The Politics of Normalization: Israel Studies in the Academy

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

Miriam Shenkar, M.A.
Graduate Program in Education: Educational Policy and Leadership

The Ohio State University
2010

Dissertation Committee:
Robert F. Lawson, Advisor
Matt Goldish
Douglas Macbeth
Copyright by
Miriam Shenkar
2010
Abstract

This study will examine the emergence of Israel studies at the university level. Historical precedents for departments of Hebrew language instruction, Jewish studies centers and area studies will be examined to determine where Israel studies chair holders are emerging.

After defining Israel studies, a qualitative methodological approach will be used to evaluate the disciplinary focus of this emerging area. Curriculum available from and degree granting capabilities of various programs will be examined. In addition surveys taken of Israel studies scholars will provide their assessments of the development of the subject. Four case studies will highlight Israel studies as it is emerging in two public (land grant institutions) versus two private universities.

An emphasis will be placed on why Israel studies might be located outside Middle Eastern studies. Questions regarding the placing of Israel studies within Jewish studies or Near Eastern Languages and Culture departments will be addressed. The placing of Israel studies chairs and centers involves questions of national and global identity. How these identities are conceptualized by scholars in the field, as well as how they are reflected in the space found for Israel studies scholars are the motivating factors for the case studies.

Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) have examined the emergence of Jewish studies in American universities, with a focus on the “normalization” process in terms of academic
mainstreaming. How and if it is possible to extend the process of “normalization” to Israel studies will be addressed. In addition, the dilemma of what Gerald Graff (1993) has described as “teaching the conflicts” within the context of Israel studies will be examined. In the four case studies, two public versus two private institutions, with varying institutional histories in terms of the “uses of knowledge” will highlight this dilemma.
Dedication

This is dedicated to my family- Zahava and Meier Stessel, Keshet and Steven, Joshua and Rakefet. Especially Oded -Who didn’t let me give in.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not be written without the guidance of my advisor, Robert F. Lawson and the support of Matt Goldish, the Director of the Melton Center for Jewish Studies, and Douglas Macbeth. I am grateful to the Melton Center for Jewish Studies for the fellowship which assisted this research. I would also like to thank the professors at the Near Eastern Languages and Culture Department of The Ohio State University for the introduction of Hebrew 241.
Vita

1980…………………………B.A. Economics, Barnard College

1984…………………………Graduate Certificate in Journalism, Tel-Aviv University

1996…………………………M.A. Asian Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa

2000 to 2009……………… Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Languages, The Ohio State University

Publications


Field of Study

Major Field: Education: Educational Policy and Leadership, Comparative Education.
## Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................ii
Dedication.....................................................................................................................................iv
Acknowledgements......................................................................................................................v
Vita..............................................................................................................................................vi
List of Tables..................................................................................................................................viii
Chapter 1: What is Israel Studies?.................................................................................................1
Chapter 2: Precedents for Israel Studies in the Academy..............................................................31
Chapter 3: Describing an Emerging Field......................................................................................60
Chapter 4: The First Two Case Studies..........................................................................................82
Chapter 5: Normalizing Israel Studies at Columbia and NYU......................................................125
Chapter 6: Conclusion & Implications-Structural Analysis of an Intellectual History...162
References......................................................................................................................................172
Appendix A: IRB Approved Survey of Israel Studies Chairs.......................................................186
List of Tables

Table 1. Case Studies of Israel Studies Chair Holders........................................188
Chapter 1: What is Israel Studies?

One definition of Israel studies is the study of modern Israel and the Zionist movement and the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine. This definition by the Association for Israel studies (AIS) points to the complexity of a lack of set borders and clear physical boundaries.\(^1\) This definition is similar to the 1917 Balfour Declaration. That declaration was widely seen as the culmination of early political Zionist goals. These included the achievement of a statement by the British government of support for a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. However, this statement lacked the designation of the borders of that homeland. Similarly, physical boundaries are also left out of the AIS definition. As will be examined, how and where Jewish settlement progressed in terms of acceptance by their neighbors remains an important theme in Israel studies.\(^2\)

The AIS definition combines the Zionist movement and the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine with the study of modern Israel. This combination highlights the intersection between Israel studies and Jewish studies. Particularly in terms of a focus on Jewish communal dynamics, the AIS definition incorporates the Zionist movement which had a strong Diaspora based contingent as well as a Biblical thematic element. The AIS definition does not leave Israel studies in the Middle East, with a focus on the

---

\(^1\) This definition appears on the website of AIS, Spring 2008. The Association for Israel studies was founded in 1985. Membership is composed of scholars from all disciplines in the social sciences as well as many in the humanities, according to the website.

geographic and natural resources, neighboring relationships and economic ties. By focusing on the Jewish community and Zionist ideology in the AIS definition an emphasis is placed on Jewish historical, social and cultural forces. This definition mirrors a reality in which physical borders have been contested. The lack of acceptance of Israel by its neighbors has made it difficult to research it as just another part of the Middle East. However, analyzing the relationships between Israel and their neighbors, in terms of decisions made to keep or relinquish land is a major disciplinary focus of the field. This disciplinary focus will be highlighted in the four case studies.

Israel studies – does the normalization process reflect an ideological bias?

One aspect of Israel studies reflected in where space is found for it is the politicization of the academy. David Sidorsky (1995) has examined politicization in the university as particularly problematic in departments of modern Middle Eastern history regarding the history of Zionism and the Jewish state.

One example of this politicization is the new association for the study of the Middle East (ASMEA) formed in 2008 as an alternative to the veteran Middle East Studies Association (MESA). In MESA taking an anti-Israeli stand had become a litmus test of political correctness. Where one stood regarding Israel and the Palestinians had become more important that the actual content of one’s academic work.

The politicization of Middle East studies has included a failure to incorporate Israel-related content in the

---


field without a strong anti-Zionist bias. As Derek Penslar (1998) has pointed out, although differences of opinion are found everywhere in the university, in the Israeli context such differences are particularly striking as they created existential ramifications. These existential arguments attacked the very legitimacy of the state. This kind of existential criticism which totally condemns one partner of a debate is not common to other university based area studies programs.

Such questions regarding legitimacy and consensus are important to the placing of Israel studies. Where Israel studies courses and chair holders are placed echo this sense of legitimacy. Whether they are placed within Middle East studies or within Jewish studies is another indication. In addition, the choice of chair holders, as well as if they become part of a degree granting program or function as a “one-person” or “one-course” subject is examined within this context.

Ginsburg et al. (1995), point to the ways in which professional and intellectual activities are intertwined with the political. This view of the political takes it away from the limitations of governments and voting and puts it into all aspects of the human experience, including the university setting. Where space is or is not being found for

---


6 The term post-Zionist is traced to a newspaper article by Yair Sheleg as cited by Frilling, T. (2003). An answer to a post-Zionist colleague and translated from the Hebrew as The new historians and the failure of rescue operations during the Holocaust. Israel Studies, 8, 3, 25-64.

Israel studies reflects a political bias. Some of the ways in which Middle East area studies has been politicized has been noted by Martin Kramer (2001).\(^8\)

Israel studies can be compared to Jewish studies, area studies and African American studies in terms of the process of normalization. African American or black studies for example has also been described as a deeply politicized area in which curriculum had to take on academic legitimacy, as noted in the work by Fabio Rojas (2007). However, there are major differences in the ways in which Israel studies and other area or ethnic studies have sought and gained such academic legitimacy. For example, a focus on academic support for students has been part of the platform for African American studies but not for Israel studies. The establishment of degree-granting programs is considered an indicator of successful integration into the university structure. Fabio Rojas (2007) has noted that about 48% of research universities have degree-granting programs in African American studies. However, a degree granting program in Israel studies was only recently established (2006) at American University and is not common.\(^9\)

For the most part, interdisciplinary chair holders have been appointed for Israel studies rather than incorporate the subject matter into degree programs. Israel studies chair holders share features common to African American studies in terms of the process of creating legitimacy for their field. This process of normalization includes the struggle of such chair holders to create a forum for their work. In addition, they must formulate academic programs in topics that are not standard to the discipline and cut across fields. Fabio Rojas (2007) noted that while African American studies had gained legitimacy

---


when administrators used it as a tool for attracting minority students and managing racial tensions on campus, faculty in the field suffered from conflicting demands. These included conducting research while providing that academic support. Israel studies chair holders are experiencing similar demands in terms of the need for community outreach and visibility, particularly as funding has come from private donors.

Howard Wachtel (2006) the first director of Israel studies at American University has outlined various components of a successful Israel studies program. He has stressed such factors as support for faculty research, a tenured (interdisciplinary) chair position, visiting scholars, library facilities, conference opportunities and post-doctoral stipends as important features in gaining academic recognition. Wachtel had been approached by a donor who had earmarked the creation of Israel studies as a priority. Indeed, as will be examined, the donor based community aspect of Israel studies programs has been a prominent factor in their establishment. However, unlike African American studies Israel studies has not reflected a push towards the academic support of Jewish students across the board. Rather, donors have expressed to the need for a community resource to explain the Middle East conflict both to students and faculty. Israel studies chair holders have noted that this type of service takes a lot of time that is not factored into other academic committees. In addition as will be examined in the case studies, chair holders clearly see their position as an independent scholar rather than an advocate for Israel.

---

11 He presented this in a paper at a session on Teaching about Israel at the AIS conference in Banff, 2006.
12 The questionnaire of Israel studies chair holders includes this aspect. Nadav Shelef, the Israel studies chair holder at the University of Wisconsin, noted the difficulties involved. As he is yet untenured, it is particularly challenging to speak to the wider community as the Israel studies chair holder.
The creation of an education space in an era of borderless education

For an analysis of the spatial dimension of Israel studies in terms of where they are being located within the university, the study will rely on what has been described by Martin Lawn (2002) as the creation of an education space, in an era of borderless education. While Lawn refers to ways in which European identity is constructed in a post-modern era, one can use this metaphor for the conceptualization of Israel studies. This metaphor can be used to point to problems involved in teaching the history of Zionism, which has cut across time and space. The Zionist movement held their elections for many years outside Palestine. Zionism, whether it is perceived as having begun as a political, cultural or religious movement or combination of the three, gained followers first in exile and has continued to be influenced by the actions and ideas of those not living in the country. Although Zionism never incorporated consistent and finalized borders some type of identity formation was still created through an ideologically based borderless education space.13

The definition of Israel studies by the AIS as the Zionist movement and the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine is a continuation of this creation of space with actual borders never mentioned. The latest post-Zionist continues to incorporate such arguments as that of the 1897 Democratic Zionist Faction which called for a cultural rather than political agenda. This faction called for the establishment of a Jewish

University as a priority over territorial acquisition at the Basel held First Zionist Congress.\textsuperscript{14}

The conceptualization of an education space for Israel studies is connected to shifting identities. An Israel studies scholar and director of the program at Maryland University, Eric Zakim (2006) has focused on the formation of Zionist identity at the turn of the twentieth century. He is interested in how identity and landscape were intertwined. He questions what came first, the actual physical connection to the land as expressed in cultural and literary output, or the idealization of agricultural labor as a metaphor of Zionist and Israeli identity.\textsuperscript{15} Similar work on the political narratives of maps by Collins-Kreiner, Mansfield & Kliot (2006) has looked at the ways in which the construction of maps of Israel functioned as symbolic units. Each map depicted an alternative “border creating reality” which differed according to where and by whom they were produced.\textsuperscript{16} Shifting views of this landscape plays a key role in the intellectual development of Israel studies chair holders. In the case studies, the topic of Jewish settlement in particular is imbued with these shifting narratives.

Shifting Zionist interpretations and narratives are important from the perspective of the identity creation. As Anthony Giddens (1991) noted the ability to keep a particular narrative going on is part of the way in which a stable identity is created.\textsuperscript{17} How cultural, political and national identities change in Israel studies is particularly evident in the fierce


academic battles still raging over who did what in the 1948 War of Independence.\textsuperscript{18} Tuvia Friling (2003) has written of such debates as an expression of the splintered national identity.\textsuperscript{19} The chair holders are examined in terms of interpretations of that identity. In a word search of course syllabi with Israel content posted on the web site of AIS the word identity appeared many times including in the title of the course.\textsuperscript{20}

**Margaret Mead and how to categorize Israeli identity**

Picturing the academic study of Israel in terms of identities, politics and disciplinary focus is one of the conceptual aims of this study. Such questions arose prior to the establishment of the state. As early as 1957, Margaret Mead, in a speech given in New York after returning from a visit to Israel, was asked to report on Jews and Israel and problems of identity. Mead described the problem of how to define Israeli identity in terms of national and religious identities as “virtually a post- World War II problem.”\textsuperscript{21} She explained that much media attention had been focused on what national identity in Israel meant. Questions of Israeli identity were tied in with continuity of a Jewish

\textsuperscript{18} As noted in the controversy surrounding a recent MA thesis submitted to the University of Haifa which related alleged atrocities committed against the Palestinian population by the Alexandroni brigade in the War of Independence. An Israeli journalist published the content of the MA thesis and the Arab members of the Knesset called for a judicial investigation, at which point veterans of the brigade still living sued the author of the thesis for libel, the results of which are discussed in an article by the Israeli historian, Gelber, Y. (2003). The status of Zionist and Israeli history in Israeli universities. In A. Shapira & D. Penslar (Eds.), *Israeli historical revisionism from left to right* (pp.121-154). London: Frank Cass.

\textsuperscript{19} Friling, T. (2003). David Ben-Gurion and the Holocaust- the roots and growth of a negative stereotype. In T. Friling (Ed.), *An Answer to a post-Zionist colleague* (pp.418-456). Tel-Aviv in Hebrew, this has been translated as an article entitled “The new historians and the failure of rescue operations during the Holocaust.” *Israel studies*, 8, 3, 25-64.

\textsuperscript{20} For example, the word identity was mentioned 30 times including in the title of a syllabus for a course at the University of Toronto, taught by Emanuel Adler. This analysis was conducted by the author based on syllabi posted in 2006.

identity which had been previously preserved not only without clearly defined borders but without any physical homeland.

In the early post-war period, Mead had already pointed to one of the major problems involved in finding space for Israel studies. Michael Meyer (2000) has noted that there was some resistance towards situating Israel studies within Jewish history, as the history of the state of Israel had been conceptualized as the first chapter of a national or Zionist saga, differing in existential ways from previous chapters of Jewish history.22

Rachel Elbonim-Dror (2001) has noted that even within the Israeli education system, many struggles have revolved around Israeli cultural and national identity. For example, educators wanted to create the image of the Zionist as a new Jew. Rather than teaching Hebrew for the purpose of reading the Bible, an emphasis was placed on Hebrew as a basis for secular literature, albeit related to Biblical and agricultural motifs. Yet, many of the older generation who had been educated in religious based institutions outside the country expressed their disappointment. They found the new Zionist youth who had not been trained in a religious background to be lacking a core identity. The new Zionist youth had not received the basics of a religious tradition from which they could then depart. The older generation and early Zionists had rebelled against an observant lifestyle when they left their homes and adopted socialist principles with accompanying anti-religious attitudes.23 After the establishment of the state, discussion of the education system included questions such as how much of the cultural and linguistic background of

---

the various immigrant groups should be included in the curriculum. Another continuing theme was which parts of the 2000 year old legacy of Jewish educational institutions as they existed in different countries should be considered relevant to the modern system.

As Esther Gottlieb (1991) has noted education is a central issue in Israel, both socially and politically. Israel viewed education as a major state apparatus as noted by S.N. Eisenstadt (1985). For a country facing constant threat and external pressure, falling back on the traditional high regard for education was emphasized both as a tool for preparing an able military and work force as well as a way to integrate new immigrants.24

The emphasis placed on education by David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister, and such legislation as the Basic Education Law of 1953, reflected this view. The political career of Ben-Gurion, as reflected in legislation and archival material, is an important part of the focus of Israel studies chair holders. In addition, Israeli Parliamentary (Knesset) legislation passed to memorialize Ben-Gurion in the early 1970s set in place funds and teaching positions related to that career and the early years of the state. This provided a precedent for the degree granting program in Israel studies created in the 1990s which would form a prototype for programs abroad.

Any discussion of Israel studies revolves around the question of inclusion. What part of the previous history of the Jewish people, or of Palestinians is to be included in course content? What material and from whose perspective should be required reading? Should the history of American Zionists be given precedence over Zionists based in other countries? The work of leading Israel studies scholars such as Ilan Troen at

Brandeis University has indeed emphasized the American connection to Zionism by looking at common educational, pioneering and frontier motifs. However, later work such as that of the Israel studies scholar Yinon Cohen at Columbia, Cohen & Haberfield (2003) has involved flipping those themes around to focus on the success of Israeli immigrants in America.

Inclusion questions cannot avoid the conflict. Alan Dowty, the first Israel studies chair holder at the University of Calgary, has focused on the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Such scholars examine the conflict in terms of the impact on Israeli and Palestinian internal politics, regional solutions and issues of international enforcement.

Dowty (2006) has noted that although Israel is omnipresent in the media and Israeli scholars engage in “more self-contemplation per square-centimeter than in any other literate society” most of that writing is in Hebrew and doesn’t necessarily travel well. There is a reluctance to include scholarly writing which focuses on the Israeli perspective regarding the conflict in Middle East studies departments and curriculum. Israel studies has been “twice orphaned” in academic life Dowty noted as it is not really welcomed in either of its two natural homes- Middle Eastern studies and Jewish studies. However, chairs of Israel studies are often being placed in Jewish studies by private donors. These chair holders are also at times connected to Middle East studies in terms of scholarly

---

25 Troen, S. I. (Dec.1999). Frontier Myths and their application in America and Israel. *Journal of American History, the Nation and Beyond: Transnational perspectives on United States History*. This article was reprinted in *Israel Studies*, 5, 1, 301-329.


promotion and affiliation. How they navigate such complicated intersections, particularly regarding perspectives on the conflict, will be examined in the case studies.

**Things that are seen from there, are not seen from here**

Can Israel studies be taught in universities abroad? What becomes the focus of academic inquiry? Within Israel, teaching about Zionist history varied in scope from school based holidays remembering the early pioneers incorporating selective biographical material, to a focus on archeology and Bible land studies. University based Jewish studies departments such as that of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at Hebrew University incorporated archival and historical research. The historical lens remains prominent in Israel studies.

Establishing a separate interdisciplinary modern Israel studies program even within Israel was not easy. When such a program was established at Ben-Gurion University it became a prototype for Israel studies in terms of the broad sampling of courses offered and the participation of intellectuals such as Amos Oz. Tuvia Friling has noted that it was not easy to claim funds and academic positions for this interdisciplinary challenge even at an Israeli university. It was not by chance that it developed at Ben-Gurion University. At least there, justification for establishing the program could rely on the legacy of the first President of the State of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, for whom education had been an often stated priority.

---

29 Pfeffer, A. (2008, Feb.2). Israel no longer the world’s ‘Mecca’ of Jewish studies. *Haaretz internet edition.* Jehuda Reinharz was cited in the article as noting that in Israel there has been a process of decline in the focus on Jewish studies in the university, unlike in the U.S. There are various factors for this decline, such as the privatization occurring in the university sector and a general problem of academic brain drain that the economist, Dan Ben-David of Tel-Aviv University, has been linking to low salaries and high taxes as well as the rebirth of the traditional Bible academy aimed at students interested in Jewish studies.

30 Based on an interview with Tuvia Friling, at Sde Boker, the archive of Ben-Gurion, Summer 2006.
Rather than duplicate the structure of the many interdisciplinary courses offered in Israel, American universities are recruiting Israeli professors for newly established chairs. Brandeis University has brought in a founder of the influential *Israel Studies* journal Ilan Troen from Ben-Gurion to hold the recently established chair in Israel studies. Ron Zweig was brought to New York University. Although there are only a dozen such Israel studies chairs at this time, those filled by Israelis are of particular interest. How they manage to navigate an interdisciplinary chair with a subject now geared towards audiences outside Israel will be examined.

The American universities which have endowed Israel studies chair holders (on more than a one year visiting professorship basis) are divided between public and private institutions. They range in size and type from American University, New York University, Brandeis University, University of Wisconsin, Emory University, University of Maryland, Columbia University, and UCLA to Michigan State and the University of Denver. Four universities have been chosen for analysis- two public and two private. The four case studies were chosen to highlight salient points regarding the process of normalization of an emerging discipline. They are: University of Wisconsin, Michigan State, Columbia University and New York University.

**Passing the torch to the next generation-An inherited aspect of Israel studies.**

Israel studies scholarly development has included a link between generations. Fania Oz-Salzberger- the daughter of Amos Oz - part of the Israel studies program at Ben-Gurion-now holds the first Israel studies chair established in Australia (Monash University).

While Amos Oz is a leading intellectual who continues to have an impact on the cultural and political life of the country, his daughter, a historian focused on the history of the
Enlightenment, has been less public.\textsuperscript{31} Her work ranges from how Scottish civic discourse was translated into eighteenth-century Germany through the writings of Adam Ferguson (1713-1816) to a view of the German influences on the Israeli Supreme Court. She has examined the biographies of Israeli Supreme Court justices trained in German universities who then reflected concepts such as that of an enlightened public or tzibur na'or – in their decisions. Such work is a good example of the complexity of academic identities and disciplinary focus that will be highlighted in the case studies.\textsuperscript{32}

Myron Aronoff and Yael Aronoff form another father/daughter Israel studies academic story. Yael Aronoff was appointed to the new Israel studies chair at Michigan State (2006) with a dissertation in political science. Her topic examined how hardliners become soft. She has built on the work of her father on Israeli political parties. Myron Aronoff was an example of the seemingly random ways in which Israel studies scholars emerge from other disciplines. He has written that his graduate studies in the sixties were in anthropology and political theory, with an initially planned focus on the hot topic of nation building in Africa. They did not include a single course on the undergraduate or graduate level that dealt with Israel. However, when an opportunity came to conduct fieldwork in a small frontier town in Israel using ethnographic methods being developed by Max Gluckman at Manchester University, Aronoff took it. An academic identity and career describing Israeli political behavior was the result. Although he writes that he

\textsuperscript{31} His work has been part of the curriculum in a number of courses with Israel content, ranging from political science to literature.

almost stumbled into the profession, ironically, his book on the Israeli Labor party, first published in 1977, was considered to have anticipated the subsequent defeat of that party in an electoral reversal so shocking it was popularly known in Hebrew as *hamahapach* or the earthquake.\[^{33}\]

**Articulated objectives of acquiring knowledge and Israel Studies**

The conceptualization of Israel studies also relies on some of the arguments related to useful knowledge in academic settings, as described by Charles Kerr (1972, 2001).\[^{34}\] Useful knowledge was debated by student demonstrations against required curriculum in the latter part of the twentieth century. Fabio Rojas (2007) described how students at San Francisco State College demanded that a department of Black studies be created in 1968.\[^{35}\] The curriculum debates have led to a call for Israel studies as well, but from a totally different perspective. Rather than following active student protest there has been “intellectual ferment” through newspapers and academic publications against the way in which Israel’s side of the conflict has been presented in Middle East departments. The call for Israel studies has also come from students, most notably in the film created to document anti-Israel polemic at Columbia University. However, generally the integration of chairs of Israel studies has followed more of a top down process with private funding than a bottom up one with public funds.\[^{36}\]

---


\[^{36}\] The film, Columbia Unbecoming, was created with the assistance of the David Project.
Israel studies can be compared to other new studies such as ethnic studies in terms of subject diversification from the traditional curriculum. However, Israel studies as a subject may also be used in the call for a traditional humanities based curriculum. Israel studies integrates basic concepts related to Western civilization, from the Bible to the Enlightenment, for the development of Zionism. Many Israel studies scholars have focused their work on elements of the Enlightenment. The historical lens remains an important one.

As the historical lens becomes less popular and more contested, the subject of Israel studies suffers in terms of university consensus regarding useful knowledge. The lack of a common background in history and the classics on the part of students has been described by Tzvetan Todorov (1989) as crimes against humanities. He has noted that most college graduates have never taken a course in Western Civilization much less a foreign language. The lessening in popularity of this background historical study has an impact on Israel studies.37 Not only is the history of Zionism based on understanding Jewish history intertwined with that of various countries over thousands of years of exile, other aspects of Israel studies also rely on some understanding of foreign languages (Hebrew and Arabic) as well as Biblical references.

As the short story writer Etgar Keret (2008) has noted, Hebrew uses words that Biblical characters if they were to be resurrected would understand together with phrases borrowed from Arabic and English.38 Knowledge of linguistic context is important for referencing daily cultural and political events. For example when the Hamas government

---

38 Etgar Keret, an author of many short stories such as Shooting Tuvia, spoke in Columbus, Ohio, on May 6, 2008, when a film he had produced with his wife, Shira Gefen, was shown at the Wexner Center for the Performing Arts.
took over in Gaza Israeli journalists referred to the chaotic situation which ensued as entirely *tohu vebohu* the Biblical words for the absolute void that existed at the beginning of creation before the forming of light and darkness. Only when the language is understood in context is the full expression of the deep fear of the unfolding chaos and political unrest the journalists were describing to their audience evoked.

The need for a broad curriculum puts Israel studies in a problematic position. It is often categorized as one of the newer fields of study similar to the other area studies programs (e.g. Asian, gender, racial/ethnic, media, folklore, etc,) added to the curriculum after W.W. II. This problematic position forms another piece of the analysis of where space is found for Israel studies. How it is perceived in terms of new and old concepts of civilization is important, particularly as the lack of consensus regarding historical narratives grows.

Jewish studies also reflected the mix of traditional with modern elements in a curriculum. For example, although Biblical references were a core component of the field particularly when first located in departments of religion, the very study of texts for non-ritualized purposes was problematic. Religious positive precepts regarding the study of the Bible as a goal in itself had an impact on the academic study of Judaism. Such questions as the appropriate use of knowledge came up. The use of Hebrew language study for utilitarian secularized purposes rather than for the sake of heaven (and Bible study) was questioned. When the science of Judaism emerged in the nineteenth century as *Wissenschaft des Judentums* a distinction was quickly made between ritualized learning and using the text as a methodological tool or means. This has been described by Nathan Rotenstreich (1995) as the difference between viewing the study of Judaism,
as a goal in itself, with study of the text not changing the subject matter, versus the science of Judaism in which study became a means for the creation of new knowledge.  

Yael Feldman (1995) has noted that she has seen these differences in approaching the text when teaching Hebrew at New York University. When students trained in religious day schools to revere Hebrew as a sacred language encounter modern Israeli literature, they are disappointed. Particularly when the text reflects such conflicted Israeli identities as that of the playwright Hanoch Levin and his version of the European theater of the absurd, it comes as a shock.

How source material is approached in American and Israeli universities has been the focus of research by Jane Gerber (1995). Through the prism of Sephardic studies, she found that Israeli scholars emphasized historical methods such as retrieving internal community and rabbinical records such as response as well as documenting oral traditions as the basis for knowledge acquisition. Scholars in European and American universities were more focused on how Sephardic (Spanish) communities could be examined within the broader historical and political framework of the countries in which they lived. This distinction in terms of the internal versus external views was to be reiterated in the ways in which Israel studies has addressed conflict.

---

Prescriptive versus descriptive uses of knowledge – appreciation of the subject studied or pushing for change.

The use of knowledge comes up in arguments among scholars of Israel studies regarding humanities based and social science based disciplinary focus. The social science based scholar works through a prescriptive rather than descriptive lens with an emphasis on the practical recommendations that can be made to improve the political or social reality. The humanities based scholar is more focused on presenting an understanding of the text rather than prescription for political action. The differences between the two approaches have many implications including visibility in the media regarding the analysis of what may be controversial political positions. Immanuel Wallerstein (1997) has written of such approaches as moving from subject to discipline, with the former involving appreciation of and focus on the object of study, while the latter involved a focus on technique and method for manipulation and control of the object of study. He has presented the two approaches as a battle raging between those studying the language for the sake of appreciation only, and those interested in acquiring social science predictive expertise. The latter were termed perpetrators of “scientific colonialism” by John Galtung. He had refused to participate in the 1964 Project Camelot. Funded by the Defense Department, Project Camelot was described by Galtung as bent on the subsequent change and perhaps exploitation of the subject of study.

---

42 In a panel at the AIS annual conference in Arizona 2005, an argument between various approaches broke out between the political scientist Ian Lustick who insisted that teaching must focus on the conflict, while Ken Stein said an analysis of historical documents is the way to approach Israel studies, while students can make their own decisions on which side need to give what to whom.

