The Creation of a Pluralistic Religious Orientation

The Integration of Jews and Judaism at Wesleyan University

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Wesleyan University hosts a vibrant Jewish community and enjoys a myriad of options for exploring Judaism within social, religious, and academic contexts. The university supports the Bayit, a residence for those who desire to maintain a kosher environment, and the Havurah, which hosts Jewish services and sponsors Jewish cultural events. A pluralistic chaplaincy features a rabbi who serves both the Jewish and non-Jewish community as an adviser, teacher, and scholar. Wesleyan also boasts a curriculum with a strong commitment to the study and teaching of Judaica.

Yet this tradition of support for the study and practice of Judaism only dates back about twenty years. All of the institutional trappings of the Jewish community, including the Bayit, the Havurah, the rabbinical post, and the tenure-track faculty position in Judaica, grew out of the late nineteen-sixties.

My purpose in this essay is not to document the activities of these institutions. Instead, I endeavor to uncover the conditions which encouraged the creation of Wesleyan's contemporary Jewish community. In documenting the series of events which transformed Wesleyan from a Methodist college to a university with an active Jewish presence, I seek to expose the forces which shaped the current reality.

In order to understand the integration of Jewish people and Judaism into the Wesleyan community, I examine the Methodist
origins of the institution and trace the influence of sectarian biases into the twentieth century. As late as the nineteen-sixties, Wesleyan's curriculum, social environment, and religious policies were marked by discrimination against Jews. The eradication of these prejudices was a necessary precursor to the establishment of a viable and valued Jewish community.

To demonstrate the decline of entrenched religious bias at Wesleyan, I focus on the changes which drastically altered three pivotal institutions at Wesleyan: the Chapel, the fraternities, and the Department of Admissions. During the first half of the twentieth century, each of these institutions explicitly or implicitly perpetrated religious discrimination. Between nineteen-fifty and nineteen-seventy, these institutions underwent conflicts which reflected a fundamental reformation of Wesleyan's orientation toward religion. In nineteen-fifty, Wesleyan espoused tolerance and diversity, but discriminated against its Jewish population. By nineteen-seventy, the institution initiated the construction of a pluralistic approach to religion, and a policy supportive of Judaism and Judiaca.

The establishment of Wesleyan College on September 21, 1831 culminated a thirty year effort to found a Methodist-sponsored school. The task was ultimately accomplished through the purchase of land from Captain Partridge's American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy. This land, while valued at $30,000, was
sold for four thousand dollars with the provision that the
gelding college raise a suitable endowment. Wesleyan's first
academic year, 1831-1832, realized a student body of forty-eight
and an endowment of forty thousand dollars. Nearly half of that
sum, approximately eighteen thousand, resulted from the
contributions of Middletown citizens.¹

Dr. Willbur Fisk served as the college's first president. Dr.
Fisk, who has been characterized as an "educational innovator"²,
instituted a curriculum which included several non-traditional
elements. Under his stewardship, Wesleyan encouraged advanced
placement of students based on positive proficiency examinations,
the study of modern languages, and a scientific course of study.

In 1872, forty years after Willbur Fisk initiated these
reforms in the curriculum of the college, Wesleyan attempted
coeducation. The women admitted to the class of 1876 and those
following confirmed that they were as capable as their male
counterparts. Professor C.T. Winchester observed at the time
that:

The experiment of coeducation (for it must still
be considered an experiment) can hardly have been of
injury to the college; no changes have been made in
the course of study to accommodate it to the ladies
and there has been no lowering of the tone of scholar-
ship, for the young ladies have shown themselves able,
both mentally and physically to perform the intellectual
labor of a college course quite as well as the gentlemen
who sit in class with them.

In the early twentieth century, as Wesleyan transformed itself
into a small, Eastern college in accordance with the examples of
Amherst, Dartmouth, and Williams, the school returned to a policy
of admitting only men.

Despite the cessation of coeducation, Wesleyan continued to
endorse the intellectual values of diversity and tolerance. In 1926, an editorial in The Wesleyan Argus entitled "Unsquelched Utterances" proclaimed:

Gone are the days, as far as Wesleyan is concerned, when we look askance at a proposal to give audience to a disbeliever in the established social order. We now take it for granted that Payweather Gymnasium should be at the disposal of Professor Jerome Davis when he questions the Profit Motive, or that the Christian Association at its meetings should tolerate expression by professors of philosophies of all hues of unorthodoxy...We tacitly declare our faith in Wesleyan's liberality each time we arrange for the appearance of another speaker...Wesleyan is different.

