

Kai Johann Willms

[0009-0009-6095-1186](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6095-1186)

University of Basel (Basel, Switzerland)

kai.willms@unibas.ch



Social Marginality as Epistemic Resource? Exiled Polish-Jewish Sociologists in Cold War America

Abstract

The massive violence unleashed by World War II forced many European scholars and scientists to emigrate, with the United States being the most common destination. While émigré scholars often experienced the loss of their familiar surroundings and their professional status as a biographical crisis, exile also created new opportunities for the transcultural circulation of knowledge and scholarly innovation.

The article analyzes the trajectories of Aleksander Hertz (1895–1983) and Feliks Gross (1906–2006), two Polish-Jewish sociologists who both found permanent refuge in the United States after fleeing German-occupied Poland and who devoted much of their scholarly attention to the problem of how to organize multiethnic societies peacefully.

Drawing on sociological theories that link social marginality to cultural and intellectual innovation, the article argues that Hertz's and Gross's own experiences of marginalization as Jews in interwar Poland and as newcomers to American society provided an epistemic resource for the comparative analysis of multiethnic societies, but also set limits on the contemporary reception of their ideas.

Keywords: *History of sociology, social marginality, exile, multiculturalism, racism, antisemitism, Cold War*

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Marginalność społeczna jako zasób epistemiczny? Polsko-żydowscy socjologowie na wygnaniu w Ameryce okresu zimnej wojny

Abstrakt

Ogromna przemoc wywołana II wojną światową zmusiła wielu europejskich uczonych i naukowców do emigracji, a Stany Zjednoczone były najczęstszym celem ich podróży. Choć utrata znanego otoczenia i statusu zawodowego często stanowiła kryzys biograficzny, to jednak emigracja stworzyła również nowe możliwości transkulturowego obiegu wiedzy i innowacji naukowych.

Artykuł analizuje trajektorie Aleksandra Hertza (1895–1983) i Feliksa Grossa (1906–2006), dwóch polsko-żydowskich socjologów, którzy po ucieczce z okupowanej przez Niemcy Polski znaleźli stałe schronienie w Stanach Zjednoczonych i poświęcili wiele uwagi naukowej problemowi pokojowego organizowania społeczeństw wieloetnicznych.

Opierając się na teoriach socjologicznych, które łączą marginalizację społeczną z innowacjami kulturowymi i intelektualnymi, artykuł dowodzi, że doświadczenia Hertza i Grossa związane z ich marginalizacją jako Żydów w międzywojennej Polsce oraz jako nowo przybyłych do społeczeństwa amerykańskiego dostarczyły materiału epistemicznego do analizy porównawczej społeczeństw wieloetnicznych, wyznaczyły również granice współczesnej recepcji ich idei.

Słowa kluczowe: historia socjologii, marginalizacja społeczna, wygnanie, wielokulturowość, rasizm, antysemityzm, zimna wojna

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of social marginality attracted the interest of sociologists early in the history of the discipline. In a classic article in the *American Journal of Sociology*, Robert E. Park – a member of the Chicago School of sociology – conceptualized the “marginal man” in 1928 as a particularly important figure in the transition from traditional to modern societies. Drawing on earlier reflections on social outsiders, in particular Georg Simmel’s essay on “the stranger,”¹ Park described migrants, converts, people of mixed ethnicity, and minority groups such as European Jews as hybrid actors participating simultaneously in the social life of two cultures and as potential agents of cultural innovation: “It is in the mind of the marginal man – where the changes and fusions of culture are going on – that we can best study the processes of civilization and of progress.”²

Following in Park’s footsteps, a long line of social scientists have explored how marginality can be a source not only of social disintegration and possibly delinquency, but also of creativity. Since the 1960s, the contribution of ‘marginal men’ (and women) to scientific innovation has been a particularly fruitful area of research.³ However, researchers who have empirically tested the hypothesis that social marginality is related to innovation have found that this causality is not direct: According to Neil McLaughlin’s concept of ‘optimal marginality,’ innovative ideas are usually not produced by completely marginal and isolated individuals but by actors who have access to central networks, institutions and cultural capital while at the same time remaining marginal to intellectual and institutional orthodoxies.⁴

This article aims to shed new light on the conditions under which social marginality can be an epistemic resource by focusing on two cases of marginal actors in the history of social science – the sociologists Aleksander Hertz (1895–1983) and Feliks Gross (1906–2006), who both developed their interest in social science in interwar Poland, fled their homeland during

¹ Simmel 1971. For the German original see Simmel 1908.

² Park 1928, p. 893.

³ See, for instance, Menzel 1960; Gieryn, Hirsh 1983. See also Goldberg 2012, pp. 208–209.

⁴ McLaughlin 2001, p. 273. See also *id.* 2021, pp. 51–80.

World War II, and continued their scholarly work in exile in the United States. Hertz and Gross are instructive cases for such a study because social marginality affected their trajectories as researchers in three different ways: First, growing up as members of the Jewish minority in an increasingly antisemitic social environment shaped their early scholarly interests and limited their prospects for academic careers in interwar Poland. Second, after emigrating, they experienced marginalization as newcomers to American society and academia and had to find strategies to rebuild their social networks and professional lives in a foreign environment. And third, for both Gross and Hertz, social marginality was not only a personal experience but also an important object of sociological research and reflection.

This article reconstructs the extent to which Gross and Hertz, despite their similar experiences, represented different ways of how Polish-Jewish émigré scholars could define their sense of cultural belonging and of how sociologists in exile could draw epistemic advantage from their transcultural experience for the analysis of multiethnic societies. To this end, it draws on Gross's and Hertz's scholarly publications and ego-documents, such as published memoirs and unpublished correspondence, which can be found in the archive of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (PIASA) in New York, the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars Records at the New York Public Library, and the archive of the émigré journal *Kultura* in the outskirts of Paris. The article employs a biographical method; instead of suggesting a direct causality between lived experience and scholarly knowledge production, however, it explores how Gross and Hertz themselves interpreted their biographical experiences and how these interpretations shaped their scholarly self-conception.⁵ While neither Gross nor Hertz transformed American social science, I argue that it was precisely their position on the margins of two societies and two academic communities that privileged them as astute observers of the dynamics of multiethnic societies in 'East' and 'West.'

