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Jewish Studies: Are They Ethnic?

Howard Adelman

Introduction

The history of Jewish studies has not yet been written. Scholars engaged in this field, however, are beginning to subject it to searching analysis. Pertinent articles have appeared that offer two extreme positions on the development of Jewish studies: one sees the increase in Jewish studies as the result of heightened Jewish self-awareness during the late 1960s because of the Six Day War, growing interest in the Holocaust, and the influence of rising black and ethnic consciousnesses that resulted in the establishment of academic programs. The other, usually a reaction to the first view, argues that the study of Hebraica and Judaica has held an ancient and honorable place in the traditional university curriculum.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the history of Jewish studies, by which is meant the critical study of the history, literature, and thought of the Jewish people since the biblical period, and to indicate some of the features that undermine both of the positions mentioned above. Thus it will be demonstrated that the status of Hebraica and Judaica has not always been ancient or honorable and that the field has roots other than the consciousness-raising events of the late 1960s. These observations are offered with the hope that an outline of the development of Jewish studies will suggest interdisciplinary discussion about the origins and development of other fields of study. When suggesting a comparison of different fields it is hoped a level of discourse can be established that transcends the use of comparison as a foil for elaborating the strengths of one’s own predilections. It is for this reason that ethnic studies cannot be narrowly defined but must be discussed in the general sense of any field which attempts to study a particular community, often one neglected by the general curriculum. Jewish studies are ethnic, and considering them as such is necessary not only for purpose of obtaining cooperation from administrators and mutual support of colleagues, but also for the creation of academically sound disciplinary and methodological approaches.

History

Although Jewish scholarship can be traced uninterruptedly from the first century to the present, academic interest in the study of Hebrew was motivated by Christian missionary concerns. In 1311-12 the Spanish Dominican Raimon Lull (c. 1235-1315) elicited a declaration from the Council of Vienne calling for instruction in Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, and Greek for purposes of conversion. Hebrew instruction was soon instituted at universities such as Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Salamanca, and Alcalá, and perhaps even earlier in Naples and Salerno. Jews were not involved in these programs of study; Christians or apostate Jews taught Christian students.

It is unlikely that Jews were allowed to attend universities at all until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy, when they became involved in the study or the teaching of medicine. Information about these early Jewish university students is available because for them to graduate and to practice, special dispensations had to be granted them by the popes. Fear of the temptations to which Jewish students at Christian universities were exposed prompted Italian Jews in the fifteenth and again in the sixteenth century to propose a university under Jewish auspices where Jews could study Jewish and secular studies without distraction, pursuing degrees in medicine, law, philosophy, and rabbinics. Nothing came of these plans at that time.

In Italy there were a few Jews who served as university Hebrew instructors in Ferrara, Pisa, Padua, and Bologna. At Padua, the Jewish scholar Elijah del Medigo (c. 1460-1497) regularly lectured, although not as an official member of the faculty. As a tribute to his contribution to the humanism of the period, however, his portrait was included among the great scholars of the time in a fresco by Gozzoli in the Palazzo Ricardi in Florence. Most academic instruction in Hebrew was still offered by Christians. These courses were sporadic and not a regular feature of the curriculum. For example, in Bologna, Ionnes Faminius is listed as “Ad Litteras hebraicas et caldaeas” from 1521 till 1526; the position is then listed until 1532 with no incumbent. After that it is dropped from the rolls. The relationship between the study of Hebrew and medicine was particularly close during the Renaissance because many of the standard Greek and Arabic medical and philosophical texts were being reintroduced to Christian Europe through Latin translations made from Hebrew versions. By the end of the fifteenth century, Christian interest in Hebrew books also turned to kabbalistic works. These proved the truth of Christianity according to some of the leading figures of the Renaissance, such as the humanist Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), who had studied with Elijah del Medigo.

In 1490, after a meeting in Florence with Pico, the German scholar Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) devoted himself to the study of Kabbalah and Hebrew. On his return to Germany, Reuchlin was appointed to the chair of Hebrew at Ingolstadt and then at Tuebingen. He was able to
prevent the Talmud, which was being printed for the first time, from being burned at the instigation of the apostate Johannes Pfefferkorn (1469-c.1512). This controversy and Reuchlin’s work in Hebrew stimulated a strong interest in the study of Hebrew literature in Europe, including Poland. From 1525-1530, rabbinic studies received much Christian attention when they took on practical and political importance. Because of conflicting interpretations of several verses in Leviticus that were relevant to the validity of his marriage with Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII of England sought rabbinic support in Italy for its annulment. In the wake of this controversy, Henry VIII established Regius chairs of Hebrew at Oxford and Cambridge, and Hebrew became a required subject. As was the case elsewhere, these positions were filled by Christians and apostates—Jews were not even allowed to live in England.

Interest in Hebrew and Kabbalah also spread to France, another country in Europe that had no Jews. In 1538, Guillaume Postel (1510-1581), a Christian Hebraist, taught Hebrew in Paris. One of the first practicing Jews invited to teach Hebrew at a European University was Elijah Levita (c. 1468-1549), a German Jewish Hebrew scholar and Yiddish writer who lived in Italy and worked for the Hebrew publishers there. Since there were no other Jews in France and it would have been difficult if not impossible for him to continue to live as an observant Jew, he did not accept the position.

With the coming to Europe of the Reformation at the beginning of the sixteenth century, positions in Hebrew and oriental languages flourished at the leading universities such as Jena, Leipzig, Heidelberg, Strasbourg, Basle, and Wittenberg. The early Protestant incumbents showed strong interest not only in biblical Hebrew, but also in rabbinic writings in order to advance their arguments against the interpretations and practices of the Catholic Church. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, these Protestant Hebraists devoted themselves to writing Hebrew grammars and translating into Latin sections of the Mishnah, Maimonides’ code of Jewish law, or the biblical commentaries of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, or Abravanel. During the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation, even after the Catholic Church confirmed its commitment to the Latin canon of the Bible, many Catholic scholars continued to turn to post-biblical rabbinic literature and produced significant bibliographic catalogues, manuscript collections, and philological works. Hebrew libraries, to which Jews were usually denied access, were developed by nobles, cardinals, bishops, and popes. As late as 1865, the Vatican Library, a major treasure-trove of Hebrew manuscripts, was closed to all Jews, prompting one Jewish scholar to urge the people of Italy to overthrow the Pontifical State for the sake of humanity—and Jewish scholarship.

During the seventeenth century, Protestant scholars in many cities, such as Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leiden, and Altdorf, continued to exhibit
interest in post-biblical Judaism. Typical of this generation of scholars was Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1633-1705) of Altdorf, who knew Yiddish, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Wagenseil defended Jews against the blood libel, translated rabbinic tractates, collected Jewish writings, and prepared polemics that he hoped would help convert the Jews. Another Dutch Hebraist is the woman Anna Maria Schurman (1607-1678), for whom a special loggia was built so that she could attend classes at the University of Utrecht. Between 1603 and 1611 at Oxford and Cambridge, Protestant scholars not only worked on translating the Bible for King James, but also were able to translate post-biblical texts such as the Mishnah and Maimonides' Code, and to correspond in Hebrew with Italian Jews.

Although Christian Hebraists took Jewish literature seriously, maintained friendships with Jewish scholars, and devoted their lives to producing works that continue to be of value for Jewish studies today, their material was often marred by their attempts to cast aspersions on Jewish practices, to justify Christian beliefs, and to win converts to Christianity. By 1700, Christian Hebrew scholars began to produce works that were even more hostile to Judaism. For example, Johannes Eisenmenger (1645-1704), a professor of Oriental languages at Heidelberg who had studied Talmud and Midrash with Jews for nineteen years under the pretense that he wanted to convert, wrote Entdecktes Judentum, "Judaism Unmasked," a collection of distorted translations of rabbinic texts designed to stigmatize Judaism. In this work, the professor gave credence to the blood libel and to the accusations that Jews poisoned wells. Nevertheless, Christian scholars continued to produce substantial works in Jewish studies. The History and Religion of the Jews from the Time of Jesus Christ to the Present, the first major synoptic history of post-biblical Jewish life was written by Jacques Basnage (1653-1725), a French Protestant who lived in exile in Holland after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Although Basnage's historicism did much for the presentation of Jews in nondogmatic terms, he still felt that the Jews had been rejected because they rejected Jesus.

During the seventeenth century, Jews and Jewish studies had reached the new colleges in the American colonies. Hebrew was required at Harvard from the university's beginning; many students wrote theses about Hebrew and attempted to prove that it was the original language. Nevertheless, to teach Hebrew at Harvard, Judah Monis (1683-1764), a rabbi from North Africa, had to convert before he could receive his appointment in 1722. In the sermon he preached on the occasion of his public acceptance of Christianity, he used Kabbalah and the Hebrew Scriptures to prove the truth of Christianity. Ezra Stiles (1725-1795), a minister who had studied Hebrew and Kabbalah with an itinerant kabbalist, made Hebrew a required subject when he was president of Yale from 1778-1795. Chairs in Hebrew were established at Princeton and what would later be called Columbia and the University of
Pennsylvania. These classes were taught primarily for Christian divinity students by Christian instructors. Despite these efforts, the study of Hebrew began to wane. As colleges shifted from training clergy to providing general education for the young men of the new nation, they had become more practical and less classical. In 1787, Hebrew became an optional subject at Harvard and the professor of Oriental Languages switched to teaching English. The swan song for Colonial Semitics study was the last Hebrew oration delivered at the Harvard commencement of 1817.14

In the early nineteenth century, Jews first began to attend German universities in large numbers. For a few years (1812-1822), when Prussian authorities allowed Jews to hold academic posts, Jewish intellectuals in Europe turned to the Wissenschaft des Judentums, “the Science of Judaism,” calling for the modern, objective, critical study of Jewish history, Bible, rabbinics, literature, theology, law, and even contemporary statistics. This was a movement that attracted young Jewish intellectuals, primarily students at the University of Berlin, whose feelings towards their own people had been awakened by contemporary criticism, popular anti-Jewish movements, and the indifference, estrangement, or apostasy of many young Jews. Noting the positive contributions made by Christians to the study of Judaism, they hoped that the “purely scholarly” study of the Jewish past, especially as embodied in Hebrew literature, would awaken in Jews a sense of pride, produce educational, communal, and religious reform, help foster Jewish survival, and cause non-Jews to have a more favorable opinion of Jews.15

The pioneers of Wissenschaft included Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), Eduard Gans (1798-1839), and Hayyim (later Heinrich) Heine (1797-1856). By 1824, however, having published only three numbers of their Zeitschrift, their organization had disbanded and, ironically, soon afterwards Gans, Heine, and some of the others converted to Christianity. Heine noted later in life that kugel (noodlepudding) had done more to preserve Judaism than all three numbers of the Zeitschrift fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums. Nevertheless, Zunz as a private scholar continued to pursue research that changed the nature of Jewish studies and influenced, among others, Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), a leader of Reform Judaism; Zacharias Frankel (1801-1875), a leader of what would become Conservative Judaism; and Solomon Rapoport (1790-1867) and Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-1865), who were traditionally religious scholars.16

These scholars hoped that Wissenschaft would be accepted as part of the curriculum of at least one European university, but this did not happen.17 Instead Wissenschaft was fostered by Jewish scholars who served as rabbis, Jewish teachers, or businessmen. They communicated with each other in letters and made their findings known through articles which appeared in Jewish journals. In 1854 the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau, headed by Zacharias Frankel, became
the first institution devoted to *Wissenschaft*. Other seminaries that followed this pattern soon opened in Berlin, Vienna, Paris, London, Budapest, and Italy. The rabbis who led these schools usually held doctorates in Semitics from the leading universities in Europe. Soon monographs, critical editions, multivolumed histories, and scholarly journals devoted to *Wissenschaft* began to appear.