President James L. McConaughy, in an address to the student body in 1930, similarly lauded the educational bonanza provided by a diverse student body:

Our attitude toward mankind requires constant revision. In a college whose members represent different houses, different parts of the world, and bring with them different religious beliefs, different standards of conduct, even different languages, there is the opportunity to learn about people different from ourselves.

President McConaughy additionally noted in 1930:

Comment is sometimes made regarding the denominational representation of the undergraduate body. The actual number of Methodists at Wesleyan continues about the same, but they are of course, a much smaller percentage of the whole college than formerly. It is, I think, a feature of all Eastern colleges that no matter what the denominational antecedents of the institution may be, the sectarian representation in the undergraduate body is quite incidental today.

While such expressions of diversity and tolerance were central to the college's credo, Wesleyan simultaneously maintained institutional religious biases which discriminated against Jews, Catholics, and other non-Protestants. The most
blatant discriminatory practice was the enforcement of mandatory chapel attendance.

The *Wesleyan University Bulletin* of 1910 enumerates the extent to which the chapel services influenced student life: "Devotional Services, at which the attendance of students is required, are held in Memorial Chapel every week-day morning, and on Sunday afternoons."7 Despite President McConaughy's recognition of religious diversity within the student body in 1930, the college required that all students attend services which embodied and sought to propagate specific religious beliefs. These services additionally provided the context for many of the speakers brought to the college, most of whom addressed topics related to some form of Christianity. The 1915 edition of the *Wesleyan University Bulletin* cites that, "it is perhaps not sufficiently appreciated what a wealth of opportunity the students of Wesleyan have to hear the best speakers of the country upon topics connected with religion and social service. Sunday by Sunday prominent clergymen of several denominations are invited to conduct the vesper services in Memorial Chapel."8

The reactions of students and faculty to compulsory chapel comprise a gamut of responses. An editorial in the *Argus* dated January 18, 1926, samples various attitudes:

Mr. A--"To be frank, I enjoy chapel...We've got to be compelled to do some things right straight through life..."

Mr. B--"This alarm-clock religion and the benefit-of-getting-the-college-body-together-every-day talk is the bunk...Away with compulsory chapel!"

A Professor--"I wouldn't want my boy to go to college without being compelled to be exposed to chapel..."
Another Professor—"Compulsory chapel is wrong. Fifty years from now there will be no thought at all of a compulsory religious service. It simply doesn't and never will work."

Mr. E.—"Any form of compulsion in connection with religious services is wrong."

These commentaries on the value of mandatory chapel are similar to later debate in the 1950's, in that they address the philosophical validity of compulsion, and ignore the discrimination inherent in the services.

Yet compulsion was not an issue for some students. Robert R. R. Brooks, in the April 12, 1926 issue of the Argus, argued "The discussion is not whether compulsion is right or wrong, but whether the things we compel ourselves to do are right or wrong." Brooks proceeds to defend chapel as the only institution which adequately provides the "certain intangible yet unmistakable benefits arising from a spirit of college community unity." Mr Brooks' letter prompted a response from Albert Edgar Stephan '26, in which Stephan maintains that "the spiritual benefit of daily chapel dwarfs any resulting college body unity..." The editors of the Argus present the conflict between community and religious value and cast their ballot by stating, "The Argus favors Mr. Brooks' contention that the need of campus unity justifies compulsory assembly."

In 1926, the compulsory chapel issue was divided into three camps: those who found chapel religiously rewarding, those who accepted the institution as a means to maintain a sense of unity, and those who objected to the practice of compulsion.

The college's official position on the importance of
compulsory chapel remained relatively stable over the next several decades, though the quantity of required services began to diminish. In 1951 the college catalogue explained that, "The Trustees and Faculty regard the Sunday Chapel Services as an integral part of the work at the college; accordingly, reasonable regularity of attendance is required of all undergraduates."14

The Chapel-Assembly Program, or Credit System, was instituted in the mid-1950's. The system required that students accumulate no less than ten attendances each semester, and allowed individual students to determine whether these attendances were at Sunday evening worship services, weekday college assemblies, or a combination of the two. The system additionally allowed students to use services at a local house of worship to satisfy up to five of their credits.