2. Becoming sociologists in interwar Poland

The interwar era was the formative period of Polish sociology. At the end of the nineteenth century, a first generation of Polish sociologists had been trained at universities of the three partitioning powers and in Western Europe. After Poland regained its independence in 1918, these scholars imported the knowledge they had acquired in different cultural contexts back to their homeland and promoted the establishment of sociological chairs and research centers. Both the general expansion of Polish scientific institutions after 1918 and the demand for knowledge about social problems created by the economic and cultural disparities of the previously partitioned country formed the basis for a steady rise of the young discipline: In 1930 sociology became a regular course of study for the first time and the first sociological journal, *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, was founded.⁶ From a methodological point of view, interwar Polish sociology was decisively shaped by the contributions of Florian Znaniecki, who had spent the time of World War I in Chicago and had collaborated with William I. Thomas on a groundbreaking study of Polish immigration to the United States.⁷ This study was based largely on the analysis of autobiographical writings, and in the interwar period Znaniecki continued to advocate a "humanistic sociology" that paid close attention to the subjective dimension of social reality.⁸ Appointed professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań

⁵ On the distinction between biographical reality and autobiographical narrative see also Stanislawski 2004.

⁶ See Markiewicz-Lagneau 1982, p. 82. On the institutionalization of sociology in interwar Poland see more generally *ibid.*, pp. 71–95; Kraśko 1996, pp. 37–80.

⁷ Thomas, Znaniecki 1918–1920.

⁸ See, for instance, Kwilecki, Czarnocki (eds.) 1989; Hałas 2010; Kubera 2019.

in 1920, he established an Institute of Sociology that he turned into a hub for the circulation of knowledge between Poland and the United States.⁹

Another manifestation of the early entanglements between social science in Poland and the English-speaking world is the career of Bronisław Malinowski. Educated at the Jagiellonian University in his native Kraków and at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Malinowski quickly gained a reputation as a founding father of social anthropology, particularly through his fieldwork among the inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands in the South Pacific and his contributions to the development of the method of participant observation.¹⁰ His impact on social science in Poland, however, proved to be less than that of Znaniecki, as he declined to accept a chair in the reestablished Polish state after 1918 and continued his career in London before being appointed professor at Yale University in 1939.¹¹ Aleksander Hertz and Feliks Gross belonged to a younger generation of scholars who, originally trained in other fields in Poland, were attracted to the emerging discipline and contributed to its differentiation. For reasons of discrimination, however, they could not join the first rank of Polish social scientists at that time.

Both Hertz and Gross were raised in secular, assimilated Jewish families. Hertz's father, Leon, who worked as a clerk in Warsaw, had participated as a young man in the January Uprising of 1863/64 against Russian rule over Congress Poland and had subsequently been interned in Russia for several years.¹² Gross's father, the lawyer Adolf Gross, had been a member of the Polish Democratic Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*), a liberal group popular among the Polish-speaking intelligentsia in Galicia, and had represented Kraków's Jewish district Kazimierz in the Austrian Imperial Council from 1907 to 1918. The Gross family maintained good relations with Polish gentiles – four of Feliks Gross's aunts were married to Catholics, as were his brothers¹³ – and enjoyed such a reputation that, as Malinowski later stressed in a letter of recommendation for Feliks Gross, they were “regarded always, even by anti-Semitic Poles, with respect and sympathy.”¹⁴

Like their fathers, both Hertz and Gross became involved in political activities early in their lives. While at school in Warsaw, Hertz joined the Youth Union for Progress and Independence (*Związek Młodzieży Postępowo-Niepodległościowej*). This organization was affiliated with Józef Piłsudski's Revolutionary Faction of the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS) and thus combined advocacy of Polish independence with a socialist agenda. As he recalled in his memoirs, Hertz took this socialist orientation very seriously and began to study Marxist theory; however, instead of identifying with Historical Materialism, he was more interested in unorthodox interpretations of Marx, such as Georges Sorel's syndicalism and Eduard Bernstein's revisionism¹⁵. As a student, he joined the PPS and Piłsudski's Polish Military Organization (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*). Because of this political activism, he was interned in a camp for about a year during the German occupation of Poland in World War I.¹⁶ After the war, he withdrew from active politics but retained an affinity for the PPS¹⁷ and Piłsudski, whom he considered somewhat anachronistic but still

⁹ See Lopata 1998.

¹⁰ See Ellen, Gellner, Kubica, Mucha (eds.) 1988; Young 2004.

¹¹ On the reception of Malinowski's ideas in Poland see Szacki 1988.

¹² See Borzysmińska. See also Lorenz, Stokłosa 2014, p. 8.

¹³ See Kubica 2007, p. 151.

¹⁴ Letter Malinowski to Seelye. See also Kubica 2007, p. 149.

¹⁵ See Hertz 1991, pp. 69–72.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 72; Lorenz, Stokłosa 2014, p. 9.

¹⁷ See Hertz 1991, p. 76.

“the only man in Poland who had a vision, a conception on a grand scale.”¹⁸ Similarly, Gross turned to the political left, becoming a member of the PPS and a pacifist student organization.¹⁹

This political involvement became an important factor in both Hertz’s and Gross’s interest in sociology. Since it was not yet possible to study sociology in Poland, both began their academic careers in other fields. Hertz studied philosophy and history in Warsaw; as a correspondent for *Robotnik*, a newspaper of the PPS, he also spent half a year in Vienna, where he attended lectures at the university.²⁰ Under the supervision of the philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbiński, he wrote a dissertation on Hegel’s philosophy of history.²¹ Although his instructors included such notable scholars as Marcelli Handelsman, Edward Abramowski, and Max Adler, Hertz considered his university education in retrospect of little use to his later research. He recalled learning much more from self-study of contemporary sociological works by Znaniecki, Émile Durkheim, and especially Vilfredo Pareto and Max Weber.²² Reading Weber, who generally received little attention in interwar Polish sociology and who, according to Jerzy Szacki, was “discovered” by Hertz,²³ convinced him that the Marxist model of base and superstructure was insufficient to explain complex social phenomena and that cultural aspects were not subordinate to economic ones.²⁴

After completing his dissertation, Hertz soon realized that he had no prospects for a professorship. “A man of my name and background could not dream of an academic chair,” he wrote in his memoirs.²⁵ So he eked out a living with precarious jobs at various extramural research institutes, such as the Institute for Research on Eastern Europe (*Instytut Badania Europy Wschodniej*) in Wilno and the State Institute of Theater Arts (*Państwowy Instytut Sztuki Teatralnej*) in Warsaw, as well as with teaching and journalism; from 1937 to 1939 he worked at the Polish Radio in Warsaw. One of his colleagues was the young poet Czesław Miłosz, who became a long-time friend of Hertz.²⁶