It was in America that the first Jewish scholar with modern training was appointed to a university position in Semitics. Around 1835, Isaac Nordheimer (1809-1842), the first avowedly Jewish professor in the United States, taught, for no salary, at New York University. Soon, however, he moved to Union Theological Seminary, inaugurating a long tradition of Semitic study there. It has been suggested that he flirted with Christianity, but this cannot be demonstrated even in the tendentious reminiscences of a Christian colleague used for proof of such an assertion, nor in accounts of his life written by other Christian contemporaries. Finally, several Jews received appointments in Hebrew, Semitics, or rabbinics at European universities, beginning, appropriately, with Julius Fuerst (1805-1873). Fuerst was a Polish Jew who had studied at the University of Berlin with Hegel, and at the Universities of Breslau and Halle with the prominent Semitic philologist Gesenius. Fuerst taught Hebrew, Syriac, and Aramaic grammar and literature at the University of Leipzig and by 1864, he was appointed a full professor. Other Jews received positions teaching Talmud and rabbinics in Paris, Heidelberg, Strasbourg, Berlin, Oxford, and Cambridge, soon after Jewish students were admitted there.

For the most part, Christian Hebraists of the nineteenth century tended to concentrate more on the Hebrew Scriptures than post-biblical literature. Nevertheless, some Christians continued to teach Jewish subjects at major universities. Even the most committed scholars at this time, such as Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890), who wrote the first history of Hebrew poetry, and Hermann Strack (1848-1922), a prolific scholar of rabbinic literature, also engaged in missionary work among the Jews. These were the philosemites. There were also antisemitic orientalists such as Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891), a professor at Goettingen, who considered the Jews “a repulsive burden with no historical use.”

In Europe *Wissenschaft* did not fulfill its goals. Indeed, its goals made it impossible for it to succeed. The attempt to use Jewish scholarship to create a sense of pride for Jews opened the door for some to use Jewish scholarship for other purposes. Not only were Jewish studies open to antisemites and missionaries, but much of the material produced by Jewish scholars was marked by ideological tendentiousness and denominational biases. *Wissenschaft* also attracted “... younger rabbis... who find their consolation in deciphering manuscripts and publishing books, when it is impossible to decipher the faith and convictions of their people... they work among the libraries rather than among the ignorant and superstitious.” By the end of the century, one
of Wissenschaft's last and most famous practitioners, Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907), said "We have only one task left: to give the remains of Judaism decent burial."  

The Growth of Jewish Studies

In the United States, the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of institutional consolidation and rapid expansion for the American Jewish community. This was also a period of growth for American universities, for the involvement of Jews—and others—in university life, for renewed interest in Semitics, and for the creation of the first graduate schools. In 1871 Rabbi Abram Isaacs, an alumnus of New York University who had received further training in Breslau, was appointed to teach at his alma mater, rising to the professorship of Semitics in 1889. Ironically, by this time the library of the above-mentioned Paul de Lagarde had become the main corpus of the New York University semiotics collection. In 1874, the newly opened Cornell University hired Felix Adler (1851-1933), the son of a prominent New York Reform rabbi, as a professor of Hebrew and Oriental languages. At the time, this arrangement, financed by members of his father's synagogue, was unique for an American college. When, a few years later, Adler left academics to become the founder of the Ethical Culture Society, Jewish studies would remain divided between Christian Hebraists (usually clergymen) at the universities and European-trained Jewish scholars at community institutions. In 1875, Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900) founded Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati to train Reform rabbis and in 1885, Sabato Morais (1823-1897) opened the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York to train more traditional rabbis. These seminaries would attract many European Jewish scholars and rabbis to the United States.

At the end of the nineteenth century some American Jews who had earned doctorates in Europe, who for the most part came from the Reform movement, and who were often the sons of the leading pulpit rabbis, had begun to teach Semitics and Rabbinics at major American universities. These men, who sometimes taught for no pay or for a subsidy provided by the Jewish community, attracted both Jewish and Christian students, but they did not produce any widespread dissemination of Jewish studies on American campuses.

The important work in Jewish studies was done at institutions developed by the Jewish community. In 1888, the Jewish Publication Society was founded to help publish basic Hebrew texts, English translations of important works, and new scholarship. In 1892, the American Jewish Historical Society was established to promote research in American Jewish History. From 1901-1905, The Jewish Encyclopedia, the first systematic presentation of Jewish scholarship, was published in the United States by Dr. Isaac Funk, a distinguished Christian.

In 1902, three men who would do much to promote Jewish studies in America received appointments at important institutions. As president
of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Solomon Schechter (1847-1915) gathered some of the finest Jewish scholars in America and Europe. Similarly, as president of Hebrew Union College, Kaufmann Kohler (1843-1926) assembled a very distinguished faculty. George Foot Moore (1851-1931), as professor of Religion at Harvard, developed the academic study of religion by combining German scientific standards with an American openness for Jews and the study of Judaism.  

During this period of expansion of the field, Dropsie College, an institution devoted exclusively to post-graduate study of Hebrew, Semitics, and rabbinics, opened in Philadelphia in 1907. Moses Dropsie (1821-1905), a child of a mixed marriage who accepted Judaism at the age of fourteen, made provisions in his will for this institution, and required that there would be "no distinction on account of creed, colour or sex in the admission of students." Significantly omitted from most accounts of his largesse is the fact that members of the faculty and the board had to be Jewish. In 1906, the year between Dropsie’s death and the year the college opened, the executors of his estate solicited opinions from the leading figures in higher education concerning how the school should be run. The replies provide wide-ranging views about the nature and purpose of graduate education in general and Jewish higher education in particular. The considerations ranged from the “ethical” to the employment prospects of the graduates—positions as heads of orphan asylums with enough time for research. Also under discussion during that period was whether the college would include a center for Jewish education or whether this would not be in the nonsectarian spirit of Dropsie’s will. The mantle of Jewish scholarship unofficially passed from the old world to the new in 1910 when the Jewish Quarterly Review was removed from England to Dropsie College.

Institutions devoted to Jewish studies continued to emerge in the United States. Local Hebrew colleges in many major cities offered preparatory programs for high school students and courses for college credit. Important Judaica and Hebraica collections were developed at the Library of Congress, Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, Yale, and the New York Public Library. In 1915, the Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation was established to support the publication of Jewish scholarship. In 1916, Bernard Revel, a Dropsie graduate and head of the Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Theological Seminary (later Yeshivah University), tried to establish a Society of Jewish Academicians of America with the published provision that “…scientific truth will have to be sacrificed to tradition.” Revel’s plan was opposed by the leading scholars and it came to naught. Shortly afterwards, in 1920, the American Academy of Jewish Research was established to promote Jewish scholarship in the United States. Drafts of the articles of its incorporation show that Revel’s name was crossed out, perhaps indicating continued tensions over the nature of Jewish scholarship.

Despite the slow acceptance of Jews into the ranks of American
faculties, Jewish studies continued to emerge at secular colleges, and prominent scholars in areas of Jewish studies received appointments. In 1924, David Blondheim, a pioneer in the study of the French glosses in Rashi's medieval Hebrew Bible commentaries and in understanding Judeo-Romance dialects, began to teach Romance languages at Johns Hopkins. In 1925, a chair in Jewish studies at Harvard was established by a member of the Jewish community of New York; for many decades this position was occupied by Harry Wolfson. In 1930, a chair in Jewish history was endowed at Columbia; it was held for many decades by Salo Baron. Wolfson and Baron produced graduate students who would determine the contours of the field for a long time. A major boon to the furtherance of Jewish life on college campuses in general and the teaching of Jewish studies was the establishment of the Hillel movement between 1923 and 1925.

Jewish studies continued to develop abroad. When the Hebrew University in Jerusalem opened in 1925, a secular setting had been established that would support many departments for specialization in Jewish studies and encourage the development of Hebrew as a living language for Jewish scholarship. In Europe, Jewish academicians found positions not only at seminaries in Germany, England, Poland, Italy, Hungary, and France, but also at universities such as Warsaw, Frankfurt, and Padua.

In the United States, influenced by movements in Eastern Europe and Palestine, there was a renaissance during the 1930s in the study of Hebrew. Some themes in Hebrew literature unique to the United States were Native American motifs and descriptions of the plight of the blacks. As a result, during the early 1930s, Hebrew was introduced in the New York City public high schools. This movement soon reached the colleges, and, in 1934, New York University (the institution which had the largest Jewish student body in the world but not a single Jewish instructor until 1930) began to offer modern Hebrew in the Division of General Education. Similarly, although there had been a course in Jewish history since the 1930s, Hebrew was not introduced at City College until 1948. By the late 1940s, about a dozen colleges offered modern Hebrew, in addition to the 77 colleges and 47 seminaries that taught biblical Hebrew. Some of the schools that introduced modern Hebrew included standard bastions of Semitics such as Pennsylvania, Hopkins, Chicago, Harvard, Columbia, and Yeshiva as well as large universities often with sizable Jewish enrollments such as Buffalo, Boston, Brooklyn, Colorado, Missouri, Wayne State, and Houston.