43 This was following the 1964 Project Camelot in which Galtung refused to participate as a matter of principle as it was funded by the Defense Department. This is cited in Wallerstein, I. (1997). The unintended consequences of cold war area studies. In. N. Chomsky, et. al., (Eds.), The Cold War and the University (pp.195-231). New York: The New Press.
Israel studies scholars have moved between these two approaches. Particularly regarding recommendations for the United States government and service in presidential administrations, Israel studies scholars taken prescriptive roles regarding what Israel should do in the conflict. How this has been addressed in terms of the possible exploitation of the subject under study is one of the questions examined in the case studies.

A recently advertised call for an interdisciplinary chair holder in Israel studies highlights some of the huge expectations regarding the academic and activist role of the scholar. The University of Maryland call for an Israel studies chair emphasized that a breadth of linguistic and cultural knowledge of the region was expected, as well as expertise in explaining the controversial politics of the conflict. The call was for someone able to combine strength in Hebrew language and literature, together with an ability to “push the boundaries of history and also look at questions from a sociological or political science perspective.” The combining of language and social science perspectives in the search for Israel studies chairs may reflect the private donor funded quality of the chairs.

How can these chairs be implemented in the university hierarchy? Can a prescriptive, political science bent, particularly regarding what the Israeli government should do regarding the conflict, be combined with an appreciation of the subject under study? Will that subject be Israeli or Palestinian? Is it possible to appreciate and represent both subjects? The case studies will examine these issues as they are reflected in the work of the chair holders of Israel studies.

---

The programs of the Association of Israel studies annual conferences provide another arena in which to examine disciplinary focus. The social science based experts with prescriptive work that focused on solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were the original founders and organizers of AIS in the mid 1980s. However, while political science remains the preferred discipline, there has been an increasing effort to include comparative and cultural studies.

A recent conference program (2008) included subject titles reflecting the growing importance of the Israeli film industry. Depictions of the conflict in the media and film have become a significant portion of the program in addition to international relations and political science based expert panels.

Cultural studies have been defined by Howard Becker & Michal Mc Call (1990) as referring to intellectual currents which first arose in the humanities. These reflected the interest in the construction of meaning. Cultural studies then entered the social sciences through critical and neo-Marxism, structuralism and post-structuralism, postmodernism, and feminism, with the focus on subcultures, media and language. Elements of cultural studies include a sense that culture and political economy are intertwined and that each needs to be studied in relation to the other, as well as the conception of culture as something that is actively constructed and maintained by human actions. Culture is interpreted as constantly changing, not monolithic and requiring consciously self-reflexive research.45

The historical lens as a defining feature

One of the salient features of the intellectual development of Israel studies is the emphasis placed on the role of historical interpretation. The role of David Ben-Gurion, the leader of the pre-state Yishuv or Jewish community and the one who continued to make fateful decisions as Prime Minister following 1948 is the center of much of the archival based historical research in Israel studies. For example, in a much example of revisionist history, Tom Segev, critiqued Ben-Gurion’s leadership during World War II in *The Seventh Million* (1993) regarding Palestinian based rescue attempts. He then went on to suggest that Ben-Gurion’s focus on breaking from the British mandate and declaring an independent state may have been a mistake.\(^{46}\) Other historians have answered with the claim that the Jewish pre-state leadership was powerless to negotiate for the saving of any lives.

Another rift between historians centers on revisionist interpretations of the Israeli War of Independence. Who did what to whom and when has been the focus of archival digging. Critiquing the foundational narrative of the founding of the state, a group of new historians was juxtaposed against the old historians, with each citing their own archival documents, as described by Ofira Seliktar (2005).\(^{47}\)

Yoav Gelber (2003) has noted that the emergence of critical theory and the intellectual new left in the latter part of the twentieth century led to a push for revisionist accounts of the War. In addition, a concentrated anti-Zionist campaign by the Arab world during


those years promoted such ideas.\textsuperscript{48} Derek Penslar (2004) has noted that Zionism and post-colonialism has become part of a conceptual and methodological package rather than referring to a specific chronological or spatial epoch or entity. This is ironic since the Zionists conceptualized their historical struggle as a colonized people fighting for independence against an imperialist entity (Britain) rather than colonizers.\textsuperscript{49}

Critical theory as it developed in American and European universities led to cultural criticism of the West. On example is that of the Oriental construct by Edward Said based on the idea of the “other” as shaping foreign policy. This concept was integrated into a popular critical approach in international relations. For Israel studies this construct was particularly damaging. It came with an existentialist punch. Scholars debating what happened to the Palestinians were not just pointing to concepts of the “other” but were making recommendations regarding the legitimacy of the Jewish state. Israel became seen as created by European nationalist ideals.

The historical lens became a barometer through which definitions of nationalism created academic camps. By putting the focus on a historical lens as still defining academic identity and course curriculum Israel studies may differ from other areas in which historical material and interpretation has taken a back seat or has even been rendered obsolete. For example, a recent study on the marginalization of education history in U.S. teacher education by Sonia E. Murrow (2006) noted that although history


was once at the core of the curriculum of teacher education, it has diminished in status regarding curriculum and pedagogy.  

The role of the intellectual

Michael Keren (1989) who has been part of Israel studies at the University of Calgary, has written about intellectuals and David Ben-Gurion. He has pointed to the heightened political role academics have played when widely covered in the popular press.

The importance placed on the role of the intellectual in Israeli society is reflected in the theme of Israel studies conferences. For example, the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies held a conference focused on history as reflected in Israeli literature. The stated goal of the conference was to examine the intersection of literature and history, and the ways in which one has confronted or ignored the other. The conference examined such questions as whether one could write history today without paying careful attention to Israel’s rich literary tradition. In addition, it was asked if one could write literature in Hebrew/Israel without feeling the weight of history.

David A. Hollinger (2007) has looked at the development of American studies as an academic discipline. Hollinger (2007) tied in American studies with the founding of the American Quarterly in 1949 and of the American Studies Association shortly thereafter. Similarly, the development of Israel studies has been tied in with the founding of journals and the Association of Israel Studies.

---

52 The conference was held on March 11-13, 2007 at UCLA
Hollinger described the politics of uniqueness in American studies which has implications for issues wrestled with in the Israel studies context.\textsuperscript{54} Shared issues are related to intellectual traditions concerning religious and secular thought. A politics of uniqueness involves the argument that universal and apparent laws of historical development are not being followed in a particular nation’s development. This argument sees events occurring which defy historical precedents and create an exceptional interpretation of historical circumstances. Avihu Zakai (1992) has written of the origins of the Puritan migration to America, as an apocalyptic ideology of history with eschatological visions.\textsuperscript{55}

Michael Barnett (1996) has noted that a politics of uniqueness surrounded studies about Israel, which for many social scientists, represented of a problematic case study as it was neither part of the East or West, capitalist or socialist.\textsuperscript{56} This conceptualization of the typicality of the Israeli case had an impact on where space was found for Israel studies chair holders.

Another aspect of defining Israel studies is analyzing the structural limitations involved in creating the field. In the case studies, attention will be paid to the intellectual histories of the chair holders and how they have been shaped by the academic unit they are placed in. Walter P. Metzger (1987) has analyzed structural differences between an academic subject, topic, and discipline. His definition of a discipline as having a social as well as an intellectual dimension is particularly important. This social dimension will

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p.16.
involve what Tony Becher (2005) has described as a set of shared cultural values that are important for integration within an academic discipline.

A definition of Israel studies must include the forming of an academic identity which incorporates this social dimension. Metzger (1987) delineated the social aspect as the factor that made a subject into a discipline, through a community of practitioners within and outside the academy who derive their occupational identity from it and who receive career advantages by improving its efficacy and reputation. In the analysis of one person chair holders and departments teaching Israel studies, the social aspect is part of the normalization process of creating a discipline.

Tony Becher (2005) has written of the cognitive and social aspects of academic disciplines, with the former including marking the knowledge domain in such a way that it is clearly identifiable and the latter involving integration within the working structure of the university. Both of these areas will be considered in the analysis of Israel studies, particularly regarding such factors as academic visibility and integration reflected in courses taught at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Marking a boundary around subject content in Israel studies has been particularly difficult as the emerging chair holders have come from interdisciplinary backgrounds. The absence of a doctoral degree in Israel studies is one of the factors leading to topic diversity.

Fabio Rojas (2006) has noted that structural features of universities such as size and diversity of programs can be important to the integration of ethnic studies, in that

---

interdisciplinary academic programs are more likely to be created at large intellectually diverse institutions. What Rojas has described as the “Harvard effect” - universities imitating what has happened at leading institutions of higher education -provides a context within which to examine the development of Israel studies. An Israel studies chair has yet to be established at Harvard, although there have been visiting professors. However, lacking a clearly followed “Harvard effect” the process of integration of Israel studies at various universities is following a winding road dependent on the appearance of donors and administrative dreamers at public and private institutions.

Howard Wachtel provided such a role at American University which has been a pioneer in Israel studies in the United States. He was the first director of the Israel studies program and involved with the donor effort to establish the program. His published work dealt with the construction of the economist’s culture in the United States and the history of Wall Street from an ethical standpoint, not typical to scholars of the Middle East.

Pat Steinhoff (2007) has edited an exhaustive study of the structural development of Japanese studies in the United States and Canada. Her work considered everything from sources of funds for visits to Japan, opportunities for publishing, and types of jobs found for Japan specialists by disciplinary focus. It is an excellent example of structural analysis combined with intellectual trends. Steinhoff notes that such trends have moved from a language and area studies paradigm, to the economic competition paradigm, to the

cultural studies paradigm currently dominant. In Israel studies there has also been a trend
towards the cultural studies direction from a social science dominated area, as evident in
the 2008 program of the AIS conference. 62 How structure impacts intellectual output is
highlighted by Steinhoff’s comparison of the social science paradigm which needed a
department of experts to conduct an array of research based site visits and document
analysis, with the cultural studies paradigm in which the construction of meaning is an
individual endeavor. The latter paradigm is better suited for interdisciplinary one person
only academic chairs not backed by departments of experts or large funding for field
notes.

Significance of the Study

The debate over “knowledge worth knowing” is one which has intensified in the era of
globalization. Rebecca Kook (2003) has written of the changes in the perception of what
is considered “legitimate knowledge” or that which has status and authority. 63 The
examination of how an education space is created for Israel studies reflects this
discussion and can add to it. While the sociology of knowledge has included such
concepts as Weber’s (1922) link between the development of ideas and the particular
social locations or interests of individuals or groups, Israel studies can provide a lighting
rod of sorts with which to examine such connections. Reliant on interdisciplinary
exchanges, Israel studies integrates many ways of looking at nation building and Western
Civilization. If academic organizations provide a prime site for the evolution of
knowledge categories which determine what is to be accepted as authoritative

62 AIS website lists the program for the 2008 conference held in New York City.
the constitution of knowledge. Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice, 5, 59-78.
knowledge— the hotly contested development of Israel studies can illuminate that process. Foucault (1973, 1980) and Bourdieu (1977, 1984) have written of the historical contingency of the power-related processes through which knowledge is produced in such privileged arenas as universities. The ways in which space is found or not found in those arenas is a telling indicator of the perceptions of power and knowledge regarding Israel.\(^{64}\)

Tobin, Weinberg & Ferer (2005) have written of the university as a declining civil institution. Some of the rhetoric regarding Israel studies has reflected such debates. When rhetoric is imbued with existential components as in the use of the Arabic word for tragedy or \textit{al naqba} to refer to the birth of the state of Israel, there is concern that a civil debate on social, economic or political issues is not possible. Such rhetoric attacks the legitimacy of the Jewish state and is not common to the discourse of other area studies programs.\(^{65}\) Discussion of the emerging chairs and programs in Israel studies can therefore add to an understanding of tolerance in the university setting.

**AIS— a significant contribution to the academic development of Israel studies**

Lost in the passionate rhetoric over the Middle East, organizations like the Association of Israel studies have yet to be included as a subject in research. This study will incorporate archival material and other documents related to the forming of the Association. As the main professional scholarly organization linked to the development of Israel studies in the university setting, AIS sent out newsletters, prepared conferences, and kept minutes of board meetings since the group was founded in 1985. Through an analysis of this

\(^{64}\) As cited in Kook, p.62-3.
material, it is possible to put together a history of the motivations and concerns of those academics. Original letters and memos provide an unmediated source which directly conveys the voices of those involved. Use of the archives added to the thickness of description of the qualitative research method used in this study, and in the illustration of the case studies.
Chapter 2: Precedents for Israel Studies in the Academy

Historically, language instruction has been connected to knowledge interface, politics and commerce. Language provided a link to national identity. Emperor Vespasian provided salaries from the imperial treasury for chairs of Latin and Greek rhetoric.\(^{66}\) One of the provisions drawn up by the Council of Vienne in 1312 was to establish schools of Hebrew, Greek, Arabic and Chaldean at Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca. Although it is difficult to determine to what extent these provisions were followed, Pearl Kibre (1948) notes that the records found of Hebrew and Arabic teachers at medieval and early modern universities have pointed to religious and political motivations.\(^{67}\) For example, in the medieval university, foreign language instruction was connected at times to demands from overseas students organized in the _nations_ system which consisted of various associations of scholars, masters and students. These associations served to broaden the core of the university by adding a cosmopolitan element in terms of student population. One of these associations demanded that teachers of Hebrew (as well as Greek and Chaldean) be added to the University of Paris in 1430.\(^{68}\)

While language offerings in Hebrew and Arabic have been part of a missionary outlook they may have also presented a venue for engaging with another culture. Hebrew language instruction at European universities has reflected an attraction to the Hebrew

\(^{66}\) Hezser, C. (2001). _Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine_. Tubingern; Mohr Siebeck, p.107.1

\(^{67}\) Ibid., p.98-99.

sources despite the ultimate use of that material as part of Christian conversion efforts.

In this respect, pre-modern pressures regarding the perceived public role of the academic may be glimpsed.

Haim Benart’s (1992) work on *conversos* includes glimpses into the ways in which the knowledge and teaching of Hebrew was both a liability and a desired connection with a forbidden culture. This could prove to be a dangerous maneuver. The records of a trial of the Chair holder of Hebrew at the University of Salamanca (which had been established in 1314) reveal that he had been accused of becoming a Jew. His interrogation included listing the names of the books which had influenced him.69

Complicated relationships with those in positions of authority were tied in with the teaching of Hebrew in other places. E. Carlebach (1998) has noted that Salamanca was one of five medieval universities selected by the Council of Vienne in 1311 to teach oriental languages, including Hebrew for missionary purposes. When a Peter Schwartz-Nigri returned from the University of Salamanca to German lands to teach Hebrew, he petitioned Duke Ludwig in 1474 to force the Jews of Regensburg to attend his public lectures.70 Similarly, Peter Van Rooden’s (1989) study of the history of Leiden University focuses on a professor of Hebrew and how his work reflected a problematic connection between Biblical scholarship and Rabbinical studies in the seventeenth century.71 The appointment of a theologian, C. L’Empereur as professor of Hebrew in seventeenth century Leiden, showed a marked difference in the way in which the subject

---


of Hebrew was handled from other subjects. With Hebrew a vehicle for dogmatic instruction from the Old and New Testaments much attention was paid to both the curriculum and the personalities of the academics. Refutation of Jewish doctrine was paramount in what was published. Jewish works that did not fit this bill were not prepared for publication by L’Empereur. In return, L’Empereur received an appointment in a faculty of theology after holding the chair in Hebrew. While these examples are just a small sampling of the large scholarship on Hebrew language instruction at early universities, they reflect some of the complexities involved in the teaching of Hebrew. It has stood out as a subject that has combined scholarly concerns with politics of the authorities and the surrounding communities.

Controversy surrounding the instruction of Hebrew and Jewish subjects continued in the modern research university. Conflict appeared around the method of instruction, as well as the scholar’s identity. Ben-Horin (1969) has described the importance of rote learning and memorization in the traditional teaching of the Hebrew language. Studying Hebrew was part of Jewish ritual behavior prior to the emergence of cultural Zionism. When these teaching methods became considered old fashioned they were replaced by culturally and rationally based tools such as conversational and grammatical texts. These became the basis of instruction rather than the pure memorization of text. The new methods were controversial. An ability to memorize a text had been an important criterion in the world of Jewish scholarship, with the recitation of sections of scripture considered an important goal.

---

72 Ibid., pp.232-3.
Teaching Hebrew as a modern language for non-religious purposes to Jews as well as to non-Jews was another break with tradition. Hebrew was not regarded in the same way as any other language. It was considered the expression of divine inspiration and considering it an everyday language was subject to excommunication.73

The Tarbut Ivrit Model of Instruction

Seven university models were described by Arnold Band (1993) for tracking Hebrew language instruction in modern universities. They were: (1) DSH (Divinity School Hebrew); (2) SPH (Semitic Philology Hebrew); (3) AWH (Americanized Wissenschaft Hebrew), (4) TIH (Tarbut Ivrit Hebrew, or Hebrew Culture Hebrew); (5) ASH (Area Studies Hebrew); (6) JSH (Jewish Studies Hebrew) and (7) IH (Israeli Hebrew).74 The last model reflects the total integration of Hebrew in modern Israel and the inability to separate it from the experience of daily life. The IH (Israeli Hebrew) model differs from the earlier Hebrew Culture model Tarbut Ivrit which was based on an idealized image of pioneer life mainly in the pre-state period.

Arnold Band (2003) pioneered in the subject of modern Hebrew literary analysis. He has noted that Hebrew instruction under the Tarbut Ivrit or cultural paradigm was part of an ideological package in which teaching Hebrew through modern methods became an important component of Jewish and Zionist identity in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When introduced to NYU in the late 1930’s, Hebrew language was taught in


the School of Education rather than the College of Liberal Arts. Jewish teacher colleges also incorporated this model of Hebrew instruction.

The Tarbut Ivrit or cultural paradigm model of Hebrew language instruction emphasized total immersion in the language. A cultural paradigm became important to the youth groups and educational programs affiliated with leftist socialist Zionist movements such as Hashomer Ha Tzair or the Young Guard for whom Hebrew instruction was imbued with a romantic aura and sense of moral mission. The first task of creating a new Jewish people was considered to be adapting the -what had been considered to be for sacred purposes only- language of the Bible for modern life. The cultural model also included a geographic component, which in later years was to lead to summer study abroad models.

**Zionist Socialist Romanticism versus Diaspora based Historical Detachment**

Jewish studies in the late nineteenth and twentieth century went from being located mainly in seminaries, teachers colleges, and departments of Near Eastern Studies, to departments of history at research universities and liberal arts colleges. As Jewish scholars began to teach Jewish studies in American universities Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) have noted, questions of advocacy versus academic detachment, or objectivity regarding the presentation of the Jewish religion and historical background arose. While questions were raised in the Jewish community as to the danger of describing non flattering elements of both Judaism and Jewish history to non Jews, American scholars of

---

Jewish studies in the twentieth century concluded that they could write more freely than their European predecessors who faced basic questions of Jewish existence.\textsuperscript{76}

Twentieth century scholarship in Jewish subjects began to reflect a process of normalization. Todd Endelman (2001) has described this process as one in which the writing of Jews and non Jews about Jewish history proceeded along the same rules common to other fields of historical research. An early holder of a chair in Jewish history, Salo Baron of Columbia University, who had been trained at pre-war European universities, famously came down against what he critiqued as “a lachrymose conception of Jewish history” focused only on the heroic and those who had sacrificed for their faith.\textsuperscript{77} Jewish historians who followed Baron, such as Yosef Yerushalmi, used social, economic and cultural explanations beyond tales of martyrdom to present the complexities of Jewish identity in groups such as the \textit{conversos or Marranos}. D. N. Myers (1998) noted that the Jewish historian Y. Yersuhalmi was careful not to present such converts’ attempt to straddle both the Christian and Jewish worlds in moral terms.\textsuperscript{78}

As noted by Ritterband & Wechler (1994) the first six American universities to include Jewish subjects were a mix of private and public institutions (California, Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, John Hopkins & Pennsylvania). In some cases, presidents such as William Rainey Harper at the University of Chicago were directly involved in the process of bringing Jewish subjects to the university. Some college presidents such as Coit-Gilman at John Hopkins and Eliot at Harvard, reasoned that the inclusion of Jewish

\textsuperscript{78} Myers, D.N. (1998). Of Marranos and Memory. In E. Carlebach, J. M. Efron & D.N. Myers, (Eds.,) \textit{Jewish History and Jewish Memory}. Hanover, N.H: Brandeis University Press.
studies provided a way of reconciling seemingly antithetical religious and scientific 
agendas. While a study of the classics was still seen as having a moral agenda, Jewish 
studies also incorporated the newer scientific forms of Biblical criticism. In addition, 
adding Jewish studies was a way of reciprocating Jewish communal interest in higher 
education. Tapping into the increased prosperity of American Jews of the late nineteenth 
and early twentieth century who were willing to fund privately endowed chairs of Jewish 
studies was another consideration.79

Scientific Racially Based Theories of Evolution and Jewish social scientists

Reconciling scientific professions which included research into racial categories of 
descent was an existential issue for Jewish social scientists in Europe. It has been argued 
that by the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish social scientists at European universities 
found themselves in a difficult position. They, as Jews, were defined negatively by the 
very academic discourse they had come to accept as true. This academic discourse was 
based on the language of the social and biological sciences that had a racial component. 
Jewish academics underwent a path of “resistance and rejection” accompanied by 
“acceptance and appropriation” in their academic work.80 Amos Morris-Reich (2006) has 
described the academic environment for Jewish social scientists at the turn of the century 
in which concepts related to social Darwinism placed race as a central category. Racial 
determination was a principle many believed in as defining the potential of racial groups. 
Situating the Jewish people within such parameters was a political problem; should such 
social scientists acquiesce to the prevailing theoretical environment and create definitions

and categories which defined individual potential, including Jewish potential, as within
not across races? Even if such theories were used to promote Zionism, seen as a way to
correct the abnormalities and perceived defects of the Diaspora based race, they could
also be used to discriminate against Jews.81

Racially based theories of normality.

Jewish studies and Israel studies have been impacted by the shift from the humanities
based instruction to that of the social sciences. These changing paradigms involved shifts
in perceptions of the meaning of knowledge. Whereas a classics based model of
instruction involved developing the student’s character though the discipline of language
study, a social science perspective focused on perfecting the world and society around
the student. Ideas of the normal came with a numerical society, in which precision for
measurement followed the Industrial Revolution, with the nation state essentially
considered built and characterized by its statistics.

Ian Hacking (1990) has pointed to the collection of data about Jewish households as a
forerunner of the statistical study of other populations in such countries as Prussia.
Statistical laws were used not only for description but also for explaining and
understanding the course of events, with the emergence of European states and
established offices to collect and publish this data.82 The dilemma for Jewish social
scientists using statistical tools for research on a Jewish race, whether analyzing
birthdates, health and educational related information was great. They could only hope

that those statistics be used to advance the position of the Jewish people and not to their
detriment.

Whereas in earlier times Jews could convert to blend into the larger society, even if such conversions were subject to suspicion and inquisition, a racial theory of descent erased such options of assimilation. Morris-Reich (2006) noted that the statistical method had implications for basic conceptions of man and society as they emerged from the patterns of statistics with definitions as- on the average, the typical, the normal, the pathological, and the accidental used to create a connection between regularity and causality.83 Anzia Yezierska (1932), a Jewish European immigrant to the United States, voiced her concern with statistical representation. After having been hired to translate for a prestigious university based data collection project on tenement life, she resigned. She was skeptical about the usefulness of the data collection. She doubted that the numbers they were collecting could accurately capture the reality of the stories of pain and poverty that the numbers were to reflect.84

Ian Hacking (1990) focused on the importance of not just who collects information, but what meaning is made of it. He presented the example of Karl Marx as someone who used official statistics reports collected from factory inspectors and others to reach his own conclusions which radically reorganized how people categorized themselves.85 The fact that the bureaucrats who had collected the statistics that were to be used by Marx never envisioned the revolutionary theory that would emerge is just one example of the ways in which numbers could be used unexpectedly.

83 Ibid., p.16.
Normality as used to refer to the usual or typical, as in the middle, or mean as in statistical analysis displaced previous ideas of human nature as a central organizing concept. Definitions of normality presented a vision of the normal as the right and the good. Another definition was one of the normal as the mediocre, in need of improvement. Both definitions were tied in with a seal of objectivity and impartiality, a bridge between what “is” and what “ought” to exist. Hacking (1990) has noted that terms and concepts of probability as they were applied from statistics began to take precedence over religious based views of the world in the modern era. Fear and chance replaced concepts of reward and punishment, as determining and controlling elements of probability were debated in terms of statistics on the chances for cancer, earthquakes and other dangerous events.86

The concept of normality was part of the push for a Zionist homeland. Taking one’s fate in one’s own hands rather than waiting for a religious solution was seen as part of becoming a normal nation for Jewish political theorists. Becoming a normal nation also involved correcting the perceived deficiencies of a “parasitic” Jewish race through living as a normal people in their own land.87

Definitions of the normal continued to be debated after statehood. Was Israel like any another European country in terms of replicating nationalist patterns of historical and cultural development (a type of new Vienna as envisioned by Theodore Herzl)? Or was it another Middle Eastern country victimized by colonial European powers and therefore required to escape that cultural dominance?

Such questions regarding definitions of normality are important to Israel studies. Y. Gelber (2008) in his summary of various academic strains of intellectual post-Zionism, describes two variants which both hinge on definitions of normality. One variant considers Zionism an ideology that has accomplished its goals by becoming a normal nation “like any other” and has therefore become redundant. The other denies the need for a Jewish state and envisions an ideal state as multinational and multicultural without any connection to historical Judaism.  

**Intellectual definitions of Zionism**

In 1891 the Russian Jewish Scientific Society of Berlin called their Hanukah celebration a Hasmonean holiday. This term was advertised instead of the more commonly used Festival of Lights. The latter term emphasizes the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days, while the former emphasizes the heroic actions of the nationalist revolutionaries. Leo Motzkin, a speaker at the ceremony described by S. Almog (1987), pointed to the lessons of the Greek and Italian national revivals for the Jewish people. These lessons were those of a nation forging their own destiny by arising to a “normal independent life.” At the Fifth Zionist Congress held about a decade later, Martin Buber, the German philosopher and later Hebrew University intellectual, outlined his vision of the return to normality for the Jewish people. This perspective focused on the creation of Jewish art and a literary awakening over political negotiations with world leaders.

---


90 Ibid., p.75.
These views of normality came with accompanying political implications. An immediate political solution was imperative for those who saw the Jewish race as in danger in the Diaspora. Any territory in which self government could begin to be practiced was under consideration (even Uganda). This group, led initially by Theodore Herzl, feared that perceptions of abnormality of and anti-Semitism towards the Jews were so great that they needed to find a way out of Europe as fast as possible. Opponents of this view held that Jews had lived in exile for so long that they would never relocate to any one territory from the many countries of their dispersion. This view was held by such intellectuals as Asher Ginsburg, or *Ahad Haam*- or one of the people-. Ginsburg critiqued those who saw territorial acquisition and political negotiation as a priority of Zionism in the early 20th century. Seeing less evidence of the coming catastrophe of the Nazi Era, Ginsburg called for the renewal of Jewish cultural life as a priority. This renewal could take place in Palestine as well as outside through such methods as Hebrew language instruction. Palestine was to function as a spiritual center for Jews in the Diaspora, rather than a physical refuge. This vision of a spiritual center combined modern and traditional elements as in the push to build a university in the city of Jerusalem.

**The Jerusalem school of Jewish history**

Y. Gelber (2007) has analyzed the development of the Jerusalem school of Jewish history. This school was associated with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the pre-state period. It continued the debates involving the role of the Jews in the Diaspora. Historians argued over the importance placed on studying the history of the land of Israel versus the history of Jewish life in the Diaspora. The work of Benzion Dinaburg (later
Dinur) exemplified the Jerusalem school which put the land of Israel in the center of Jewish history. The school was accused of presenting a narrow treatment of Jewish history. They were accused of emphasizing those periods which reflected strains of Jewish self-government and autonomous rule. Scholars of the Jerusalem school such as Dinaburg, who was later appointed Minister of Education by David Ben-Gurion were also accused of glorifying pre-state Zionism over Diaspora based Jewish political and intellectual activities.