The stated intention of the Credit System was to "advance the consideration of values, which the college believes is a central function of education."15 The system reduced the college's earlier emphasis on disseminating sectarian doctrine, as students were offered credits for a wide range of events including plays and performances by Pete Seeger.16

Within the Credit System, Jewish students could presumably fulfill their required ten attendances without going to the services in Memorial Chapel. Nonetheless, by providing Protestant worship services and neglecting Judaism, the college ignored the religious beliefs of its Jewish students and failed to encourage the appreciation of Judaism within the college environment. Additionally, the concentration of such cultural activities as guest speakers and concerts within the context of Chapel services
exempted some Jewish students from participation. The sectarian legacy of "Old Wesleyan" was perpetuated by the Credit System in a manner which conflicted with the ideals of pluralism and tolerance touted by students, faculty, and administration.

The religious bias evidenced by the Credit System also translated into the social environment at Wesleyan. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) provided one of the major social outlets for Wesleyan students. As early as 1901, the Argus maintains that, "The work of the YMCA is of no small importance in its influence on the college..." The Wesleyan Christian Association, founded in 1885, also played a prominent role in campus social life. The Christian Association organized the "Freshman Camps" during orientation, held weekly discussions, published the handbook mailed to all freshmen, coordinated the Book Service (a discount book outlet), and sponsored forums at which outside speakers addressed religious issues. The Association also aided the Oxford Club, a related group, in promoting the idea of post-graduate Christian work. Additionally, the Christian Association maintained a reading room, an office and stenographic service, and a cabin for outdoor social gatherings. The funds which supported the Christian Association came from the budget of the "Church of Christ at Wesleyan", the college church.

Students of other religious backgrounds formed groups of their own. The Wesleyan University Bulletin of 1946-47 states that, "Undergraduates who are Catholics have organized, with a
faculty adviser, the Newman Club, for the study of their religion and the position of the Catholic Church in contemporary civilization. There are similar organizations for the undergraduates who are Christian Scientists and Jews." While Jewish groups such as the Stephen Wise Club did exist at Wesleyan, no Jewish organization received the magnitude of financial encouragement provided to the Christian Association. Jewish students were not prohibited from membership in the Christian Association or the YMCA, but the existence of independent Jewish groups suggests that at least some Jews felt the need to establish their own social-religious clubs. The fraternity system will be examined later in the essay as a special case of religious discrimination within the social sphere.

Jeremy Zwelling, in his article, "An Informed Sense of Identity: The Jewish Experience at Wesleyan", notes that, "Until the mid-Fifties, Judiaca courses were available at barely a handful of universities, and only at Harvard and Columbia were there endowed chairs in Jewish thought. At Wesleyan, there was relatively little, either culturally or academically, with which Jewish students could identify." Not only was Wesleyan's curriculum lacking in Jewish studies, but it reflected the same sectarian bias evidenced by the Credit System and the unequal allotment of resources among social clubs.

The Department of Religion was marked by a high degree of overt sectarian bias throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1910 Announcement of Courses, three out of five religion courses focused exclusively on Christianity. They were
"Evidences of Christianity", "English Bible, New Testament: St. Paul's conception of Christianity", and "Relations of Science and Religion: Scientific thought and their bearing upon theistic and Christian belief". The textbook for the last of the three courses was entitled, *Christian Faith in the Age of Science*. While the department offered a course "English Bible, Old Testament", the description "Development of Prophecy" does not indicate what, if any, perspective the course offers on Judaism.²¹

A course description from the 1915 *Announcement of Courses* provides a clear depiction of the institutional bias towards Christianity. The course, "Introduction to the Study of Religion", consisted of "A few lectures on the origin of religion and the great historic religions...followed by a discussion of the debated problems of religion and a constructive presentation of the truths of Christianity."²²

The emphasis upon Christianity continued to dominate the Religion Department at Wesleyan through the 1950's. The *Announcement of Courses* for the academic year 1951-1952 lists six religion courses, three of which treat exclusively Christian topics: Christian Doctrine, Christian Ethics, and The History of Christian Thought.²³ It is interesting to note, however, that instruction in Hebrew was available between the years of 1910 and 1920.²⁴ Considering that the course was offered through the Berkeley Divinity School, it is reasonable to assume that it was not a "Jewish Studies" course. By the end of the nineteen-fifties, the curriculum started to reflect an appreciation of the study of Judaism. The 1959 *Announcement of Courses* lists a course
exclusively on Judaism.\textsuperscript{25}