Courses in modern Hebrew and Jewish studies were also offered during the 1930s and 1940s at Smith, a small but prominent women's liberal arts college with few Jews. Old Smith catalogues show that beginning in 1938 Margaret Breckenbury Crook taught a Hebrew course in the Department of Religion and Biblical Literature that included "readings from Modern Hebrew schoolbooks." For a year or two this
course was taught by a young Jewish visiting lecturer in the department, Cyrus Gordon (b. 1908), who was at Smith to study its collection of cuneiform tablets. Beginning in academic year 1940-1941 there was also a course called “Contemporary Judaism,” described as “An analysis of Judaism, its religion and social background, dispersion, the Jew in Europe and in America, Judaism’s contribution to Christianity and to democracy. Present forces influencing Jewish Christian relations.” The instructor was S. Ralph Harlow, a Christian scholar and social activist who travelled regularly in Palestine, lectured at synagogues, protested the persecution of Jews, and invited rabbis to speak to his class. Harlow also organized regular field trips to New York City each year, and the itineraries included going to Harlem to listen to “negro music,” touring the Lower East Side, visiting at the Spanish Portuguese synagogue, and attending Sunday morning services at Riverside Church to hear Harry Emerson Fosdick preach. The work of Harlow, following the pattern established by Moore at Harvard, shows clearly how Jewish studies began to enter some colleges in the United States. Believing that religion is a major force in the world that has to be understood in its own terms, Harlow and his department hoped that by teaching about all religions, greater understanding between all peoples would be fostered. As he and his colleagues began to teach about eastern religions, it was only natural that attention would be given to developments in Judaism after the Bible. In recognition of his accomplishments, Harlow was awarded an honorary degree from Hebrew Union College, bringing the relationship between secular colleges and Jewish institutions full circle.

Modern Developments

Although by 1945 some schools had let their Semitics programs lapse, there were about a dozen full time positions around the country in Jewish studies. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jewish studies, especially courses on Israel and Hebrew, were introduced at schools with both large and small Jewish enrollments. Also at this time, Brandeis opened, as a secular university supported by the American Jewish community. One of the first departments opened by Brandeis was Near Eastern and Judaic Studies chaired by Simon Rawidowicz. Brandeis soon began granting doctoral degrees to people who would hold some of the growing number of positions in Jewish studies. Courses in Jewish studies were still mostly taught by Hillel directors, leaders of Jewish educational agencies, and special appointees. By 1956, 48 colleges and universities offered modern Hebrew, and 133 colleges and 112 seminaries taught biblical Hebrew, an interesting increase since the language of the Bible had not changed much in a decade. In 1958 the National Defense Education Act gave added impetus to the study of foreign languages, including Modern Hebrew. Continuing to reflect the changing status of Jewish studies on the national level, in 1963 Smith College hired Jochanan Wijnhoven, a
specialist in Kabbalah and medieval Jewish religious philosophy who had degrees from Hebrew University and Brandeis, to teach in the Religion Department. The course in contemporary Judaism became a year-long survey of Jewish thought. An introductory course in biblical Hebrew led to a sequence of courses in post-biblical Hebrew religious texts. By 1966, throughout the country, there were 54 professors and 34 Hillel directors who offered Jewish studies at 92 colleges and universities.42

In 1966, observers of the Jewish scene were aware of the growth of Jewish studies. They explained that the phenomenon was due, in part, to pride in the State of Israel and growing concern over the losses of the Holocaust. They saw the Jewish studies programs as a sign of the new acceptance of Jews and Judaism in the colleges and universities of the U.S. after World War II. Part of the reason for the expansion of Jewish studies during the 1940s and 1950s was attributed to basic changes in the curriculum of higher education, which allowed for interdisciplinary studies, more flexibility, and a broader range of courses. Finally, the Jewish community often backed Jewish studies programs and supported what was considered to be one of the few opportunities for serious study in modern Jewish life. Jewish students, however, were not turning out in large numbers for the courses and non-Jewish participation was dismissed as “negligible.” Because there were more positions than trained candidates, questions were raised about the qualifications of many people who were hired to teach during this period of expansion. It is interesting to note that at this time on the undergraduate level the number of women students equalled or exceeded that of men, but at the graduate level, most of the students were men and faculty members were routinely referred to as men.

Thus, before the Six Day War and the public recognition of black and ethnic studies, Jewish studies had already developed as a field that enjoyed some success but also suffered from many problems. Of course, these later events did inspire many Jews on the faculties, in the student bodies, in alumni organizations, and in the community to turn to Jewish studies and the numbers of programs continued to rise. In 1969, the year that the Association for Jewish Studies was established, there were 80 full-time positions and another 200 part-time appointments. According to some estimates, at least 600 students were majoring in Jewish studies in 1969. During the 1970s, interest in the study of Modern Hebrew continued to grow while national trends indicated decreased participation in language courses.13 Now twenty years after the boom in Jewish studies and after a period of recession in university growth, most schools in the country have some offerings in Jewish studies and it is easy to find programs in modern Hebrew. New chairs in Jewish studies are still being established.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the analysis of Jewish studies reveals several
paradoxes. On the one hand, the field has had a long history; on the other, Jewish studies surely has had an erratic pattern of growth and, even after their establishment, these courses have been dispensable. The appearance of Jewish studies seems to correlate more with the needs of the practitioners, Christian or Jewish, than with what schools have considered to be their essential curricular needs. Although making substantial academic contributions, medieval and colonial Christian pioneers in Hebraica, Judaica, and rabbinica pursued their work for the furtherance of Christianity, often at the expense of Judaism. The early pioneers of "the Science of Judaism" had an agenda that would now be categorized as ethnic Jewish survival and pride. The failure of Jewish studies to find acceptance at universities until the twentieth century is as much an indication of the nature of the field as it is of the universities themselves. Having developed in other contexts (most notably rabbinical seminaries and Jewish communal institutions) Jewish studies has acquired contours that still make it difficult for it to fit into the secular collegiate curriculum. The burden of adjustment, however, does not fall exclusively on Jewish studies. One of the essential aspects of Jewish studies is a challenge to the nature and structure of western higher education. One of the reasons for interest in Jewish studies and other ethnic fields is that the basic university curriculum not only excludes materials relevant to the lives of many students but there is, according to many, little room conceptually for anything but "an unselfconscious, western, white, Christian, male view of the world" which is often considered "universalistic." One of the unstated tensions present as new fields emerge is whether they or the traditional curriculum are in fact ethnic. Is it the regular departments or the new programs that really represent parochial concerns? Practitioners of Jewish studies and other ethnic fields need not feel any shame that students are motivated to take their courses out of a sense of personal interest, that they themselves entered the field because of specific communal concerns, that growth in their field correlates with the arrival of large numbers of their group on a given campus, that their group is using the university to recognize its concerns and validate its position, and that their field does not conform to the standard curricular rubrics. Ironically, writers on Jewish studies want to distance their field from the label of "ethnic," which often evokes partisan associations, while at the same time they list all the benefits which the Jewish community derives from the academic study of Judaism. They argue that Jewish studies should not be a partisan enterprise, but overlook the fact that the academic process has always been committed to fostering particular values whether they are nationalistic, religious, sexual, or racial. The ultimate defense against ideological forays into the classroom is the academic process itself, which is based on rigorous disciplinary and methodological questioning of all data, assumptions, and conclusions. If such tests are not applied—and, even before the development of ethnic
studie s, they have not always been—the fault does not lie with a particular field but with the academic process itself. The task before Jewish studies and ethnic studies, therefore, is, on the one hand, not the repression of identity, community, and social concerns, but the creation of a methodology that will help these matters find expression among many disciplines and departments on campus. On the other hand, ethnic courses cannot and must not replace traditional courses. Nor can traditional courses, offering what they do in terms of content, method, depth, and coverage, try to accommodate all that the ethnic perspective brings to academic study. To be sure, the experience of the minority, any minority, can only be understood in light of the influence on it by the majority and its culture, just as the dominant culture must be seen as rooted in many different traditions. The key to success therefore is the integration of ethnic studies and traditional disciplines.

The articulation of Jewish or ethnic considerations in the curriculum is an opportunity not only for those involved in academics, but also for those committed to the ethnic community. Indeed the academic study of the Jewish people is the only opportunity to challenge tendentious, polemical, and self-serving interpretations of the Jewish experience. Thus Jewish studies is a valuable way to invigorate a sense of cultural creativity and to develop critical thinking in the Jewish community. Jewish and ethnic studies will succeed not because they serve the needs of a particular constituency, but because they offer a methodologically sound perspective for all students, they contribute to the advancement of larger disciplines, and they aid the overall intellectual development of each student.

Notes


6 Umberto Dallari. *I rotuli dei lettori legisti e artisti dello studio bolognese dal 1384 al 1799.* (Bologna, 1889) 32-69.


10 I am indebted to Jochanan Wijnhoven for this information.


26 For information about one of the first blacks to attend the University of Pennsylvania in 1879, see Cyrus Adler, *I Have Considered the Days.* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941) 30-31.

27 Feuer, "The Stages," 433, suggests that apart from a few appointments in Jewish or Semitic studies, Jews usually entered new academic fields. I believe that Jewish and Semitic studies were also new fields.


30 Adler, *I Have Considered the Days,* 274.


34 Feuer, “The Stages,” estimates that there were fewer than one hundred Jewish liberal arts faculty members by the mid-twenties.


38 Based in materials on Harlow in the Smith College Archives.

39 Based on a telephone discussion with Virginia Corwin Brautigam.


Critique

Adelman’s historical account of the rise and development of Jewish studies in European and American universities has implications not only for the current debate regarding the appropriateness and place of Jewish studies programs in the academy but also for the place of ethnic studies in university curricula in general. I believe the most compelling argument against ethnic studies programs in higher education charges them with institutionalizing specific ideologies and thus undermining the self-critical investigation of divergent positions within a traditional discipline. But this charge raises an equally troublesome presupposition: that courses of study can and should be compartmentalized into a specific “discipline” or “field.” With ethnic studies our more traditional notions of “field” collapse, because ethnic studies, by their very nature, are interdisciplinary, the very concept of which challenges scholarship based on traditional canons. Adelman, I believe, addresses both these concerns quite effectively in his argument for a critically fashioned methodology with which universities can successfully integrate Jewish studies (and by extension, ethnic studies in general) into traditional curricula.