**A Zionist dilemma - allocating limited funds for cultural activities or for land purchase?**

Various groups at the pre-state Zionist Congresses fought for use of limited resources. Money could be allocated towards cultural or political aims. The latter could include strategic purchase of land for agricultural settlements with the stated goal of linking them together for future statehood. Ken Stein (1984), the Israel studies chair holder at Emory University has explored trends in land purchase in the pre-state period by such organizations as the Jewish National Fund. Debate over where to spend limited resources included decisions regarding support of cultural organizations to educate communities outside Palestine (such as teaching Hebrew as in the *Tarbut Ivrit* model) versus allocations for land purchase and provisions for the population and institutions already in Palestine.

The philosopher and later Hebrew University professor Martin Buber called for the funding of cultural activities. He has been associated with the leftist leaning *Hashomer*

---

*Hatzair* political movement by E. Margalit (1996). Influenced by the German romantic movement in terms of style and cultural ideals *Hashomer Hatzair* (*literally the Young Guard*) incorporated a youth branch. This group advocated the moral improvement of its members through small educational groups with an influential leader. Meant to have an impact beyond that of study and sports clubs these groups advocated selflessness and made reclaiming and working the land a cultural ideal. Although Buber never settled on a collective farm as promoted by the leftist group he supported their educational methods. The *Hashomer Hatszair* movement took on universal overtones such as the push to unite with all workers in the revolt against capitalists. Ideologically, Buber and the movement opposed to the operational pragmatism of political Zionists, such as Theodore Herzl, and more significantly, the first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. 93 This opposing group also critiqued Ben-Gurion’s organization and use of a military force.

**David Ben-Gurion and precedents for Israel studies**

Michael Keren (of the University of Calgary) has explored the complicated relationship between David Ben-Gurion and the academic world. Keren (1983) notes that as the leader of the state during and after the British mandate Ben-Gurion was privy to classified security information related to the decision to declare independence despite heavy Arab opposition. With no peace agreements, Ben-Gurion saw the new nation as constantly threatened and besieged. He correspondingly devoted enormous effort and resources to the building of a unified, fully equipped and highly functional military force. This effort included educational and citizenship training for the military. This training

was also a way to integrate and prepare for service the large number of immigrants entering the country. Recruitment for talented pilots was popularized in a the often heard slogan, “the good ones, to the air force”. Nathan Rotenstreich, a philosopher at Hebrew University influenced by Buber, prepared a counter slogan, “the good ones to do good; the pilots to the air force”. These critiques of Ben-Gurion’s political and military efforts continued the cultural versus political Zionist debates of the pre-state era.

Yoav Gelber (2007) has argued that the influence of academics working in such institutions as Hebrew University was even greater after the founding of the state than in the pre-state period. Under socialist ideological paradigms, intellectuals aligned with agricultural collectives (kibbutzim) and their political counterparts downplayed the authority of those not directly involved with groups working the land. As collective settlements began to decline in importance in the Israeli economy in the sixties and seventies, academics took on greater prominence. The cultural and political debates were to take national precedence in the form of the split over the aftermath of the 1967 war and the topic of Jewish settlement.

Israel studies and David Ben-Gurion-

The life and work of David Ben-Gurion has been the focus of much scholarship in Israel studies. The sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt (1967) has described the importance of Ben-Gurion to organizational structures formed in the early years of the state. He faced the enormous challenge of getting the pre-state Zionist factionalist movements to unite. Political versus cultural Zionist factions were now asked to put aside their animosity for

one another’s goals and methods. They were asked to down play their differences in order to build up the country. This push for unity was termed Ben-Gurion’s focus on statism or *mamlachtiut*.\(^96\) It involved strengthening bureaucratic control over functions previously performed by voluntary partisan associations. This included uniting individual pre-state militias.

As a charismatic leader with a strong personality, Ben-Gurion initially succeeded in merging the identification of the diverse movements and interests with that of the state. Negotiating between ideologically distant factions, such as the socialist based labor party (Mapai) and the General Zionists, a liberal capitalist entity, Ben-Gurion managed to form a parliamentary government coalition. However he also had to appease the new stakeholders. This included making concessions to the religious parties in terms of the Jewish character of the state. Ben-Gurion instituted state policies mandating the observance of dietary laws in public institutions as well as some form of Sabbath observance. He also had to make concessions that reflected the goals of the socialist parties. The 1953 Basic Education Act is an example of this blend. It mandated elements taken from the socialist based goals of respect for communal farming, working and exploring the land together with a classical Bible curriculum. In addition, the Act included the blending of the citizenry in Israel with that of loyalty to an entire Jewish people.

As much as he could, Ben-Gurion had distanced himself from dogmatic Marxism. Ben-Gurion particularly objected to the a-priori Marxist rejection of Jewish religious views. He referred to the radical left as “Strange Fire” or *eish zarah*. This phrase has a

from the episode of the strange sacrificial offering of the sons of Aaron which gets them killed.\textsuperscript{97}

While he was critiqued for not supporting the extreme left in a worldwide communist revolution, Ben-Gurion was also critiqued for tying in the fate of world Jewry with that of Israel. The Middle East Studies scholar Don Peretz (1993) has noted that due to concerns on the part of Jews in America, an arrangement had to be made between David Ben-Gurion and leaders of the American Jewish community organizations regarding how he referred to them. While Ben-Gurion wanted to tie in the identity of world Jewry with that of the Jewish state, using ambiguous statements referring to one body, the leaders asked that the two not be confused. Clarity on the identity of American Jews as Americans and Israeli Jews as Israeli citizens was requested with no blurring of the distinction between American and Israeli Jews.\textsuperscript{98}

\textbf{The leap of faith necessary to leave the Diaspora for uncharted waters}

Mitchell Cohen (2003) has noted the ideological conflict between the new Jew focused on acting for and building a homeland versus the Diaspora Jew. The latter was seen as passively dreaming of and praying for one.\textsuperscript{99} Zionism was not initially supported by a religious establishment suspicious of the mostly secular and socialist pioneers moving to Palestine. The leap of faith needed by the early pioneers was enormous. After arriving, in the early twentieth century, many Jews returned to their home countries after being shaken by the intense poverty of the land. Many could not endure the split from their

\textsuperscript{97} The Biblical phrase can be found in Leviticus, X, 1-2.
former families, friends and professions. Ben-Gurion symbolized the practicality required of that generation in terms of being able to look forward and not back. Haiim Hazaz (1942) in *The Sermon* presents the difficulties of the pioneers. The kibbutz-farmer protagonist Yudka is asked to speak at a town hall meeting in an Israeli collective settlement. The town hall meeting was a distinctive feature of the collective settlement. As a democratic organization the collective had members vote on all aspects of life. The votes included decisions on whether vacations should be granted to certain workers, whether marriages should be allowed and other personal details. Yudka questions the very sanity of the Zionist project:

> How, how can men who are by no means simple, who were no fools at all; on the contrary, very shrewd men, men with more than a touch of skepticism, men who are practical, and maybe even a bit too practical, how can they believe something like that, a thing like that- and not just believe, but trust it, pin their whole life upon it, the whole substance of their life and survival, their national, historic fate?100

**Israel studies connected to Ben-Gurion University**

Ben-Gurion went to live in the Negev desert where he retired upon leaving office.

Following his death in the early 1970s the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) passed legislation to memorialize him and his contribution to the early years of the state. The legislation allocated funds for the establishment of an archive/library to house his vast collection of papers in the Negev (Sdeh Boker). The archive was called a heritage center, or *moreshet* Ben-Gurion. This legislation also included academic positions funded by the government for research on the early years of the state. This legislation was important to the Israel studies program created later at Ben-Gurion University. A journal was also established

---

with a joint affiliation between the Ben-Gurion Research Center and the Oxford Center for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. *Israel studies* became the leading journal of the emerging field.

**A Homeless Queen and a Crownless King**

The poet and university literature professor Leah Goldberg was one of the lucky few to find a position at the newly established Hebrew University after fleeing Berlin in the 1930s. In her poetry, Goldberg describes the Palestine she found. It is a place where the pilgrimage seekers can forget their troubles. However it is also a place which requires a great wisdom of the heart to understand that some will stray, some will make mistakes, and only for some, “will a door open”. An often cited line refers to the beloved land as one of great poverty where the “queen is homeless, the king crownless” with only seven days of holiday a year to provide respite from the many burdens. Yet she writes that the praises of every street and corner of this land have been sung and will continue to be sung. The ruins of the walls have been kept as memories by those wandering from city to city and state to state.101

**A wandering singer of Zion’s praises—and visiting positions in Israel studies**

The indelible image in Jewish studies of the wandering praise singer of Zion is mirrored in visiting positions of Israel studies. These positions evoke the cultural emissaries sent abroad to teach Hebrew and promote Zionism to communities in Europe and America. in the pre-state period. After statehood, employees of various government agencies continued to visit Jewish communities around the world. In a continuation of the *Tarbut*

---

Ivrit or cultural paradigm model of Hebrew instruction, the messengers from the holy land continued to provide educational programs about Israeli culture and society. They also facilitated travel programs to Israel.

In recent years a new kind of messenger has been created by American philanthropists concerned with the absence of the Israeli viewpoint on campus. Recruited from mostly Israeli universities, the visiting scholars of Israel studies are funded for two-year stints in American colleges. Limited sojourns in the host country had been part of the rules for cultural emissaries of the Israeli government. Restricted time periods were meant to guarantee that emissaries returned and that they continued to reflect current cultural and political trends.

Making sure that a visiting Israel studies program did not create a brain drain or encourage immigration to America was important, as noted by Mitchell Bard, the executive director of the American Israel Cooperative Enterprise Cooperative.\textsuperscript{102} Bard (2008) has dated the beginning of the visiting scholar program as 2004-2005. It quickly grew to 27 visiting scholars in the academic year (2008-9) on 26 campuses. The private funding for the program was connected to the Second Intifada or Palestinian uprising. Attention was paid to the anti-Israel activism on American campuses which included mock checkpoints set up by students. These were meant to protest the security measures used against terrorists in Israel. Scholars in the visiting professor program must be accepted by the host department and institution to ensure that their academic record is objectively evaluated. Mitchell Bard (2006) had also done a survey of American colleges.

through the Israel on Campus Coalition which also identified the need for Israel Studies
Chairs and programs.\(^{103}\)

In a televised speech given in 2007 by then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert at an Israeli
ceremony on Holocaust Memorial Day a focus was placed on the animosity towards
Israel on college campuses. The former Prime Minister said in his address that

there are many, gathered in prestigious academic institutions whose eyes
are blinded and hearts are closed by hatred for Israel. They deny the right
of the Jewish people to exist in a sovereign state. They are the first to find
justification for any atrocious act against the residents of Israel and to
vehemently condemn any defensive action taken by the State of Israel.\(^{104}\)

Although the Prime Minister was viewed as fighting for his political life at the time of the
speech, a discussion of university polemics on a ceremonial occasion was unusual. It
reflected the growing attention paid to academic discourse on the political level which
was seen as threatening support for Israel’s legitimacy.

Columbia University

Columbia University has been one of the campuses noted for anti-Israel rhetoric. The
extremely negative portrayal of Israel by professors in Middle East studies and Iranian
studies has been linked to the influence of the late Edward Said, as will be examined in
the case study chapter.\(^{105}\) Ironically, J.C. Hurewitz (1993) has noted that Columbia
University pioneered the study of the Middle East first at the Center for Jewish and Israel
studies with funding from the Jewish Agency.\(^{105}\) Salo Baron, the holder of a Chair of
Jewish History was involved in raising funds. Ernst Jackh, described by Hurewitz as an

\(^{103}\) Mitchell Bard is on the Academic Board of the Israel on Campus Coalition, which published the report entitled, \textit{In Search of Israel Studies- A survey of Israel Studies on American College Campuses.}


“old Turcophile” with a doctorate from Heidelberg University in 1899, who had presided over the Politische Hochshule in Berlin in the interwar decades, was also active. The timing of opening one of the first interdisciplinary area studies programs was connected to the publicity following the granting of an honorary degree to the Shah of Iran in 1949.

The Center for Jewish and Israel studies was initially opposed by Schyler C. Wallace, chairman of the Department of Public Law and Government and Director of Columbia’s School of International affairs. He was reluctant to introduce what was already becoming known as an area of stubborn disputes. Only when the Center was promoted as a test study for how to raise funds and experiment with a regional institute, did Wallace agreed to cooperate as a “feasibility test” for future institutes.

Following a grant from the Jewish Agency for an initial five year period, the Center was established in 1950. Hurewitz was recruited to offer courses on the political and social institutions of Israel as well as on the Palestinian problem. He recalled that the classes attracted large numbers including U.N. personnel. He had been advised to schedule the topic of Israel and Palestine in the evening to attract extension as well as full-time students. Hurewitz speculates that the proximity of Columbia University to the UN was part of the attraction for funding.

The influence of Palestine on American Middle East Studies scholars

Don Peretz and J.C. Hurewitz were American scholars who linked the focus of their careers on the Middle East to an overseas study program at the pre-state Hebrew University. Peretz (1993) was able to use army educational benefits after W.W.II to study at Hebrew University in 1946. He recalls being influenced by the political discussions between Jewish and Arab residents of Palestine being held at Hebrew
University. In a memoir he recalls that he was taken hostage by Palestinian Arab forces in the walls of the Old City in Feb. 1947 while moving between the Jewish sector and the British zone of Jerusalem. Luckily he was able to eventually negotiate his own release after expressing familiarity with and admiration for a pro-Palestinian political faction at the university, led by Martin Buber among others.106

J.C. Hurewitz was also influenced by his study at Hebrew University. He changed his thesis to reflect an interest in the partition plan proposed by the British for Palestine in 1937. Hurewitz had enrolled as a graduate student in the history department of Columbia University when he received a fellowship to study abroad at the Hebrew University’s school of Oriental Studies. The subject he originally planned to research was the Ottoman Empire and foreign consulates. However, Hurewitz (1993) notes that the discussion of the partition plan was so fascinating that it led to a new topic later published as *The Struggle for Palestine*. Hurewitz also credits the volunteer work he was able to do at the Kibbutz Mishmar Ha-emek a “leftist collective which advocated cooperation with the Palestinian Arabs even in the midst of their three year revolt,” as important to opening his eyes to the complex dynamics of Zionism.107

Hurewitz (1993) recalled wanting to major in Middle Eastern studies at Columbia University in the mid 1930’s. However, he was told that Columbia offered no direct instruction in modern Middle Eastern history. He was also told that it wasn’t offered at any other American university. Eventually he discovered a survey course on Ottoman


history taught in the interwar decades at the University of Illinois. The course was only offered in alternate years.\textsuperscript{108}

**The Survey Course**

The famous Contemporary Civilization Course at Columbia University, an undergraduate required course for many years, has been traced by Lucas (1994) to a “war issues” course introduced in 1919. It was one of several implemented at various universities. The courses offered a new methodological approach, in that a multidisciplinary curriculum was used to combine social, historical and literary references.\textsuperscript{109}

The University of Wisconsin adopted a similar course with a variety of new social science perspectives, including that of economics, used in studying the classic civilizations. The novelty of such survey courses as opposed to traditional language or classics courses has been described in the work of Brubacher & Rudy (1976) as the broadening of issues discussed. Social, economic and political perspectives could be related to contemporary events such as the World War.\textsuperscript{110}

The ideal area studies academic program was described by Albert Hourani (1993). He pointed to Gibb’s (1963) description of the creation of a nucleus of specialists in various subjects within the Faculty of Oriental studies. These specialists should be able to interact with each other and have the necessary language skills required in that area. They would also function as “missionaries” for the area studies program in terms of

outreach to other faculties in the university. These specialists would be “amphibians” of sorts, at home both in Oriental studies and in other disciplines.  

The concept of the “amphibian” as an area studies expert, assumes that various disciplines are open to “hopping” in and out. Charles Issawi (1993) an economist who has focused on the Middle East, has noted that it was very difficult to move between departments. It was difficult to persuade economics students to take on the burden of learning a foreign. Economists saw “area studies” as below their dignity. It was believed that economics is like physics, independent of time and space and that their theories apply to all cultures.  

The difficulty of crossing disciplines is evident in the recruitment calls for Israel studies chairs. For example, the language of the call for an Israel studies chair at San Francisco State University in 2008 is extremely broad in scope. The reputation of the university as anti-Israel has been cited as one of the reasons for a $3.75 million gift which has been called the largest endowed chair ever received in the California State University system. Fred Astren, the Director of Jewish studies, in announcing the gift, noted that there were two ways of approaching Israel studies, one by teaching the conflict, and the other by describing a “normal place where people live lives”. He hoped that both approaches would be used. Comparing Israel studies with American studies, Astren pointed to expectations to describe a nation through science based theoretical or humanities based historical or literary, history, politics, language, culture, art,


socioeconomics, religion, ethnic makeup, international relations and modern society elements.\textsuperscript{114}

This call echoes the language of a 2005 Association of Israel studies conference plenary session on how to effectively teach about Israel. The session became a forum for arguments as to methodological and disciplinary focus. The arguments centered on the competing strategies of teaching the conflict (with a focus on the wars) or teaching the history and society of Israel which can be consumed by the conflict.\textsuperscript{115}

The Association of Israel studies provides an important point of departure for the analysis of Israel studies. Don Peretz (1993) has praised the association in terms of it approaching the topic of Israeli politics in a critical fashion. Present at the first conference held in 1985 at Dartmouth College, in which some 35 scholars participated, Peretz noted the wide ideological spectrum. It included leftist oriented Peace Now sympathizers to semi hawks in terms of the academics involved and on the Board of Directors \textsuperscript{116} This broad range is reflected in the annual conferences of the association, which addressed many problems in the country with open, frank and often revealing analysis.\textsuperscript{117}


\textsuperscript{115} The session occurred at the AIS conference in Arizona in 2005. The main proponent of the political science approach was Ian Lustick, while Ken Stein introduced the importance of a historical approach focused on document analysis. The session then became a forum for many different disciplinary arguments, such as teaching about an area (Israel) through gender studies (as voiced by Shulamit Reinharz).

\textsuperscript{116} Peace Now was a political movement in Israel affiliated with left of center parties who advocated immediate territorial compromise with the Palestinians and recognition of the late Yasser Arafat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, then considered a terrorist organization. Peace Now had European and American benefactors and supporters who pushed for the signing of the Oslo accords which legitimized Arafat.

Other members of the group of scholars who formed the Association of Israel studies included Ian Lustick, then at Dartmouth, Myron Aronoff of Rutgers University, Barry Rubin, then a fellow for the Council on Foreign Relations, Mitch Cohen then of Baruch College, and Jerold Green, then at the University of Arizona’s Middle East Center. Barry Rubin (1997) has noted that the impetus for creating such a scholarly organization came at an annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). A conversation between Myron Aronoff and Jerold Green was overheard by Rubin in which the prevailing view was that program and contents of that MESA annual meeting showed the need for an organization focusing on the study of Israel. Rubin recalled that he also felt the need for such an association following his years as a graduate student at Georgetown University. In that period he saw a proposal to establish a Center for Arab Studies which explicitly stated that avoiding the name “Middle East” and thus excluding Israel, would make the project more attractive to prospective Arab donors. As a scholar of Middle East Studies, Rubin found that Israel was either ignored altogether in Middle East studies or addressed in the most polemically hostile manner, and viewed only in the framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The special features of the country’s history, society and political culture were eliminated, resulting in a demonization of Israel in academic circles related to the Middle East. This reflects the anti-Israel ideological viewpoint described by Tobin, Weinberg & Ferer (2005) as placing the Israel/Palestine conflict at the core of all the world’s problems.

---

119 Ibid., p.7.
Many of the endowed chairs of Israel studies have resulted in “one – person shows” in terms of the lack of a degree program or corresponding department to back up the scholar. Tobin, Weinberg & Ferer (2005) compare anti-Israel rhetoric with racially motivated hate speech which is never offset by a “token” position. The inclusion of a course in the department taught by a visiting professor, or the endowment of a single chair position in Israel studies, particularly when such positions come from private charitable funding, it is argued, is not enough to cancel the effects of extremely negative rhetoric.

An analysis of Israel studies evokes such issues regarding the polarization of the academic environment. Does a class in Israel studies taught by academics careful not to advocate politically for the Israeli government counter anti-Israel demonstrations outside the classroom, or strong ideological rhetoric against the legitimacy of the state used by scholars of Middle East studies centers? What happens when positions related to Israel studies are filled with academics identified with the Palestinian side of the conflict and ready to sign anti-Israel petitions, rather than counter them?\(^{121}\) Do privately endowed positions in Israel studies which do not represent advocacy, nevertheless just feed into the prejudices of those convinced of a strong pro-Israel lobby?\(^{122}\) If the Palestinian side is presented in the Israel studies curriculum, with the Israel side/position of the conflict be

\(^{121}\) Yinon Cohen, of Columbia University, is one such example, as noted in the inclusion of his signature in a petition of academics from Columbia University calling for President Bollinger to condemn Israel for the Gaza operation as posted online on Feb.16, 2009 by Lila Abu-Lughod, a controversial professor of anthropology and the first to sign. Columbia University has posed a challenging environment for Israel studies following the pro-Palestinian stance and influential legacy of Edward Said as will be examined in a later chapter.

presented in Middle East studies as well? These questions will be addressed in the four cases studies.
Chapter 3: Describing an Emerging Field

Using the policy interview as a qualitative researcher

Denzin & Lincoln (2003) describe qualitative research. Methods used in qualitative research include case studies and various narratives. I use case studies, archival research, scholar surveys-policy interviews and cultural narratives to describe the process of the normalization and development of Israel studies. Qualitative researchers present a variety of empirical materials such as the case study, personal experience, observation, introspection, interview, artifacts, cultural texts and production, which may be intertwined with historical analysis.

Questioning academics

I use a qualitative research method of an open ended policy interview and academic survey to assess Israel studies chair holders. Some examples of previous qualitative research surveys of academics include that of Shulamit Reinharz (1995) and Tony Becher (1989). Reinharz looked at the influence of the Chicago School of sociology on the sociology program at Brandeis University as “a case study in cultural diffusion.” Her work relied heavily on interviews with faculty and their recollections of the founding of

---

125 Ibid., p.5.
the program. While Reinharz focused on the development of one department, Tony Becher (1989) interviewed academics across disciplines. His goal was to highlight how subjects were viewed across disciplines. His work, which spanned not just departments but also universities, pointed to the existence of “academic tribes and territories”. He referred to differences in how work methods were valued including such parameters as independent discovery, adherence to the work group, and other patterns. Particularly important for interdisciplinary chairs, his work highlighted the crucial problem of “border zones” between disciplines.¹²⁷

**Defining one’s position**

I am sure that my position as an adjunct lecturer in Israel studies had an impact on my choice of topic. I taught a course at the Ohio State University for nearly a decade in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Culture. Following questions from students as to what other courses were available with Israel related content, I became curious as to the emergence of Israel studies as an academic discipline. A desire to compare Israel studies with other area studies programs soon followed. I also began to focus on the question on the question of teaching the conflict versus teaching the history. Compared with the experience in taking and reading about other area studies courses, this area seemed to be especially important for the Israeli context.

After checking with colleagues and examining course syllabi, I realized that the course I was teaching was the only one regularly offered on modern Israel. It functioned as a


¹²⁹ These conversations were held with members of the department of Near Eastern Languages and Culture at the Ohio State University in the Spring of 2005 with further information presented at a paper at the AIS conference that year.
survey course of the history, society and culture of the country. The course was routinely
taught by adjunct faculty, as well as wedged into the Semitics language department
although it was taught in English and dealt with societal issues. I began to wonder why it
was not included in the federally funded Middle East Studies Center at Ohio State. In
addition, having just completed a degree in an area studies program I wondered how such
programs are integrated within the university structure.

Even compiling a tentative chronology of the only course offered on modern Israel at
Ohio State University was difficult. It pointed to conflicting memories. When I
questioned faculty as to how the course was introduced, I was told that the impetus to
introduce a society and culture class came after the Six Day War between Israel and the
Arab states in 1967. An increased focus on the Middle East had followed the war I was
told. This followed the emotional rollercoaster of the euphoric atmosphere of Israeli
victory following the bleak sense of doom which had lead up to the war with the
Egyptian threat to “throw the Jews into the Sea”.

After interviewing some other faculty members I was told that it had been added
during the next war. I was told that this followed the disappointment with Israel which
accompanied the perceived lack of preparation for the war and the heavy Israeli
casualties suffered in 1973 (the Yom Kippur War).129 After conducting archival research
at the Ohio State University, I found the installation of the course to fall in between the
two wars. It had apparently come from a “top down” rather than “bottom up” process
initiated to promote a greater understanding of other countries (in an early multicultural/globalization effort) throughout the university.\textsuperscript{130}

**Building on a survey of courses with Israel content**

A content analysis of courses with Israel in the title was the subject of a survey by the ICC (2006) or the non-profit Israel on Campus Coalition. That survey did not focus on chair holders of Israel studies in terms of disciplinary focus and recognition. Indeed, a need for further research in that direction was noted.\textsuperscript{131} The ICC survey is the broadest in terms of the collection of empirical data on what courses are offered with some Israel content in the title. It did not look at the academics teaching those courses in terms of departmental affiliation or recognition in the field. Courses with Israel related content have also been examined by researchers such as Ian Lustick (2005), in terms of assigned textbooks and curriculum choices. However, attention has not been focused on the disciplinary focus and academic identity of the scholars and chair holders and how space is being found for them.\textsuperscript{132}

**Academic positions and disciplinary focus**

As Israel studies chairs are just beginning to be established in universities around the country, I examine where chair holders are being located. I look at what location means in terms of disciplinary focus and academic identity.

\textsuperscript{130} Archival work was conducted into the files of the Melton Center for Jewish studies at the Ohio State University as well as the department of Near Eastern Languages and Culture in Fall 2008.

\textsuperscript{131} As noted in the introduction to the report, *In Search Of Israel Studies a Survey of Israel Studies on American College Campuses*. Published by the Israel On Campus Coalition, a partnership of the Charles & Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, in cooperation with a network of national organizations.

\textsuperscript{132} Lustick, I. (2005) as heard from a paper presented to the AIS conference, in Arizona, at the plenary session on Israel studies around the country. Lustick examined the syllabi of various courses with Israel content.
As Hendel (2000) noted, a recognized discipline plays a significant part in identity formation for the academic. This is particularly important for Israel studies chair holders. As pioneers in an emerging and contested subject of study, Israel studies chair holders have been examined in the case studies in terms of identity formation in an academic culture. I access archival sources in addition to academic surveys. I was graciously given permission by the Association of Israel studies, the leading scholarly organization in the field, to examine their archive at the University of Wisconsin. The archival documents helped my understanding of the motivations behind the founding of the organization. I was also able to examine first-hand accounts of disciplinary concerns such as guarding access to and controlling presentation of a hotly contested field.

**The policy interview**

The policy interview as described by Tierney & Dilley (2002) is an information gathering tool that is particularly useful for answering questions regarding changes taking place within and across institutions. As space is in the process of being created for Israel studies, the policy interview is used to qualitatively describe the experiences of the academic chair holders. Such interviews have been previously used in the work of Tony Becher (1989) to survey academics regarding how disciplines develop and how they are regarded within a university structure.

Becher & Parry (2005) defined academic disciplines in terms of two distinguishable aspects- the cognitive and the social. A discipline needs to be surrounded by some boundary, or marking of territory, with the basic knowledge domain that falls within that
boundary being clearly identifiable.\textsuperscript{133} Marking that basic knowledge domain is what I have found to be part of the problem with the emerging discipline of Israel studies.

In addition, I examine social aspects tied in with academic identity as expressed by Israel studies chair holders. Becher & Parry (2005) described the social aspect of a discipline as involving such factors as integration within the working structure of the university, including such structural parameters as teaching courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels.\textsuperscript{134} This type of integration in terms of courses taught and other facets of academic visibility are examined.

Integration within the academic community of a discipline involves a set of shared cultural values, or a sense of common concerns despite doctrinal controversies. A sense of shared concerns within an academic department or discipline may be particularly poignant in terms of Israel studies chair holders facing existential criticism of their research subject. There is an academic questioning of Israel’s legitimacy as noted by Ruth Wisse (1992).\textsuperscript{135}

Israel studies chair holders face challenges defining the discipline of Israel studies in terms of cognitive and social aspects. An analysis of such boundaries of academic identity and shared common concerns can be useful to scholars in other fields with interdisciplinary approaches. Such approaches are particularly important in that stepping outside the discipline may lead to creative theoretical constructs and paradigm shifts.