Despite his job insecurity, Hertz was a prolific writer. Among his diverse fields of interest, his contributions to the sociology of politics have had the most lasting impact on the development of Polish sociology, and he is considered the founder of this subdiscipline in Poland.²⁷ Drawing on Weberian concepts such as “charismatic authority,” Hertz analyzed the exercise of power in Nazi Germany²⁸ and the Soviet Union. His reflections on the role of the cult of personality, single mass parties, and ideologies in these dictatorships have earned him a reputation as a pioneer in theories of totalitarianism.²⁹ Less well known than these analyses are Hertz’s interwar writings on the problems of racism and antisemitism.³⁰ In articles published in the 1930s in journals such as *Droga* and *Wiedza i Życie*, which targeted not only sociologists but also large sections of the Polish intelligentsia, Hertz sought to explain why racism and antisemitism had become widespread among contemporary Europeans. He argued that prior to World War I, racism on the European continent had been an attitude of individual theorists, not

¹⁸ “Widziałem w nim jedyne go człowieka w Polsce, który miał wizję, koncepcję na dużą skalę.” *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁹ See Kubica 2007, pp. 155–156.

²⁰ See Lorenz, Stokłosa 2014, p. 9.

²¹ See Hertz 1991, pp. 105–106.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 108–115.

²³ See Szacki 1995, p. 101.

²⁴ See Hertz 1991, p. 114.

²⁵ “Człowiek o moim nazwisku i pochodzeniu nie mógł marzyć o katedrze.” *Ibid.*, p. 123.

²⁶ See Miłosz 1988, p. ix.

²⁷ See Kosiński, Panek 1999.

²⁸ See in detail Musielak 2002.

²⁹ A selection of these writings has been edited in German translation: Hertz 2014.

³⁰ These publications have temporarily been forgotten to such an extent that even his friend Miłosz remarked in 1999 that Hertz had never published anything about Jewish topics before World War II. See Miłosz 2000, p. 6. For a recent comment on Hertz’s interwar writings about antisemitism see Linkiewicz 2025, p. 112.

an integral part of mass political movements. In the recent past, however, nationalist movements in Europe, particularly Nazism in Germany, had begun to draw on concepts from biology and anthropology to define communities that had previously been considered primarily cultural; racism thus represented “a new phase in the development of nationalist ideologies.”³¹ Hertz pointed out the inconsistencies of racial theories in the European context, arguing that in fact,

each of the national groups currently existing in Europe is the result of the mutual interpenetration of the most diverse ethnic elements, and it is absolutely impossible to prove whether Mr. X's ancestors were Slavs or Germanic people, Lithuanians or Tatars (Hertz 1932, p. 354–355).³²

The fact that many people believed in such theories, he wrote, was due to the ambiguous social effects of modernization: The rapid advance of technological progress had destroyed the social values that had characterized the nineteenth century, leaving a moral vacuum that the proponents of pseudoscientific worldviews promised to fill.

In an epoch in which, on the one hand, hitherto stable ethical values are collapsing and, on the other, new ones have not yet crystallized, charlatanism skillfully exploits the existing mental and emotional attitudes (Hertz 1931, p. 467).³³

Hertz found a similar explanation for the rise of antisemitism that he observed in Europe and experienced firsthand in his native Poland. Writing dispassionately on the subject, he emphasized that the claims made by antisemites about Polish Jews were not based on empirical facts – the Jewish share of the population was declining, not growing, and Jews were no more susceptible to Communist propaganda than the Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities in Poland or young Polish workers.³⁴ The reason why such irrational claims, similar to conspiracy theories about Freemasons or Jesuits, had an impact on significant parts of the population, therefore, had to be a more general crisis of society. In this context, Hertz discussed the approach of the Marxist writer Otto Heller. Heller had interpreted antisemitism in terms of class struggle: The emergence of a non-Jewish petty bourgeoisie had led to economic rivalry in retail trade, a traditional area of Jewish economic activity.³⁵ As a follower of Weber, Hertz could not agree with such a materialist explanation; with regard to the Polish case, he argued that the problem was a widening gap between the increasingly important role of trade in a society moving from a feudal to a capitalist stage of development and the persistence of a mentality that considered trade morally reprehensible. This gap led to a “disproportion between the role played by Jews and their traditional valuation.”³⁶ As in the case of racism, he attributed the rise of antisemitism to the inability of many people to cope mentally with processes of social transformation.

In this context, Hertz was also interested in the situation of ethnic minorities in the United States. As early as 1934, he suggested that it might be fruitful to compare the relations between European gentiles and Jews, on the one hand, and American whites and blacks, on the other.³⁷ A step in this direction was a two-part article Hertz published three years later in *Wiedza i Życie*.

³¹ “Rasyzm jest nową fazą w rozwoju ideologii nacjonalistycznych.” Hertz 1931, p. 464.

³² “Każdą z istniejących obecnie w Europie grup narodowych jest rezultatem przenikania się wzajemnego najprzeróżnorodniejszych elementów etnicznych i absolutnie nie da się wykazać, czy praprzodkowie pana X byli Słowianami czy Germanami, Litwinami czy Tatarami.” *Id.* 1932, pp. 354–355.

³³ “W epoce, gdy z jednej strony załamują się trwale dotychczas wartości ideowe, a z drugiej – nie skryształizowały się jeszcze nowe, szarlataneria zręcznie wyzyskuje istniejące nastawienia mentalne i emocjonalne.” *Id.* 1931, p. 467.

³⁴ *Id.* 1934, pp. 724–725.

³⁵ See Heller 1931.

³⁶ “[...] dysproporcja pomiędzy rolą, jaką Żydzi odgrywali, a tradycyjną ich oceną.” Hertz 1934, p. 734.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 733.