The Department of Biology also featured courses which indicate insensitivity towards Jewish students. Between the years of 1935 and 1947, the department frequently listed a course on "Genetics and Eugenics". The course description read as follows:

"Modern work in genetics and related problems. Topics included: Mendelian inheritance, physical basis of inheritance, inheritance of acquired characteristics, pure lines, mutation, heredity and environment, race problems, eugenics."\textsuperscript{26}

By 1952 the course was renamed "Genetics" and the references to eugenics were removed from the description.\textsuperscript{27} The same college which offered these courses ironically sponsored an undergraduate parley on February 8–9, 1934 featuring speeches entitled "The Nazis and German Jewry", by Rabbi Louis I. Newman Ph.D., and "Hitlerism and the Jew" by Rabbi Louis I. Newman Ph.D., Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman, and Prof. Carl J. Friedrich.\textsuperscript{28} The Wesleyan Argus, on January 15, 1931, reported that the teaching of eugenics was not an accepted practice at all colleges and universities:

Following the refusal of Harvard University to accept a gift in a will to endow courses for instruction in eugenics, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has ruled that the money must be given to some other institution for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{29}

The fact that the Department of Biology promoted the study of eugenics through 1947 is illustrative of the fundamental biases within the Wesleyan curriculum.

The abolition of the discriminatory Credit System facilitated the realization of a pluralistic orientation towards religion at Wesleyan, and thus was a precursor to the development
of a vibrant Jewish presence. In the late nineteen-fifties, students at many colleges and universities began to protest against mandatory chapel attendance. In 1957, Princeton University students and faculty expressed dissatisfaction with that university's chapel policy. The *Argus* reported that "Dean of the Chapel, Ernest Gordon, led his support to a move by prominent student leaders at Princeton University to alter the compulsory chapel regulations at the New Jersey school."\(^{30}\) Students at Amherst College, in what Amherst President Willard L. Thorp characterized as "a display of surplus vernal energy"\(^{31}\), rioted against mandatory chapel services in May of 1957. The *Argus* relates that a group of Amherst students filled in a hole which was the initial step in the construction of a new religion building, and that "...all that was left the morning after the rioting was 'a charred cross and some well trampled ground' where the hole had been."\(^{32}\)

Meanwhile, in December of 1957, Wesleyan's Standing Committee of the College Church attempted to "evaluate and improve the Chapel services and make the Chapel more appealing to students".\(^{33}\) This revision in the services' format created "a more meditative and musical type of program".\(^{34}\) Reverend William Spurrier, the college chaplain, told the *Argus* that the attractiveness of the new services might encourage the elimination of the Credit System.\(^{35}\)

On June 5, 1958, the faculty voted to reduce the number of required credits within the Credit System from ten to six. Dean of the Faculty John W. Spaeth explained that "the reduction was
effected because of the next year's 'revised assembly program which will envision fewer but superior' assemblies.\textsuperscript{36} Thus students could still satisfy their requirement solely through attending the assemblies.

Improved services and reduced credits did not preclude some students from questioning the validity of mandatory chapel. A letter to the editor printed in the \textit{Argus} on March 6, 1959, observed that, "some students...are becoming increasingly conscious of the uselessness of the credit system. Others already regard chapel credits as a slur on their maturity and a threat to their dignity as students."\textsuperscript{37}

Two weeks after that letter was printed, Dean Spaeth informed the student body that the issue of chapel credits was under consideration by the faculty's Administration Committee. The faculty viewed the Credit System as an issue of compulsion, and it linked the discussion of the system to an examination of class-attendance requirements.\textsuperscript{38}

As a part of a trend towards eliminating such requirements at Wesleyan, the faculty voted unanimously to abolish the Credit System on January 5, 1960. This resolution of the chapel issue came after the Board of Trustees ceded power to determine a solution to University President Victor L. Butterfield. President Butterfield, in turn, empowered the faculty to act on the matter.

It would be misleading to represent the abolition of the Credit System as a conscious statement against religious discrimination. The debate which terminated in the removal of chapel-assembly credits revolved around the issue of compulsion, and predominantly neglected to address the issue of religious
discrimination. Yet voluntary chapel services paved the way for the creation of a Wesleyan chaplaincy which represented Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious interests. The curtailment of the policy which sponsored only Protestant services served as a prerequisite for the establishment of Jewish organizations such as the Havurah and the Bayit. The increase in academic interest in Judaism, which resulted in the creation of a tenure track in Judiaca and the hiring of Jeremy Zwelling as the university's first professor of Judiaca, also reflected the pluralistic attitude created by the abolition of the Credit System.