Hall and Tarrow (1998) noted that area studies as a field allowed scholars to step outside


\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p.133-4.

established boundaries to create new work, such as that by Anderson (1983) on imagined communities, which was written while at an area studies program.\textsuperscript{136}

Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002) have argued that values are a key factor in communities of practice. Higher education theorists have looked at the concept of communities of practice in terms of the connections between learning and the social process as more and more applicable to the university setting. For Israel studies scholars, as well as area studies scholars holding country focused chairs within a broader subject discipline, creating an identity in respective communities of practice must be constantly negotiated. Centers or departments devoted entirely to Israel studies are not normative and chair holders need to be hired by another department.

**Experiential programs in Israel studies**

The concept of communities of practice has also been important to the development of the summer institute workshop. A Hebrew language workshop was begun as part of the New York University program in 1947 by the Dewey influenced A. Katsh. The workshop pioneered a total immersion approach with experience in Israel. This type of experiential program has also been part of the Brandeis Summer Institute in Israel studies.\textsuperscript{138}

Israel studies as a field has also incorporated the analysis of experiential communities such as the kibbutz and other forms of communal living. The Israeli collective farms


were unusual in comparison with other socialist systems in that they were not compulsory. There were great variations and types of communities that shared everything from farming equipment to living rooms. Changes in the rules of the collective community were often enacted after high numbers of participants had decided to leave.

**Stability in narratives relating to Israel studies**

The creation of an academic identity for Israel studies scholars involves *stability*.

Anthony Giddens (1991) looked at the ability to keep a particular narrative going as connected to how a stable identity is created.\(^{139}\) Identities involve analysis of where one is going as well as where one came from. Within the academic community, such issues involve recognition of legitimate members and narratives.

**Self-definition in the survey of Israel studies scholars**

Answering the interview from the perspective of a representative of an emerging discipline such as Israel studies has been problematic for some of the respondents. Identifying as an Israel studies scholar is not always a priority. Rather a scholar may identify with the disciplinary focus of the department to which he or she is attached, i.e., history, language, cultural studies, economics or political science, with the Israel studies component marginal to that academic identity.

One untenured chair holder emphasized in an interview that although the title of the position is that of Israel studies, he considers himself just a rank and file member of the department where his tenure and promotion is to take place, rather than the forerunner of

---

a new center or department or area of academic focus. In his responses, he notes that his position is similar to any other member of the department, with the Israel component of his research not unique but comparable to other case studies used as theoretical exemplars in the (political science) department.

The respondent expressed frustration with the tag of Israel studies attached to the chair. He has received public attention due to the title of his position. However, his research needs to be comparable in method if not subject, to that of his home department. A main difference between him and another political scientist, according to the respondent, is the source of (outside) funding for his chair, which brings with it a community service debt. Requests to talk about Israel and the situation in the Middle East pour in daily, the respondent noted. After one year in the position he had just begun to decline some of them, as he is yet untenured.140

Questions of academic identity are noticeable in such responses. They reveal the problem of the scholar wedged between a home department and the area studies related chair. The respondent may focus less on his identity as an area studies scholar, and more on his identity within the larger disciplinary home/department. Acknowledgment of such core competencies may be seen as important for professional advancement.

For some respondents, even making the time to respond to a survey/policy interview on the Israel studies aspect of their academic career was a problem. Answering a survey of the field involved some assessment of the scholars’ position as a leader in the field. Indeed, Israel studies scholars from Columbia University evaded answering the survey

140 Based on an interview with Nadav Shelef, the Israel studies chair at the University of Wisconsin by the author, Fall 2007.
altogether. Columbia University has proven to be a contested site of identity politics, as will be examined in a later chapter.

**Israel studies and area studies**

Area studies at American universities have been the topic of numerous academic surveys. An early survey was conducted by Fenton (1947) for the American Council on Education. He surveyed area studies at American universities that were affiliated with the armed services educational programs in 1944. While W.W.II provided the backdrop for the choice of areas worthy of study, the issues examined in terms of disciplinary focus were already contentious. The question of where to place the emphasis was already prominent. Such questions included whether language instruction was a prerequisite for the study of a civilization and whether the teaching of an area can occur without advanced language study. These issues are still debated in the designing of Israel studies programs, as was evident in the interviews of chair holders and directors.

More recently, Immanuel Wallerstein (1997) examined area studies development in terms of required academic background. He found the general pattern to be one of graduate study in a standard discipline combined with training in general knowledge of a region. Wallerstein has also traced the beginning of area studies development to the W.W.II era. At this time, a lack of regional experts with an emphasis on understanding and predicting the dynamics of contemporary politics and economics was acknowledged. While there were specialists in classical texts, as well as geographers and anthropologists


studying various regions there was now a need for experts to interpret economic, political and cultural affairs for the United States government.

**Area studies and the cooperative attack on a region**

The new and improved regional studies expert was expected to be multi-disciplinary. The expert was also expected to have a global orientation in terms of theoretical application. What were formerly seen as largely isolated disciplines and vertical pillars of knowledge were to be connected through area studies to create a “cooperative attack” upon the whole knowledge of an area. However, a hard core of area studies was still viewed as tied in with competence in the traditional disciplines, with doctorates coming from an established discipline.\(^{143}\) An area studies scholar was seen as incorporating a more global approach in terms of a general social science based practical application. This approach was contrasted with the more scholastic focus on text interpretation, language and culture. The ideal area studies center would include cooperation among all the social science disciplines with each specialist dependent on another for analysis. An analogy was drawn between the field of medicine which is composed of the application of a number of sciences, and teamwork.

From the onset, however, Wallerstein (1997) cites the quarrels between area studies and the disciplines. These battles centered over the virtues of the disciplinary generalist as opposed to the area specialist. The former was presumed to be superior in terms of theoretical and methodological skills. These distinctions played into battles for resources based on methodology.\(^{144}\) The battles were important as they predated general changes in

---

\(^{143}\) Ibid., p.203.
concepts of disciplinary focus. The disciplinary generalist approach began to replace the idea of the area specialist. This was largely due to an emphasis on technique and method rather than appreciation of the object of study. Such changes would lead to the charge of knowledge being used to manipulate and control the object of study. This was in contrast to the appreciation of the subject under study as was formerly inherit in language and literature specializations.\textsuperscript{145} Cultural studies and post-modern theoretical constructs were to revive these debates in many area studies programs.

**Case studies**

Michael Crotty (2004) has described epistemological issues such as identifying the academic setting and social context in qualitative analysis.\textsuperscript{146} I contextualize the interviews with supplementary background information about the particular universities. I have picked some case studies as illustrations of trends salient to Israel studies. I incorporate interviews with other background material, for case studies that point to academic identity formation and shared cultural values involved in defining a disciplinary focus.

I will highlight four case studies. I have chosen them because of how they illuminate particular themes apparent in the process of normalization of Israel studies. The four universities are: Michigan State University, The University of Wisconsin, Columbia University and New York University. These case studies will present differences in the implementation of Israel studies chairs and programs. In addition, historical information about each institution provides a *comparative* context. I particularly examine how the

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., p.212.
choice of the Israel studies scholar to fit each institution reflects the social parameters involved.

**Discussion of the Sample**

The sample covered in the policy interviews is that of all the current at the time of data collection (2006-8) full time Israel studies chair holders at American universities, with chair holders in Israel and Canada used for purposes of comparison and contextualization. While I discuss the phenomenon of visiting scholars, I have not included them in the sample. As the number of chair holders is not large (a dozen in the United States and under twenty overall excluding Israel) the decision was made to canvas all the chair holders rather than a representative sample. However, for the choice of case studies, the four universities which most illustrated developing themes in Israel studies were highlighted.

The majority of the interviews were conducted through an internet questionnaire with a detailed recruitment script attached explaining the purpose of the interview. In addition, I have conducted interviews in person with some of the chair holders, as well as through follow up telephone conversations. Some of the published work of each chair holder is part of the contextualization and background information included in the research to assist in the analysis of disciplinary focus.

**Why choose the policy interview for the survey instrument?**

The policy interview as described by Tierney & Dilley (2002) is used to compile information about the emerging programs. Tierney & Dilley (2002) have described the usefulness of this type of interview in gathering information particularly regarding a
particular plan, strategy or model as employed within or across a particular system. The
policy interview is considered particularly useful in answering questions regarding
changes taking place within and across institutions, as well as outlining the problems
those changes address.\textsuperscript{147}

In the emerging field of Israel Studies, this type of interview provides a window into a
formal organization of higher education to which the individual chair holders and
directors belong. The policy interview is common when dealing with bureaucracies and
organizational change.\textsuperscript{148} For an emerging field such as Israel Studies, successful
integration of chair holders into the departmental bureaucracy with acceptance within the
university is a necessity.

Part of the challenge involved in designing the interviews will be what Johnson &
Weller (2002) have described as how to tap into a respondent’s knowledge. Framing
questions in such a way that reliable, comparable and valid responses are provided is
necessary, as well as providing some elicitation techniques.\textsuperscript{149} A good recruitment script
or introduction is necessary, explaining the interview’s purpose and the project for which
the material is being collected.\textsuperscript{150}

Knowing what questions to ask is considered an essential part of the researcher’s task.
Questions were compiled following a taxonomic approach. This included a structured
questionnaire as well as questions which relate to categories, and the relationships
between them, with specific questions used to elicit \textit{domain} items. Such items are

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., p.455.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., p.497.
described as a set of things that go together to create a domain. This may refer to a set of attributes or examples of a specific thing, or a set of sequences or developmental stages.151

Wachtel’s model of institutional development of Israel studies

The questionnaire uses some of the elements of a model presented by Howard Wachtel (2006) of a program in Israel studies. These include number of faculty, types of research facilities and courses taught, and outreach or community related activities. Faculty may involve visiting scholars, doctoral students, and post-docs, as well as a tenured chair position. The research component could consist of library facilities and publications with an outreach component such as conferences, lectures and media exposure.152 The survey reflects the search for such domains. In addition, there are questions regarding disciplinary affiliation and direction.

The Ben-Gurion School of Israel Studies and an emphasis on archival materials

A research facility and teaching positions related to the legacy of David Ben-Gurion was established by the Israeli Parliament in 1974. This set a precedent for the academic focus on the early years of the state. A full-fledged Israel studies program was set up years later at Ben-Gurion University with a degree granting capability and course offerings on aspects of Israel’s economy, politics, films, literature, ethnicity and religious life.153 Ben-Gurion University formed a prototype of a program in Israel studies. This program incorporated the focus of legislation memorializing the first Prime Minister and the

151 Ibid., p.498.
152 As presented to the AIS conference, in Banff, 2006, by Howard Wachtel.
153 Based on an interview in the summer of 2006 with Professor Tuvia Frilling, one of the founders of the department.
archive at Sde Boker, with documents related to the early years of the state, and positions for research and dissemination of that material. Choice of method, which became intertwined with the use of historical archival research for new interpretations of the early years of the state, was another important component of the scholarly output. The importance of access to archival material for new interpretations of the early years of the state was part of a 2010 award granted by the Scone Foundation at City University of New York Graduate Center to archivists of the conflict.

The Ben-Gurion school of thought in Israel studies scholarship

Gary Fine (1995) has looked at the development of academic schools of thought. He has noted that a school can be used as a term to refer to a collection of individuals working in the same environment who are defined as representing a distinct approach to a scholarly endeavor. These academics are not necessarily limited to a single department but may enjoy similar cultural environments. For the Ben-Gurion school of Israel studies, the use of the archival and historical method based on analysis of the early years of the state has become characteristic. This archival based reliance on documents related to the early years of Ben-Gurion’s life has defined not just academics based at Ben-Gurion but also Israel studies scholars based elsewhere. Academic analysis of the decisions made by Ben-Gurion are an important part of the scholarly work published in the journals affiliated with Ben-Gurion University.

Israel studies as a function of changing paradigms

The structure of scientific revolutions as described by Kuhn (1962, 1970) delineates how models and paradigms are developed. This delineation is important for an understanding of how knowledge is legitimized in the academic arena. Kuhn points to several parameters which are important to the maturity of the acquisition of a paradigm. These include the formation of specialized journals, the foundation of specialists’ societies, and the claim for a special place in the curriculum. I look for the parameters that were important to the creation of the field of Israel studies. Archival research and specialized journals connected to the Ben-Gurion School of Israel studies, as well as the founding of the Association of Israel studies, were all part of the process.

Control of knowledge production

Knowledge production includes the referee process that may filter out articles and manuscripts on Israel. Knowledge production depends on scholarly advancement and publications, which is part of the normalization process in an emerging field. The policy interview of Israel studies chairs included an assessment of opportunities for publishing and visibility in the university.

The Israel studies chair holder can encounter an additional systematic reluctance to include a focus on Israel as a case study. Ways around this include what Yael Yishai (1991) has pointed to as a justification for exceptional circumstances, as in the

Israeli case, neither East nor West, colonized nor colonizer. Including Israel as a subject of comparative study is dependent on perceptions by academics who decide what belongs in the intellectual discourse. Barnett (1996) has noted that how the academy produces, organizes and treats knowledge of Israel is part of the sociology of knowledge.

For Israel studies scholars, functioning between a home department and a specialized chair, being seen as a legitimate member of the academic community involves changing identities. Particularly when perceptions of the legitimacy of Israel are problematic as in the post-colonial (Said) theoretical era, with the sense that the country itself represents an alien and unwelcome presence in some academic circles, Israel studies scholars are reluctant to identify themselves. One way around this may be to emphasize Middle Eastern (rather than European) elements through comparing linguistic similarities between Hebrew and Arabic, as well as commonalities shared by Sephardic Jews and their Arab neighbors, as a disciplinary focus, and or to adopt pro-Palestinian political stance regarding sides of the regional conflict.

The case studies will compare Israel studies to Jewish studies in terms of disciplinary focus. Jewish studies were integrated and used in the university at times by various disciplines. Jewish studies were mainstreamed into religious programs to defend religion in the face of biblical criticism, and into history departments to support Western civilization. At the same time they were viewed as a way to open up religion and ancient texts to scholarly inspection.

Israel studies has been caught between a classics based curriculum, with some study of Hebrew and the Bible important to understanding the origins and history of Zionism and post modern cultural studies in languages and literature which have displaced that curriculum. Israel studies scholars have also used a heavily theoretical based political science approach, with topics such as managing the conflict (or solving it) paramount. Area studies and international studies and political scientists were behind the founding of the Association of Israel studies in 1985 and among the first presidents. Other early areas of focus included the study of Jews in Arab lands.

Academics negotiate complex identities and cultural histories. Ruth Hayhoe (2006) has written of the difficulty of fitting Chinese data into Western theoretical categories, and how to negotiate the “interface between Chinese and Western categories of knowledge”. Hayhoe is interested in how to insert knowledge from area studies into the core competencies of disciplines such as political, science and economics. She points to China’s elevated economic status as part of the reason behind the increased visibility of Chinese studies and the interest in penetrating the core of such disciplines.

Dan Porat (2006) has looked at early Zionist historians. They struggled with where to situate the history of the land of Israel within Jewish history. The prominent proponent of cultural Zionism known by his pen name, Ahad Ha-am (literally, “one of the people”) writing in the early 20th century promoted Jewish nationalism as incorporating comparative histories by definition. He believed that unlike Serb or Bulgarian nationalism for example, Jewish nationalism could not only focus on identification with

---

159 Hayhoe, R. (Feb. 2006). She is cited as part of a panel ‘Moderated discussion- Comparative education, area studies and the disciplines.” (126-148). Comparative Education Review.

the land and language of Palestine. It had to take into account the cultural assets and ways of thinking developed by Jews over the centuries in their places of exile. For this reason, Ahad Ha-am linked the study of world history with Jewish history through a method of *comparison*. Scholarly topics had to be linked to the events in the lives of other nations, rather than seen as miraculously unique and without connection to the laws of the world.\(^\text{161}\)

**Methods used in comparative education**

Noah & Eckstein (1998) described five identifiable stages in method in comparative education. These included travelers’ tales as a beginning of looking at how children were reared in other countries, up until the development of the social science explanation. This included the attempt to put information about education within a broader historical and political context. Rather than pure description, which oral traditions and even travelers’ tales had provided, the social scientist had an added burden of prescription. Prediction became an important element of the interdisciplinary equation including analysis of comparative education.\(^\text{162}\)

Area studies and comparative research in education have similar issues in terms of making meanings in context. Noah & Eckstein (1998) argue that moving beyond the social science categories of data and perspective is necessary. They argue that the comparative education field is best defined as the intersection of the social sciences, education and cross national study.\(^\text{163}\) The Israel studies chair as well must move


\(^{163}\) Ibid., p 58.
beyond traditional definitions in both the social sciences and the language departments to which their chair may be linked. They need to integrate their specific focus with the larger disciplinary focus. This reflects the elements relevant to the creation of a discipline, in terms of cognitive and social categories as described by Becher (1989, 2005). The entry into the academic community for a scholar with work focused on the Israeli experience, involves looking for commonalities with other theories or countries in the region.

**Historians and Israel studies**

Yoav Gelber (2007) has written of the complexities of methodological issues for Jewish historians. In his discussion of the Jerusalem school of Jewish historiography, he noted that what was emphasized was how Jews in various places throughout their exile were unified through the ability to minimize the specifics of each personal case, in favor of presenting a collective summary.\textsuperscript{164} Gary Fine (1995) in his work on defining a school of thought, points to the need to identify some portion of the group as characteristic of the whole. Such attempts to identify and map “intellectual space” contextualize history and determine what Fine terms “intellectual destiny”.\textsuperscript{165}

Providing measures of academic excellence is important to an emerging discipline. Mordechai Gordon (2007) looked at interdisciplinary research in the field of education in terms of definitions of discovery and originality. He pointed to the many ways in which meanings were made of findings- whether from a perspective of philosophy, psychology


80
and sociology - and which may not all be valued equally.\textsuperscript{166} If difficulties exist in terms of making meanings of research within disciplines, what strategies can an area studies based chair holder - whose work involves crossing culture-based subjects as well as methods - use to navigate the process of tenure and promotion? In terms of judging scholarly work, addressing the “so what” question is difficult for interdisciplinary and comparative research. How is the significance standard valued across disciplines?\textsuperscript{167} Kelly & Altbach (1986), in their work on the challenges of comparative education, have noted the ways in which data is critiqued.\textsuperscript{168} The field of comparative education has also involved accepting methodological variations, as noted by Lawson (1990), accompanied by, “endless verbal differences over academic identification”.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., p.198. Gordon cites the work of Glassick, Huber and Maeroff. \textit{Scholarship Assessed}.
Chapter 4: The First Two Case Studies

Two Public Institutions - Michigan State University and the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Robert Yin (1989, 2009) has done extensive work on the applicability of the case study to various research strategies. He calls it particularly useful for policy and public administration research in which there is a need to understand complex social phenomenon. The case study presents information which retains “the holistic and meaningful characterization of real life events” ranging from individual life cycles, to organizational and managerial processes. 170 Yin (1989) defines the case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. 171 Yin (2009) delineates the elements of case studies in terms of a unit of analysis which is addressed by the main study question, with the unit of analysis an organization or person, or various cases of each.

For my analysis of the process of normalization of Israel studies, the unit of focus is both the individual, as in the Israel studies academic, and the organization. The latter included the scholarly association of AIS (the Association of Israel studies) as well as the specific universities in which the programs are situated.

171 Ibid., p.23.
Yin (2009) has noted that unlike experiments in which a phenomenon is deliberately divorced from its context, so that attention can be focused on a few variables while the context is controlled by the laboratory experiment, the case study is useful for explaining a present circumstance in terms of how or why when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated as in an experiment.\(^{172}\) The case study method when used for contemporary events also includes direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons included in the events.

Many of the same techniques as historians studying previous periods are used in case studies, which include primary and secondary documents and archival material. Yin (2009) points to the strength of the case study method in that it can incorporate a wide variety of evidence. In addition to interviews, letters, memoranda, minutes of meetings, proposals and other internal records as well as types of correspondence and documents such as news clippings and other versions of events under study were used to compile the four case studies.

Yin (2009) also differentiates between case studies and the way in which surveys use a sampling logic. The latter can reflect data that is assumed to present an operational enumeration of the entire universe.\(^{173}\) Case studies by contrast, are not typically used to assess the frequency and prevalence of a particular phenomenon, but to cover both the phenomenon of interest and its context. The case study cannot represent the entire phenomenon, but it can provide answers as to how and why a particular phenomenon occurred. While preparing case studies of the process of normalization of Israel studies, I have used interviews to collect various perceptions of this process. Questions for the


\(^{173}\) Ibid., p.56.
participants were then combined with direct observation of academic activities. This included conference presentations, and board meetings of the Association of Israel studies. In addition, archival material of that organization was accessed which included minutes of meetings, program data, and other documents. The case studies also incorporated some of the published work of the Israel studies academics for the intellectual history component. Rather than representing the entire phenomenon as in a sample, the case studies were chosen in terms of how they demonstrate a particular phenomenon, that of the process of normalization of Israel studies.

Yin (2009) has noted that common case studies include those designed to describe a publicly supported program which must differentiate between the substance of the program and the process of program implementation. This might involve issues regarding an effective curriculum. A case study in the field of education can describe why the curriculum is not implemented effectively.174 This example was instructive in terms of the questions I asked while compiling the case studies regarding the process of normalization of Israel studies, which involved differences between the substance and process of implementation of Israel studies programs.

The implementation of Israel studies reflects contradictory world views regarding the scholar and the institution. These views are: 1) “teach the conflicts”. This involves a critical action based theoretical analysis of solutions to the Israeli Palestinian conflict. It involves an activist prescriptive role of the intellectual as government advisor. It reflects a push to professionalize the field of Israel studies to foster academic expertise and activism in the public arena. This view includes putting pressure on the Israeli

174 Ibid., p.38.
government for solutions to the Palestinian conflict such as territorial withdrawal.

Finding a solution to the conflict becomes the focus of the curriculum. As the scholars have easier access to Israeli materials and documents, the onus of solving the conflict is placed more heavily towards the Israeli side rather than the Palestinian/Arab side. The analysis of this view involves Gerald Graff’s (1993) “teach the conflicts” description of the humanities in terms of widening the canon of required texts.175

The other world view is: 2) “teach the history”. This view holds that Israel studies should focus on the long road to Zionism and the language, history, society and culture of modern Israel as the core of their research. It does not presume that such scholars can solve the Israeli Palestinian conflict. It incorporates an element of humility regarding the scholar’s role. Rather than prescribe a course of action for another country’s government, scholars who take this world view argue that only the stake holders or those who will bear the consequences of the policies, should make them.

John Voll (1996) has noted that prescriptions for teaching the conflict do not take into account the “essentially contested concepts” in Middle Eastern studies which make it nearly impossible to present the conflict without ideological bias.176 Teaching the conflict has been seen as incorporating theoretical constructs for government policy change including prescriptions for Israeli territorial withdrawal. The pressure placed only on the Israeli side by activist-scholars engaged in “teaching the conflict” may place them in direct opposition to the expectations of the privately funded donor quality of the

chairs and programs in Israel studies. The case studies will examine the discrepancy between donor or charitable intent and actual implementation.

The case studies were chosen to reflect the process of normalization of Israel studies in the academy. In some ways this process mirrors other departmental shifts from humanities’ based core programs to that of the social sciences. Such disciplinary shifts as they occur in Israel studies reflect the pressure to provide experts on the Middle East for various types of community outreach and in response to media attention. This pressure coming from above and below, makes teaching the conflict impossible to avoid.

These often contradictory processes will be examined in terms of the way in which Israel studies chairs were established at two universities, Michigan State University and the University of Wisconsin. These two public universities will be contrasted with two private universities in the next chapter. Michigan State University and the University of Wisconsin were chosen to illustrate the normalization process of Israel studies in terms of the disciplinary focus of Israel studies chair holders. In these two cases, the focus has been that of political science with an activist role of the intellectual/scholar. Critical action theoretical views of the intellectual point to solving the conflict, as will be examined.

The chair holders who will be described in this chapter are Yael Aronoff of Michigan State University, and Nadav Shelef, of the University of Wisconsin. Both are political scientists. Their academic work and activist view of the intellectual follows precedents set by founding members of the Association of Israel studies such as Myron Aronoff, Yael’s father, and Ian Lustick. Such scholars have bet lifelong careers on their prescriptions for solving the conflict.
While looking for ways to understand the conflict and make suggestions regarding how to “manage it”, Israel studies scholars have often relied on archival material and government records dating back to the decisions made by the first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. In many cases, this work has then placed the burden of the conflict on the shoulders of the Israeli government rather than the Palestinians. As one revisionist historian has ironically noted, the Palestinians have yet to establish great archives, making scholarly analysis of the decision making process by their leaders almost impossible. The impetus behind private donor funding for a chair position in Israel studies has been to provide an academic forum in which the side of Israel in the conflict is to be presented. This would not necessarily involve critiquing or pressuring a government entity. Donors have looked to provide an educational space for the history and society of Israel to be addressed.

Through an analysis of the first chair holder at Michigan State University, theoretical issues involving the process of normalization of Israel studies will be highlighted. Of particular importance to this process is the perception of the public role of the intellectual. Institutional decisions made regarding what Gerald Graff (1993) has termed the leading controversy of the modern university as in “teaching the conflicts” will be examined in terms of the implementation of Israel studies.

177 The revisionist historian Benny Morris, at a panel on writing history at the Association for Israel studies conference, held at New York University in 2008.
178 Ilan Troen, discussed the history focused perspective of Israel studies while speaking at a roundtable discussion of Israel studies held in June 2007 at the Open University in Israel. Troen, who had been at Ben-Gurion and left to hold the Israel studies chair at Brandeis University, noted that Ben-Gurion established the first program (B.A.) in Israel studies in the mid 1990s. Troen noted that fifteen members of the faculty do Israel studies there, but that it has a social science bent, and that the historians were busy arguing with each other.
Whether to focus on teaching the conflict or teaching the history has been tied in with the role of the intellectual. An ongoing feud has simmered between such scholars as Ian Lustick, the founder of AIS and an advocate of the former position and Ken Stein, an Israel studies chair holder at Emory. Stein has designed workshops in Israeli history which involve presenting original documents so that readers can become more informed of and make their own decisions regarding historical narratives, rather than advocating prescriptions to solve the conflict. Lustick has focused on disputed lands and settlements.\textsuperscript{180} Howard Wachtel, the first director of the Center for Israel Studies at American University, has hoped that Israel studies would develop like French studies, in that you could learn everything about the country, including language and culture and not just the conflicts.\textsuperscript{181}

The innovative history of Michigan State University-

Michigan State University is one of the earliest American land grant institutions, dating back to the mid nineteenth century. Michigan State University was the first institution of higher learning to teach scientific agriculture and many other innovative subjects.\textsuperscript{182}

Kenneth Waltzer, Director of Jewish studies at Michigan State University since 1994,

\textsuperscript{180} As noted at a plenary session on teaching about Israel held at the Association of Israel studies annual conference in Arizona, 2005. Ken Stein and Ian Lustick presented opposing views of the topic; the former noted that before dwelling on the conflict the history of Israel should be carefully presented through original documents- study of primary sources, without influencing students with a political bias, while Ian Lustick thought that the conflict is what everyone is interested in.

\textsuperscript{181} As noted at a meeting of Israel studies chair holders, held at the Association of Israel studies annual conference, held in Israel, at the Open University, 2007

\textsuperscript{182} According to the Michigan government home web site, retrieved on 5/7/09. The web site lists some of the innovative “firsts” of Michigan including 1849- the first Michigan State Fair as the first state fair in the United States, and 1855- Michigan State University founded as the nation’s first land-grant university which served as the prototype for 69 land-grant institutions later established under the Morrill Act of 1862. Other “firsts” listed included that of 1910 when the U.S. Census placed Michigan first in the nation in the production of automobiles, and 1920- when the first four way traffic signal, with red, green, and amber lights appeared in Detroit….followed by other transportation “firsts” such as the first practical highway snowplow developed in the U.S. in 1922, and the first intercity superhighway developed in 1923 followed by the first regularly scheduled air passenger service in 1926.
related the history of the push for a chair in Israel Studies in a survey for this study. He noted that MSU Jewish Alumni in Southeast Michigan have been the main development support for the Jewish studies program. Alumni had given over $4 million, with the largest gifts to establish a chair in Israel studies and for scholarships for students engaged abroad in Israel.