The development and implementation of Jewish studies curricula have implications for ethnic studies programs in general (and may even, in a certain context, be regarded as a subset of ethnic studies). Jewish studies programs, in particular, raise even more complex issues than do other programs that, historically, we have defined as ethnic or minority. Although Adelman provides a workable definition of Jewish studies—“the critical study of the history, literature, and thought of the Jewish people since the biblical period”—unless we are speaking of Hebraic studies, Yiddish language and literature, or Israeli scholarship per se, we get into trouble with the definition of Jewish studies, because Jewish writers and scholars have for centuries been well-ensconced in our corpus of literary works. Is, for example, the “Jewish experience” in America since World War II as distinct from mainstream American culture as it was prior to that period of changing attitudes and involvement? In America, Jews, much more rapidly and effectively than other immigrant groups, have assimilated into the economic and cultural mainstreams of society and have had such a formative influence on intellectual culture that it is difficult to separate Jewish solely on religious grounds. Yet, it seems safe to say that those who advocate Jewish studies programs don’t want to make Jewish studies into only religious studies. We want, instead, to offer courses in the history, politics, culture, and literature of the Jews. However, this ambition remains a problem. How, for example, are we to define a Jewish writer in America? Robert Alter, in After the Tradition: Essays on Modern Jewish Writing (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969, p. 18) makes this point: “It is by no means clear what sense is to be made of the Jewishness of a writer who neither uses a uniquely Jewish language, nor describes a distinctively Jewish milieu, nor draws upon
literary traditions that are recognizably Jewish.” And so, if our intention is to construct a coherent program of study, do we include only those writers, let’s say, who express explicit Jewish issues, themes, and political concerns in their works, or who can claim Jewish identity?

Thus, the definition of a uniquely “Jewish” point of view becomes virtually artificial, since, as Leon Yudkin points out in *Jewish Writing and Identity in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982, 112), “the Jewish voice is not only heard but increasingly accepted as the norm.” If, indeed, Yudkin is correct, and the Jewish voice is no longer distinct, no longer on the “periphery” of American culture, then how can we isolate this voice and make it the center of a coherent and separate program? What would be the consequences of distinguishing such a program if any specific grounds for doing so are necessarily arbitrary and exclusive? Would such a program, by its self-consciously “political” nature, ideologize or, worse yet, sentimentalize the family of texts, topics, and myths we call “Jewish”?

Not so, argues Adelman, if we provide a format for a critical approach to the newly created discipline. The only way Jewish studies can find a place in the academy, a place of integrity and coherence, is if it becomes more than a subject, but a methodological process of inquiry as well, a study that is fluid and dynamic, one that questions its own traditions. Such programs, based on a critical and comparative methodological approach, a dialogue in which traditional values and policies are challenged, are, indeed, viable. Adelman’s point that “the academic study of the Jewish people is the only opportunity to challenge tendentious, polemical, and self-serving interpretations of the Jewish experience” is well-taken. Only if the study turns in on itself, so to speak, criticizes its own assumptions, can we hope to secure the kind of academic integrity we expect from our institutions.

—Victoria Aarons
Asia ns, Jews, and the Legacy of Midas
Alan Spector

In much of the U.S. media today, Asian-Americans are being hailed as the new “wonder group.” Local newspapers seem to be filled with articles about how this student from Pakistan won the spelling bee and that student from Japan won the math contest. Weekly newsmagazines carry articles extolling this phenomenon, and many liberals and conservatives alike enthusiastically promote the stereotype: liberals because it combats the racist myth that people of color are intellectually inferior to Euro-Americans (“whites”) and conservatives because it can be used to promote the idea that any ethnic group can make it if only they work hard.1 Therein lies one of the negative aspects of this media campaign.

Some have used the seeming success of Asian-Americans as a way to deny the intensity of past and present racism against blacks and Hispanics.2 Negative comparisons are made between black and Latino people on the one hand, and Asian-Americans on the other, coupled with assertions that racial discrimination can no longer be an “excuse” for blacks and Latinos, because, after all, Asians are not white, and they have “made it.” Needless to say, Asian-Americans are not the ones behind this campaign. In addition to the negative impact on other minority groups, the latest seemingly positive stereotyping of Asian-Americans may ultimately prove to have negative impacts on the lives of Asian-Americans as well.

Malleability of Racial/Ethnic Stereotypes

Most biologists and social scientists understand that racial and ethnic groups are defined by social, cultural, political, and economic factors much more than by supposedly fixed biological characteristics. Perhaps the most widely read critic of the biological view is Montagu,3 although many have written on this subject. In fact, the flexibility of racial meanings and the contextual variability of racial stereotyping are commonly understood and studied in the social sciences.4

In urban areas, street gang alliances and rivalries are not necessarily based on rigid ethnic lines. South African racial laws classified Chinese
people as non-white and Japanese people as white. Classifying the ethnicity of an Argentinian family of German or Italian ancestry that has lived in the U.S. for three generations would be a challenge. Are they Hispanic? “White” Portuguese immigrants in southeastern Massachusetts occupy a position in the community not unlike that of “nonwhite” Latinos in other places. Native Indians from Peru who know no Spanish might similarly be categorized by some as Hispanics. Puerto Ricans of obviously African ancestry are sometimes less vulnerable to discrimination in housing than those people classified as “black” or “Afro-American.” “White” North Americans with one eighth “black” ancestry have legally been considered “black” in some contexts. Much U.S. popular culture treats the rich ethnic complexity of Africa as a homogenous mass and discusses Africa as if it were a country. And while there is some differentiation made among Asians, there is also a tendency to group Asian-Americans into one stereotype, despite the often quite different life experiences among urban Chinese, suburban Pakistanis, Laotian refugees, Japanese, and Koreans, for example.

Contradictory stereotypes abound, especially in popular culture. Black people are accused of being lazy and not wanting to work, while at the same time they are blamed for “taking all the jobs away from whites.” Black males are stereotyped as aggressive and violent and also as docile and without initiative. Jews are accused of being fuzzy-brained intellectual liberals, or even Communists who want to overthrow the capitalist system and who deal in far-away utopias and oppositely, being present-oriented, greedy capitalists who are controlling the capitalist system. Hispanics, too, are subjected to contradictory stereotypes of docility and violence, and Asian Americans have been subjected to racist stereotypes which have sometimes implied docility, sometimes violent criminal gang activity, sometimes stupidity, sometimes “inscrutability,” and are sometimes associated with the All-American ethic of strong families and hard work, and sometimes accused of being clever and manipulative.

In the light of the contradictory nature of ethnic stereotyping and the generally negative effects that stereotyping has on ethnic groups, it might be prudent to be less than enthusiastic if the same media that promotes so many negative stereotypes of ethnic groups should decide to gild a particular ethnic group, or in the case of Asian-Americans, create an ethnic group and then appear to gild it.

Different Functions of Racial/Ethnic Stereotyping
Volumes have been written and debates rage with great intensity as to the causes of ethnic differentiation, racial discrimination and racist ideas and stereotyping. This is not the place to discuss all the nuances of each theory. However, it is useful to acknowledge some of them in a schematic way in order to see to what degree and in what context they might apply to the stereotyping of Asian-Americans and Jews.
Extreme conservatives and neo-fascists argue that there really are significant biologically based behavioral differences among different ethnic groups. Another view with conservative implications is that members of ethnic groups voluntarily stick together. The most extreme version of this view asserts that people have genes that make them want to associate with others who are most like themselves. How affinity towards certain skin tones (which themselves vary considerably within ethnic groups) or other ethnically associated physical differences should be the criteria rather than height, weight, hobbies, etc. is another problematic point. But these writers offer little biological evidence; they write primarily as social philosophers. It is true that many members of ethnic groups have chosen to settle near others from their homeland. Churches, in particular, have been unifying forces to immigrants. But most social scientists would agree that external factors have had the most profound effects on ethnic differentiation, racial discrimination, and racist ideology.

The economy and especially employment opportunities are very important “external” factors affecting ethnic clustering. If the mass migration of an ethnic group, (e.g. Serbs) coincided with the rapid expansion of industry in a particular city, (e.g. East Chicago, Indiana) then one would find a disproportionate number of members of that ethnic group in that city. The “sticking together” theory has other problems as well. For example, the idea that racial segregation exists mainly because black people do not want to live near white people is contradicted by the thousands of black people who do move into predominantly white neighborhoods, and the millions more who have been denied those opportunities by the institutional racism of banks and insurance companies, and by overt racism of some white residents. Restrictive covenants in effect even through the 1950s, forced busing for segregation, gerrymandered school districts, and real estate manipulators are other factors that sustain segregation that come from outside the ghettoized ethnic group.

There are several theories that see dominant elites in society as being primarily responsible for ethnic stratification. Some of these theories emphasize economic factors while others emphasize issues of political control and social order. The economic analyses of Reich, Gordon, and Edwards focus on the ways that a segmented labor market allows employers to maximize profits not only from the “superexploited” minority group, but from the majority segment of the working class as well. Some of those conclusions are controversial, but certainly an even broader group of social scientists has argued that racism can help employers increase profits. For several hundred years, race-based slavery in the United States proved to be a major source of profits. In any case, whether or not one sees superexploitation at the root of racism, there are many particular patterns of racial stratification in particular places that can be usefully explained within the framework of super-
exploitation theory. Another standpoint that emphasizes elite domination focuses on scapegoating processes. While scapegoating often interacts with other factors, including superexploitation, scapegoating can have certain political functions not immediately connected to exploitation of labor. Sometimes scapegoating can serve rather specific local functions, such as when a neighborhood politician seeks to consolidate a political base by blaming all neighborhood problems on members of racial minority groups. Sometimes scapegoating can have world-shaking effects, such as the Nazi extermination of half of the world’s Jewish population.

The objects of scapegoating can be a segment of the superexploited working class. They need not be, however. Ethnic minorities who are seen as being relatively successful in business are often targets, even when those businesses are small and the actual income of those groups is not very high. Chinese merchants in Africa have been subjected to discrimination and violent attacks. Many of the Japanese-Americans imprisoned during World War II were farm owners. Tamils in Sri Lanka also have experienced discrimination despite the fact that they are not the lowest economic group. It is true that racist oppression based on superexploitation has killed millions of people; the American slave system was unbelievably brutal. But it should be understood that severe racist oppression, including genocide, has also been practiced against groups perceived of as “middle class.”