While the elimination of the Credit System opened up great possibilities for religious pluralism at Wesleyan, the liberalization of fraternity pledging policies fundamentally reformed the social organization of the institution. Because the process of religious integration within the fraternities removed a primary obstacle to Jewish students' full participation at Wesleyan, it merits close scrutiny as an example of the creation of religious pluralism at Wesleyan.

Despite widespread discrimination against Jews among the fraternities in the nineteen-fifties, several social outlets were available to Wesleyan's Jewish students. The Stephen Wise Club sponsored forums which addressed issues of Jewish history and culture. On November 4, 1956 Professor Juan Roura-Parella addressed the Wise Club in a lecture about the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. He characterized the exile of Jews as "maybe the greatest mistake Spain ever made."\textsuperscript{39} Later that semester,
on December 2, the club held a meeting at which Professor Arthur C. McGill of the Religion Department discussed the nature of Jewish law.\textsuperscript{40}

The John Wesley Club, while not a specifically Jewish organization, provided Jewish students with an alternative to the fraternities. "John Wes" earned a reputation among students for liberalism and intellectualism, and boasted a strong Jewish membership in the nineteen-fifties.\textsuperscript{41} Wesleyan Trustee Emeritus Robert Cohen, who was an undergraduate at Wesleyan in the late nineteen-thirties and early forties, recalled that the John Wesley Club was "fully open" during his student days, although "the prejudicial barrier was nearly completely operating, in admissions as well as fraternities."\textsuperscript{42}

While certain fraternities routinely discriminated against Jews and other minorities throughout the first half of the century, the fraternity system received overwhelming support from the institution. In a letter to Mr. William C. Levere of Illinois in 1914, President William A. Shanklin wrote, "I believe thoroughly in our Greek letter fraternities...the fraternities are my right arm of strength in administration. There is not one in which the leading spirits do not stand for the highest and the best."\textsuperscript{43} Even in 1954, when the fraternities were under fire, President Butterfield stated:

If I must give a simple answer regarding the fraternities, however, I can only say...it is still my feeling that the fraternities as an integral part Wesleyan have on the whole proved more of an ally than an enemy to the cause of the college. I must say that I think the fraternities deserve only praise for the progress they have made [reducing discrimination].\textsuperscript{44}
Despite the strong endorsement from President Butterfield, the fraternity system received criticism from several quarters. The Educational Policy Committee's Subcommittee on Fraternities reviewed the issue of fraternity discrimination from 1952 to 1955. The subcommittee, under Secretary Robert S. Cohen, recommended that the "fraternities should be encouraged to give up national affiliation" and that "fraternities must continue to move rapidly to eliminate restrictions based on race, color, or creed...Administrative compulsion will be advisable if action is not taken in a reasonable time."\(^45\) The subcommittee's investigation culminated in a positive vote to abolish the fraternity system at Wesleyan. The reconvened full committee overturned this mandate, but warned that "the committee vote in favour of retention of the fraternities should not be interpreted as a simple affirmation of the status quo. On the contrary, probably no one on the committee is satisfied with the present operation of the fraternities."\(^46\)

The Junior Faculty Committee, composed of Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Instructors, succeeded the EPC subcommittee in assailing fraternity discrimination. Morton Tenzer, Chairman of the Junior Faculty subcommittee on discrimination, declared in the February 11, 1958 edition of the Argus, "Wesleyan has been subject to an inordinate degree of 'pussyfooting' on the discrimination issue, and this issue belongs in the open."\(^47\) In February of 1958 the Junior Faculty Committee Report on Fraternities resolved:

...that each fraternity sanctioned by the university be required to include in its governing instrument a
positive statement that race, creed, or nationality shall not be a factor in determining membership.48

In an editorial which ran in the same Argus issue as the report of the Junior Faculty resolution, the editors opposed any administrative compulsion of the fraternities.