With a doctorate is in history from Harvard University, Waltzer is an example of the interdisciplinary nature of the Jewish studies program. His work has examined European and Jewish social and historical relationships. He has also written about youth in the Holocaust. He is part of the James Madison College (residential college-public affairs) and the College of Arts and Letters.

Waltzer notes that since the Jewish studies program at Michigan State, focuses on the transformation in modern Jewish life from Europe to two centers in North America and Israel, Israel Studies was a good fit for that program. The Jewish studies program has been open since 1992, with the number of faculty affiliated with the program listed at 14. Different academic units (about 8) provide the primary affiliation of faculty in the program spread in 4 different colleges with some visiting professors. A push for an Israel studies scholar Waltzer notes, came after frequent requests for Jewish studies scholars to lecture on the Middle East and Israel for the community at large as well as in the academic community.

Yael Aronoff, who was named the Israel studies chair at Michigan State University in 2006, said that the push came after a rush in Muslim Studies, with a multicultural center
coming up simultaneously. The Chair is the Michael and Elaine Sterling and Friends Israel studies chair at Michigan State University. According to a press release the chair is a “core position” in the Michigan State University Jewish Studies program, which is administered by the College of Arts and Letters. Aronoff is also a faculty member in James Madison College, the university’s prestigious residential college in the area of public affairs.

Yael and Myron Aronoff-a father/daughter team studying political leadership

Yael Aronoff was born in the United States but partially raised in Israel where she lived when her father did research into topics such as Israeli politics, leadership and development towns. She has been described by her father as being made aware of the dangers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from early on. In an article about wars as catalysts of political and cultural change, Myron Aronoff (1999) referred to the way in which death in wars and acts of terror have been imprinted in the public memory in Israel. In a footnote, Myron Aronoff adds that “my younger daughter, Yael, who had spent her first six years living in Israel, at the time warned her first grade Dutch teacher (when we were on sabbatical in Holland) that when she visited Israel she should not pick up strange objects because they might be booby-trapped and to alert a policeman or soldier if she saw a suspicious package because it might be a bomb.”

---

183 As noted at a meeting of Israel studies chair holders, held at the Association of Israel studies annual conference, held in Israel, at the Open University, 2007 in which Howard Wachtel, graciously allowed the author to attend.
Yael Aronoff graduated from Princeton University in 1990 and went on for her doctorate in political science from Columbia University, after which she was a senior associate at Columbia University’s Institute of War and Peace Studies. Aronoff also worked for the Pentagon’s Office of Humanitarian and Refugee Affairs in the Office of Secretary of Defense during the Clinton Administration.

By examining the development of the published scholarly work of Yael Aronoff, the legacy or “intergenerational nature” of some of the work in Israel studies is showcased. Yael Aronoff has presented at academic conferences and published together with her father, Myron Aronoff, an Israel studies scholar at Rutgers University. Although not holding an official chair of Israel studies, Myron has been a fixture and early backer of the Association for Israel studies. He has served as president of the Association as well.

Yael Aronoff has built on the analysis of Israeli politics with an ethnographic component, introduced by her father. She has looked at how and when “hardliners opt for peace” in a study of leadership and decision making among six recent Israeli Prime Ministers, which builds on her father’s work on leadership (power and ritual) in the labor party.

She compared Israeli prime ministers, in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, in terms of remaining hard-line versus evolving into a peacemaker. By examining belief systems and individual characteristics, Yael Aronoff (2009) developed a theory for which types of “hawks” were most likely to change their views of an opponent and convert into peacemakers.

Aronoff (2009) found three elements that made change more probable. They were: 1) a weak ideological commitment, 2) a present or future view of time, and 3) a flexible
cognitive system or exposure to a significant advisor with flexible views of the opponent. Her research included personal interviews with a former Prime Minister (Yitzhak Shamir) and several politicians close to other former prime ministers. In addition to her father, Aronoff has been influenced by Ian Lustick, who focused on Likud politicians such as Shamir and decisions regarding the territories.

**Theoretical constructs regarding the Oslo Accords**

The possibility of real cognitive change is part of the debate regarding *Teach the Conflicts* versus *Teach the History*. This debate has focused on work such as Aronoff (2009) which focuses on the significance of the Oslo Accords in terms of how they illustrate successful methods of conflict resolution.

This debate involves theoretical constructs which focus on the actual success or failure of Oslo. One argument focuses on the occurrence of real cognitive change in the Oslo Accords, signed between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the early 1990s. Rather, the opposing view, emphasizes that an attempt was made to “manage the conflict”. This attempt involved efforts by the technocrats, and engineers to regulate border crossings, etc., to create strategies for two people at war to begin to live in peace. It did not involve solving the core problems in a “100 year” war. Managing the conflict was seen as the best possible outcome in a region known for tribal conflict with real cognitive changes not likely to occur.

Aronoff and Aronoff (1998) examine the evolution of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians from the elections of the Labor government in June 1992 until the

---

assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in Nov. 1995. They argue that the dovish composition of the Labor cabinet and the influence of intellectuals on Shimon Peres, a protégé of David Ben-Gurion, helped persuade Rabin to move towards peace with the Palestinians, despite strong opposition from Israel’s right wing parties.

Aronoff and Aronoff (1998) hold that the recruitment of a coterie of influential younger advisers by Shimon Peres during his tenure as party chairman was the primary explanation for the shift in policy. This was facilitated by a coalition government formed between dovish and extremely leftist Israeli party (Meretz) Cabinet members combined with Arab parties such as the Arab Democratic Party and the Democratic Movement for Peace and Equality. The coalition was accused by the right as not representing Israel proper with the argument that the Arab parties had provided the crucial votes for the decision to sign the Oslo peace accords. The accords represented a crucial turn to the left in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in terms of the recognition granted to Yassar Arafat, the founder of the Palestine Liberation Organization, with an anti-Israel agenda.188 Constant fighting between Shulamit Aloni the Marxist and ultra-feminist leader of the Meretz party and Areyeh Deri, the leader of Shas, the ultra-Orthodox party representing Sephardic (Spanish, Arab and North African) immigrants, led to the exodus of Shas from the coalition government and to an increased dependence on the votes of the Arab parties. This in turn strengthened the oppositions’ charge that fateful decisions

relating to the future of the nation were being made in the Oslo negotiations without the support of a Jewish-Zionist majority.\textsuperscript{189}

Aronoff and Aronoff (1998) focus on the ways in which cognitive changes happen. They are interested in fitting the Oslo Accords into a theoretical construct that can then be used as a model for conflict resolution. Examining the inaugural address of Yitzhak Rabin, as Prime Minister, delivered to the Knesset on July 13, 1992, they find a clear declaration of cognitive change by Rabin. When he insisted that Israel must overcome the sense of isolation that it has felt for almost half a century, in thinking that the whole world is against it, Aronoff and Aronoff (1998) argue that Rabin thereby signaled a fundamental ideological shift in cultural perceptions of political reality for his government. This shift was a departure from the emphasis on the Holocaust and Israel’s isolation in the world. These had been ideological motifs of the Likud governments. Rabin was ready to apply a universalistic, humanist and less particularistic vision of Zionism.

Yael Aronoff (2009) describes Rabin as having become exposed to and sensitive to American public opinion after his term as an ambassador to the United States. Rabin cited U.S. objections as one reason for his opposition to the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor under the Likud. Consideration of American public opinion is part of what pushed Rabin towards considering negotiating with the Palestinians as well when he served as Prime Minister. Aronoff and Aronoff (1998) suggest that such changes in a mainstream individual’s political perceptions were also part of a broader process. This process included the increasing challenges put to the dominant Zionist political leaders by

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., pgs. 17-18.
traditionally marginalized groups such as Israeli Arabs and the extremely religious Jewish parties, who were joined by post-Zionist academics in pressuring the Labor party apparatus.

Aronoff & Aronoff (1998) note that the Arab parties and labor iconoclasts had challenged dominant assumptions on a consistent basis, including the “demonization of the Palestinian other” at a time when traditional Zionism was undergoing an inner crisis in terms of the strength of the veteran Labor party on the Israeli political map. This process facilitated the breakthrough in policy regarding negotiations with what had previously been considered a terrorist group such as the Palestine Liberation Organization. 190

**Dreaming of the handshake on the President’s lawn**

A perception of the ability of cognitive changes to create peace in the Middle East as well as nostalgia for the breakthrough of the Oslo negotiations was apparent in one of the early interviews that Yael Aronoff gave as an Israel studies chair, on Jan.15, 2009. When queried about the newly inaugurated president, Barack Obama, in an interview to the Michigan State University News, Aronoff, said that “helping broker a peace deal between Israel and Palestine should be one of Barack Obama’s top priorities as president”.191 Aronoff noted that the Middle East situation was especially poignant because “we had this peace process that was started in 1993 under President Clinton’s auspices where we had an Oslo agreement on the White House lawn and I think many Israelis were hopeful that peace was around the corner and many Palestinians were hopeful that a Palestinian

190 Ibid., p.22.
state was right around the corner and so it’s very tragic that we are at the point we’re we are at today”.

The other side of Oslo

In recent years, the successes and failures of the Oslo accords have been the topic of many academic publications both within and outside Israel studies. Much analysis has indeed focused on the personalities of Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Bill Clinton and Yasser Arafat. Recent accounts have included information such as Rabin’s nervous breakdown just before the 1967 war began, as that noted by Rich Cohen (2009) which may have had a yet to be acknowledged impact on his decision making.192 Aronoff omitted such speculations in her biographical data, focusing only on what matched the theoretical development of “how hardliners become soft”. This included the focus on how Rabin had been considered one of the hawks within the Labor Party and closer to a more militant group than that of Ben-Gurion’s faction. The theoretical construct of how hardliners turn soft was also transferred to the American context by Yael Aronoff (2006) in her work on Jimmy Carter.193

Michael Keren (1989 has analyzed the political activism of academics in various historical periods. He has examined the life of David Ben-Gurion, who wrote many letters to and argued with critics in the newly established universities.194 Keren (1994)

---


has critiqued the theoretical construct that conflicts are resolved as a result of cognitive changes, or actual changes in thinking about the core of the conflict. The latter view presented by Aronoff and Aronoff (1998). Keren points to the Oslo accords as a triumph of the engineers, or technocrats rather than that of the intellectuals or philosophers. The engineers went to work on managing the conflict, in terms of minute details for bridge crossings, border cooperation and economic ventures. Instead of diplomats and political scientists designing models of peace and ways to reach them, technocrats created plans for limited autonomies with open bridges, good fences, and mutual warning systems. Such solutions worked around the core of the conflict with the aim of its management; instead of searching for a breakthrough in the conflict. For Israelis who had lived under the British mandate, and for Jews who had lived in their own communities in Europe, Oslo represented a plan for coexistence. Technological devices, intermediate solutions and complex arrangements were sought to enable ways in which two peoples could function autonomously and live in proximity with each other.

Keren (1994) critiqued the dramatic picture orchestrated of the Oslo Accords as having found a “happily ever after” solution to the conflict symbolized by the Rabin-Arafat handshake on the south lawn of the White House in Sep.1993 as exaggerated. What the activist intellectual and Israel studies scholar Avi Shlaim had labeled as “the mother of all breakthroughs” in terms of the impact of the Oslo Accords was not the product of cognitive changes, but rather an outgrowth of the pragmatic traits represented by Israel’s technocratic stratum. Israel had a long history of creating various types of state-within-a state bureaucracies with degrees of economic autonomy and cooperation.
The Oslo Accords which were designed from that experience of cultural and economic cooperation, which was seen as a way to manage the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Oslo agreements were immediately criticized by the Palestinian side for the avoidance of real political risks such as militarization. They were also criticized by many Israelis who while they admired the prospect of cooperation on various political, economic, and cultural projects, wondered whether such projects could be implemented in a region fighting a “hundred-year” war.

Many intellectuals were therefore surprised by the parameters of Oslo. Keren (1994) notes that it was called “a strategic surprise” a term normally reserved for the 1973 surprise attack (as used by the columnist Ze’ev Schiff in Haaretz, Sep.2, 1993). Other journalists (such as Nachum Barnea of Yediot Aharonot) used Biblical imagery of deep deception such as one headline, “the hands are Peres’s hands, but the voice is the voice of Rabin”. This evoked the image of Jacob asking for the blessing of the first born from his father Yitzhak (and disguising his smooth hands with rough material to evoke his brother’s) who then wonders why the hands are those of Esau, but the voice is that of Jacob and gives in.

**Shimon Peres and Ben-Gurion**

Both Keren (1994) and Aronoff & Aronoff (1998) agree on the significance of the part that cabinet minister Shimon Peres played in the Oslo process. Peres mobilized a close

---


circle of academically trained aides, worked with government employed professionals, founded both ongoing and ad-hoc policy making forums, held endless meetings with heads of universities and media organizations, and established a network of informal contacts between his office and academia.198

Peres, born in 1923, became part of the Hanoar Haoved youth movement and then the Labor workers’ party or Mapai. There he was asked by David Ben-Gurion, the head of Mapai to undertake tasks such as weapons acquisitions and manpower recruitment during the Israeli War of Independence. After the war, Peres served for many years in the Ministry of Defense in bureaucratic functions. He had links with technocratic enterprises, including research and development. He emphasized the advantages of a modern technological state, with increased industrialization, economic productivity, national planning and the encouragement of higher education. Peres urged the Zionist movement to focus its efforts on enticing immigration from those in universities, rather than the Jewish public at large, even calling for “immigration to Israel should be from university to university and not from country to country.”200

Solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a curriculum

Yael Aronoff includes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a case study on her course syllabus for world politics and international security. She calls it a real-world example with which to ground various theories of contemporary social science and international politics. She notes that these theories will be examined in terms of the ability to explain

the causes of conflict and possibilities for its resolution. The signing of the Oslo Accords (with the push for a Palestinian state that would make peace with Israel) forms one part of this analysis. The course, an introductory one for International Relations, uses other case studies of conflict as well, with the stated goal of focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical approaches in explaining the causes of war and of “war termination”. Aronoff notes that students will need to evaluate both theory and empirical cases of conflict and cooperation, to understand the “contested nature” of the concepts, which include war, power, balance of power, collective security, foreign policy, anarchy, among others. Other courses taught by Aronoff include those focused only on Israeli politics and society.

Contested Concepts

The historian John Voll (1996) has written of “essentially contested concepts” in terms of philosophical and political ideas prevalent in Middle East studies. The problem with “essentially contested concepts” lies in the perception that only one definition is rational and genuine, while any other usage is dangerously irrational and needs to be opposed actively. Historical narratives in Middle Eastern studies, as “essentially contested concepts” can be absolutely contradictory. The different views depend not only on the actual available information but on the starting personal commitments of the narrator or analyst, making a high proportion of the content of any course on modern Middle Eastern

---

201 The course syllabus was for Fall 2007, James Madison College, Michigan State university, MC220-Section 4, entitled “International Relations I: world politics and international security, Professor Yael Aronoff.

202 The course is listed as MC 390 and part of the Jewish studies program as well. The course is described as focusing on Israeli politics and society, as well as investigating the relationship between society, culture and politics and the influence of all on Israeli foreign policy.
studies by definition controversial. Teaching involves choosing what sides are presented or identified with. The “zoo theory” of giving equal time to a wide array of perspectives in a conflict is difficult to achieve in regions with multiple languages, ethnicities and political demands.

**Controversy in the academy**

Julie Reuben (1996) a historian of education has examined the way in which controversy has been handled in universities. She points to consensus as a form of validating knowledge. Consensus involves the aversion to the mixing of contradictory positions. Expert agreement in the social sciences became a sign of legitimacy with progress considered the ability of science to come up with better and better theories. Science moved consistently forward, beyond controversy to agreement, while controversy was associated with unscientific methods. To assist this process, regulations for appropriate scholarly presentation and ranking were set in place. The problem with this approach is that it ignored the reality that in some contexts, certain subjects will be controversial and the only way to avoid controversy will be to avoid those subjects.

---


Controlling controversy

The process of normalization of Israel studies has reflected its own trajectory of regulation of scholarly presentation and avoiding controversy in the presentation of opposing theories particularly regarding “essentially contested concepts.” Part of this process included promoting the Association for Israel studies and related journals and prizes as a venue for scholarly ranking and publication. While instrumental in providing legitimacy and publicity for the field of Israel studies, the Association was also a means of regulating the field in terms of deciding what to present regarding controversial subjects and what to avoid. Theoretical constructs which differed from those of the founders of AIS regarding how to proceed in peace negotiations and withdrawal from territories were suppressed.

Against the Oslo Accords and left out of the curriculum?

In archival material of AIS, accessed for the first time, I found letters and minutes of meetings which detailed the suppression of opposing academic positions regarding the Oslo Accords. The founder of AIS, Ian Lustick, fought and won a turf battle against a competing organization. A group called the Conference for the Study of Israeli Politics had been attending panels at conferences of the American Political Science Association in the early nineties. Ian Lustick as founder of and then president of the Association for Israel studies, wrote the organizers of the American Political Science Association (a central player in determining core competencies and mapping key forms of knowledge in the field) a letter in 1994 in which he asked the APSA to ban the other organization from presenting. Lustick argued that the competing organization did not conform to the
guidelines of the APSA as its organizers saw their purpose in militant political terms. Lustick complained that the Association for Israel Studies was being confused with the other group, which concerned him as the two organizations were on different ends of the political spectrum. Lustick called only the organization which he led (AIS) a bona fide scholarly association with absolutely no political affiliation. He also stated that since the best represented discipline at AIS is political science, with each of the presidents, since the association’s founding in 1984, a political scientist, including Myron Aronoff, Robert O. Freedman, Mark Tessler, Gregory Mahler, and Ian Lustick, they did not want any misconception or confusion with another academic group dealing with Israel at APSA.

Edward Alexander, a Washington University professor and member of the competing group for representation of Israeli politics is listed as a chair of one of the sessions. Lustick refers to Alexander in his letter as a political theorist who specializes in Nietzsche and someone “far removed” from areas relevant to the study of Israeli politics.

Lustick succeeded in his quest. However, his description of Alexander was deliberately misleading. Alexander had been a professor at Tel-Aviv University who later moved to Washington University. He published a number of historical works regarding the fate of liberalism, however he also wrote about the Israeli political scene. He was a strong critic of those who attempted to push solutions to the conflict on Israel without understanding or having to pay for the consequences down the road. Alexander was part of a conference sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies in Jerusalem, held in 1985, which included such topics as conflicting versions

---

A letter dated Sep.21, 1994, from Ian Lustick, University of Pennsylvania, President of the AIS, to the Executive Director of the American Political Science Association, Catherine Rudder, housed in the AIS archives at the University of Wisconsin
and interpretations of the social sciences, international relations, history, law and political settlement.  

With Ian Lustick’s work focused on political settlement it is highly unlikely that he was unaware of Alexander’s analysis, which had also been published. In June 1986, Commentary Magazine was the forum for a heated debate between Edward Alexander and Bernard Avishai, regarding the meaning of the Zionist ideal of hityashvut or settlement that is of the imperative of securing the Jewish nation through working the land.  

The interpretation of the 1948 War of Independence, another standard in the field of Israel studies was also part of Alexander’s analysis, and he was an early critic of the political influence of the late English professor Edward Said.  

Alexander (2003) has continued to write about the impact of post Zionism on Israeli intellectuals and politics.  

Lustick’s letter against the competing organization stated that AIS was the only one that presented “multiple perspectives” of the conflict. Ironically, Lustick was the one censoring an opposing view. Lustick did not want anyone to confuse the two organizations as he had staked his academic career on a particular prognosis of the settlements and the Oslo Accords.  

A report by a non-profit organization, the Israel on Campus Coalition (2006) examined 386 institutions of higher learning in terms of courses offered on Israel. The

report did not look at content, disciplinary focus or syllabi of those courses. However, the report did address an already perceived issue of addressing multiple perspectives. The authors of the report note that “though establishing new chairs in Israel studies holds great promise for the field, it is also not without its perils as on more than one occasion, the academic decision makers involved in hiring scholars for these positions have taken advantage of the process to advance specific political agendas.”212 The report also notes that one of the most pressing challenges facing Israel studies is the lack of scholars who can advance this field and provide mentorship to aspiring scholars. The creation of chairs was part of an effort to make Israel studies a normative part of the academic environment.

A theory for making the state smaller

In an interview with Harry Keisler, of UC Berkeley Ian Lustick was asked about the direction of his academic career towards government involvement.213 Lustick answered, that he just happened to become an expert on one particular issue, after studying it more than anyone else. The issue was that of “settlements in the occupied territories and how they would prevent peace” which led to his government involvement. In 1989 he was called by the first President Bush to the White House. Lustick believes that this influenced a number of policy changes- starting with the speech James Baker gave at AIPAC (The American Israel Public Affairs Committee). This speech involved for the first time, the linkage of the threat of the suspension of loan guarantees with Jewish settlement. Lustick believes that this policy change led to the victory of the Rabin

212 L.B. Eisen, D.A. Harris, M. Bard & R. Neuwirth, (2006). In search of Israel studies-a survey of Israel studies at American Campuses. Published by ICC- Israel on Campus Coalition, a partnership of the Charles and Lyn Schusterman Family Foundation and Hillel, p.12.
213 “Conversations with History with Harry Keisler” UCLA television, posted with a transcript on the internet in 2008, the conversation was taped in 2002.
government over Shamir in the 1992 elections, and then to the success of the Oslo negotiations.

Lustick has been questioned regarding this influence in terms of how he was perceived by other Jews. He has also been questioned regarding the interference in the affairs of another country of an academic living far away and safely protected in an “ivory tower” on the campus of a prestigious American university. The common view of a social scientist Harry Keisler emphasized, was that one applied “rationality” to a particular problem, published a book and then went on to the next book. However, Lustick very clearly combined a notion of advocacy and seeking to help effect change beyond just the writing of a book through his government work. Lustick countered such arguments with the assertion that his work is “beyond advocacy” and that “nothing but scientific reasoning” motivated him. His analysis early on pointed to the necessity of dividing Jerusalem as crucial to solving the conflict. Although asked to wait with the publication of such analysis so as not to risk antagonizing supporters of the Oslo process, Lustick has noted that he newer let such concerns delay him. As for the Jewish community, he is sure that he has been able to have the influence he has had on the political process specifically because he is Jewish. While others would be called anti-Semitic he has been called courageous enough to apply scientific knowledge beyond the black and white parameters of religious identification.

**Academics as stakeholders**

Louis Menand (1996) has analyzed perceptions of advocacy in the university. Academics have been respected for not being a stakeholder as in not having a vested interest which could affect the outcome of research projects. It is this perception which
led to the possibility of objectivity and gave the university the power it has had in terms of appearing above “interest”.\footnote{Menand, L. (1996). Culture and Advocacy. In P.M. Spacks (Ed.), \textit{Advocacy in the classroom: problems and possibilities} (pp.116-124). New York: St. Martin’s Press.} When academics have a clear stake in a political outcome in terms of their status as a government consultant which is linked to the success of their prescriptive work and or political activism, this power may begin to decline.

Menand’s description evokes that of Noah & Eckstein (1998) regarding the way in which comparative education has moved from travelers’ tales as to how children were reared in other countries, to the development of the social science based explanation with the “added burden of prescription”.\footnote{Noah, H.J. & Eckstein, M.A. (1998). \textit{Doing Comparative education: three decades of collaboration.} Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, pl5, 37.} Involvement of the complex role of the activist/intellectual can be found on both sides of the political spectrum in the history of Zionism. Stefan Collini (2006) has linked controversy over perceptions of the prescriptive role of the intellectual in the modern era to an incident central as well to the development of political Zionism.

When a Jewish French Captain, Alfred Dreyfus, was accused of spying for the Germans in the late 1800s, he became a symbol of how prejudice and bias had affected the French courts. While evidence mounted that Dreyfus was not the spy, as leaks continued after his arrest until the real spy was caught, his case was not reopened as it would involve confirmation of the mistakes of high officials in the French army who arrested Dreyfus on the basis of his Jewish heritage. The writer Emile Zola, who was approached by Dreyfus’ wife for help, called for an end to the miscarriage of justice in an open letter (\textit{J’accuse}) against the military authorities who were accused of suppressing evidence in their investigation against Dreyfus in1897. In support of Zola and Dreyfus, a
newspaper published a text signed by 1,200 writers, scholars and other university graduates. This text became known as both the “manifesto” and the “protestation of the intellectuals.” Stefan Collini (2006) calls this incident the first time a clear connection was made between political intervention and a parade of academic qualifications which became crucial to the subsequent usage of the term. The Dreyfus trial was also a key event in the political conversion of Theodore Herzl, the journalist covering it. Collini (2006) has also referred to the ways in which the role of the intellectual has evolved, with intervention in politics initially stemming from the “attainment of a level of achievement in an activity which is esteemed for the non-instrumental, creative or scholarly capacities it involved” combined with such factors as the ability to reach a wide public through the media, and the establishment of a reputation for being likely to have interesting things to say. While a popular response to the intellectuals who signed the petition against the military degradation of Dreyfus at the time was “what right has a professor of Tibetan to instruct his fellow citizens in matters of morals and politics,” Collini notes that this perception of a lack of conflict of interest is what led to the moral authority of the intellectual. This perception continued in later years, even as areas in which conflicts of interest between theoretical constructs and political outcomes became difficult to separate. An example is the critical action Marxist views of the role of the intellectual personified by the advocacy of the Palestinian cause by the Columbia University English literature professor, Edward Said.

217 Ibid., p.52.
**The anti-Zionist manifesto**

The proposed boycott of Israeli academics and institutions suggested by the British University and College Union in recent years has been the topic of much discussion among scholars in Israel studies and the Jewish academic community. In 2007 AIS addressed the boycott in a board meeting. A response drafted by Ian Lustick to the boycott was one of many. Lustick noted that the Association for Israel Studies joins the Middle East Studies Association and other academic organization around the world in expressing opposition to the efforts by members of the University and college unions in Great Britain to impose a boycott on Israeli universities and academics. He urged all AIS members to engage with their British colleagues who will be deliberating on this question in order to ensure that they adhere to the hallowed principles of academic freedom.

While most of this language is similar to some of the other statements opposing the unprecedented boycott of Israeli academics and institutions, Lustick adds another telling phrase. He calls for the recognition of the “crucial contribution made by Israeli academics to illuminate all the painful and difficult dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict.”

**Illuminating all the painful and difficult dimensions of the conflict**

After visiting Israel for the first time in 1969, Lustick wrote his first published paper on “what do the Palestinians really want in the West Bank”. In 1979 Lustick went to work for the U.S. government’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, as an expert on the Israeli Palestinian conflict. He realized that he could only say a limited amount after staring at

---

218 AIS archives at the University of Wisconsin, from the minutes of a board meeting held on June 10, 2007, regarding academic issues.
the Israeli-Palestinian case, just looking at it, piling up facts about it. He needed to
develop a theoretical explanation for the conflict and for how to resolve it. This involved
a theory for how to make states contract, as a way of explaining the process of
withdrawal from the West Bank and creating a Palestinian state instead. The main
argument regarding the settlements was if a “point of no return” had been passed in terms
of withdrawal. Lustick searched for the conditions under which states contracted around
the world, and found examples such as the British relationship with Ireland over time,
and the French relationship with Algeria.

**Consolidating the State versus holding on to Land**-
Lustick turned to David Ben-Gurion as well for precedents in state contraction. He noted
that Ben-Gurion had celebrated a state whose “borders were weird” and excluded actually
the biblically most important parts of the country for Jews (including East Jerusalem).
Lustick found that in this respect Ben-Gurion emphasized the State of Israel, not the Land
of Israel. Lustick (1996) studied Ben-Gurion’s handling of the negotiations centered
around how to refer to Jerusalem and surrounding areas as well as where to situate the
Knesset (Israeli Parliament).²¹⁹

He does not focus on other work which details Ben-Gurion’s insistence that territory
be held when it could be defended with surrender of areas only after fierce fighting and
fears of civilians falling into captivity. Shlomo Sharan (2003) has recently noted that
much of the analysis of Ben-Gurion’s early decisions ignores the parameters under which
he made them. These parameters include the fact that only 650,000 Jews lived in Israel

in 1948 at the time of independence, and that in his fondest dreams, Ben-Gurion “foresaw an Israel of three million Jews,” (with the population to later double that estimate). Indeed in 1956 Ben-Gurion was the subject of severe criticism by intellectuals opposed to his use of Biblical imagery to justify military action in the Sinai Campaign of 1956 which was couched in images of the return to the “Mount” where the Ten Commandments were given.