Drawing on contemporary American sociological research, especially that of Robert E. Park, he asked why some whites in the United States were obsessed with hatred of African Americans.³⁸ Distancing himself from a simplistic equation with antisemitism in Europe, he identified factors that distinguished the United States from European societies, such as its history of immigration and the disparities between the American North and South. He also emphasized that the initial situation of African Americans as slaves on plantations in the American South had more in common with Russian serfdom³⁹ than with the historical living conditions of Eastern European Jews. Nevertheless, his explanation for American racism pointed in a similar direction to that of European antisemitism: While white plantation owners were mentally attached to a quasi-feudal social order, blacks had benefited from industrialization and the transition to modern capitalism because these processes offered them the prospect of social mobility, even if their social status remained low in many cases.⁴⁰ Both European antisemitism and American racism were thus phenomena that illuminated broader, critical social trends: “The Negro question is a question of America in general, an indicator of its social and economic development, a manometer displaying the pressure of social forces, whether they be colored white or black.”⁴¹ At the time he wrote this, Hertz did not know that the course of his life would lead him to deal much more extensively with these issues, which during the interwar period were only a small part of his interests.

Like Hertz, Gross developed an interest in ethnic minorities early in his academic career. His starting point, however, was less philosophical and more pragmatic. Following his father’s example, he studied law at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Here, Gross was drawn to the social sciences by the seminars of Jan Stanisław Bystroń, who had been appointed the university’s first professor of ethnography after Malinowski had declined the same chair.⁴² He became Bystroń’s student assistant.⁴³ After research stays in Geneva and Paris, he wrote a doctoral dissertation in the anthropology of law under the supervision of Stanisław Estreicher, who had already been Malinowski’s doctoral advisor. For the same reasons as Hertz, he could not hope for a position at a Polish university.⁴⁴ He therefore worked as a lawyer in his father’s office, defending, among others, left-wing political activists.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, he tried to leave the door open to a future academic career by publishing a monograph on the cultural life of the Polish proletariat, as well as an edition of autobiographical writings by Polish workers⁴⁶ – here Gross followed Znaniecki’s paradigm of a “humanistic sociology” – and working on a habilitation on nomadic societies.⁴⁷ Toward the end of his work on the latter, he had the opportunity to visit Malinowski in London and attend his seminar. Meeting the famous Kraków-born anthropologist was a formative experience for Gross, and the anthropological methods he learned in Malinowski’s seminar had a significant influence on his later research.⁴⁸

The first result of his acquaintance with Malinowski was a research project on the social and cultural life of Kraków’s Jewish district of Kazimierz, which Gross began in the summer

³⁸ Hertz 1937.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 740–741.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 822.

⁴¹ “Kwestia murzyńska w Ameryce to kwestia Ameryki w ogóle, to wskaźnik jej rozwoju społecznego i gospodarczego, to manometr, który mówi o ciśnieniu sił społecznych niezależnie od tego, czy są zabarwione na białło, czy na czarno.” *Ibid.*, p. 828.

⁴² See Kraśko 1996, p. 42.

⁴³ See Kubica 2007, p. 154.

⁴⁴ See also Linkiewicz 2025, p. 105.

⁴⁵ Kubica 2007, pp. 157–158.

⁴⁶ Gross 1938; Mysłakowski, Gross (eds.) 1938.

⁴⁷ This study included a foreword by Malinowski. See Gross 1936.

⁴⁸ See Kubica 2007, p. 160.

of 1938. As Grażyna Kubica has shown,⁴⁹ this project was one of the first instances of “anthropology at home” – Gross’s methodological approach to the study of the Jewish ghetto owed much to Malinowski’s suggestions, even if he did not strictly follow the prescriptions of the latter’s conception of fieldwork. Aware of Gross’s lack of prospects for an academic career in Poland, Malinowski organized a teaching position for him at the LSE. The outbreak of World War II, however, interrupted both Gross’s plans for a career in London and his fieldwork in Kazimierz; he fled German-occupied Kraków via Lwów (now L’viv) in the Soviet occupation zone of Poland to Vilnius, the former Polish city of Wilno, which had since been occupied by the Red Army and ceded to independent Lithuania. Here he stayed for several months and continued his research, now among the Jewish community of Vilnius. The only surviving result of this work was a brief essay published in a Lithuanian magazine in 1940;⁵⁰ when the Soviet Union annexed Lithuania in August 1940, Gross realized that he would have to leave Europe altogether.⁵¹

3. Finding a new sense of belonging in exile

As astute observers of European social and political developments, Hertz and Gross had no illusions that the German occupation of Poland would force them into exile to save their lives. Hertz fled via Romania to Paris, where he stayed for a few months. After the German invasion of France, he moved to Madrid and applied for an American visa. In the summer of 1940, he arrived in New York.⁵² Gross went the other way, traveling by train from Vilnius to Vladivostok, spending several months in Japan waiting for an American visa, and finally arriving in San Francisco in March 1941. Both Hertz and Gross considered their exile temporary at first, but ended up staying in the United States for the rest of their lives.

For them, as Polonized Jews, living with a hybrid identity and feeling the pressure of group loyalties was not a new experience. But while it remained uncertain whether they as Jews would be welcomed by other Polish émigrés as members of their community, they were also confronted with the necessity of living in a foreign cultural environment. Zygmunt Bauman, who faced a similar situation after settling in Great Britain in 1971, described this experience of inescapable alienation:

In exile, one is pressed to stop being in exile; either by moving elsewhere, or by dissolving into the place, not being anymore out of it. The latter is the pressure of assimilation. To be like anyone else. Not to be odd anymore – to renounce one’s nonidentity, that is, to renounce one’s identity in the name of a new identity, which would be nonidentity (Bauman 1996, pp. 569–570).

Having to position themselves between self-identifications as “Polish,” “Jewish,” and “American,” Gross and Hertz developed different but equally creative strategies for constructing a new (non)identity.

Realizing that his mentor Malinowski had been unable to secure an academic position for him despite his best efforts – in particular, Malinowski had brought Gross to the attention of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, a vital organization assisting scholars who had fled the Nazis⁵³ – Gross threw himself into Polish émigré politics. During the war, Gross served as secretary general of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board, an organization set up in 1942 by representatives of the exile governments of Poland,

⁴⁹ *Ead.* 2014.

⁵⁰ For a Polish translation of this essay see Gross 1992.

⁵¹ See Kubica 2014, p. 330.

⁵² See Miłosz 2000, p. 14; letter Hertz to Sukiennicki.

⁵³ See the letter Malinowski to Seelye. For the history of the Emergency Committee, including the role of Laurens Seelye, see Samuels 2017.

Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Greece to prepare the region's postwar reconstruction, and as editor of the monthly *New Europe*.⁵⁴ In this context, he also made the acquaintance of influential members of the Polish émigré community, most notably the historian Oskar Halecki, and was invited to become a member of PIASA, an institution founded by émigrés in 1942 in order to preserve Polish scholarly traditions in exile and to facilitate Polish-American intellectual dialogue.⁵⁵ Gross also began cooperating with Polish émigré journals, such as *Kultura* and *Wiadomości*.

This strategy of full integration into the Polish émigré community had both a reward and a price. On the one hand, over time Gross acquired a high status within this community, which allowed him to influence its overall development, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, a generational conflict emerged among Polish émigrés in the United States, and younger émigrés, who were less interested in preserving the intellectual traditions of the interwar period than in making Polish subjects more visible in the American humanities and social sciences, became more influential in institutions such as PIASA. In this context, Gross appeared to many as a candidate who could integrate the heterogeneous community, and in 1975 he was elected executive director of PIASA after serving for several years as vice-president of the institute. His strategy of integration into the Polish émigré community thus allowed Gross to acquire a position in which he could, to some extent, define what "Polishness" meant in the circumstances of exile, and he used this opportunity to advocate a pluralistic understanding, free from any form of group pressure.⁵⁶ The price he paid for this was that he could not openly reflect on his own experiences of discrimination, and while the problem of tolerance and conflict in multiethnic societies preoccupied him throughout his career as a sociologist, the history of Polish-Jewish relations played only a minor role in his postwar writings. Noting this gap, Grażyna Kubica argued that "Gross denied his anti-Semitic trajectory, because he felt himself a Pole, and anti-Semitism made his Polishness doubtful."⁵⁷

Hertz found a different way to construct his (non)identity in exile. While Gross was reluctant to reflect on his own Jewishness, Hertz devoted an entire chapter of his memoirs to his "search for a homeland."⁵⁸ He explained that his attitude toward Polishness was full of ambiguities: As a native of Poland and a native Polish speaker, he had identified strongly with Poland in his youth, but had soon found his Polishness was questioned by others.

Under these circumstances, the question kept coming up: How can I consider myself a Pole when Poles consider me a foreigner? And in that case, who am I? How should I describe myself? (Hertz 1991, p. 174)⁵⁹

Fully identifying with the Jewish minority in Poland would not have been an option because, as a secular, assimilated Jew, he felt alienated from the Yiddish language and Jewish religious customs.⁶⁰ His identity problem was further complicated by the fact that, in addition to his experiences with Polish antisemites, he had always had Polish friends who supported him. Hertz concluded that "Poland is a very weird country. After all, every country is weird.

⁵⁴ For a synthesis of the wartime federalist plans see Gross 1945. – See on this aspect of Gross's political and intellectual development also Łukasiewicz 2010, pp. 222–248.

⁵⁵ See the invitation to the General Assembly of PIASA. – On the history of PIASA see also Dorosz 2013; Willms 2022.

⁵⁶ See, for instance, Gross 1976.

⁵⁷ Kubica 2007, p. 169.

⁵⁸ He titled it "W poszukiwaniu ojczyzny." Hertz 1991, pp. 148–196.

⁵⁹ "W tych warunkach nieustannie stawiało pytanie: jak mogę się uważać za Polaka, kiedy Polacy uważają mnie za obcego? A w takim razie, kim jestem? Jak mam siebie określić?" *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

But Poland is one of the countries where weirdness is particularly developed. The contrasts here are striking, sometimes astonishing.”⁶¹

In exile, this ambivalence toward Polishness was a reason for Hertz to be very selective in his contacts with the Polish émigré milieu. His closest friends were non-conformist émigrés such as Aleksander Janta-Pończyński⁶² and Czesław Miłosz, who did not identify with the staunch anti-Communism and nostalgia for the Second Polish Republic typical of many Polish émigrés during the early Cold War. Although Hertz himself was highly critical of the Communist regime in Poland in his postwar writings, he also maintained friendships with Marxist thinkers, such as the economist Oskar Lange,⁶³ and had kept in touch with Miłosz when the latter was not yet an émigré but the cultural attaché of the Polish People’s Republic in the United States.⁶⁴ His attitude toward PIASA, on the other hand, was distant. In a letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, the editor of the émigré journal *Kultura*, Hertz stated that he regarded “this institution very critically” and did not become a member of the institute.⁶⁵ The significantly more liberal *Instytut Literacki*, which published *Kultura*, remained for him, as for Miłosz,⁶⁶ the only Polish émigré institution with which he cooperated intensively. While he knew Gross personally, their relationship was not particularly close.⁶⁷

Gross and Hertz also took different approaches to their integration into American society. Gross was optimistic about the opportunity to contribute his East Central European perspective to American social science.⁶⁸ Already as secretary general of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board, he had been in contact with two professors at New York University, the political scientist Arnold J. Zurcher and the historian Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, who actively supported the idea of an East Central (and later Pan-)European federation. As a result of these contacts, New York University, with the financial support of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board, launched in 1945 an area studies program explicitly devoted to East Central European affairs.⁶⁹ A year later, Gross was hired by the Department of Sociology at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, where he taught until his retirement in 1977.⁷⁰ Hertz, on the other hand, worked during the war for the Office of War Information, an American intelligence agency that produced country reports and coordinated propaganda campaigns, but he never managed to find an academic position in the United States, even though Znaniecki and Lange had recommended him to the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars.⁷¹ Instead, together with his friend Janta-Pończyński, he supported himself by

⁶¹ “Polska to bardzo dziwny kraj. Zresztą każdy kraj jest dziwny. Ale Polska należy do krajów o szczególnie rozwiniętej dziwności. Kontrasty są tu uderzające, nieraz zdumiewające.” *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁶² Aleksander Janta-Pończyński (1908–1974) was a Polish émigré writer and journalist. His book *Wracam z Polski* (*I return from Poland*, Janta 1949), containing his impressions from a two-month visit to Communist Poland the year before, caused a scandal in the Polish émigré community because Janta-Pończyński had commented positively on the postwar reconstruction of Poland under the Communist regime. See on him Bolecki 2009, p. 157.

⁶³ For Hertz’s memories of Lange see Hertz 1991, pp. 397–406.

⁶⁴ See Miłosz 2000, p. 16.

⁶⁵ “Odnoszę się bardzo krytycznie do tej instytucji i nie jestem jej członkiem.” Letter from Hertz to Giedroyc, 4 April 1961. However, Hertz seems to have joined PIASA eventually. A list of the institute’s members from the year 1963 contains his name. See the brochure “The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, Polski Instytut Naukowy w Ameryce.”