We hope, then, that it is not the long-range goal of the Junior Faculty to obtain an administrative edict which would demand that fraternities get rid of their clauses or "agreements" by a given year. There is no mention of this in the report, but we cannot help sensing that such a proposal is lurking in the background.49

The editorial depicts the dichotomy between two camps which developed within the fraternity discrimination debate: those who endorsed administrative compulsion in removing discriminatory clauses and practices, and those who supported the fraternities' right to voluntarily seek a solution to the problem.

While both the Educational Policy Committee's Subcommittee and the Junior Faculty Subcommittee assumed positions in favor of administrative intervention, the Board of Trustees and the College Body Senate adopted policies which stressed persuasion as the appropriate means to resolving fraternity discrimination. The Board of Trustees issued the following resolution during a meeting on December 12, 1958.

That, to insure each undergraduate group's right to select its own membership, the President remind all fraternities that the University disapproves of any clause in their charters or by-laws limiting membership for reasons of race, religion or color; and that the President urge the undergraduates and alumni of fraternities having such clauses either to intensify their efforts to eliminate such clauses, or if this approach appears fruitless, in light of the moral principles involved, to consider carefully their relation to the national fraternity.50
In the fall of 1957, the College Body Senate considered a number of resolutions designed to address the problem of fraternity discrimination. On September 31, 1957, Argus Editor Ezra Amsterdam made "a motion to have fraternities with discriminatory clauses make regular voluntary reports to the C.B. Senate concerning their progress in removing these clauses."\(^{51}\) This motion is similar to the Board of Trustees' resolution, in that it encourages the fraternities to resolve the issue of restrictive clauses without calling for administrative intervention. On October 7, 1957 the College Body Senate vetoed a resolution condemning discriminatory clauses in fraternities, but "a motion was then made to make fraternities with gentlemen's agreements or discriminatory clauses report them to the Rushing Committee for the information of any interested frosh during rushing."\(^{52}\) This motion, which became known as the Saks proposal, was subsequently tabled due to uncertainty over the feasibility of getting fraternities with unwritten agreements to reveal the existence of such practices.

Three days after the Saks proposal was made, President Butterfield issued a statement opposing the use of compulsion and "declared the problem was 'one of education' and that the fundamental position of the administration was to educate and exercise persuasion in prompting fraternities to seek the solution within themselves."\(^{53}\) The majority of the C.B. Senate's Rushing Committee apparently agreed with the administration's policy, as the Saks proposal was defeated on October 14, in a 17-12 vote. In lieu of the proposal, the C.B. Senate voted to remind freshmen
that information on fraternity discrimination was available from individual fraternities.\(^{54}\)

The College Body Senate served as a forum for the heated debate between the proponents and detractors of compulsion. Both the Amsterdam motion to have fraternities make voluntary reports on the process of removing restrictive clauses and the Saks proposal were defeated in favor of a policy which encouraged increased visibility of the discrimination issue without placing demands on the fraternities. The C.B. Senate thus joined the administration and the Board of Trustees in opposing coercion of the fraternities.

The Board of Trustees subsequently moved closer to the positions held by the EPC and the Junior Faculty Committee. On February 4, 1961, the Trustees approved the Proposals for Fraternity Policies in an Expanding Wesleyan. The proposals, which were submitted by the Special Committee on Educational Policy, coupled a reiteration of the Trustees' previous statement of disapproval of discriminatory practices with the following resolution:

That no fraternity at Wesleyan, now or in the future, shall have a clause in its charter or by-law limiting membership for reasons of race, religion or color.\(^{55}\)

This resolution is a departure from the Trustees' earlier position in that it prohibits discriminatory clauses instead of simply expressing disapproval. By 1961, however, all of the clauses had already been eliminated through the independent action of the fraternities.\(^{56}\)
While the Trustees, the EPC, the Junior Faculty Committee, and the College Body Senate issued resolutions and recommendations, individual fraternities attempted to resolve the problems posed by restrictive clauses and "gentlemen's agreements." With each fraternity that entered the fray, it became more clear that two specific groups resisted the integration of Wesleyan fraternities. The alumni of Wesleyan fraternities and the fraternities' national organizations both impeded the efforts of contemporary fraternity members to remove discriminatory practices. This conflict produced tension between the fraternities' loyalty to the national organizations and their responsibility to the Wesleyan community.