Analysis of the many paths Ben-Gurion took to create and consolidate the State of Israel form a consistent part of Israel studies. S.N. Eisenstadt (1967) had described the early years of the state as one in which the values of Zionism and the identification of pre-state movements were transferred to the state in a policy of *mamlachtiut* or statism. This policy was seen as evidence of the strong personality of Ben-Gurion who was able to merge the identification of the former party interests with the state. Ben-Gurion was able to strengthen bureaucratic control over functions previously performed by voluntary partisan associations such as the pre-state militias. These had been politically based and were unified by Ben-Gurion only after great effort, including the threat of civil war. However, part of this achievement came from Ben-Gurion’s analysis of the state as a point of departure from the political powerlessness Jews endured in the Diaspora.

---

Israel studies scholars and government work

Ian Lustick has been involved with the U.S. government at various stages in his career, and recently a student of his has followed his lead. Mara Rudman was appointed chief of staff to the “dream team” assembled by Special Envoy George Mitchell in the Obama administration, by officials of the State Department. Media reports of the announcement speculated that Rudman would tackle such policy questions as how to persuade Israel to restrain its building of settlements. Rudman attended Dartmouth in the early 1980s where she took a seminar with Ian Lustick, who was described as a former State Department official studying how Israeli settlements might prevent the creation of a Palestinian state. “Mara was the first student to get what I was doing,” Lustick is quoted. He also noted that Rudman stood out among the idealistic students in the class because she understood “that not all problems have win-win solutions.”

While Ian Lustick has used the concept of contracting Jewish settlement as the basis for his professional career, other academics outside Israel have worked for the opposite goal. Famous examples include Chaim Weizmann, the head of the Jewish Agency in England, and Lewis Namier, a Jewish historian, who worked to advance the Zionist cause under the British mandate. While Weizmann’s contribution has been the subject of much academic debate in the field of Israel studies, Namier used his position as best he could, despite conflicted reflections on national identity. While serving at Oxford University for a limited time as a tutor in history, Namier taught Malcom MacDonald, the future Prime Minister’s son in the 1920s. When a controversial Passfield White Paper was passed in 1930 which restricted Jewish immigration and land purchase to Palestine following the

Arab riots in 1929, Namier and Weizmann were alarmed. The Passfield White paper was considered so severe in scope as to effectively release Britain of the promises made in the Balfour declaration of 1917 regarding a Jewish national homeland. Namier contacted Malcom MacDonald, and convinced him to meet with Chaim Weizmann. Following the meeting, Malcom asked his father, Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald to do something. The MacDonald letter which he then issued cancelled out the Passfield Paper and allowed Jewish settlement to continue although it was to remain hotly contested and the subject of future legislation.225

Visions of the frontier at the University of Wisconsin

Amy Ng (2004) has looked at Lewis Namier’s professional work including on the 1848 revolution of the European intellectuals as intertwined with the impact of growing up in Poland and living through two world wars in England.226 Nadav Shelef, the newly appointed Israel studies chair at the University of Wisconsin, has researched intersections between various types of national identities as they relate to the Israeli Palestinian conflict. While a doctoral student at the University of California, Berkeley, in the political science department (where Ian Lustick also did his doctorate) Shelef presented a paper in 2001 entitled “Israeli national identities, moving beyond hegemonic competition? “at an AIS conference session chaired by Myron Aronoff.227

Shelef looked at the ways in which a more nuanced understanding was needed of the competition among different visions of Israeli collective identity. This understanding

227 The AIS meeting was held May15-17th 2001 at American University.
should not come at the price of focusing either on one of the major cleavages in Israeli society that affect collective identity or on “the competition for hegemony that characterizes the interaction of collective identities”. He noted that visions of collective identity may compete, sometimes violently, cooperate, attempt to convert or even ignore each other. He has suggested that one potential way of accomplishing a more nuanced understanding of Israeli collective identities and of collective identities more generally, would incorporate different dimensions of collective identity and investigate modes of their interaction that may range beyond their competition for hegemony. He has analyzed ways of doing this which involved the ideological content of categories of Israeli national identity listed according to the following dimensions: definition of membership, the appropriate territorial boundaries, and conception of time for a multidimensional concept of collective identity.

Nadav Shelef was appointed as a chair in modern Israel studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 2006. Steve Nadler, the Director of Jewish studies, noted that this appointment was a major addition to the program in terms of the social sciences particularly political science. Shelef’s dissertation topic was reconstructing nations – mechanisms of change in borders, boundaries and missions in Israel. Shelef was appointed as the newly established and privately funded Harvey M. Meyerhoff Professor in Israel studies, with his tenure home in the Department of political science. At the start

---

228 As noted in Notes from the Director by Steven Nadler, of the George L. Mosse/Laurence A. Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies Newsletter of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, vol.8/ 2006.
of the search, Nadler announced that this faculty position had been made possible by the generous gift of Harvey “Bud” Meyerhoff and alumni. 229

Shelef, like Yael Aronoff and Ian Lustick, presents his point of view as a political pragmatist and social scientist and not a Zionist advocate. Similar to the work of Aronoff and Lustick on the issues in withdrawing from territory and settlements, Shelef (2007) compares various periods of Zionist history including that of the pre-state labor movement and the imposition of a new territorial configuration in the early 1920s. Shelef, as many of the Israel studies scholars, returns to the life and words of Ben-Gurion and others in the Labor political movement. Looking at Ben-Gurion’s early views on holding on to both sides of the Jordan, Shelef analyzes how it became apparent that Transjordan would become a separate entity, as in the tactical acceptance of the Peel Partition Plan of 1937 by David Ben-Gurion. Although Ben-Gurion announced that no one is demanding that anyone abandon a vision, Shelef finds that indeed the Labor movement did give up all hope for that territory which became Jordan. Shelef documents how Jewish references to Transjordan and other territories changed in speeches and other archival material of the period. 230

Shelef also points to Ben-Gurion’s emphasis on institutionalizing the process of state building over finalizing borders. Shelef attempts however, to superimpose this example to the Palestinian case, hoping that indeed an ideological transformation that lies at the heart of sustainable conflict resolution does not necessarily require generational change. He writes that despite the common Israeli refrain that it will take generations for

229 As noted in Notes from the Director, by Steven Nadler, The George L. Mosse/Laurence A Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies Annual Newsletter, vol. 6/2004.
Palestinians to change their territorial aspirations, Ben-Gurion and the Labor party (Mapai’s) experience shows that this is not necessarily the case. Similar to Aronoff’s work on cognitive change, Shelef finds that the pace of change is more closely linked to the pace of the domestic battle for ideological dominance than to an imposed time.

**The University of Wisconsin and a full-fledged program in Israel studies**

Presenting a more nuanced understanding of Israeli identity is what Shelef (2008) promotes as the aim of a program in Israel studies. In a statement regarding his vision for the future of Israel studies, he notes that he hopes to build a vibrant Israel studies program within the Center for Jewish studies. The Israel studies program will offer classes on the entire spectrum of Israeli life, and reach out to Jewish and non-Jewish students. Given the role that Israel plays in the national headlines, undergraduate students are eager to learn more about Israel Shelef notes, while at the graduate level the University of Wisconsin at Madison also presents a unique opportunity to train the next generation of Israel experts. He connects this with the traditional strengths in the humanities and social sciences which would enable a broad education about Israel while at the same time training students who are firmly rooted in a discipline. Shelef emphasizes that Wisconsin’s academic and political culture nurtures students in dialogue and real scholarship, rather than advocacy, and that therefore Wisconsin has the potential of becoming the premier place in the Midwest, if not the country, for people to come to study about Israel.

---

However, at the moment there is only a chair holder, and not a program, in Israel studies. Israel as a subject is also integrated into the political science department, within which Shelef is placed in terms of tenure. It is also part of the Middle East Studies Certificate which includes Hebrew language and related courses as part of the curricular choices. Shelef when asked about Israel studies in a questionnaire for this study noted that he considered his first goal that of fitting in with the political science department in terms of promotion.232.

Political science, history and controversy at the University of Wisconsin

Historically, Political Science was set up as a separate department relatively early at the University of Wisconsin, circa 1901. Political science had been combined with history in most other universities, and by separating it into another department Wisconsin predated private universities such as Harvard. The political science department had a practical focus from policy administration to “colonial administration” as it was termed.233 However, political science at that time was not a site of controversy, which was linked more with economic views and socialist party oriented speakers than state administration such as the issue of anarchist Emma Goldman coming to town. The Social Science Club at the University of Wisconsin in 1922 could not invite the political novelist Upton Sinclair to speak in 1922 in a university building. Sinclair had a son studying at the

232 The author conducted a survey of Israel studies scholars in 2006-8. Shelef did not answer the survey after a number of attempts to send it via email with a recruitment script, but did eventually agree to a phone interview.

University at the time, and insisted that he be given a platform to speak within it. After taking the argument to the newspapers he eventually received permission to speak.234

A significant element of the history of the University of Wisconsin has included that of how to interface with the public and community at large. The extension department of the University was well known and reflected the vision of the university as incorporating service to the state. What became known as the “Wisconsin Idea” involved complicated relationships between the state and the university based on possibly contradictory premises—such as that the goal of a university was to develop independent and challenging ideas, but that together with that goal came the challenge of serving the state and the people living in it.235

Nadav Shelef was asked in the questionnaire about the community at large. He is frequently asked to give lectures relating to Israel. Requests come from the academic community and the larger public, as frequently as once a month. Shelef notes that he is the recipient of such requests because no one else does contemporary Israel. He may also be the address for talking venues as the chair holder of Israel studies. There is a well known professor of Hebrew literature, Rachel F. Brenner as Wisconsin. Although active in and a former president of the Association for Israel studies, she is not formally linked with political science contacts.

An example of a community wide lecture given by Nadav Shelef, was part of a global happenings series, entitled Paths to Peace – with Ali Abootalebi, sponsored by the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation, on Wed. Oct. 11, 2006. The talk was listed together

234 Ibid., p.155.
with Global Studies and the Division of International studies. A student’s impression of
the talk was recorded in an editorial. Majoring in history and global cultures, S. Zoheri,
who described herself as of Arab descent, complimented the way in which Shelef
addressed the conflict, calling him more than a “talking head”. However, she voiced her
frustration with the way in which lectures did not lead to action on the part of the
government. Professors, the student noted, were “preaching to the choir about the
nuances of Middle East politics and pathways to peace” without any resulting “dramatic
change”. The student wrote that while she was not entirely opposed to the idea of
academic lectures, she was against the “stagnancy” they promote. She was looking for
real activism in terms of influence on the government.236

Universities as a vanguard for change

Robert M.L. Follette, a controversial governor of Wisconsin in the early 1900s, had
appointed professors to state positions in what he believed was a fulfillment of the ideal
of using the knowledge of the university to enact change in the lives of people.237 The
concentration of professors who also served in state positions eventually raised suspicion
of conflict of interests extending into the era of President Roosevelt and resistance to his
“brain trust” in 1933. Another factor drawing the state and university apart in Wisconsin
has been described as the perception during World War I of German leaning sympathies
at the University.238

Giles Bousquet (2007) has linked the history of the UW-M in terms of outreach to
both local and international communities, to it serving as the first campus in the nation to

editorial retrieved on-line.
238 Ibid., p.324-5.
establish a Scandinavian Studies department, in 1875. Bousquet believes that this
department, which reflected public interest in the subject, paved the way for other
pioneering efforts in language and area studies. He ties this in with early success in
accepting international students, which UW-M did in the 19th century, from Canada,
Hungary, Germany and Japan. Bosquet discusses the “Wisconsin Idea” in terms of
service to the state as one in which the boundaries of the state are extended to the world.
Globalization and views of a world without borders take the concept of land grant to
world grant. The Wisconsin idea of public service becomes one of international
development.

A Mission statement of the University of Wisconsin-

The mission of the system is to develop human resources, to discover and
disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond
the boundaries of its campuses and to serve and stimulate society by
developing in students heightened intellectual, cultural and humane
sensitivities, scientific, professional and technological expertise and a
sense of purpose. Inherent in this broad mission are methods of
instruction, research, extended training and public service designed to
educate people and improve the human condition. Basic to every purpose
of the system is the search for truth.

Part of the historical vision of the land grant university involved the transfer of the image
of workers laboring in the field to that of a student- laborer in “broader fields”.
Wisconsin in particular has been linked to the thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner
regarding the closing of the physical frontier and the opening of an educational one.

Such visions were needed it has been noted, to defend the appropriation of land for

239 Taken from a speech given by Professor Gilles Bousquet, Saturday, March 10, 2007, 9:00 a.m. at the
Wisconsin Union, entitled, “A world of difference”.
240 Ibid.
241 A reference guide to University of Wisconsin system statistics and general information. University of
Wisconsin, Fact Book 2008-2009. Published by the University of Wisconsin, System p.56.
educational institutions. Turner, appointed as a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin in 1891, became part of the force pushing a “new history” for the Progressive generation which was determined by the spirit of the time.\textsuperscript{243} A frontier could be described in terms of social, political or economic terms, rather than physical, with the state university seen as the place in which the energy of the former farmers and agricultural pioneers should now be focused.

The concept of the state university, unlike a private university, was a democratic one. Turner tied in the state universities of the Mid West which were “shaped under pioneer ideals” with the focus on applied science “devoted to the conquest of nature” and the breaking down of the traditional required (Greek and Latin based) curriculum.\textsuperscript{244}

Ronald Takaki (2002) has called Turner the “father of the master narrative of American history,” with Turner’s view of the closing of the Western frontier as Eurocentric and eclipsing the loss of Native Americans, leading the way to a reframing of the frontier thesis by Samuel Huntington in his interpretation of the “clash of civilizations.”\textsuperscript{245} The frontier thesis is seen as both having provoked responses on the left and right, as well as having put an emphasis on population rather than land. Turner looked to the development of industrial society through the expansion of the frontier, which would be shifted now from an abundance of natural resources to population and education as the next frontier.

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., p.112-3.
Education as nation-building

Part of the expectation for Israel studies scholars on the part of donors and the larger Jewish community has been seen as bolstering sentiment in favor of the Israeli national enterprise, through the scholarly attention paid to culture, society and history. This expectation mirrors what Gerald Graff (1994) has noted regarding the establishment of other area-defined fields of study, such as that of British studies. Dissemination of the Anglo-Saxon spirit was what one of the British pioneers of English studies had in mind in 1891 when he made a plea for English studies as an instrument of political education and called for reorganization of the universities.\textsuperscript{246} The study of English was promoted as a way to create a national fellowship in which it would be possible for everyone to forget the existence of classes. This was a way to fight a Marxist revolution. Following 19\textsuperscript{th} century cultural nationalism literature was taught in departments labeled “English”, “German”, “Spanish”, and “French”, etc., though it was easy to forget this political motivation once national language departments became accepted and routine and nationality appeared to be a neutral principle of organization. Graff points to the acceptance of subjects as “English” or “French” without thinking of them for the most part as politicized, although such classifications come from political not aesthetic categories.\textsuperscript{247}

The academic legitimization of American literature played a significant role in the United States achievement of the status of a major world power. Graff (1994) points to early scholarship that established American literature as an academic field as intended to claim for American literature a stature comparable to America’s position as a military

\textsuperscript{246} Graff, G. (1994)pgs.151-2
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., p.152.
and economic power in the postwar world, an “educational Monroe doctrine for Americans” with the development of American studies following W.W.I as well an instrument of political education.

**Israel studies scholars- as an instrument of national education**

Most Israel studies scholars when asked (such as Ron Zweig, Ian Lustick, and Ken Stein) vehemently deny any connection with advocacy for the Israeli government. However, the Association of Israel studies has been perceived as part of political education by the Israeli government. In documents found in the AIS archives, many fundraising efforts were noted, including help given from various Israeli government and nongovernment agencies. In addition to the annual meetings being held at Israeli universities every few years, travel assistance for academics was often given. At a meeting of the board of trustees of AIS for example, held on May 23, 1999, Dr. Pnina Lahav of Boston University, as president together with Hanna Herzog, raised $1,000 from Israel Development Bank and $500 from the Israeli Embassy for a cultural event presented at the annual meeting, with $2,500 from the Israeli Consulate. Dr. Robert Freedman noted at this meeting that the $2,500 is not just a gift from the Consulate, but that the AIS does some very important services for the Consulate through its panels and receptions at the Middle East Studies Association.  

---

248 Such as a letter dated Dec.16, 1997, from Dr. Pnina Lahav, then President of AIS thanking the Israeli Consul of Academic Affairs for his support. Numerous efforts also were taken to enable the travel of Israeli and Arab academics living in Israel to the conferences, with some private donors elicited specifically for the travel grants to enable Arab scholars to attend.
Conclusion

This chapter has examined the impact of prescriptive theories in political science on the emerging field of Israel studies. These theories include various road maps for how states contract, how hawks become doves, and interpretations of the Oslo Accords.

The scholarly influences on the work of two chair holders of Israel studies was presented in terms of what Gerald Graff (1993) termed teaching the conflicts. How prescriptive theories regarding withdrawal from territories were made part of the curriculum as well as the use of Ben-Gurion’s early decisions to evacuate areas was presented. The impact of these views, which include advising the American government to pressure the Israeli government, were juxtaposed with donor related expectations of Israel studies as part of nation building. In this respect, Israel studies is not following the same process of normalization as that of British and American studies in terms of solidifying political claims and nation building. Israel studies scholars see their role as anything but justifying militant actions. The role of the scholar was examined, particularly in terms of a Marxist critical action oriented view. In the next two case studies, those of private universities, Columbia University and the break away institution, New York University, will be examined in terms of the placing of Israel studies chair holders.
Chapter 5: Normalizing Israel Studies at Columbia and NYU

This chapter will examine the tension between the institutional implementation of a program and stated donor purpose at two private universities. As in the previous chapter, Jewish settlement in Palestine is again a hotly contested topic. A preoccupation with condemning and actively opposing the Israeli government has infused political with scholarly activity at Columbia University following the example of the late Edward Said (2000). His focus on presenting the Palestinians as the new Jews has created a discourse in which, the language of occupation, developed by political scientists to refer to the Jewish administration in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights following the 1967 Six Day War, has been used to refer to the entire Zionist enterprise and settlement in Palestine. An example is Said’s influence on Barnard/Columbia’s Nadia Abu El-Haj (2001) work on archeological digs in the British mandate period as part of the discourse of Israel as a “settler nation”. This discourse includes repeated references to Israel as a racist state (Joseph Massad, 2002) while at the same time describing Israelis in racial terms (Hamid Dabashi, 2004). This chapter will examine the implementation process by a search committee that imbued the Israel studies position with pro-Palestinian political advocacy. An examination of the intellectual history of the scholars involved points to changing themes from that of centering on the history and development of the Jewish state to the conflict.
The second case study, the development of Israel studies at New York University, will be presented as a contrast to the process at Columbia. Reflecting different institutional histories, both case studies incorporate views of the uses of the university as noted by Kerr (2001). Columbia University moved from the instruction of Hebrew language for moral improvement, as promoted by Samuel Johnson, the first President of Columbia College, who taught it himself, to the current post-Said scholarly shift to political activity on behalf of the Palestinians for moral improvement. In the latter paradigm, the Hebrew language is condemned as representative of a colonial imperialist strategy. Arabic becomes the language invested with moral improvement.

Changing views of the uses of the Hebrew language instruction were also seen at New York University. It was the first American institution of higher education to include a Jewish Semitics language instructor as a break off organization from Columbia in the pre Civil War period. One hundred years later, it became the first American university to situate the instruction of Hebrew language as that of a modern language in a school of education in the 1930s. As noted by Ritterband & Wechlser (1994) this was promoted by the dean of education, George Payne, as part of a social experiment to develop religious tolerance and pride in Jewish identity, as opposed to the growing hostility shown towards Jews in Europe. The work of the first Israel studies chair holder recently established, has also dealt with the impact of the Second World War on Israeli leadership and relationships with Jews in other countries. The two case studies, Columbia University and New York University will be presented in terms of these different institutional histories and pedagogical agendas.
Columbia University and the break-off group that created a secular alternative

New York University was the first higher academic institution to appoint a Jewish professor in the pre Civil War era, as noted by David Rudavksy (1965). Issac Nordheimer was hired to teach Semitic languages in the early 1830s. He had studied in Europe at both the Jewish Orthodox Chasam Sofer Yeshiva upper level school and later at German Universities. His appointment to teach at New York University, lacked a regular salary, and he had to take on private tutoring in Hebrew for Jewish students at the Shearit Israel synagogue. New York University was considered a school that broke with the classical past with knowledge of Latin and Greek not required. It was formed as a secular institution with nondenominational ties and without a theological school, in 1832, when a splinter group of Columbia University trustees broke away from Kings (Columbia) College. Nordheimer, although trained in teaching the Hebrew language among others, was not hired to teach Hebrew. That position was reserved for George Bush, a Protestant clergyman (and an ancestor of the presidential family). Shalom Goldman (2004) noted that although Nordheimer’s linguistic expertise was acknowledged by Bush in his work on Hebrew grammar and the Old Testament, even a new break away institution with a stated pedagogical purpose of secularizing American higher education, would not chance as important an appointment as Hebrew language.

instruction with the accompanying Biblical-moral implications to a non-converted Jew.\textsuperscript{250}

George Bush’s published work included commentary on the Old Testament, as well as a history of the Life of Muhammad, which was considered one of the first widely read American books about Islam, although with a clear missionary bias. His work also dealt with the controversial subject of restoration of Jews to the holy land, a theme also developed by other 19\textsuperscript{th} century Christian Hebraists.

Columbia College had a longstanding interest in Hebrew language instruction. Goldman (2004) found that early American educators made a connection between the process of settlement in America by European Christians, and an interpretation of the Bible as a guide for charting a new terrain. The first President of Kings College, the predecessor of Columbia University, Samuel Johnson, serving from 1754-1763, wrote of the moral significance of teaching and learning the Hebrew language, and authored a Hebrew grammar book. Johnson is credited with designing the Columbia University seal, to include verses from four Psalms, Latin translations, and the Hebrew words for light and divinity. Recently, C. Pierce Jr., (2009) analyzed Johnson’s work including his essay “Rasselas” which describes the Middle East. When the protagonist visits Cairo he is initially dazzled by the people he sees, but he is quickly disappointed by the surrounding loneliness, madness and violence, concluding that exotic locations notwithstanding, life everywhere is “a state in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed.”\textsuperscript{251}


University positions established with donations from the Jewish community

Pamphlets and fundraising efforts for the Center for Jewish and Israel studies at Columbia University highlight such figures as Johnson, as well as early Jewish figures involved with Columbia. Gershon Mendes Seixas is described as a Revolutionary patriot and an incorporator and Trustee of Columbia College, 1787-1815, as well as the spiritual leader of Shearith Israel, the first Jewish congregation in New York City. He reportedly refused a British order that the congregation pray for King George II (although praying for the welfare of the ruler of the land is common) and had to leave New York when the British captured the city.

Shalom Goldman (2004) has researched the connections between Columbia College and the early Jewish population of New York, including the first Jew to attend Columbia College, Sampson Simson, who graduated in 1800. He delivered an oration in Hebrew at the graduation ceremony, which has been preserved. Simson credits the Jewish clergyman Seixas with the composition of the speech, entitled “historical traits of the Jews from their first settlement in North America”. The speech was delivered in Hebrew. It placed the Jewish experiences in America within the context of American history, and affirmed Jewish support for the revolution, with a summary of the history of the Jewish community of New York, many of whom had come from Holland in 1660. Simson became a prominent attorney and is cited as the first Columbia alumni to bequeath a large sum to the college. His philanthropy, Goldman (2004) notes, showed two interests that were to be emulated by others in the Jewish community, that of his alma mater, and that

252 Institute for Jewish and Israel studies, Columbia University, Web site.  
of the Jewish agricultural expeditions to Ottoman-ruled Palestine. Simson left a cash legacy for the purpose of “teaching the Jews of Eretz Israel artisan skills, and mechanical and agricultural trades,” in 1857, and the North American Relief Society For Indigent Jews in Jerusalem was established to fulfill this bequest. Curti & Nash (1965) point to Hebrew language as the first endowed professorial chair in America, with that of the Hancock Professor of the Hebrew and Other Oriental languages, endowed in 1765 for Harvard with a thousand pounds. They also note that the College of Rhode Island received a gift from a Jewish merchant who wanted it tied in with allowing Jews to study there to enjoy freedom of religion.

**The era of Hebrew instruction as tied in with improved moral character passes, but a clearly biased moral agenda resurfaces with Edward Said.**

With the departure from the custom of appointing clergyman to the presidencies of universities, the phenomenon of presidents such as Samuel Johnson who were themselves knowledgeable in Hebrew disappeared. However, while Christian Hebraist scholars such as Samuel Johnson of Columbia engaged in Hebrew study as a way of training the mind, Semitics departments in the 19th and 20th century included archeological expeditions, as a vehicle with which to explore the physical remnants of the Biblical worlds.

Archeological exploration was part of a push towards ancient material restoration which included support for Jewish settlement in Palestine. Protestant missionaries were some of the earliest archeologists- calling themselves biblical researchers- they searched for evidence of the validity of the Bible in the face of the theories of Biblical criticism

---

coming from Europe. The Holy land was called the “Third Testament”. German higher criticism which deconstructed the sources of the Bible, subjecting it to the same type of historical analysis as it did the texts of the classical worlds, was seen as a challenge to the belief that the Scripture was divinely inspired. Exploration and discovery in Palestine and the Middle East around Biblical sites and events was an antidote.\textsuperscript{255} Geography of the holy land was another factor in this push with the concept of “Geopiety” as developed by Karl Ritter describing geography as influenced by religious beliefs such as how faith communities viewed sacred landscapes.\textsuperscript{256}

Archeological discovery in Palestine was a hotly contested area among emerging Jewish university trained philological scholars, who felt pressure both from their own religious communities as well as from the scientific community. Fierce debates occurred among Jewish scholars as to both the reliability and the significance of archeological findings. In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, what had been called the “golden age of philology” included the search for items which would expand the list of ancient manuscripts about which to publish findings. Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) note that this scholarly race to the Near East entailed discoveries of manuscripts such as those of the “temple library” which were met with skepticism, with the verification process taking decades and leading to feuding scholars over the interpretation of found material.

\textbf{From Spirituality to Materiality-the debate over Palestine}

Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) have noted that while schools of political science and other humanistic subjects opened in 1880 at Columbia, sectarian study was still tied in


\textsuperscript{256} Ibid., p.153.
with the University through agreements signed between Columbia and the Union
Theological Seminary which moved in 1912 to Morningside Heights as well as with the
Jewish Theological Seminary to allow cross registration. These agreements also
included enrollment in Hebrew language study and Jewish studies subjects. A Jewish
philanthropist, Jacob Schiff, established fellowships in political science, as well as social
legislation and social ethics, in addition to serving as treasurer and giving money for the
establishment of a women’s college at Columbia (Barnard).

Richard Gottheil had taught Rabbinic studies at Columbia University in a position
funded by trustees of Temple Emanuel where his father was the Rabbi. When his
scholarly interest shifted to Semitics in 1903, the trustees of Temple Emanuel gave
$10,000 for a Lectureship in Semitic languages at Columbia in his father’s honor.
Gottheil had religious and secular training with degrees both from Columbia and Jewish
seminaries as well as German universities. However, he became emblematic of the
growing difficulty of reconciling communal and scholarly obligations, particularly after
he was identified as an early supporter of Zionism.

Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) have noted that Gottheil was aware of the precarious
position his attraction to Zionism put him in. Careful not to mix in his politics with the
classroom, he deliberately broadened the scholarly interest in the Semitics department
from Hebrew to Arabic texts.