⁶⁶ On Miłosz’s antagonistic relations with the early PIASA leadership see Dorosz 2011.

⁶⁷ In 1961, Hertz wrote a mixed review about one of Gross’s books for *Kultura*. In a letter to Giedroyc, however, he confessed that he considered the book “very weak” and only chose to write gently about it for “various tactical reasons.” See Hertz 1961a; letter Hertz to Giedroyc, 14 April 1961.

⁶⁸ See on this point also Lebow 2019, p. 189.

⁶⁹ See the letter from Gross to Friedrich. See also Gross 1966.

⁷⁰ See Krase 2007, p. 175.

⁷¹ Letter Znaniecki to Emergency Committee; letter Lange to Duggan.

dealing in antiquarian Slavic-language books.⁷² In retrospect, Hertz turned this defeat into a positive self-fashioning: Being a lifelong autodidact and outsider had allowed him to think independently.⁷³ In time, this positive perspective on exile as an opportunity *not* to belong⁷⁴ also enabled Hertz to identify positively with the United States. After fifteen years in New York, he wrote that he had still not achieved “a spiritual identification with American civilization. I feel lonely and strange in it.”⁷⁵ Toward the end of his life, however, he expressed a “deep gratitude” to the United States precisely because it had not forced him to assimilate completely:

It allowed me to speak of my Polishness and my Jewishness with joy and pride, it allowed me to reach out to other fatherlands. In other words – it gave me the right to my humanity (Hertz 1991, p. 196).⁷⁶

4. Viewing multiethnic societies from the margins

Hertz’s and Gross’s different strategies for finding a new sense of belonging in exile influenced their postwar sociological writings. While Gross published extensively for both an American and a Polish émigré readership, Hertz wrote almost exclusively in Polish. For both, however, the publications of the *Instytut Literacki* provided an important forum for presenting their reflections on American society and its postwar dynamics to their fellow émigrés. This concerned a wide range of aspects. As early as 1959, for example, Gross noticed a change in the American class structure, in particular a rapidly decreasing macroeconomic importance of the agricultural sector and an increasing demand for highly educated workers. He suggested that this development might lead to a new form of class society, different from the industrial society predicted by Marx and Engels.⁷⁷ Continuing his interwar interest in the sociology of politics, Hertz devoted an entire monograph, published in the book series of *Instytut Literacki*, to the American political party system.⁷⁸ In contrast to the mainstream of the Polish émigré community, he also wrote a benevolent essay on the student protests of 1968 at American universities. Admitting that he did not share the students’ enthusiasm for the writings of Marcuse and Mao, Hertz argued that young Americans deserved credit for their efforts to find ways out of the crisis of traditional ideologies and value systems that Western societies were experiencing.⁷⁹ Far more critical was his perspective on the development of the American media landscape, particularly with regard to how the mass availability of television influenced political discourse.⁸⁰

For both Hertz and Gross, however, the most important development in Cold War American society was the transformation of interethnic relations, particularly the emancipation

⁷² See Miłosz 2000, p. 18.

⁷³ See Hertz 1991, pp. 126–127.

⁷⁴ Anne Kuhlmann has pointed towards a similar understanding of exile among Jewish émigré writers from Germany: “Es wird deutlich, daß Exil hier nicht als ein ‘Entheimaten’ sondern vielmehr als ein Befreiungsakt des ‘Sichentheimatens’ formuliert ist. Das Exil ist damit nicht auf Identität, sondern auf Überwindung der Identitätszwänge gerichtet.” Kuhlmann 1999, p. 206.

⁷⁵ “[N]ie doszedłem do duchowego utożsamienia się z cywilizacją amerykańską. Czuję się w niej samotnie i obco.” Hertz 1955, p. 60.

⁷⁶ “[P]ozwolił mi z radością i dumą mówić o mojej polskości i o mojej żydowskości, pozwolił mi docierać i do innych ojczyzn. Inaczej – uprawniał mnie do mego człowieczeństwa.” *Id.* 1991, p. 196.

⁷⁷ Gross 1959, p. 35.

⁷⁸ Hertz 1957a.

⁷⁹ *Id.* 1970. – The title of the essay alluded to the journal *Bunt Młodych* (literally “youth rebellion”), which Jerzy Giedroyc, the editor of *Kultura*, had founded in interwar Poland. Hertz thus wanted to suggest that the motivation of American student protesters might not be completely different from that of rebellious young members of the Polish intelligentsia during the 1930s.

⁸⁰ See *id.* 1971.

of African Americans.⁸¹ As has been extensively studied, the black civil rights movement captured the imagination of many Jewish American intellectuals: While the latter in many cases initially viewed American blacks as possible allies in the struggle for equal rights, the relationship between the two ethnic groups became increasingly conflictual over the course of the 1960s.⁸² It would not be wrong to place the writings of Hertz and Gross in this context. What makes their point of view specific, however, is the fact that, as recent émigrés, they interpreted American developments against the background of their East Central European experiences and, at the same time, gained a new perspective on the historical problems of Polish society by viewing them through an American lens. In this sense, they acquired what the German-Jewish émigré historian Fritz Stern referred to as “bifocal views”:⁸³ the tendency to see Poland through American and America through Polish(-Jewish) eyes.

As if to continue his fieldwork in the Jewish neighborhoods of Kraków and Vilnius, Gross visited the predominantly African American neighborhood of Harlem in New York City in the fall of 1960 to gather material for an article in *Kultura*. In his correspondence with Giedroyc, he described this trip as an initially frightening experience:

I walked streets where I was the only white person, streets that some people would not cross, and that I did not cross without fear. There are streets that a policeman does not enter alone. And after much thought – I wrote a new article, which I attach. Just under the impression of this trip, or rather the reflections on longer explorations and experiences (Letter from Gross to Giedroyc).⁸⁴

A year later, the article was published under the title “Democracy and Color.”⁸⁵ Gross noted that America was going through a revolutionary period:

It seems to me that for the first time, the American Negroes have created a modern movement that is an effective political and social force (Gross 1961a, p. 67).⁸⁶

He went on to analyze the movement’s historical background, organizational structure and strategies, commenting mostly favorably on its goals. But there were aspects that irritated Gross. In his view, some in the movement went too far in their antipathy toward whites:

There are racist or nationalist Negro groups that proclaim new theories that the black race is a superior race, or a race of good people, that all evil comes from the white man (Gross 1961a, p. 81).⁸⁷

He also disapproved of the fact that, as he had observed during his visit to Harlem, some African Americans were converting from Christianity to Islam because they saw Christianity as the religion of their oppressors.