Parallels between Jewish Stereotypes and Asian-American Stereotypes

There are points of convergence and divergence between the Jewish experience in the U.S. (and Europe) and the Asian experience in the U.S. (and Europe and Africa.) One major difference is that Jews are generally considered to be “white” while Asians are usually considered “non-white.” This difference is not absolute, however. First of all, many “whites” consider Asians closer to “whites” than other non-white groups, and their attitudes towards intermarriage with Asian Americans are much more liberal than they are towards blacks and Latinos, in general. Furthermore, some anti-Semitism has the character of depicting Jews as “different” in such a profound sense that among some people, Jews really are fundamentally different, perhaps biologically or spiritually, from the rest of the white population. Stereotypes of Jews as greedy, for example, often imply that the greed is much more deeply rooted than the stereotyped alleged flaws of other ethnic groups, such as the alleged alcohol abuse of the Irish or the alleged stinginess of the Scots. But of course, in general, Jews are considered “white” and Asians are generally considered “non-white.”

Another major difference is that for every Jewish person on Earth, there are over one hundred Asians. Asians are not a minority group in
Asia. Jews, however, are a minority group in every country but Israel. Yet another important difference is that Asians constitute dozens, if not hundreds of ethnic groups and religious factions. While it is true that Asian-Americans are often grouped together as if they are one ethnic group, they understand quite clearly that Korean, Vietnamese, and Bengali immigrants may have had quite different life experiences. And while it is also true that Jews can be Italian, black, Swedish, Argentinian, or Asian, for example, the overwhelming majority of Jews in the United States are Eastern European in origin.

Jews, Asians, blacks, American Indians, and Hispanics can all be found in both the “cheap labor” segment of the population as well as in the “alien, middle class” segment of the population. There are hundreds of thousands of blue collar Jewish people in the United States, and the history of Asians in the U.S., particularly the Chinese, demonstrates that they too have often had large numbers counted among the blue collar work force. What is interesting, however, are the parallels between the stereotypes of Jews as middle class and the recent stereotypes evolving around Asian-Americans as a “super group.”

Despite the fact that the great majority of Jews in Eastern Europe were poor, the Nazis maintained the fiction that Jews were wealthy bankers and merchants and were controlling the world economy. The fact that Jews experienced persecution and were often forced to migrate did mitigate against Jews becoming farmers, for example. Economic survival for urban migrants often means getting an education, becoming an artisan, or becoming a merchant. But most Jews were lower income and many were also workers. The Nazis did not have a consistent line on the biological nature of Jews. Sometimes they asserted that Jews were located on the biological superiority spectrum somewhere near the Slavic peoples and below Southern Europeans; the implication was that Jews, especially Russian Jews, were mentally inferior to most other Europeans. But sometimes the Nazis implied that Jews were unbelievably clever, perhaps the “smartest” group, but so perverted by greed that they had no morality at all, and therefore were not really human at all, but rather almost Satanic.

Stereotypes of Jews in the United States, both positive and negative, have centered more on the “middle class success story” image. On average, Jewish Americans are slightly more educated than the U.S. average, although it should be pointed out that it was not until the 1950s, after the stereotype of Jews as “middle class” had developed, that a significant portion of the Jewish population began to earn bachelor’s degrees from colleges. In the 1960s, Glazer and Moynihan pointed out that Jews’ average income was only slightly higher than the national average, despite the stereotype that Jews were wealthy. And today, while anti-Semitism in the black community is a widely spotlighted topic, it should be recalled that anti-Jewish stereotypes, especially the stereotype of Jews as financial manipulators, are strong among non-Jewish whites.
As mentioned earlier, stereotypes about Asian-Americans are very contradictory. However, much of the national media attention, which often has a way of evolving into generally accepted public “knowledge” seems to be focusing more on Asians as the ultra-intelligent, middle class, hard-working supergroup—all “positive” images, except that the door is still left open to classical negative stereotypes of “inscrutability, cleverness, and being manipulators who don’t play by the rules.” Even as much of the media waxes enthusiastic about the new Asian-American “supergroup,” the backlash is already developing.

In Detroit, a Chinese-American worker was murdered by a white racist who beat the worker to death while denouncing Japanese auto companies. In the U.S., autos made by non-U.S. companies are sometimes vandalized. (The irony is that U.S. brands made overseas have generally not been targetted for attack, even as many “foreign” brands made in U.S. factories by U.S. workers have. The vandals’ “alliance” therefore is with U.S. companies, not U.S. workers.) The United Auto Workers union refused to allow “foreign” automobiles to be parked in a union parking lot in Detroit for many months. In the midwest, blue collar workers are being inundated with propaganda against “foreign” automobiles and “foreign” steel, with the main focus being that the Japanese are winning by “cheating,” rather than by playing by wholesome rules. Computer equipment from Japan has often been put in the same context. In Texas, Vietnamese fishermen have been subjected to violent attacks. In Philadelphia, the city was forced to take down street signs written in Korean because of pressure from “white” community residents, who no doubt would appreciate signs in English should they travel to Mexico or Paris.

In some educational institutions, “middle class” Asians are being used to fill minimum quotas for racial minorities with the effect being that the numbers of black and Latino acceptances are held down. That is because “quotas” are used as the target maximum goal by many institutions, instead of as a minimum goal. As a result, a backlash has developed there as well. Some institutions appear to have developed informal quotas limiting the number of Asian applicants accepted. One begins to hear rumblings and grumblings among some people in some communities, blue collar whites and minorities, urban residents envious of seemingly successful small shopkeepers, “middle class” suburban whites who are puzzled by the academic performance of generally “middle class” Asian-Americans, patients who view their Indian or Pakistani physicians with suspicion, students who complain that they cannot understand their engineering professor who may speak perfect English, but do so in a subdued voice, and so forth. Debunking the stereotypes is another discussion. However, it would be a mistake for those who believe in all people learning to respect and appreciate the contributions of people from other cultures to enthusiastically embrace as well.
the current media campaign to stereotype Asian-Americans as a super-group.

A paper such as this cannot begin to answer many of the complicated questions that arise. If anything, its purpose is exploratory, more to provoke further questions, further investigation, research and debate on these issues by challenging some assumptions that may be taken for granted. Any stereotype has a dehumanizing aspect which may be a minor, secondary point in some contexts, but which may become the dominant aspect in other contexts. Singling people out on the basis of ethnicity and placing them on a pedestal can serve to isolate such people from the mainstream. Of course, the alternative extreme of crudely forcing assimilation is not desirable, since it creates disrespect for the value of the “minority” group’s contributions and the group itself. It also leads to the whole society being denied the special contribution that each of its parts can create. But honoring special contributions does not mean that one has to engage in stereotypes, especially stereotypes that have an almost mystical quality to them. King Midas thought that gold was precious. When he turned his daughter into gold, he realized that living people are the most precious of all. Stereotypes, even “positive” stereotypes, drain the life out of human beings and concretize them into non-human statues. The same “positive” stereotypes that are currently being focused on Asian-Americans have within them many of the negative aspects that were applied to Jews and others who have suffered severe oppression... oppression that was intensified by isolation that in turn was justified by their presumed “differentness.”

Notes

1. The words “white,” “minority,” “middle class” and other similar terms are sometimes used in quotes here as a way of denying that they have any real intrinsic meaning other than what is conventionally accepted in given social contexts. On the other hand, they are sometimes not placed in quotes as a way of acknowledging that these words are used by many people and therefore do have a real effect on the world. The use of these quotation marks in this article is more or less random and one should not attach too much significance to their use or non-use in given sentences.

2. Recent writings of conservative spokesmen such as Walter E. Williams have emphasized this point, which has been repeated in numerous magazine and newspaper articles. Psychologist Arthur Jensen, who continues to publicly assert that on average “black” people are born with less innate biological capacity for “intelligence” than “white” people, has also hinted that “Asians” may be biologically superior (slightly) in “intelligence” to “whites.” Besides the obvious problems of defining
intelligence, and the serious methodological problems in separating heredity from other biological factors and all of that from environment and social relationships, the issue of defining "race" is handled by Jensen and his followers in an especially imprecise, unscientific manner that implies biology but never quantifies it in a credible way.


6There have been many examples of this, especially of immigrant groups used as a source of inexpensive labor. A few examples of this are: Chinese railroad workers in the U.S. in the 1800s and garment workers in New York and California today, Haitians in the Dominican Republic, Mexicans in California, Turks in Germany, Palestinians in several mid-East countries, and blacks in South Africa, who are not immigrants, but who do not have citizen status and are obviously a source of extra profits.


8Nathan Glazer and Patrick Moynihan. *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City.* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1963). Every October, *Forbes* magazine publishes their list of the several hundred wealthiest individuals and families in the U.S. This is a very useful resource; it is clear that Jews do not come anywhere near dominating that list.

Critique

The author of "Asians, Jews, and the Legacy of Midas" presents a provocative comparative analysis of Asians and Jews. Spector utilizes both a cultural and economic basis for understanding the function of Asian stereotyping and applies his analysis to the Jewish situation. While the American context provides the locus of his research, he does present his argument in an international context. Spector illustrates how the categorization of Asians and Jews as the "model" for economic success is dehumanizing as such a perception "drain(s) the life out of human beings and concretizes them into non-human statues." The conclusion of this author's work in dealing with oppression based in stereotype is actually a starting point which scholars should begin addressing. To be sure, the model minority, as applied to Asians and Jews, has generated numerous articles and papers, and yet scholars have failed to develop analyses which reflect an interdisciplinary and historical approach to the reasons for propagating such stereotypes.

While Spector presents both economic, biological, and cultural theories focusing on Asian and Jewish "malleability" in different economic situations internationally, he does not really develop the arguments within an historical context. We do not receive an analysis which illustrates focused scholarship in the field of race/ethnic realities within the human societal context. Much like the neo-conservative scholar, Thomas Sowell, Spector uses historical incidents selectively to prove the cultural impact of stereotyping. Sowell, however, develops a different conclusion concerning Asians and Jews as he lauds their "human capital" and supports the "model minority" belief. And while I agree that such stereotyping is devastating for both Asians and Jews, ethnic studies research must begin to address the sources of such stereotyping and not be entrapped by using the same methods as neo-conservative scholars.