---

The negotiation that centered on a new course proposed by Gottheil sheds light on the interaction between institutional history and religious background of academics involved in curricular addition. In the early twentieth century, Gottheil proposed teaching a new course on archeological research in Egypt, Palestine and Iraq. He initially pitched the class as one which would include reflection on and significance for Biblical interpretation of the archeological dimension, although he promised Seth Low, then President of Columbia University, that if the course was added, Gottheil would refer “as strictly to the archeological” as he had to the philological courses he had taught. Gottheil also wrote that the course could be limited to “Recent archeological research in the Orient” adding that such a course was necessary for “college and university men, who should be given a chance to know what light the investigations of scholars have thrown upon the Bible,” and that “Semitic research can never forget that the interest the intelligent layman class shows in the East, is in the largest part due to his interest in the Bible and in all that concerns it.” The course was approved. A few years later, Gottheil asked for permission to introduce a course in “Hebraics” which would not be limited to philology, but would include a broader curriculum of history and Kultur-Geschichte.\footnote{Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) note that the chairman of the history department at Columbia, in 1928, C.J.H. Hayes, had written of the rising vogue of kulturgeschicte – which reflected an effort to understand the context of ancient history and religion, including such factors as economics and other aspects of material culture.}

Richard Gottheil had attended the first World Zionist Congress convened by Theodore Herzl in Basel in 1897, and established and chaired the Federation of American
Zionists. Later he noted that these Zionist activities, had cost him positions in U.S. government service, most notably, as an ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. He noted that due to his scholarly focus, he had been twice on the list for the Constantinople Ambassadorship, but with Palestine under control of the Ottoman Empire, his Zionist activities were a liability particularly after the onset of World War I when it became clear that the Zionist camp was hoping for a British victory.

Jewish scholars may have noted Gottheil’s failed attempt to balance Zionist activities with political civil service opportunities. Subsequent scholars in Israel studies have carefully avoided any appearance of a conflict of interest between Zionist advocacy and American national interests. When possible they have cultivated opportunities to serve in diplomatic and related U.S. government positions. Ken Stein, the Israel studies scholar at Emory University, had served as an advisor to the Carter administration and was one of the founders of AIS, as was Ian Lustick, who helped advise foreign policy for another presidential administration. However keeping away from perceived conflicts of interest would not be the example set by Edward Said (1979) the professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia, who wrote of the necessary intersection of politics and intellectuals. He publicly supported and became a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization and a confidant of Yasser Arafat before the group was legitimized through the Oslo Accords, only to note that in later years that Arafat had become too “soft” on Israel.

---

261 Ibid, p.89.
262 Ibid., p.90.
When a replacement was sought for the Semitics chair after Gottheil died in 1936, a candidate from ‘the other side’ was nominated by the president of Columbia, Nicholas Murray Butler who asked George Antonius to fill the chair. Antonius had a background in foreign service that Gottheil never managed to achieve, working for the British in Palestine from 1921-1930 in Palestine, first in the Department of Education, and then as the Chief Secretary’s advisor on civil affairs. Antonius, author of The Arab Awakening (1938) was closely identified with Haj Amin El-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem. Early in his political career Husseini had been sentenced by the British to fifteen years for inciting attacks on Jewish worshippers in Jerusalem, but had been pardoned by Herbert Samuel, a Jewish British Commissioner of Palestine, in the interest of interfaith relations. Later on Husseini organized Arab opposition to land sales to Jews. He also opposed Jewish immigration to Palestine from Europe and worked to halt it as Nazi Germany rose to power while publicly supporting that regime.

When Emma Gottheil, Richard’s widow, heard of the candidate she called upon American Jewish religious leaders to stop the appointment. Supporters of Antonius wrote in response that Zionist Jews would be well advised to listen to another point of view, as they already showed a lack of comprehension of the Arab-Palestinian problem.\textsuperscript{264} It was only the discovery that Antonius did not have the required academic qualifications (he did not have a doctoral degree) which led to the cancellation of the offer.

Jewish studies scholars are careful to avoid any appearance of partiality

With interest in Semitics as a field declining new battles were fought over positions related to Jewish studies in history and the emerging social sciences. The career of Salo W. Baron at Columbia University illustrates some of these battles. Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) describe the appointment of Baron as an attempt to mediate between communal and institutional expectations. When a Temple Emanuel trustee and strong proponent of Reform Judaism had described giving money in the 1920s towards a position in Jewish studies, the donor stated a preference for illustration of the “spiritual and intellectual aspects of Jewish life” rather than the Zionist nationalist ideas which had begun to circulate.265

As one of the first privately endowed positions in Jewish history, the location of the chair was discussed both in terms of the impact that would have on the scholar’s development, as well as the precedent set for curricular development at other institutions. The location of the chair in such departments as Semitics, Religion, English and Comparative literature, as well as history was discussed, including the possibility of forming a new department. Filling the chair with a “jack of all trades” who could advise Jewish students and serve as a source of social wisdom was addressed, as well as scope of scholarship. Salo W. Baron, the chosen candidate, seemed able to address both concerns. Born in Europe, he had doctoral degrees in philosophy, political science and law as well as knowledge of Rabbinic literature. He had already expressed interest in new methodological tools beginning to be used such as those using social and economic

265 Ibid., p.151-2. The donor was Linda Miller, who endowed a professorship of Jewish history, literature and institutions at Columbia University in memory of her later husband in 1928.
factors to explain the interaction of Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Baron requested that the chair be placed in the history department. He envisioned a departure from the study of Jewish history as belonging only to an ancient era with the emphasis placed on powerful rulers/empires and how they treated their Jewish subjects, or as a backdrop to the history of the Bible. Above all, he advised a departure from “the prevalent lachrymose conception of Jewish history,” as one of scholars and persecutions or saints and villains.  

His methodological approach to Jewish history incorporated universal categories to explain motivations and actions rather than concentrating on textual analysis. Descriptions of the ordinary life of people, their legal status and economic activities replaced the focus on political/intellectual figures and trends. Baron called for the broader use of data and universal categories to interpret causality or trends in Jewish history. 

**Baron and fears of propaganda**

Baron’s influence on the field was enormous. In addition to methodological preferences, Baron presented a completely different model than that of Gottheil in terms of support for Zionism. Baron was critical of early Zionist historiography and wrote that he feared it would repeat the “lachrymose conception” he had argued against by juxtaposing Jews in the Diaspora as opposed to those in the promised land in terms of active versus passive categories of heroism. Following the Holocaust and the Israeli declaration of independence, Baron softened his tone, when he referred to the historical circumstances.

---


267 Ibid., p.168.
of the founding of the state, as nevertheless unique and difficult to describe in terms of universal categories.\footnote{Ibid., p.177.}

**Jewish historians become religion substitutes**

Ritterband and Wechsler (1994) have noted that with the ascent of the social sciences and quantitative methods of analysis, there was an avoidance of textual and historical sources. Even Baron now complained of those who were totally unfamiliar with Jewish texts becoming specialists in Jewish history. He wrote that their work presented universal, external factors only, and lacked an understanding of the texts and source material that defined Judaism, and that with less emphasis on language ability, many scholars relied on secondary sources which they could not evaluate.\footnote{Ritterband & Wechsler (1994). p.206.}

In his seminal work *Zachor (Memory)* (1982) Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi of Columbia University, examined the changing role history would play in American Jewish life. Assimilation and secularization processes had made history become the “faith of fallen Jews”. Yerushalmi wrote that this made the modern historian appear to be an antidote to a decreasing Jewish group or collective memory, with history becoming an arbiter of Judaism.\footnote{Ibid., p.175, Y.H. Yerushalmi (1982). *Zachor: Jewish history and Jewish Memory*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.}

The role of historians would become even more pronounced in the field of Israel studies and the shifting Zionist narratives. Taking sides in the war of historical positions regarding what happened between the Israelis and Palestinians would become equivalent to an oath of allegiance. The ongoing debate surrounding the work of Israeli historian Benny Morris provides an example of the importance given to that role. Morris has
continued to capture the attention of not just the academic community, but the media at large, with ongoing speculation as to his “conversion” from one perspective to another when he publishes new interpretations of archival material regarding Ben-Gurion as well as the War of Independence.271

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, (2008) has dated the beginning of the Institute of Israel and Jewish studies at Columbia University to the appointment in 1930 of his mentor Salo W. Baron to a professorship in Jewish history, the first in a secular university, to be followed by endowed chairs in Modern Hebrew literature and Yiddish. In 1950, Baron created the Columbia Center for Israel and Jewish studies. Part of the funding rationale for the center was that it could be accessed by United Nations personnel living in New York City, with classes and lectures scheduled for their convenience. Although the Center was aided by an initial grant from the Jewish Agency and supported by many Jewish donors, Yerushalmi (2008) has emphasized that as per the philosophy of the founder, Salo Baron, it was not to be considered an “organ of the State of Israel” …and that, it cannot have the aim of propagating any particular Jewish ideology, to defend Israel. Yerushalmi (2008) noted that the only acceptable ideology would be that of modern critical scholarship,

271 Morris was part of a panel at the Association for Israel studies conference at New York University in 2008 which focused on the War of Independence where his changing stance was discussed. He noted that the lack of comprehensive Palestinian archives/documentation keeps historians from coming to a final conclusion regarding the period. Morris has been the focus of various “conversions” in that his work first brought criticism of Israeli military action during the War of Independence to the academic and public arena, as part of the trend of “new historians”. However, he has recently been cited as coming out strongly against the absence of a partner for peace, in terms of the lack of transparency and democratic process in the Palestinian leadership. See the recent article by Morris, B. (2009, Sep.11). Obama’s impossible ambition- The U.S. President’s intention to bridge between Israel and Palestine is bound to fail. The Guardian (online edition). Morris writes that for the Palestinians, the struggle with Israel from the beginning was part of a zero-sum game and that dating back to the King-Crane Commission in 1919 Palestinian leaders rejected the idea of partition, with the slogan that either “we will push the Zionists into the sea, or they will send us back into the desert.” Morris also writes that this was the intractable position of Palestinian leaders such as Haj Amin El-Husseini, and Yasser Arafat, whose “only concession to the realities of power was that Israel would have to be destroyed not in one fell swoop but in stages.”
shared by all disciplines, and that otherwise, the best students would avoid the courses, and “rightly so”. If Jewish students have their Jewish identities strengthened, or have chosen careers of Jewish communal service as a result of the center and the classes, those were considered fringe benefits but not the main purpose of the center, and Yerushalmi wrote that such benefits would never happen if “we had preached, proselytized or propagandized.”

**Rationales for separating Jewish and Israel studies**

Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) note that the location issue remained central particularly when there were competing claims to subject matter, and that Jewish studies were complicated in that scholars had to define a relationship to a parent discipline with its own history, and then to the field of Jewish scholarship. Issues of center and periphery were examined in terms of the discipline to the field, and some scholars pointed to way in which the Jewish aspects of the subject were relegated from center to periphery. Also while the success of scholars in using universal methodologies was noted that also meant that a separate discipline with its own conceptual tools for Jewish studies had not been established. Michael A. Meyer (1979) noted that the peculiarity of the discipline lies only in its substance, not in the method or mode of thinking of the scholars. Jewish studies reflected many disciplines, philosophy, history, literary analysis, sociology, to name some, but its distinctiveness was not of form but of content. Establishing a

---

273 Ritterband & Wechsler, p.214.
274 Ibid., p.229.
separate program for Jewish studies was debated in that the universal norms that
governed research and teaching with a discipline-based department, it was argued, might
discourage such courses for and about Jews and or Israelis. Issues of identity were
however, not limited to students, and sociological research on the “prioritization” of
values suggested that the majority of Jewish academics identified with their discipline
more strongly than with religiosity, and that conflicts were resolved in favor of
scholarship rather than Jewish identity.276

**Student organizations and advocacy**

As college campuses by the 1960s became the main institutions with captive audiences of
Jewish adolescents, Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) note that donors now viewed
university based Judaic programs as a venue with which to nurture identity and even
religiosity.277 With the advent of ethnic and racial identity politics, exploring one’s
personal background became part of the university agenda. Courses on the history and
society of Israel, with summer study abroad programs, became part of this trend, some of
which had already been in place as Hebrew language course.

One way to accommodate institutional demands for critical scholarship and donor
requests for strengthening Jewish identity was through the establishment of student
Jewish organizations on campuses. Organizations such as Hillel houses, could sponsor
Israel related programming and religious observances. The Hillel Foundation develops a
guide to Jewish life on campus. This guide includes population statistics according to

---


which in 2006 New York University ranked no. 1 in terms of Jewish population of the top ten private universities, (with 6,500) students, while Columbia University was no.6, (with 2,000). 278 Indeed, the Columbia University Hillel’s Rabbi, who had served in that position for 34 years, was the go to person for students complaining of anti-Israel rhetoric and racial comments by professors. 279

Dan Miron, “the conservative revolutionary” finds anti-Israel bias at Columbia

David Roskies (1990) has written of the development of Jewish studies and Hebrew literature at Columbia University, comparing the work of Dan Miron, who brought a modernist horizontal approach to Jewish literary history, to that of Salo Baron, who examined relationships between Jews and others in Jewish history. Miron was a chief proponent of correlating formal innovations in the Jewish sphere with generic models in the surrounding, dominant cultures. 280

His analysis of the relationship of the writer Nathan Alterman and David Ben-Gurion developed the model of the “conservative revolutionary”. This model was used to explain Alterman’s muted criticism of the Zionist leadership in its formative years as

278 Feb.16, 2006, published at Hillel’s Top Ten Schools, on the Hillel Foundation Web Site.
279 Rabbi Charles Sheer, was cited by Senior, J. (2005, Jan.17). Columbia’s Own Middle East War. New York Metro (online edition). Sheer noted in the article that students had complained about professors, such as George Saliba, a scholar of Islamic studies, who argued for the Palestinian cause in his class, and others who cancelled class and asked students to attend anti-Israel protests. When a student argued with George Saliba about Palestinian politics, she was reportedly told that since she had “green eyes” and was therefore not a Semite, she had no rights. Other students told Rabbi Sheer that a professor had asked Israeli students taking their class how many Palestinians they had killed. A professor of Iranian studies, Hamid Dabashi, had published an article for the Al-Ahram Egyptian newspaper (Sep.23,2004) in which Israelis Jews were described in a racially distinct and disparaging manner; “the way they talk, the way they walk, the way they handle objects, the way they greet each other, the way they look at the world. There is an endemic prevarication to this machinery, a vulgarity of character that is bone-deep and structural to the skeletal vertebrae of its culture.” Dabashi has also served as chairperson as well of the Middle East Asian Languages and Culture department at Columbia University. When Sheer wrote an editorial for the Spectator about some of these issues, Dabashi wrote a letter to the newspaper accusing Sheer of starting a Spanish Inquisition adding that no Rabbi had the right to complain about a professor.
nevertheless not a sell-out.281 This model became part of the debate on Alterman’s newspaper columns and his role as commentator on Ben-Gurion, a theme which has continue to resonate in Israel studies.

Miron himself became involved in the controversy surrounding Middle East studies at Columbia University. He has noted a difference between critiquing the Israeli government and undermining the legitimacy of the Zionist enterprise as part of the problem at Columbia. This difference was illustrated by the language of petitions that circulated calling for disinvestment in Israel by professors teaching about Palestine.282 Miron (2006) has said that he viewed teaching at Columbia with a growing sense of mission particularly the courses on the dynamics of Israeli society and the cultural perspectives of Zionism. These courses attract large numbers of undergraduates, both Jewish and non-Jewish interested in the history of Zionism and with whom he enjoys debating.283 Coming to the position in semi-retirement, after a long career teaching at Israeli universities, Miron has compared some attributes of students at Columbia to Israel, in that unlike Israeli students, they had a “metaphoric ability “to engage in dialogue and play with abstract ideas without insisting on their practicality or how they could be applied.

282 A petition to disinvest in Israel circulated in 2002, with the departments most heavily represented among the signers (106 faculty members, 376 students and 467 others) anthropology, Middle East Asian Languages and Culture, and English and Comparative Literature. The signers included Edward Said, as well as Rashid Khalidi, Joseph Massad, Nadia Abu El-Haj, Lila Abu-Lughod, Hamid Dabashi, and others. The petition called on Columbia University to use its influence, political and financial to encourage the United States government to divest from all companies that manufacture arms and other military hardware sold to Israel, among other items. The petition was opposed by Rabbi Charles Sheer, then director of the Columbia/Barnard Hillel and eventually denounced by President Bollinger. The Scholars for Peace posted copies of the petition and letters to and from the President of Columbia on the internet in the Middle East organization, Feb. 11, 2005.
Miron was cited in a film made about students in 2004 called *Columbia Unbecoming*. The film has been widely discussed in the New York press and was considered part of the push for the endowment of an Israel studies chair. In the film, Miron described the discourse used in some of the classes at Columbia where “Israelis are put to a test that is not applied to anyone else. You will not hear a murmur about the genocide in Sudan… You will hear that Israeli soldiers are raping Palestinians.”

One of the professors mentioned in the film, Joseph Massad, a signer of the petition to disinvest in Israel, had frequently repeated Said’s (2000) view that the ultimate achievement of Israel was the transformation of the Jew into the anti-Semite and the Palestinian into the Jew. Massad went beyond Said in the appropriation of symbols of the Holocaust from the Jewish to the Palestinian context, with use of the heroes of the defense of the Warsaw ghetto as linked to Palestinian uprisings and Hamas linked attacks. Dan Miron noted that although the film was not very professionally made, the problem highlighted in the film, that of classroom conduct was the minor one, the

---

284 The film was produced by the David Project following student complaints that the administration was not taking their feelings of intimidation seriously, only asking them if they had ever encountered different views regarding the Middle East. The transcript of the film was accessed on the web at www.columbiaunbecoming.com/script.htm. Miron (Oct.29, 2004) was cited from an article in the newspaper, *New York Sun*.

285 Ibid., the citation was Joseph Massad (January 30, 2003) in the newspaper *Al-Ahram*. Said has been cited in various publications, such as Said, E. (Sep.27, 2000) American Zionism -the real problem. *Al-Ahram*, (online edition). He did an interview with Ari Shavit (Aug. 18, 2000) *Haaretz* in which he noted that he was surprised that his views were presented uncensored, in Hebrew, “just as he had voiced them”. His discourse points to all of Israel as belonging to Palestine, with every Israeli town or village described as having had an Arab name. Said writes that Palestinians had replaced the Jews as history’s defenseless, morally just victims, and calls himself, famously, “the last Jewish intellectual”.

286 Massad, J. (Jan. 4, 2009). The Gaza Ghetto Uprising. *The Electronic Intifada*. He compares Hamas fighters to the ghetto fighters, particularly in the suicides after feeling the world’s indifference. While he does not note the often cited way in which Jewish victims of the Holocaust differed from those of other conflicts, in that they did not have any territorial claims against the German parties, Massad also does not note that terrorists had destroyed some of the original copies of stories related to the Warsaw ghetto which had been held in the Jewish community building blown up in Argentina.
major problem, which was not being dealt with, was the intellectual content of what was being said, the way in which Israel was delegitimized.287

The chair in Israel studies donated to honor the historian, Y.H. Yerushalmi

It was announced in 2006 that in honor of the retirement of the scholar of Jewish history, Y.H. Yerushalmi, a group of Columbia College Trustees (such as Mark Kingdon, Philip Millsten, Richard Witten, and David Stern) had pledged a few million dollars for the creation of a chair in modern Israeli history, politics and society.288 It was also noted that the new professorship would be grounded primarily in the Institute of Israel and Jewish studies.

However, it was also reported that the five faculty member search committee included some of the scholars who had asked the university to disinvest in Israel and been involved in student complaints against racist terminology. Rashid Khalidi, holder of the Said chair of modern Arab studies and literature (funded by the United Arab Emirates), who often used the controversial word of catastrophe naqba to describe Israel’s founding in 1948 was part of the committee. Khalidi has been an active member of forums which ask for public condemnations of the Jewish state, referring to it as an occupying force without any system of law or justice.289 Lila Abu-Lughod, another member of the search committee, was a leading figure in the disinvestment campaign as well, and had often stressed her commitment to continuing the work of the late Professor Said by not

288 This was announced in the events section of the Columbia University Web site on Feb. 22, 2006, related to the Institute for Israel and Jewish studies.
Ira Katznelson, a professor of political science and another member of the committee, had served on committees overseeing student complaints of anti-Israel bias without recommending disciplinary action.\footnote{Jacobson, J. (2005, April 1). Columbia U. Report Criticizes Professor’s Classroom Conduct but finds no pattern of anti-Semitism. \textit{Chronicle of Higher Education} (online edition).}

**Remembering Said by “freeing” Palestine**

A conference recently held at Columbia University on the “question of Palestine, in memory of the late Edward Said” illustrates the long shadow Said, even after his death in 2003, has cast. The scholars, Rashid Khalidi, and Lila Abu-Lughod who served on the search committee and disinvestment campaign, were among the conference participants and conveners, which included Nadia Abu El-Haj, Joseph Massad, Hamid Dabashi and others. The stated theme of the conference illustrates the way in which scholarly and political activity are intertwined in Said’s works, \textit{Orientalism} and \textit{The Question of Palestine}, with scholars asking to revisit “the imagined geographies that link the question of Palestine and the Jewish question to the broader phenomenon of Orientalism in its enduring historical aspects as well as to treat 1948 as a world-event enabled and prepared by the history and structures of Orientalism.” The pressure to continue Said’s work at Columbia University was also part of the agenda, when it was noted that “Columbia University is uniquely positioned to hold and sponsor this conference. Historically the mutual relationship between Said and Columbia is a matter of evidence. Intellectually, it is also the case that Said’s legacy is particularly alive here.”\footnote{Kramer, M. (2005, April 29). Searching for Israel in all the wrong places. \textit{Sandstorm a web commentary and analysis from Martin Kramer}.}

The importance of Said’s work in the field cannot be overstated. A report by Ian Lustick (2005) to the

\footnote{The conference was listed under news and events of the Columbia School of International and Public Affairs web site, held on Nov 7-8, 2008.}
Association of Israel studies found that during the years 2000-2005, on a sample of syllabi surveying courses related to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, mainly in universities in the United States, a search for the name Said found many more hits than any other author.293

**The sociologist Yinon Cohen’s support for Palestine**

The committee decided on the sociologist, Yinon Cohen, for the chair endowed in the name of the Columbia University historian, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi in 2005. An unexpected choice, Cohen is a sociologist and demographer, and not a historian.

Cohen’s choice was also surprising as he has been one of the most overtly critical Israeli academics of the government. Martin Kramer (2008) has noted that petitions signed by Cohen described Israel’s policies of oppression against the Palestinians.294 One such petition signed by Cohen during the second Palestinian uprising (2002) mirrored the movement to disinvest in Israel by universities such as Columbia, and noted the willingness to cooperate with those in the occupied territories in opposing the Israel Defense Forces, without any mention of the Israeli civilian death toll.

**Teaching the occupation from the Palestinian perspective**

The pro-Palestinian rhetoric is not confined to the signing of petitions, but an integral part of the academic focus. As a point of focus, Cohen puts the discourse of occupation in the

---

293 Lustick, I.A. (2005). Report to AIS Board on Israel-Oriented Syllabi Available on the Web. Found in the AIS archive at the University of Wisconsin. Lustick, used a search engine of the center for history and new media HE notes that the name Said appeared 240 times, with the next popular being Benny Morris, whose book was used most often in syllabi.

forefront of the class on Israeli society that he teaches.\(^{295}\) While most classes on Israeli society will involve some analysis of the history of the conflict, Cohen evokes the image of the academic described by Ken Stein (2005) as “captivated by the conflict” in terms of anti-Israel rhetoric. Stein has noted that the highly charged vocabulary used to refer to Israel, such as colonial, racist, apartheid, and Nazi-like is an attempt to indoctrinate students regarding the conflict. \(^{296}\)

**The economy is safer territory**

However, much of Cohen’s published work involves statistical analysis of demographic trends focusing on Israelis who come to the United States. Using U.S. census data, he examines the economic success of Israeli immigrants, both Jews and Arabs, to the United States. His work is heavily quantitative, with a narrow historical perspective. Although it could be argued that his work represents a logical progression of the social science approach noted by Baron as focused on universal methodologies and quantitative analysis it is nevertheless a surprising choice for a chair endowed in honor of the classically trained historian Y.H. Yerushalmi.

Cohen’s work flips traditional themes such as the economic and political impact of American immigrants on early Palestinian Zionists around to examine the opposite. America becomes a promised land for Israeli immigrants in his analysis. \(^{297}\) Cohen (1996) has researched how well Israelis do financially when they leave the Jewish state. Although he writes that Jewish Israelis can be defensive about having left Israel, with

---

\(^{295}\) The listing was from Spring 2009 courses (Sociology G6160- Israeli society- special topics) on the Columbia University website.


stories told by immigrants about why they “got stuck” in New York, Cohen does not elaborate on the psychological or philosophical dimensions of this defensiveness. Cohen does not add significant qualitative descriptors of cultural dislocation or adaptation to the statistical analysis. While ignoring references to Jewish religious norms connected to Zionist aspirations however, he does refer reverently to the Palestinian practice of clinging to the land and never selling it as *sunud*.  

More recently, Cohen & Haberfield (2003) examine the economic success of the children of immigrants to the United States. They compare whether they are more successful economically than the immigrants themselves. They find that indeed this is the case for Israeli immigrants, and that there are “unmeasured traits” that help them earn more than demographically comparable natives. In a discussion of the “unobserved differences between Israeli immigrants and natives” the authors argue that in addition to observed measured characteristics such as years of schooling, college graduation, annual income, etc., immigrants differ from natives with respect to such unobserved productivity related variables as motivation, ability, and willingness to take risks, with unobserved characteristics not confined to psychological variables but including contacts, networks and cultural capital. They find that Israeli immigrants, both men and women, attain higher income levels than natives of similar schooling and other measured characteristics, and that the children of Israeli immigrants were at least as successful as the immigrants.

298 Cohen, Y. (1996, Fall). Economic Assimilation in the United States of Arab and Jewish immigrants from Israel and the Territories. *Israel studies*, 1, 2. 75-97.
themselves. The focus of such work indeed is the promise and fulfillment of the American dream, not an Israeli Zionist one.

**We have received your survey. It does not mean that we will answer it.**

When Yinon Cohen was asked as a chair holder to complete a survey/questionnaire about Israel studies, he refused, noting that it did not apply to him. After several more attempts by the author to send the survey, an administrator in the department answered curtly, that although we have received your questionnaire that does not mean that we will answer it. Columbia University was the only higher academic institution of the ones surveyed to (not) answer in this manner.

**Turning Zionist narratives around – why should Hebrew be used in Jerusalem?**

Another example of a scholar turning Zionist narratives around is Nadia Abu El-Haj, who plays a central role in disseminating the Said legacy at Barnard/Columbia. Abu El-Haj did her dissertation field work in Israel with a focus on the history of archeology and the construction of a national narrative. Ironically, Abu El-Haj’s work (2001) echoes that of Semitic scholars a century earlier who examined archeology for proof of Biblical texts. She examines Israel as a “Settler Nation” who searched for artifacts to document not just textual evidence, but their connection with the land. Abu El-Haj describes this as a colonial enterprise, which uses the Hebrew language as a tool of conquest. Writing that names, like historical geographies and material remainders, have been fetishized as facts, she documents opposition to such attempts to combine language with politics as in the

---

case Jamal Effendi Husseini took to court in the 1930s asking to remove stamps from circulation that had added E.I. for Eretz Israel to the name Palestina, with the petitioner writing that as an Arab, he could not use a document in which his country was described as the Land of Israel.  

Abu El-Haj pointed to the use of Hebrew names as part of the establishment practices of “Settler-Nationhood”, extending the discourse of occupation to the entire Zionist enterprise, not just the land over the Green (1967) line. Jacob Lassner (2003) has critiqued her work as lacking a working knowledge of scholarly Hebrew, and missing a critical understanding of the data base (Abu El-Haj grew up in Iran and studied Hebrew for a limited time). The very title of her book, Facts on the Ground is presented as an example. While Abu El-Haj notes that her husband came up with the title, Lassner notes that the Hebrew phrase it immediately evokes is the one coined by Moshe Dayan to describe the newly created Jewish settlements on Arab territory captured during the 1967 war (and that a book focusing on archeological digs would have used the title Facts in the Ground which would not carry such a loaded political reference).