⁸¹ In this regard, Hertz and Gross differed from most Polish émigrés. As Kazimierz Adamczyk has noted, many of the latter downplayed the problem of American racism as exaggerated by Communist propaganda. See Adamczyk 2015. (Adamczyk also mentioned Hertz as an exception to this rule, see *ibid.*, p. 75.)

⁸² See on this problem in detail Forman 1998.

⁸³ Quoted from Burke 2017, p. 29.

⁸⁴ “Chodziłem ulicami, na których byłem jedynym białym, po ulicach, przez które niektórzyby nie przeszli, i ja też nie przechodziłem bez obawy. Są ulice, w które policjant w pojedynkę nie wejdzie. I po długiej rozwadze – napisałem nowy artykuł, który załączam. Właśnie pod wrażeniem tej wycieczki, czy raczej przemyślenia dłuższych eksploracji i doświadczenia [sic].” Letter from Gross to Giedroyc.

⁸⁵ Gross 1961a.

⁸⁶ “Wydaje mi się, że po raz pierwszy Murzyni amerykańscy stworzyli nowoczesny ruch, który jest skuteczną siłą polityczną i społeczną.” *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁸⁷ “Istnieją murzyńskie ugrupowania rasistowskie czy nacjonalistyczne, głoszące nowe teorie, że rasa czarna jest rasą wyższą, czy też rasą ludzi dobrych, że wszelkie zło pochodzi od człowieka białego.” *Ibid.*, p. 81.

They forget, of course, that slavery still exists in Muslim countries, and that its abolition is due only to Western countries, that the anti-slavery movement originated in England, France, and America (Gross 1961a, p. 81).⁸⁸

Gross concluded his article on a positive note, writing that peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups is possible if all parties worked toward that goal.

One needs to explore the conditions that facilitate such coexistence. There is no room for pessimism (Gross 1961a, p. 83).⁸⁹

In his writings on the subject, Gross did not draw explicit analogies between the situation of African Americans and that of ethnic minorities in interwar Poland. But from the comparatively few texts he devoted to the historical problem of multiethnicity in Poland, it is clear that his perspective on ethnic conflicts in America was very much shaped by his own attitudes toward Polish culture. He linked the problem of Polish antisemitism only to modern nationalist movements such as Roman Dmowski's National Democracy and referred positively to the historical coexistence of different ethnic groups in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁹⁰ He even considered the ability to assimilate different groups to be an essential feature of Polish culture⁹¹ and emphasized the fruitful effects of this assimilation:

Poles, Christians and Jews, went to the same universities and read similar books; all of them 'assimilated' a similar culture. They were all 'assimilationists' in terms of a modern culture, both the non-Jews and the Jews. They all became part of the same Western culture, whatever their differences. And this general assimilation of the Western culture – the culture of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment fused with the Classic past – created the great Western civilization, advanced human rights, democracy, institutions of freedom and led to the emancipation of and equal rights for Jews as well as the emancipation of serfs and slaves (Gross 1990, p. 144).

Just as he was willing to identify with Poland, Gross expected a similar identification with American culture from African Americans.

In his publications for English-speaking readers, he studied several cases of interethnic relations in order to develop a general theory of how multiethnicity can be organized peacefully. Again, he relied on Malinowski's fieldwork approach, for example among the Arapaho of the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming⁹² and in the borderlands of Italy, Austria, and Yugoslavia.⁹³ Toward the end of his life, he presented a synthesis of his ideas in two closely related monographs.⁹⁴ Gross sought to defend a universalist, individualist approach to organizing multiethnic societies against what he saw as a dangerous particularist tendency to divide society into ethnic groups that could be played off against each other.⁹⁵ Central to this

⁸⁸ "Zapominają oczywiście, że niewolnictwo nadal istnieje w krajach muzułmańskich, i że jego zniesienie zawdzięczać należy wyłącznie krajom Zachodu, że ruch przeciw niewolnictwu wywodzi się z Anglii, Francji i Ameryki." *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ "Należy badać warunki, które takie współzycie ułatwiają. Pesymizmu nie ma." *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁹⁰ See Gross 1975.

⁹¹ "Whatever the criticism, Poland has shown throughout the centuries an ability to accept and often to assimilate and fuse different creeds, views and cultures. And this is a test of a mature and advanced civilization." *Id.* 1990, p. 148.

⁹² See Gross 1951; *id.* 1961b.

⁹³ See *id.* 1978.

⁹⁴ *Id.* 1998; 1999.

⁹⁵ Gross's critique of the discourse on ethnicity at American universities during the 1990s could take polemical forms. In particular, he turned against what he regarded as a false interpretation of "multiculturalism": "In practice, what is called by ideological groups on American campuses 'multiculturalism' is, in fact, a tendency that leads to separation and isolation of minority groups and also hides a narrow ethnic nationalism, even racism,

approach was the idea that the institution of citizenship in a democratic society had an equalizing effect on members of diverse ethnic groups:

The concept of citizenship means a direct association not of groups or corporations but of an individual – a person with the state. Hence, in a civic, multiethnic state a person has two identities: particular and universal. A particular identity is his ethnic self, the one he shares with his ethnic or cultural group. The universal one is citizenship – his identification with the nation-state – that is common to all members of the state (Gross 1999, p. xiii).

In the context of American debates about ethnicity in the 1990s, some readers perceived these ideas as anachronistic.⁹⁶

Hertz had a different perspective on ethnic relations in the United States, and he reflected more openly on analogies between the situation of minorities in the United States and in interwar Poland. In his first postwar essay on African Americans, he was more explicit than in his earlier writings about the differences and similarities between the cases. In his eyes, one of the main differences was that Jews in East Central Europe had always cultivated their historical traditions, while black slaves on American plantations had not had the opportunity to retain their African heritage.⁹⁷ Therefore, African Americans had always been an integral part of American culture, and their efforts were aimed at a full integration into American society; despite temporary ideas of returning to Africa and establishing settlements for free African Americans in Liberia, there had been no black equivalent of Zionism.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, Hertz argued that American blacks and Polish Jews, as well as Polish serfs, had been subject to similar forms of exclusion from society and had faced similar forms of hostility when they attempted to emancipate themselves from their subordinate status. He concluded that all three social groups had constituted a “caste” in their respective societies:

Caste [...] produces in the individuals enclosed within it analogous characteristics and life attitudes. These characteristics occur everywhere, in every social system in which casteism has persisted in some form. And that is why the Polish observer of American caste relations finds here so many aspects well known to him. In its mass, the relationship of the black to the white in America is not too different from the relationship of the serf to the squire, or from the relationship of the Jew to the Christian in Poland (Hertz 1957b, p. 14).⁹⁹

Indeed, the concept of “caste” had been applied earlier to both American blacks and to European Jews by authors whose works Hertz had studied extensively. In the book that Hertz critically reviewed in 1934, Otto Heller had defined European Jewry as a “caste,” implying that the Jews’ role as outsiders in European societies resulted not from their distinctive cultural and

adverse to universalism, which is essential in a broad and humanistic, indeed, multicultural program.” *Id.* 1998, p. 155.