The discord between the Wesleyan fraternity Alpha Chi Rho and its national organization illustrates the obstacles to fraternity integration. On March 4, 1958, the Argus reported that "the Wesleyan chapter of Alpha Chi Rho met with national officials two weeks ago to discuss differences of opinion on the fraternity ritual."\(^57\) The ritual in question required pledges to "look up to Jesus of Nazareth as their moral exemplar."\(^58\) Because many members of the Wesleyan chapter of Alpha Chi Rho believed the ritual had discriminatory implications, the ritual was dropped from the initiation ceremony.

The officers of the Wesleyan chapter attempted to modify the ritual, but on February 18, 1958, National President Stanley Bedford "informed them that no ritual changes had been contemplated by the national. In addition, the strict requirements on any ritual change made chances for any
modification next to impossible."\textsuperscript{59} Despite the seemingly irreconcilable dilemma between the local chapter and the national organization, Crow Alumnus Henry B. Anderson '40 stated that "every effort is going to be made to resolve this problem with the national amicably."\textsuperscript{60}

Following unsuccessful attempts to reach a solution to the clash at a national fraternity convention in the summer of 1958, the members of Alpha Chi Rho were suspended from the national organization on October 9, 1958. In that meeting, the suspended fraternity adopted the name of "Black Walnut Club", which had formerly served as the name for the fraternity eating club.\textsuperscript{61}

At the time of the suspension from the national, Dean of students Mark Barlow expressed the administration's attitude toward the newly established Black Walnut Club: "South College sees no change outwardly in your relationship to the college. We recognize you at this moment as a full-fledged social organization on the Wesleyan campus as you have been".\textsuperscript{62}

The administration's position contrasted with the feelings of some alumni of Alpha Chi Rho. In April of 1959, Robert Moore, an alumnus of Alpha Chi Rho, attempted to form a "Committee to preserve Phi Gamma of Alpha Chi Rho".\textsuperscript{63} Moore was additionally a prominent member of the "Committee of One Hundred to Preserve the Wesleyan Heritage", a group of alumni who claimed that Wesleyan suffered from insufficient religious emphasis and a conspiracy to destroy the fraternity system. In a communication dated December 6, 1958 and entitled \textit{The Plot Against The Fraternities}, the Committee of One Hundred points to "the existence of a veiled,
nation-wide, well-planned, well-financed, effective program aimed at the destruction of the National fraternity system.\textsuperscript{64}

The Committee of One Hundred drew charges of anti-semitism from students and alumni. In a letter printed in the Argus on January 10, 1958, alumnus Jim Steindler '54 wrote:

> What they want to do, this committee, is to revert back to the insidious practices of fraternities which we all have fought to escape...the "white Christian" clauses... What they want basically is to promote the appointment of select alumni... to pressure the college along paths of their choosing...

The Argus also notes that "The Committee, which was formed in 1955, has been viewed in some quarters as segregationalist and anti-semectic."\textsuperscript{66} In its attempt to maintain the heritage of an older Wesleyan, the Committee of One Hundred clashed with the development of a pluralistic, non-sectarian institution.

The suspension of the members of Alpha Chi Rho indicated a general trend within fraternities to purge themselves of discriminatory practices. In the fall of 1959, Wesleyan's Sigma Chi fraternity broke with its national organization after futile attempts to remove a discriminatory clause from the national charter. Sigma Chi became a local social organization, renamed the Commons Club, after members determined "that the chapter could 'not exist as a meaningful part of the national organization if required by provision of the national fraternity constitution to discriminate in membership elections.'\textsuperscript{67}

On December 2, 1959 The Wesleyan chapter of Sigma Nu voted to revoke its national charter "in protest against the national's recently innovated 'Statement of Principle', which affirms agreement with discrimination against Negroes and
Orientals." 68 Sigma Nu, which was the last fraternity at
Wesleyan with a discriminatory clause in its charter, renamed
itself Alpha Sigma Delta.

As of the fall of 1961, every fraternity at Wesleyan had
either pledged or admitted a Jewish student. The pledging of a
Jewish student to Delta Tau Delta eliminated the last house which
had resisted Jewish integration. While Delta Tau Delta had
removed its clause prohibiting Jewish membership in 1958, the
fraternity had not actually pledged a Jewish student until 1961.
The pledging of a Jewish student at Delta Tau Delta marked the
beginning of the actual integration of Jewish students into the
Wesleyan fraternity system. 69

The fundamental obstacle in resolving the problem of
fraternities' discriminatory clauses was the conflict between the
local chapters and the national fraternity organizations.
Individual fraternities faced the choice between their allegiance
to their national and their commitment to Wesleyan. The
elimination of discriminatory clauses, whether by national
deaffiliation or alteration of the national charter, was a
critical step in the liberalization of Wesleyan's social sphere.
The creation of an atmosphere of social equality encouraged the
eventual development of a strong Jewish community.