The Zionist theme of immigration to Palestine and settling the land is thus appropriated by scholars following Said’s legacy of viewing the Palestinians as the new Jews. The ultimate goal for Israelis as seen in Cohen’s work is immigration to the United States, while Jewish settlement throughout Palestine is seen as colonial activity by other scholars. Jewish settlement is a theme thus appropriated from that of a much desired, long dreamed of activity by the Zionists, to that of a colonial outsider.

From Columbia University-to New York University - the break away institution

New York University and Hebrew language instruction.

Arnold Band (1993) had noted the various models of Hebrew language instruction, as:

SPH- Semitic philology Hebrew, AWH- Americanized Wissenschaft Hebrew, TIH - Tarbut Ivrit Hebrew -Hebrew Culture Hebrew, ASH-area studies Hebrew, JSH-Jewish studies Hebrew and IH-Israeli Hebrew. The TIH model, or the Tarbut Ivrit Hebrew Culture model, became associated with New York University, which put Hebrew language instruction in the School of Education in the late 1930s rather than in the College of Liberal Arts.

Band (2003) has noted that the TIH Hebrew culture model or Tarbut Ivrit was linked with political youth groups in pre-state Israel such as the Hashomer Hatzair or the Young Guard which focused on education. Yoram Bar- Gal and Bruria Bar- Gal (2008) in their analysis of the historiography of geography education in Israel, point as well to the importance of the “knowledge of the land” yediat haaretz movement which included an emphasis on geographical exploration combined with Hebrew language instruction.

The summer abroad Hebrew language workshop at New York University

Geographical exploration as tied in with Hebrew language instruction was difficult to do from the confines of a classroom. A six week summer workshop with travel to Israel was begun as early as 1947 from New York University. Katsh (1965) who developed the

workshop has noted that it reflected the utilitarian educational philosophy which advocated the application of knowledge to everyday affairs and derogated the value of the study of the classics for mental discipline or of learning for its own sake. David Rudavksy (1965) has written of the impact of Abraham I. Katsh on modern Hebrew at NYU. Katsh had graduated from NYU in 1932 with a Masters degree in education. He began teaching a course in modern Hebrew in 1933, later becoming the first holder of the Chair of Hebrew Culture and Education established in 1944.

An experimental program had been begun in which Hebrew was offered as an elective in the public high schools of New York City. This had followed efforts by student Zionist organizations in the early twenties and thirties to add Hebrew. The classes attracted a large number of students and their success led to the inclusion of Hebrew on a fully accredited basis in New York City high schools. The language was taught as a “living tongue” and part of a cultural milieu, rather than a religious tool connected to sacred texts. Training teachers for this subject was part of the motivation by Dean E. George Payne of the school of education at NYU in establishing a program which included a pedagogical component. The program of Hebrew language instruction had a cultural component which included Hebrew literature, Jewish history, and other elements that would form a type of pre modern Israel studies.308

**Understanding Hebrew culture as a way of promoting tolerance**

Ritterband & Wechsler (1994) have examined the impact of the rise of Nazism on George E. Payne. This included a push to make modern Hebrew part of the curriculum of the

---

school of education at NYU in 1939. Payne had been trained as a sociologist at the University of Chicago, and had examined the ways in which education could remedy social problems. By adding Hebrew which had already begun to be viewed as part of the Zionist Jewish identity to the curriculum he sent a sign of tolerance and intergroup relationships.\textsuperscript{309} Rudavksy (1965) notes that Payne believed that such a program would provide a good laboratory for a variety of religious and ethnic groups to meet for a common educational purpose within a secular center of higher learning. Education was viewed by Payne as not only part of the democratic impulse, but also a way to nurture creativity and stimulate pluralism. Modern Hebrew presented a proud vehicle in which the emerging Jewish middle class, could present themselves to the outside world. Deborah Dash Moore (1981) has noted in that it promised a secular, assertive Jewish identity through the image of the new Hebrew citizen laborer of Palestine.\textsuperscript{310} The acceptance of Hebrew as an accredited language in the secondary school system of New York City was also part of this progressive process. Hebrew language instruction did not stay in the school of education, but became part of the more common configuration of a Hebrew and Judaics department in later years.

**The popular summer study abroad workshop in Hebrew language**

D.G. Myers (1996) in his research on the development of the workshop method has noted that the process of professionalization of the university included the application of expertise to research, which meant that rather than merely understanding literature, one


had to use it. For example, creative writing, which developed in terms of workshops, was a way of imparting the understanding of literature through a use of it, with literature a fusion of knowledge and practice. This principle represented that of the teacher presenting their subject as a familiar experience rather than as an exotic phenomenon. This was described as “appointing elephants to teach zoology”.311

Myers finds that the workshop method was also an effort to apply the principle of manual arts training to the study of English. The manual arts training movement had emerged in the 1870s. It influenced progressive education through Dewey’s reinterpretation of it. The first principle applied was that of the education of artisans through their work, and with the working standards constituting the artistic tradition. Schools run on humanistic principles of appreciating the classics were thought to lack an element of common and productive activity which was needed as well for the image of the school as a miniature community. The workshop method was to correct this, with the theory of knowledge as its own end displaced by a theory of knowledge as the means to productive activity. The workshop method was also called the project method, with a shift from product to process.

The intersection of Hebrew language instruction with educational theories of the 1930s

The workshop method was to be used in the development of Hebrew language instruction and Israel studies summer abroad programs which advocated more than the classroom experience. The summer workshop, was inaugurated in the late forties first at New York University, by Katsh, an educator who had been influenced by Dewey. Katsh promoted

a study abroad experience to professors at Christian Denominational colleges who still taught Hebrew language, and went to examine Biblical archeology and Israeli life in their nature setting. Summer workshops offered at Brandeis University by the Center of Israel studies, were to echo this rationale and include hands on experience in Israel.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and New York University

An Indiana Jones style exploratory aura was to be associated with the Hebrew and Judaics department in later years following the work of Lawrence Schiffman on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Schiffman (2005) has written of the way in which the scrolls were treated in the popular media. Following their discovery just after the Israeli War of Independence, he has noted the attention they received throughout the years. For a “world still reeling from World War II” he notes, the discovery was accompanied by the anticipation of some great religious revelation.312 A Dead Sea Scrolls Conference was held in 1985 at New York University.313 Schiffman (2006) has investigated such topics as the evidence for pre-Maccabean Jewish law and its relationship with the Hebrew Bible in the Dead Sea Scrolls.314 His work represents another era, that of the philologists, with text based analysis and the incorporation of archeological finds related to Biblical material. He has also focused on the connection between ancient Israel and the site of the current state.

The Israel studies chair at New York University

The donor behind the Israel studies chair established in 2004 was Henry Taub, who graduated in 1947 from NYU’s school of commerce, which was later renamed the Stern

313 Ibid., p.31.
school of business, and later co-founded the Automatic Data Processing, Inc. Taub had previously donated money to an urban research center at NYU, as well as to the school of business. Regarding the donation for the chair of Israel studies, Taub noted that it was a privilege to have seen the State of Israel founded in his lifetime….and that everyone needed to have a better understanding of its development. Coming shortly after the well-publicized troubles at Columbia University, the chair was also seen as part of the push for an antidote to the anti-Israel climate of Middle East studies departments.

Naomi Levine, a former senior vice president of New York University noted that the atmosphere on various campuses had pointed to the need for making the case for the existence of the state of Israel, and that it could not be assumed that there was an understanding or education about its right to exist in the Middle East. The president of the Henry and Marilyn Taub foundation announced that the search was for someone who would be effective and a good communicator. The definition of the position was for a scholar of modern Israel. It was noted that their position in terms of support for the Labor or Likud leadership, did not matter, it just could not be someone who said, “drive all the Jews into the sea.”

**The choice of Ron Zweig**

Ronald Zweig had come to New York University from Tel-Aviv University. As a historian, his scholarly work had focused on the implications of World War II on various

---

dimensions, such as that of Jewish leadership.\(^{318}\) Zweig has taught courses ranging from the history of Zionism, to a graduate seminar on the Jewish community in Palestine before statehood, to an independent study on educational policy by Jewish agencies in displaced-persons camps after W.W.II.\(^{319}\) His research has also added to the legacy of David Ben-Gurion when he edited an early collection of articles on the subject.\(^{320}\) New York University also has listed history as the disciplinary focus of Israel studies program.\(^{321}\)

Zweig has also supported a pluralistic approach to teaching about the history of the conflict. He has included the writings of such pro-Palestinian scholars as Rashid Khalidi in his syllabi, and has fostered partnerships with Palestinian students and institutions. However, he has noted unequivocally that Israel did not prevent the creation of a Palestinian state, as the United Nations partition plan called for, and that had the Arab world decided to create a Palestinian state next to Israel in 1948, there would have been a solution to the conflict 60 years ago.\(^{322}\) Regarding the issue of Jewish settlement, Zweig has also noted that as long as Palestinian terror has been large and significant inside of Israel proper, it has been hard to push for Palestinian control of the West Bank.


\(^{321}\) As per the questionnaire of the Israel Studies chair holders by the author.

Zweig takes an active role in the Association of Israel studies

Ron Zweig, as chair holder at New York University, took an active role in the activities of the field of Israel studies. A few years after arriving, he hosted one of the largest attended AIS conferences at NYU. In addition to hosting the AIS conference in 2008 at New York University, Ron Zweig instituted a full day meeting of the Israel studies chair holders. Although such meetings had been held before, they had been squeezed into a narrow lunch time frame. The meeting was part of the professionalization of the field with chair holders asked to describe the type of appointment, in which department or program, collaboration with Jewish studies and or other established program, and type of classes taught.323

Israel studies as Gatekeepers

In a previous meeting, held in Israel in 2007, Ron Zweig noted that AIS should consider becoming more selective about the papers that are accepted to the annual conferences and that only papers from advanced graduate students should be accepted with the approval of their professors. His comments provoked opposition from the other members of the board of directors, such as Rachel Brenner and Ilan Troen, who felt that AIS was still a growing organization and should not reject papers from highly qualified students.324 Concern was also voiced regarding improving the ability of Palestinian university students to participate in conferences. In one of the political resolutions adopted by the AIS board, this problem was addressed when the association called upon Israeli

323 Meeting of Israel studies Centers and Faculty with Appointments in Israel studies, New York University, May 18, 2008, 1-5 P.M. held at the Kimmel Center, 60 Washington Square South, Room 909. An outline of the meeting was found in the AIS archive, at the University of Wisconsin, accessed fall 2008 (Box #1).

324 Minutes of the Association for Israel studies Board of Directors, held in Herzlia, Israel, June 10, 2007. Accessed in the AIS archives at the University of Wisconsin, (Box #1).
authorities to permit Palestinian university student’s greater entry to Israel, while it also called upon the Palestinian authorities to do everything in their power to terminate indiscriminate attacks that impede the conduct of research and study in Israeli universities. Holding a future conference at the embattled Sapir College in Southern Israel (Sderot) the target of Hamas missile attacks, was also discussed with another site chosen. Other items discussed included money for student travel. Archival documents show individual efforts by presidents of the association to raise money for travel for Palestinian students who wanted to attend various conferences. For example, one private American donor always gave money for the specific purpose of assisting with the travel of Palestinian students.325

**Monthly Interdisciplinary Seminars**

One of the innovative interdisciplinary practices introduced at the Taub Center for Israel studies at New York University, has been a regional monthly workshop for graduate students throughout the region. They have been promoted as an informal setting for the presentation of papers by students working in the field of Israel studies.326

**New York University in Abu Dhabi**

New York University, under the leadership of President John Sexton, plans to open a “clone” in Abu Dhabi, in the next three years, becoming the first major U.S. research institution to open a complete liberal-arts university offshore. Unlike other overseas arrangements, New York University is planning to treat the offshore campus as virtually

325 Ibid. Her name was Clara Schiffer and various AIS presidents contacted her.
326 Hillel Gruenberg, a doctoral candidate at New York University, has cited the importance of the Taub Center’s workshops in Israel studies, for the diversity of intellectual interests. The workshop is promoted in brochures about the Taub Center for Israel studies, entitled, *Teaching Israel’s past, present and future.*
equal to the New York campus, with the same degrees granted at both, and with students
chosen by the same admissions procedure, promoting the result as the world’s first global
university. However Israelis are barred from entering the United Arab Emirates.
While this would not have an impact on American Jewish scholars, it would affect Israeli
participation in conferences, and it remains to be seen how a subject like Israel studies
will be handled. Lawrence Schiffman (2008) expects that New York University will
not open a branch without negotiating the right to have Israelis come on campus. Others
are not so sure, and have asked about allowing homosexuals as well.328

328 Schiffman was cited by Mark, J. (2008, May 9), Associate Editor of The Jewish Week p.15. in a
summary of weekly events in the region. Also, see Lewin, T. (2008, Feb. 10). Universities rush to set up
Chapter 6: Conclusion & Implications –
Structural Analysis of an Intellectual History

I began this study searching for where Israel Studies, a new and at times controversial field, came to be located in the academic space, why and how. To do that, I have looked at university programs as well as a dozen newly appointed directors and chairs of Israel studies, mostly in the United States. Four programs have been selected as case studies based on the saliency of overriding themes such as Jewish settlement which cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries. In the process, I discovered that since very few degree granting programs have been established and that most of the chair holders were functioning as what Fenton (1947) had described as a “one-man integrated area course” the intellectual history of the scholars involved was to be most useful.329

Analysis of the disciplinary focus of the scholars, the department they were linked with as well as the institutional history of the institution in which it was embedded provided a way to move beyond what at first glance appeared to be random appointments, providing insights into disciplinary content and discourse. In particular, I was able to develop an understanding of the complexities involving interdisciplinary research, an often stated but difficult to establish objective of academic institutions. In addition to issues of scientific vocabulary and domains, my research has identified the political context within which disciplinary intersection has been taken place, and how the

scientific and the political were intertwined despite official academic manifestations to separate the two.

A Gap between donor driven chairs and institutional implementation

In all the case studies the chairs of Israel studies were privately endowed. This is not unusual when compared to chairs of Jewish studies, where private funding has also been a factor, however there was a fundamental difference between the two fields. The scholarship and courses taught in Jewish learning were not controversial and meeting the donors’ agenda of increasing knowledge about Judaism and the Jews has rarely been an issue. This is because Jewish studies by-and-large reflected the prevailing consensus regarding subjects such as the history of the Holocaust or European immigration to America. In contrast, the area of Israel studies was characterized by a lack of consensus, in particular around a subject matter that has come to represent much of the core teaching and scholarship in the field, that surrounding the Arab/Israeli conflict. This contentious issue separated the donors, which tended to view the endowed position as an opportunity to explain Israel’s side of the Arab/Israeli conflict, and the scholars who have made their way through an academic process reflecting varied and often negative attitudes towards Israel by accommodating the prevailing anti-Israel consensus.

The case studies clearly pointed to that gap between stated donor intent and the process of implementation. Most donors have phrased their motivations carefully to reflect a desire to broaden the knowledge base about Israel. Following a climate recently described by Ari Shavit (2009) as one in which a national movement that began as “legitimacy without an entity” is becoming an “entity without legitimacy” there has been
a tacit assumption that the broadening of that base would lead to better understanding of the Israeli perspective.\textsuperscript{330} Israel studies scholars, however, noted emphatically that they will avoid advocacy, with a commitment to “straight scholarship” that presents both the Palestinian and Israeli narrative.\textsuperscript{331} Still, advocacy was evident, albeit often in precisely the opposite direction as the one intended by the donors. As Menand (1996) noted, a lack of advocacy does not really exist, and accusing someone else of advocacy amounts to just another way of saying that one interpretation is better than another.\textsuperscript{332}

The meaning making process

The inclusion of area studies programs in the modern university has illuminated the conflicting pressures of nationalism, religion and culture. In particular, the analysis of Israel studies points to the complicated intersection between politics and scholarship in the post-modern era. Ian Hacking (1990) has examined normality as a statistical concept used by the ruling powers in pre-war Europe as a controlling and visible exercise of power. This power was channeled through academics as collectors of statistical information about the population that was then used for economic and social sanctions.\textsuperscript{333}

A somewhat similar theme emerged in my analysis of the chair holders. Some scholars of Israel studies have shown a preference for creating expertise in a form and fashion that will prepare them for an advisory role to the US government. This reality raises a number of important questions, such as whether data and knowledge will be used for policy

\textsuperscript{331} As noted by Ronald Zweig, the Israel studies chair at New York University. His views were also cited in Birkner, G. (2004, Nov. 12). Scholarly Eye on Israel: New $4 million NYU center vows a pure study of Jewish state and not advocacy. \textit{The Jewish Week}, p.11.
making purposes and, if yes, does this imply an alliance that may bias the scholarly process towards particular players in the conflict.

**Identity politics and Israel studies**

I have argued that questions of national identity are crucial to the emerging discipline of Israel studies. As Michael Meyer (2000) has noted, there was some resistance to situating Israel studies within Jewish history, as the history of the state of Israel had been conceptualized as the first chapter of a nationalist or Zionist saga, differing in existential ways from previous chapters of Jewish history. However, in recent years Jewish studies have become inextricably linked with Israel studies, with courses in Israeli society and culture and Zionist history located in Centers for Jewish studies rather than in Middle East Area studies. Part of the hesitation by Jewish studies scholars to include modern Israel, reflected the discussion in Israeli education circles over what the new “Jew” living in Palestine should be taught of Jewish history and religion, with cultural and national identity constantly negotiated. There was also a resistance against falling into the “lachrymose” presentation of Jewish history as one of saints and villains, condemned by Salo Baron (1928).

At the same time that Jewish studies were benefiting from mainstream acceptance, Israel studies have been marginalized unless their focus has been the Palestinian narrative. This was in turn associated with the increasing influence of Edward Said, who pointed to the new “Jew” as not at all Jewish but rather Palestinian. Combined with the

---


push for an action oriented role for the intellectual, Said’s influence has been instrumental in shifting the academic discourse and the ways in which meaning were made regarding Palestine. As Martin Kramer (2001) pointed out, scholarship about Israel that did not focus on the occupation was kept from the mainstream of Middle East Studies, with Israel becoming a barometer of one’s political affiliations and social activism.337 Zionist cultural motifs have been exploited and appropriated in this process.

Much of this study has focused on the recently appointed Israel studies chair holders. Mostly functioning without a corresponding program (with the American University being the exception) they have been examined in terms of disciplinary focus, issues of core and periphery, and subject placement. Space has been found for them mostly in centers or institutes for Jewish studies, with disciplinary affiliation ranging from that history to political science, sociology and literature. The problem Fenton (1947) identified in his survey of area studies programs affiliated with the armed services educational programs, of that of the “one-man integrated area course” was evident here as well, producing the same difficulty of fitting a single course into a larger body of knowledge.338

---


Accessing the Association of Israel Studies

Ian Hacking (1990) has written of the importance of not just who collects information, but what meaning is made of it.\(^{339}\) Looking at the meaning making process has formed a large part of this study. For instance, as David A. Hollinger (2007) noted, the development of American studies was tied in to the founding of the *American Quarterly* and the American Studies Association.\(^{340}\) Similarly, the emergence of journals such as *Israel Studies* and the founding of the Association of Israel studies (AIS) have been important to the ways in which meaning has been made. As the main professional scholarly organization to organize the academic studies of Israel, AIS is a vital element my investigation. I was able to access archival research dating back to the founding of the Association, which provided valuable background on the scholarly and institutional backdrop of the field, including turf battles which revealed how meaning was made regarding the role of the intellectual and the state. The archives of the Association have also provided an unmediated source to the sensitivities and issues related to the politics of Israel studies, for example, the many controversial subjects whose handling exposed fault lines within the community of scholars in this scholarly domain. AIS founders such as Ian Lustick were focused on keeping a high level of academic visibility for the organization as well as on keeping it open to different disciplines, while at the same time making sure that it was not confused with a right wing group of Israel scholars who wanted to present at the same conferences.\(^{341}\)


\(^{341}\) According to a letter dated Sep.21, 1994, sent by Ian Lustick, to complain to the American Political Science organization about a competing group.
Scholars like Lustick were part of the process of normalization involving what Metzger (1987) described as the social aspect of the creation of a discipline from a subject, with the community of practitioners within and outside the academy who derive their occupational identity from it. At the same time these scholars vied to play the role of the intellectual as described by Michael Keren (1989) in shaping the political process. However while Palestinian proponents such as Edward Said worked to advance the Palestinian cause, even serving in a leadership role in Palestinian political institutions, people like Lustick took a critical perspective of Israeli policies and saw themselves more as advisors to the US government as to how to put pressure on the Israeli government. If there was any advocacy role it was nuanced and implicit, implying that such pressure was good for Israel in the long term.

The Ben-Gurion school of Israel studies

One common bond identified among Israel studies scholars was that of a fascination with David Ben-Gurion. Knesset legislation enacted in 1974 following Ben-Gurion’s death led to the establishment of archives, scholarly publications and faculty positions relating to his legacy as the formative leader in the early years of the state, producing what would become a key base for the formation of Israel studies as a scholarly discipline. An Israel studies program was set up at Ben-Gurion University, connected with the Ben-Gurion Research Center at Sdeh Boker. In my research, I found that this program has become a model and prototype for subsequent Israel studies programs, in that it had a degree

---

granting capability and course offerings on various aspects of Israel’s economy, politics, films literature, ethnicity and religious life. This was somewhat ironic since Ben-Gurion was known for his stormy relationship with the academic community, he engaged in many debates with them and eventually was brought down by them (Hazony, 2000). However the irony of the legislation to memorialize him was that many more generations of scholars have argued about his decisions.

Gary Fine (1995) noted that while schools, paradigms and traditions float in unmapped intellectual space, with the labeling of a school of thought itself a social construction, a school can be used as a term to refer to a collection of individuals working in the same environment who are defined as representing a distinct approach to a scholarly endeavor. These academics are not necessarily limited to a single department but may enjoy similar cultural environments. Consistent with that view, I have identified a Ben-Gurion school of thought in Israel studies. For that school, the use of the archival material and historical focus on the early years of the state has become characteristic not just of the collection of individuals that research Ben-Gurion but also of the environment in which Israel studies journals that focus on Ben-Gurion’s life and are edited at and by Ben-Gurion scholars.

I started my inquiry into Israel studies with a glimpse of the history of Hebrew language instruction at medieval universities. Pearl Kibre (1948) noted that the nations systems, associations of scholars, masters and students, had called for subjects, such as

---

344 Also based on an interview with Tuvia Frilling, affiliated with the Ben-Gurion Research Center and Ben-Gurion University, in the summer of 2006, regarding Israel studies.
their request in 1430 for Hebrew.\textsuperscript{347} As I have traced Hebrew language instruction at American Universities, and have noted the emergence of area studies, I find that the field of Israel studies has been sandwiched in between. Although many scholars of Israel studies have been political scientists in the post-war era, the Israel studies field has gone back to the departments of Jewish studies and Hebrew language. Issues of national identity have played an important part in this process, which has involved not situating Israel studies within Middle East studies Centers.

Critical theory action oriented post-modern discourse has created an intertwining of political and scholarly activity, which has often taken the shape of anti-Israel activism. In this respect, scholars of Israel studies have faced a very different academic climate that those of Jewish studies or other area studies scholars. Capturing this aspect has been one of the main challenges in this dissertation, as it has posed the interdisciplinary nature of Israel studies as both a limitation and a contribution. Barnett (1996) referred to the perception of Israel as “an unapproachable challenge” in terms of comparative analysis, with Israel neither a socialist nor a capitalist state, neither a Western nor Eastern power.\textsuperscript{348} Israel is, from this perspective, a case which defies easy classification, and it is precisely this uniqueness that makes it vulnerable to political winds or what Barnett calls the “politics of uniqueness.” It was clear from my research that the choice of disciplines and subject matters as well as the choice of scholars to staff Israel studies programs was driven as much by political agendas as by disciplinary relevance, and that


these two forces intersected and intertwined to form the academic vehicles that have come to represent the field.
References


*In Search Of Israel Studies a Survey of Israel Studies on American College Campuses.* Published by the Israel on Campus Coalition, a partnership of the Charles & Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.


L.B. Eisen, D.A. Harris, M. Bard & R. Neuwirth, (2006). In search of Israel studies-a survey of Israel studies at American Campuses. Published by ICC- Israel on Campus Coalition, a partnership of the Charles and Lyn Schusterman Family Foundation and Hillel.


P. Ritterband & H.S. Wechsler (1994). *Jewish learning in American Universities The first


132-139.


Myers & D. B. Ruderman (Eds.), *The Jewish past revisited: Reflections on modern
Jewish historians* (pp.104-127). New Haven: Yale University Press.

In A. Dowty (Ed.), *Critical Issues in Israeli Society* (pp.223-249). Westport,

Peres, S. *David’s Sling.* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.


Pfeffer, A. (2008, Feb.2). Israel no longer the world’s ‘Mecca’ of Jewish studies. *Haaretz*
(online edition).

W20.

Porat, D.A. (2006). The Nation Revised: Teaching the Jewish Past in the Zionist Present (1890-


Reinharz, S. (1995). The Chicago School of Sociology and the founding of the graduate
program in sociology at Brandeis University: A case study in cultural diffusion. In G. A.
Fine (Ed.), *A second Chicago school? The development of a postwar American sociology*

activism, 1880s -1920s. In P.M. Spacks (Ed.), *Advocacy in the classroom problems and
possibilities* (pp.127-133). New York: St. Martin’s Press.

181


Appendix A: IRB Approved Survey of Israel Studies Chairs

Dear Participant,

Your consideration in completing this survey is very much appreciated. By completing the survey, your consent for participation in the study will be assumed. Please note that you may leave out any question you do not want to answer. Should you have any questions, please contact me at shenkar.2@osu.edu.

Thank you,

Miriam Shenkar (IRB #2007, EO216).

Israel Studies Questionnaire

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name (optional): ______________________________

Education and Area of Specialization:

Position / Title:

Department: ______

Faculty / College:

University / College:

ISRAEL STUDIES PROGRAM INFORMATION

Official Name of the Israel Studies Program with which you are affiliated: Israel Studies is an integral part of the Hebrew and Judaic Studies program

The Program resides in (Name of Unit):

The Program has been open since:

Previous holders of the position you now hold: _____

Number of faculty affiliated with the Program:

Primary affiliation of faculty affiliated with / teaching in the Program: _______

Number of visited professors affiliated with the Program:

Number of cross-listed courses affiliated with the program: __

Continued
Appendix A continued

Number of students in the Program:
Of those, ___ are pursuing a graduate degree in Israel Studies.
Is there a dissertation option related to Israel Studies in your Program?
What is the disciplinary focus of the program?
What library facilities are connected with the Program?
Are there any publications associated with the Program (please specify)?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
What conferences are customarily attended by faculty in the Program (please specify)?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Does the program host any Israel Studies related conferences? __________
Is there a language component associated with the Program? _________________
Are there any discipline related courses associated with the program?
___________
How often are the departmental professors asked to give lectures relating to Israel in the community at large- or in the academic community?
How important have alumnae of the university been in establishing the program?
Please list below any additional information which in your mind is relevant:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Thank you again for your time and attention.
IRB approval number-2007, EO216, Ohio State University
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables- names of the chair holders</th>
<th>Wisconsin Nadav Shelef</th>
<th>Michigan State Yael Aronoff</th>
<th>Columbia Yinon Cohen</th>
<th>NYU Ron Zweig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year chair established</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names of donor/private funds</td>
<td>Harvey M. Meyerhof &amp; Alumni</td>
<td>Michael &amp; Elaine Sterling &amp; Friends</td>
<td>Alumni and Columbia College trustees in honor of the retirement of Jewish History Professor Y.H. Yerushalmi</td>
<td>Marilyn &amp; Henry Taub family. Henry graduated from the NYU Stern School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary focus of the chair holders</td>
<td>Political science</td>
<td>Political science</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching the Conflicts</td>
<td>Major part of the curriculum</td>
<td>focus on the Oslo Accords</td>
<td>Focus on demographic factors</td>
<td>Focus on social, educational and historical analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public versus private institution</td>
<td>Public-Land Grant To World Grant</td>
<td>Public-Land Grant</td>
<td>Private-began as a sectarian institution</td>
<td>Private- secular breakaway from Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in Jewish Studies Centers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service/outreach mission incorporated in the chair</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair holder takes a leadership role in Israel studies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (part of a father-daughter team)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive versus descriptive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>