Neo-conservative and liberal scholars alike have tended to collapse the experiences of ethnic and racial groups, addressing their similarities and differences. In some instances, Thomas Sowell and Nathan Glazer, for example, in Ethnic America and Affirmative Discrimination, have subsumed racial groups within the rubric of ethnic and applied their theoretical models to both groups indiscriminantly. The ahistorical approach used is the dehumanizing factor proposed by the author of this article. The history of racial groups at least in the United States is decidedly different from the history of ethnic immigrant groups. The law of 1790 clearly defined who were allowed to become naturalized U.S. citizens. People of color were denied the right of naturalization until the 1950s. Historical and legal factors must be addressed if comparative analyses are attempted. The differences between the Jewish experience and the Asian American experience must be dealt with historically in
order to understand the use and abuse of the "model minority" stereotype.

Another aspect which must be considered in attempting comparative analysis such as presented in this article is to understand the economic realities and the infrastructures used to create and "push" the success stereotype. The stereotype which has a fundamental basis in a neo-conservative ideology tends to focus only on culture, hard work, and individual merit—so-called American principles. While such a cultural force is operant, the U.S. is in the throes of deindustrialization where large corporations are moving out and into third world countries in search of cheap labor. The gap between the "underclass" and the "middle class" widens in the wake of deindustrialization\(^1\) and the "blame" falls not on corporations but the "underclass" because they do not have the right values to be competitive. Here, the stereotype is abused and used to keep poor whites and people of color in line, i.e., if Jewish immigrants and Asians are economically successful, then why aren't other minority groups doing equally as well?\(^2\) It therefore becomes imperative for ethnic studies research to examine within the historical context both the cultural and economic factors under which such stereotypes are created.

Spector in his analysis did not go far enough in developing the impact the "model minority" stereotype has for Asians and Jews. And while only exploratory in nature, the article failed to present a dialectical relationship between the cultural and economic forces behind such stereotypes. Asians and Jews are, perhaps, being used as pawns within a socio/economic structure which empowers corporate capitalists to use stereotypes as a tool to control immigrants and racial minorities. The questions asked and the focus of ethnic studies research must address and examine racial inequality as cultural and economic realities and contextualize such research within an historical framework.

**Notes**

\(^1\)For an examination of the effects of deindustrialization upon the underclass, see William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).


—Barbara Hiura
Critique

In reading Alan Spector's paper, I was reminded of British sociologist Christie Davies' cross-national analysis of ethnic jokes. In it, she argues that majority members of a society stereotype others in order to reduce their own anxiety about social position. Davies found that such jokes tend to fall into either one of two categories. The first and most common type of ethnic joke addresses those groups who live below one's own station in life. By referring to them, one can elevate his/her own status and hence feel a bit more secure. A second type of joke ridicules groups who appear to be especially successful. By showing overachieving groups in a negative light, the average member of society can feel a bit better about his/her own lack of achievement. The "superachievers" are depicted as so inhuman, immoral, work-driven or tight-fisted that their accomplishments are pointless. Spector's paper draws important parallels between the experience of Asians and Jews, two groups most often depicted as "negative successes" in popular stereotypes.

It is the social structural position of Jews and Asians in many societies—as middle minorities—together with their cultural differences from the majority, that makes them subject to stereotypes. In addition to the commonalties of Jews and Asians that Spector mentions, several other similarities come to mind. One is blocked access to higher education.

From the twenties to the 1940s, Ivy League colleges imposed quotas to limit the number of high-achieving Jewish students. Today, Asian students are experiencing some of the same problems in gaining admission to elite public and private universities. This suggests that when the "meritocratic" criteria of a society become a path for minority mobility, they are likely to be revised.

Another problem these groups encounter is limited career options. Historically, Jews and Asians have been excluded from management positions in large corporations. Instead, they have concentrated in self-employment or technical specialties. The channeling of gifted young Asians into limited-interaction technical professions in the U.S. is nearly identical to the herding of "politically suspect" Jews into engineering and medicine in the USSR. The perceived "otherness" of each group makes them ineligible for highly visible and politically salient occupations.

While both Jews and Asians have been victims of the stereotypes of the larger society, many members of these groups have also suffered from the paternalism of co-ethnics. When the prejudice of the larger society lumps persons together in ethnic ghettos, weaker members of such groups are ripe for exploitation. For example, in the 19th century, assimilated Jewish Americans of German origin worked hard to resocialize the swarthy and communistic arrivals from Eastern Europe.
to avoid raising the resentment of Christian Americans. More recently, Soviet and Israeli Jewish immigrants have been chastised by the Jewish right for not living in Israel, by the left for their Republican Party allegiance, and by the faithful for their lack of religiosity.

Similarly, while 19th century Chinese were sometimes exploited by Chinatown labor contractors, recent Asian immigrants experience various forms of co-ethnic hostility as well. Established Asian-Americans who have worked hard to “fit in” are sometimes embarrassed by the foreignness of Southeast Asian refugees. Further, left-leaning Asian-Americans take umbrage at rightist, pro-capitalist immigrants from Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea. Other established Asians hire recent arrivals for starvation wages in sweatshops, factories, and restaurants. In such cases, established Jews and Asians hunger for success and acceptance in the larger society to the extent that they may stereotype and mistreat members of their own ethnic community. This may be one of the cruelest manifestations of the larger society’s prejudice.

In conclusion, Asians and Jews alike are victims of the stereotypes of American society. Further, the weakest members of these minority groups are doubly oppressed—both by Americans and co-ethnics. As Spector claims, the media that circulate stories of immigrant success are partly to blame for the unfortunate images that haunt these groups. However, the author might also consider the larger social structure that sets the context in which stereotypes manifest themselves. A society which worships success, yet simultaneously makes it elusive, can be a driving force behind discrimination and inequality. We may never be able to develop ethnic harmony in a system which fosters social insecurity and pits group against group—requiring each to exploit the other in order to achieve a measure of success.

Notes

1Christie Davies. “Ethnic Jokes, Moral Values and Social Boundaries.” 

—Steve Gold
Pica: Consideration of a Historical and Current Problem with Racial/Ethnic/Cultural Overtones

Ella P. Lacey

Introduction

Pica is an eating disorder that affects an individual who experiences a craving that is satisfied by ingestion of either unusually large amounts of selected food items (e.g., baking soda) or repeated ingestion of nonfood items (e.g., clay, laundry starch). Pica is more than an anomaly of human behavior; it is an eating disorder that carries all the risks that are inherent to impaired nutrition, including death. Pica can be dated to antiquity, yet there is little question that it continues as a current practice. As an eating disorder, pica has implications for persons who are in positions to influence human behavior, those in education and social service as well as those in clinical settings.

Pica poses specific challenges for those professionals whose work encompasses the development and enhancement of problem-solving models related to nutritional deficiencies. The literature, collectively, provides a wealth of information on pica; however, these sources are so fragmented that it is difficult to gain a stable perspective of the knowns and unknowns. There is lack of consistency in defining the behavior, charting the implications, and in identifying both causes and practitioners. This interdisciplinary review presents a framework that suggests that pica is inadequately defined in our standard references, which is in contradiction to the fact that it is a generalizable condition with a substantial body of literature. It is suggested that since pica has most frequently been documented as a problem of those who are culturally, racially, and/or ethnically different from the majority group and from medical care researchers and practitioners, it has received inadequate attention. Understanding pica will require vigorous research and sensitive researchers who consider culture, race, and/or ethnicity as
interacting variables rather than as end-stage ones.

**Background, Definitions and Labeling of Pica**

In the interest of health and well-being our society has, from time to time, focused on dietary guidelines and attainment of proper dietary patterns, with occasional attention given to eating attitudes, eating environment, and cultural meaning of food. Recent studies have emphasized the effect of food on human behavior. There has been miniscule attention given to cause and effect related to ingestion of nonfood substances. Mainly, this topic has been treated as aberrant behavior. Concurrent with the attention given to food and nonfood substances has been a concern about children’s ingestion of paint chips and/or peelings and their subsequent lead poisoning. However, although often labeled as pica, it has not generally been associated with other forms of pica and considered broadly. Instead, the focus of lead poison prevention has been on environmental manipulation related to children’s developmental stages, the age of the housing, or the nature of the paint. Concern has been sparse for considering pica as a spectrum of behaviors.

Pica definitions as presented in standard references are indicative of a bias that limits broad understanding. Such definitions describe pica mainly as a “perversion of appetite” and/or as “the ingestion of nonfood substances” by “pregnant women.” Classic examples of definitions given in medical dictionaries are:

A perversion of appetite with craving for substance not fit for food, as the practice by some women in pregnancy of ingesting starch, clay, ashes, or plaster. Condition seen in pregnancy, chlorosis, hysteria, helminthiasis, and in certain psychoses.

A depraved or perverted appetite. A hunger for substances not fit for food.

The impact of having the behavior of pica defined as a perversion, the substances as nonedible, and the affected population as pregnant women has probably limited the type of consideration given to the problem. With such limited definitions, researchers may reasonably be expected to be unconcerned about prevalence of the behavior among normal populations; educators may understandably find it unnecessary to educate the public to “not eat the inedible”; nutritionists conceivably may not be concerned with the impact of such substances on the dietary patterns of women and children; clinicians, in this schema, may not be likely to incorporate data from findings on perversions and nonedibles into their interactions with “normal” clients and patients. Using any one of the dictionary definitions as a point of reference, a given professional might reasonably conclude that no action is necessary. However, if these same professionals were to view data from a range of sources they would find that individuals ingest various substances on a regular basis over varying periods of time and that all practitioners are not pregnant women. A more objective explanation is suggested by a hematologist who has
stated that pica "...is the compulsive eating of something, usually a single item of food, or ice, or dirt, something within easy reach of the victim."\(^6\)

The literature contains six terms that have been commonly used in describing various types of pica: amylophagia, cautopyreophagia, geophagia, lithophagia, pagophagia, and tricophagia. Plumbophagia, a seventh type of pica that can be equated with a particular substance, although frequently reported, is not consistently labeled. An eighth form of labeled pica, although not commonly so, coprophagia, is limited in research focus to practicers who are institutionalized with mental impairments. Pagophagia (ice eating) should be accorded special attention because it presents a paradox; it is perhaps the most frequently experienced, yet it is the most "normal" of the labeled substances of pica. Further, its very nature as a socially accepted item of ingestion makes it the most difficult for data gathering. Interestingly, plumbophagia (the eating of lead-based paint peelings or chips) has had the least consistent labeling; it is sometimes not named; at other times, it is labeled pingophagia. Plumbophagia, along with geophagia (clay or earth eating) and amylophagia (laundry starch eating) comprise the most frequently cited topics concerning pica. Each is at various times used as a synonym for pica. Cautopyreophagia (burnt match eating), tricophagia (hair eating), and lithophagia (stone or gravel eating) are sporadically acknowledged in the literature. Other nonfood types of pica have been reported, but have not been labeled. Several food and food-related items which are ingested in disproportionate quantities have also been reported; however, they are also not labeled as specific types of pica.