⁹⁶ Gross’s colleague and friend Jerome Krase aptly described Gross – and himself – as “pre-post-modernists.” See Krase 2007, p. 180.

⁹⁷ See Hertz 1957b, pp. 7–8. – This thesis was, in fact, questionable. Already in 1941, Melville J. Herskovits had argued that African Americans had indeed retained a lot of their African cultural traditions, see Herskovits 1941. The fact that Hertz did not refer to the book and the debate it had caused indicates that he was not fully familiar with the American sociological discourse.

⁹⁸ See Hertz 1957b, p. 8.

⁹⁹ “[K]asta – podobnie jak plantacja – wytwarza w osobnikach, w niej zamkniętych, analogiczne cechy i postawy życiowe. Cechy te występują wszędzie, w każdym systemie społecznym, w którym kastowość w jakiejś formie się utrzymała. I dlatego to polski obserwator amerykańskich stosunków kastowych znajduje tu tyle momentów dobrze mu znanych. W masie swej stosunek czarnego do białego w Ameryce nie jest zbyt różny od stosunku chłopu pańszczyźnianego do dziedzica czy też od stosunku Żyda do chrześcijanina w Polsce.” *Ibid.*, p. 14.

religious characteristics but from the social and economic restrictions imposed on them.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal had used the term in his seminal study of American race relations¹⁰¹ to emphasize that the status of African Americans was determined by whites who erected insurmountable social barriers for blacks, which contradicted the American ideology of open competition.¹⁰² Myrdal was Hertz's primary source of information on the situation of African Americans.¹⁰³

Accordingly, Hertz placed the concept of "caste" at the center of his only book accessible to English-speaking readers: his study of the role of Jews in Polish culture.¹⁰⁴ The book was originally published in Polish in the book series of *Instytut Literacki* and distributed in the Polish underground press. In this way, Giedroyc hoped to attract Jewish intellectuals in Poland as readers and contributors to *Kultura*.¹⁰⁵ Thanks to the efforts of Hertz's widow, Alicja, it was posthumously translated into English.¹⁰⁶ Hertz considered the study "the fruit of my American experience."¹⁰⁷ Throughout the book, he used African Americans as a comparative case. Both American blacks and Polish Jews had constituted a "caste" in the sense of a closed group, defined by legal and moral norms as well as by economic and cultural distinctiveness, which, in principle, determined their social status from birth to death. In order to leave the caste, both groups had undergone a period of assimilation, which Hertz saw as a necessary intermediate stage in acquiring the capacity to challenge the caste system.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to Gross, Hertz was highly critical of an alleged tendency among Polish Jews to deny their subordinate status: "In some cases they even behaved as if they were not marginal. [...] That was make-believe life, an attempt to play a role that was not acknowledged by others."¹⁰⁹ Instead, he affirmed marginality as a source of cultural innovation:

The role of marginal people in the great social and cultural processes of the present time is tremendous. And not only of the present time. Great movements in thought and art, social revolutions, and changes in accepted value systems all usually had some connection with the actions of marginal people. Those people are a fermenting agent, the 'yeast' without which culture would not be able to develop and the world would seem dead. What was said in Poland about the Jews – 'difficult with them, boring without them' – can be applied to marginal people in general (Hertz 1988, p. 244).

For Hertz, this association of marginality with innovation was obviously also a helpful way to make sense of his own biographical experience of being, for different reasons, on the margins of the academic worlds of both interwar Poland and the Cold War United States.

5. Conclusion

This article discussed the trajectories of the sociologists Aleksander Hertz and Feliks Gross as similar yet distinct cases of scholars whose work was significantly shaped by biographical experiences of marginalization. Both Hertz and Gross remained on the margins of interwar Polish academia because of their Jewish backgrounds and leftist political leanings, and both

¹⁰⁰ See on this point Baehrens 2018, pp. 325–326.

¹⁰¹ Myrdal 1944.

¹⁰² See Jackson 1990, p. 220.

¹⁰³ See Hertz 1991, pp. 119–120.

¹⁰⁴ *Id.* 1961b.

¹⁰⁵ See Wiaderny 2018, p. 129.

¹⁰⁶ Hertz 1988.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

¹⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 146–147.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

were initially in a marginal position as newcomers to American society after fleeing German-occupied Poland. However, their strategies for coping with these experiences differed considerably: While Gross attempted to overcome marginality by becoming actively involved in the political and cultural activities of the Cold War Polish émigré community in the United States, while at the same time establishing himself in American academia, Hertz cultivated his marginal position by distancing himself from the conservative mainstream of Polish émigrés in the United States and continuing to pursue his scholarly interests without affiliation with any American institution.

Neither Gross nor Hertz became highly influential voices in the American sociological discourse on ethnic relations. Hertz lacked access to central networks and institutions in order to meet the criteria of “optimal marginality,” and Gross’s sociological approach shaped by the “humanistic sociology” of interwar Poland and by Malinowski’s anthropological method was at odds with the dominant paradigms of American sociology at the time.¹¹⁰ But even if their ideas did not immediately gain widespread acceptance, their biographical experiences constituted an epistemic resource insofar as they allowed Gross and Hertz to analyze the dynamics of multiethnic societies from a unique vantage point that was informed by firsthand knowledge of the mechanisms of social marginalization in two different societies.

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¹¹⁰ See also Katherine Lebow’s judgment that Gross and other exiled social scientists from Poland “must have seemed like relics of a strange, backward corner of Europe, not harbingers of a new vision.” Lebow 2019, p. 204.

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