Substances and Findings in Related Literature

In addition to the labeling of various types of pica, the related literature provide data that leads one to surmise that it is meaningless to continue to refer to the substances as inedible. Further, as these data indicate that reasonably large percentages of persons engage in the activity, it seems necessary to consider the behavior other than a perversion. Such data are available only from a review of a wide variety of sources over a long period of time. Substances identified as objects of pica in the broad range of thirty-five nonfood items range alphabetically from ashes and balloons to toilet tissue and twigs. The sixteen food-related items range alphabetically from baking soda and carrots to potato chips and tomato seeds.

The review for this article is limited to the cultural, racial and ethnic implications found in a variety of sources including journals with clinical focus in gastroenterology, hematology, internal medicine, nursing, nutrition, obstetrics-gynecology, and radiology, as well as journals in public health and science.\(^7\) While some of these fields have presented periodic summaries of the literature on pica, most have concentrated on selected substances or findings from a selected
discipline. Few\textsuperscript{8} have challenged the standard established definitions of pica or called for more systematic consideration of pica as an eating disorder.

The literature generally offers a collection of suggestions of causation for pica. Lackey, a nutritionist, has labeled six of the predominant suggestions as theories of causation. The causes and rationale compiled by Lackey are:

\textit{Psychological Phenomena} - Response to a need with no physiological basis. Oral fixation and attention seeking are behaviors of note as causative; \textit{Cultural Basis} - Women pass the habit on to their children; roles as gardeners and potters caused them to sample clay. A related or subset of this theory—West Africans began to eat clay to avoid slave trade—passed on to their descendants; \textit{Sensory Drive} - Substitutes are used for relief of hunger pangs and nauseous sensations; \textit{Nutritional Needs} - Cravings caused by instinctive searching for deficient essential nutrients; \textit{Microbiological Medium} - Substance produces pH unfavorable for growth of disease producing microorganisms or absorbs gastric juices and quiets spasms of worm infestation; \textit{Physiological Reasons} - Dry substances offset increased salivation of pregnancy. Satisfies altered tastes.\textsuperscript{9}

A problem with the “theories of causation” suggested by Lackey is that each “theory” attempts to be all-encompassing, with little consideration of multiple or interactive causes. While neither race nor ethnic background is explicitly stated as a theory, both are implicit to several of the theories. For example, the cause attributed to cultural basis suggests that West Africans, a racial, ethnic and cultural sub-group, willfully ate clay to make themselves “sick” and, thus, unfit for slave trade. According to this theory, they willfully passed the habit to their descendants. This rationale would imply that this group of people were in control of their actions and were relying on nonmedical motivation for maintenance of the behavior. Whenever this rationale was posited, medical practitioners saw no need to intervene; the attributed cause suggested that either the victim or “significant others” in the environment (both usually perceived as belonging to nonmutually exclusive groups of women, children and black persons) were blamed for the behavior, as in psychological phenomena as cause, or, as in the remaining cases, the cause is presented as a solution to a bigger problem. One can only speculate about the influences that have allowed such rationales to persist. However, the related literature provides several examples to illustrate references to racial, ethnic, and cultural considerations.\textsuperscript{10} Another manner of indirect reference to race, ethnicity or culture can be drawn from findings and conclusions such as those of Chatterjee and Gettman\textsuperscript{11} who attributed paint chip eating to the “permissive socialization of oral behavior” among low income children. Further, as these researchers studied 136 children who were diagnosed by Cleveland hospitals as lead poisoned, they, without discussion of proportionality among groups, concluded that the problem of pica was more pronounced among black children (117) than among white ones (19).
Vermeer and Fraté\textsuperscript{12} conducted a survey of 500 households in a rural Mississippi county of black persons. They found 28 percent prevalence of geophagia among 142 pregnant and postpartum women. The researchers concluded that such practices were common customs stemming from tradition and attitudes. They found no discernable nutritional need to account for the practice. Keith, Evenhouse and Webster\textsuperscript{13} studied starch eating among 987 women of lower socio-economic level at Cook County Hospital. They found statistical significance related to higher incidence of geophagia among black women than among white ones.

Key, Horger, and Miller, in 1982,\textsuperscript{14} reported what they considered to be the first case of maternal death from a complication of geophagia; a 31-year-old black woman who was transferred from a rural hospital to the obstetric service at Medical University of South Carolina. The patient was experiencing weakness, pain, nausea, vomiting, fever and rigors; she died within ten minutes of admission. The clinicians involved in this case offered an assessment that has opposite implications to those of Vermeer and Fraté;\textsuperscript{15} Key, Horger, and Miller concluded that geophagia is not an innocuous symptom or habit and must be handled aggressively. Their opinions also included: geophagia is worldwide, although more common in tropical areas; geophagia is predominant in the rural South and among blacks; and although geophagia is a widespread habit in the United States, it is decreasing due to education, nutrition, and "cultural alteration," which this researcher assumes to mean the assimilation of black and rural southern people into "white and northern cultural styles."

In an overview article, Lackey\textsuperscript{16} reports that a Georgia study found 55 percent prevalence of clay eating among pregnant women; that a Harlem study found 18 percent prevalence for starch eating among pregnant black women; and that a California study of migrant workers found 35 percent prevalence of reported pica among Mexican women and a 19 percent knowledge rate among the white migrant workers. These reports are of small nonrandom samples with racial/ethnic/cultural differences inferred but not studied. Unrelated, but in fairly close sequence to Lackey’s report, the \textit{New England Journal of Medicine} carried, first, a case report and then a full article that presented pica as a health problem, the latter of which had ethnic/racial connotations related to the practitioners.\textsuperscript{17}

Most of the studies cited above tended to treat pica as a problem of contemporary origin. This is in spite of many previous studies, especially as summarized in definitive ethnographic works of Laufer in 1930 and Anell and Lagercrantz in 1958.\textsuperscript{18} These authors reported many instances of sickness and death; of compulsive eating that was so pervasive that others found it necessary to contain it, even to the extent of shackles; and of laws having been enacted to contain the behavior, especially in the case of geophagia. Retrospectively, it is quite likely that emphasis on
specific substances in the literature may have made the data obscure for contemporary researchers. Racial/ethnic/cultural overtones are clear in these historical references; however, the contemporary works are more subtle in their inferences and bias can only be inferred from the presence of limited studies and subsequent disregard of pica as a serious health threat or as a significant eating disorder.

Conclusions from the present study are:

1. Standard references are not objective in their presentation of definitions of pica: these sources contain terms such as “perverted” and “bizarre” which are among those likely to bias the reader about the practitioner of the behavior as well as the cause of the behavior.
2. Pica is a current problem with a rich historical context in a variety of disciplines.
3. The likelihood of forms of pica having been labeled bear no resemblance to frequency of the problem. For example, there is no evidence in the literature to suggest that lithophagia, a labeled form of pica, occurs any more frequently than does baking soda pica, an unlabeled form of pica.
4. Causation mechanisms for pica have been classified as theories; supportive data are lacking for such a classification. The cultural basis “theory” projects cultural bias.
5. Articles published, even in professional studies, lack historical perspective on deleterious effects of pica and, at the same time, authors of these articles do not demonstrate racial, ethnic, or cultural sensitivity.
6. Research studies of pica knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in normal populations are lacking, but needed.
7. There are many indications that pica as a health problem is and has been the object of errant and incomplete information. Vigorous effort should be made to integrate appropriate information about pica at various educational levels and to develop strategies for incorporating the study of pica into a variety of disciplines and fields of study, including, but not limited to ethnic/racial and women’s studies at the college and university level.

It is clear that rigorous research and definitive education are needed on this health problem; however, researchers and educators should be willing to recognize that neither race, ethnicity, nor culture are generally suitable as mechanisms of causation, but may be more effectively used to generate hypotheses. More specifically, race nor ethnicity nor culture can be considered more than an association or an intervening variable related to pica; neither has been substantiated as an independent causative mechanism for pica.
Notes

5Stedman’s Medical Dictionary. (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1982).
7A more extensive literature review has been conducted by the author of this paper and is under publication review by Public Health Reports.
8Crosby, 341-2.
12Vermeer and Frate, 2129-2135.
14Key, Horger, and Miller, 525-526.
15Vermeer and Frate, 2129-2135.
8, No. 11 (November, 1983).
18 Laufer, Anell and Lagercrantz.
Critique

Pica, an eating disorder that is very prevalent among blacks, particularly southern, rural, pregnant women, is a serious problem that has received inadequate attention among researchers. Lacey’s analysis of the importance of this disorder is made clear in her article.

Pica generally refers to the ingestion of nonfood substances. Lacey points out that there has been little attention given to the causes and effects related to the ingestion of nonfood substances. The lack of copious studies in this area may be attributed to several factors, the most important being that pica is perceived as a problem indigenous to the black community and pregnant women. As a result, the problem has not been embraced by researchers. But, as Lacey suggests, “if professionals were to view data from a range of sources, they would find that individuals ingest various substances on a regular basis over varying periods of time and that all practitioners are not pregnant women.”

Stereotypically, pregnant women crave weird, strange, or different types of food at inopportune times. What is more difficult to understand is that some black pregnant women have been said to crave nonfood items such as clay or dirt. Why? Lacey states in her article, that the theory of cultural basis, as put forth by Lackey, suggests that geophagia is culturally passed from generation to generation. Lacey’s statement, “West Africans ate clay to make themselves (sick) and thus, unfit for slave trade,” implies a very important message; blacks would have chosen to be sick rather than to be slaves! On the other hand, because blacks chose to willfully eat clay/dirt, medical practitioners saw no need to intervene, and therefore blamed blacks for this disorder.

Today, geophagia (clay/dirt eating) is still a serious problem among black women. And it is associated with sickness and death. Why then, do so many engage in its consumption? Lacey maintains that “it (geophagia or clay/dirt eating) is decreasing due to education, nutrition,” and what she describes as “cultural alteration,” which means the assimilation of black and rural southern people into “white and northern cultural styles.”

Another disorder of concern is pagophagia, or ice eating, which is not all that unusual and should not be labeled as pica. Lacey points this out as being a paradox, “it is perhaps the most frequently experienced, yet it is the most ‘normal’ of the labeled substances of pica.” In agreement with Lacey, pagophagia is very common and probably not harmful, since water is so necessary for the maintenance of the human body. None the less, one might tend to drink too much water at a particular time and may feel a little discomfort.

Lacey contends that most of the studies done on pica tended to treat it as a contemporary problem. Thus, pica is not treated as a serious problem or as a significant eating disorder. However, as Lacey suggests,
"understanding pica will require vigorous research and sensitive researchers who consider culture, race, and/or ethnicity as intervening variables rather than as end-stage ones."

Phyllis Gray-Ray
The Merging of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine in China: Old Ideas Cross-Culturally Communicated Through New Perspectives

James A. Schnell

The People's Republic of China is engaged in reforms which involve development of its economic, cultural, educational, and political processes. The need for reform has been realized as China has fallen behind the development of the western world in many areas. China closed its doors to the outside world in 1949, and it experienced limited interaction with the outside world until reform began in 1979.

The cultural revolution (1966-1976) was especially hard on development in China. During this period political upheaval discouraged, and in some cases banned, technological developments. Since 1979 China has focused considerable emphasis on developing itself and promoting more interaction with the western world.

One of the many areas which has been modernized is medicine. The medical treatment in China is based on the practices of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Traditional Chinese Medicine has evolved during China's long history which dates back over 700,000 years. The effectiveness of TCM has not been questioned, but Chinese physicians have sought to better understand TCM by seeking interaction with western physicians. The hoped for result is that both Chinese and western medical practices will be enhanced through cross-cultural collaboration.

In September 1981, the Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine was founded by the All-China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The journal was the first English periodical of Traditional Chinese Medicine published in China.

In the first issue Cui Yueli, President of the All-China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine, states "Traditional Chinese Medicine is not a treasure belonging to the Chinese people alone, but it is an integral part of world civilization and a common benefit for all mankind . . . [All Chinese-Western collaboration has] shown more satisfactory results
than could have been expected with either western or traditional Chinese medicine alone.”

Traditional Chinese Medicine has proven to be effective within the Chinese culture and some practices have been exported to western nations. One such example is acupuncture. Although Chinese practitioners are confident in their methods, and they have little problem explaining “how” the procedures are to be performed, they have expressed difficulty explaining “why” the procedures are effective.

Interaction with western physicians provides a climate whereby western physicians can learn more about “how” and “why” the procedures are effective. Thus, through the merging of TCM and western medicine, old ideas are being cross-culturally communicated through new perspectives. This paper will discuss how considerations affecting the aforementioned merging have evolved since the open-door reforms were initiated by The People’s Republic of China in 1979.

Dr. Yue Meizhong, Vice-President of the Chinese Medical Association, offered the following poem in the first issue of the Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

When prejudice is cast away
The mind becomes tranquil,
Fair comments may then be appreciated.
More beautifully will flowers bloom
After the trees receive transplantations.
Knowledge will be widened
With the exchange of academic thoughts.
Wisdom belonging to mankind
Cannot be divided according to nations.
One cannot be a good physician
Without ceaselessly absorbing new things.
Our art through thousands of years
Is highly valued by others,
And theirs by us.
Heavy are our responsibilities
To inherit and develop

Interaction between Chinese physicians and western physicians has increased significantly since the opening of China. Dr. Xie Zhufan, head of Traditional Chinese Medicine at Beijing Medical College, lectured and did research on the integration of TCM and western medical systems during a six month period in 1981. This is recognized as one of the seeds of the many exchanges which have occurred since.

A symposium sponsored by France’s International Health Centre, held in April, 1987, exemplifies the many medical exchanges which have occurred during the 1980s. A Chinese delegation met with government officials from ten western European nations during the three-day symposium. “They had an in-depth exchange of views on Western and Chinese traditional medicine, their different viewpoints and methods, and their past development and present state. They also explored fresh channels for greater cooperation in the field.”

Traditional Chinese Medicine is a legacy composed of centuries of
experiences by the Chinese in dealing with disease. These experiences have evolved into a unique system of theories and beliefs. A discussion of medical exchange between China and the west must consider fundamental ideas of TCM which are foreign to western medicine. The Yin and Yang and the five elements are essential to such ideas.

Yin and Yang holds that everything in the universe is composed of two opposite aspects which are constantly interdependent and in conflict. Water and fire symbolize basic properties of Yin and Yang. “That is to say, the basic properties of Yin simulate those of water, including coldness, downward direction, dimness, etc., while the basic properties of Yang are like those of fire, including heat, upward direction, brightness, etc.”

The theory of the five elements maintains that wood, fire, earth, metal and water are the basic materials which comprise the physical world. A relationship of interdependence and interrestraint exists among these elements. A fundamental premise of Traditional Chinese Medicine is to "classify natural phenomena, tissues and organs of the human body and human emotions, into different categories and to interpret the relationship between human physiology and pathology and the natural environment with the law of the interpromoting, interacting, overacting, and counteracting of the five elements." This premise is central to their medical practice.

The merging of TCM with western medicine has been done effectively in a variety of areas.

They have used combined Chinese and western medical means to treat acute abdomens, bone fractures, arthritis, soft tissue trauma, coronary heart disease. . . . All have shown more satisfactory results than could have been expected with either western or traditional Chinese medicine alone. At the same time a deeper insight has been gained into the nature of certain diseases and the mechanisms for recovery.

The practice of acupuncture, the 3,000 year old Chinese practice of using needles to treat a wide range of illnesses, has received much attention from western physicians in the past decade. Acupuncture is now taught in the west. The Hwa To Acupuncture Centre, in the Netherlands, was the first school in the west to grant full Chinese diplomas for acupuncture study. “The object of the whole exercise is to come to a synthesis of western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine in the hope it benefits patients,” says Henk Termeulen, director of the Centre.

The combining of Traditional Chinese Medicine and western medicine has also been used for patients with orthopaedic problems. Wang Congshu, president of Baoding Orthopaedics Rehabilitation Hospital, cures orthopaedic illnesses “by using qigong—or Chinese traditional breathing exercises—combined with other Chinese traditional and western methods.” Benefits of combining approaches have also been realized in the radiation treatment of cancer and the removal of gallstones.
Concern with the connection between mental well being and physical well being has received increased emphasis in the U.S. in the past twenty years. A similar emphasis has occurred in China. The Sino-Japan Friendship Hospital, founded in 1984, bases its approaches on western TCM. Cheng Lirong, a nurse at the hospital, reports “one characteristic of nursing is ‘emotion nursing,’ similar to psychological nursing in the west.”12 It is believed seven emotional factors (joy, anger, melancholy, brooding, sorrow, fear, and shock) can cause disease.

The merging of TCM with western medicine has produced many benefits, but there have been problems which have hindered the process. “Differences in historical backgrounds and language barriers still place some limits on international academic exchange concerning traditional Chinese medicine and integrated Chinese and western medicine. This is particularly so in the west, where many medical workers are unfamiliar with traditional Chinese medicine.”13

Cultural norms have also hindered the exchange of medical practices. Blood transfusions have become more common in China “but it is still difficult to find enough donors because of a traditional Chinese fear of losing blood” reports Xing Lixiang, a senior official of the Beijing Blood Centre.14

Yu Fangquing, director of the maternity ward at Beijing Hospital for Gynaecology and Obstetrics, points out many women are reluctant to use new practices based on scientific approaches. “They stick to their old-fashioned teachings of their mothers or in-laws and make a list of taboos after delivery—abstaining from taking a bath, cleaning their teeth, eating fruits and getting out of bed within one month of delivery. Babies are completely bound up for one month.”15

Another consideration which directly contrasts with practices in the west deals with wages for physicians and health care staff. Chinese physicians and health care staff make far less money than other professions. “A doctor in Beijing’s Chaoyang Hospital has to see up to 60 patients a day, but gets a monthly wage of less than 80 yuan ($21 U.S.).”16 This amount is less than the wage of teachers in China, which is another low paying occupation. Thus, one can safely assume the health care field is valued differently than it is in the United States where medical doctors make much more money proportionate to their counterparts in China.

The merging of TCM with western medicine in China exemplifies a situation where old ideas are cross-culturally communicated through new perspectives. That is, Chinese medical approaches are explained through western perspectives. Though there are hindrances within this process, the benefits have been viewed as being well worth the costs of the obstacles which have been encountered. The benefits of such interaction, and understanding some of the problems which have arisen, can lead to a better understanding of a process which can improve health care practices around the world.
Notes


7 Yueli, C., v.


13 Yueli, C., v.


From the Editor . . .

After the 1988 Conference, several members expressed an interest in an issue of *Explorations in Ethnic Studies* which would focus on ethnicity and health. We were fortunate to receive a number of submissions in this area, and this issue includes an article by Ella P. Lacey which reports on pica and the ethnic and cultural implications of the use of pica as well as the limited reporting of that use. NAES member Jim Schnell wrote us after he returned from China and sent along the essay on Chinese medicine. Jim's essay is a personal response to recent information about an ancient tradition and might prompt further study about this collaborative view of medicine. We believed that his insights would be of interest to our readers. Another essay on medicine will be published in the July issue. The other two contributions to this issue examine issues of concern to those interested particularly in Jewish studies. The definition of ethnicity has been the focus of scholars such as Werner Sollars in *Beyond Ethnicity* and Ronald Takaki in *From These Shores*. The questions about Jewish studies examined by Howard Adelman could as easily be asked of black, American Indian, Asian, or Chicano studies. Alan Spector provides a comparative study of two groups, both of which have been stereotyped in ways which appear to be positive but ultimately result in negative responses from others. Although these essays are quite diverse in content, the issues raised are all appropriate to a journal which seeks to explore the issues of ethnicity in all their dimensions. Some writers, such as Adelman, question the academy and its curriculum while Spector deals with the average person's response to ethnic differences. Others, such as Lacey and Schnell, recognize the implications of ethnicity in the medical profession and in both the national and international communities. As always, the critiques force readers to look beyond the immediate research to the possibilities for further study.

—Gretchen M. Bataille
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