While the liberalization of fraternity pledging policies and
the elimination of the Credit System removed many of the
obstacles to the formation of an active Jewish presence at
Wesleyan, the remarkable increase in the proportion of Jewish
students within the student body undoubtedly contributed to the
higher profile afforded Judiaca at the university. Wesleyan's admissions policy underwent a series of reforms through the late nineteen-fifties and the nineteen-sixties which radically broadened the composition of the student body, and which specifically attracted Jewish students to the institution.

In the late nineteen-fifties, certain Wesleyan professors, notably the junior faculty and the professors of sciences, expressed a desire for an increased emphasis on intellectual motivation within the admissions process. In the Educational Policy Committee's Report on Fraternities, Professor Schorshe, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, commented:

Academic promise should be the sole criterion of admissions...and the sole object of admissions cultivation. To introduce the factor of character seems to me to involve us in a criterion which is almost impossible to measure, and which, above all, is not the business of a university.

Admissions policy was additionally effected by the intimation that Wesleyan might have been operating an implicit quota in the acceptance of Jewish and other minority students. A front-page editorial run in the Argus on January 17, 1958 claims that, "concerning Wesleyan admissions, it has always been held that there are no preferred or unpreferred groups. On the other hand, there is much talk of a representative cross-section of the population in our student body. This is desirable, but if ever used as a cover-up for a quota system, which we hope never happens here, it would make a mockery of any protestations of democratic principles." Dean Edgar Beckham, one-time editor of the Argus, recalls meeting with University President Victor L. Butterfield concerning the possible existence of a quota on
minority students.\textsuperscript{73} Professor Morton Tenzer, Chairman of the Junior Faculty Committee at the time of the committee's report on discrimination in fraternities, commented that he "preferred to believe it [the consistent, limited number of minority students over the years] is a coincidence."\textsuperscript{74}

Thus the Department of Admissions in the late nineteen-fifties, under the stewardship of Director Robert Norwine, was critiqued by faculty for producing an enrollment deficient in outstanding intellectual motivation, and by both faculty members and students for its possible tendency toward discrimination.

The growth of Wesleyan from a small, eastern college into a liberal arts university in the early nineteen-sixties demanded the increased enrollment of academically outstanding students. In January of 1958 the \textit{Argus} reported that the school's endowment reached twenty-three million dollars, a record high.\textsuperscript{75} A report issued in 1958 by Howard B. Matthews, vice-president and treasurer of Wesleyan, recorded:

\begin{quote}
Scholarship aid given by the university was $214,433 during the academic year 1956-57 and the university will give $265,730 in scholarship aid this year.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

Both the concern with academic excellence and the increased potential for financial aid benifitted Jewish applicants. Additionally, the augmented endowment decreased the institution's dependence on alumni donations, which may have helped to remove obstacles to minority integration.\textsuperscript{77}

The ascension of John C. Hoy to the post of Wesleyan's director of admissions in 1964 fundamentally effected admissions practices at Wesleyan. Hoy had served as Assistant Director of
Admissions at Wesleyan from 1956 through 1959, and had subsequently held positions at Swarthmore College, Lake Forest College, and a private school in Chicago. At these schools, he built a reputation for integrating schools and for drastically increasing the academic statistics of entering classes.  

President Victor L. Butterfield was responsible for the decision to hire John C. Hoy as Director of Admissions in 1964. Robert Norwine had resigned under criticism on January 31, 1964, and Richard V. Showers replaced him as acting director of admissions. Butterfield hired Hoy with the recognition that Hoy would reshape the student body at Wesleyan.

In an article printed in the Argus on October 6, 1964, John C. Hoy, Wesleyan's newly-appointed Director of Admissions, enumerated his plans for the future of Weslyan admissions.

"...There will be considerable emphasis on prior academic achievement, intellectual and career commitment, and proven ability...In an effort to obtain a wider intellectual, social, and economic diversity at Wesleyan, the admissions department is preparing a dramatic increase in visits to large urban schools and previously neglected rural areas. In addition, a revision in scholarship policy seems eminent. Where now most of the one-half million dollars in financial aid that Wesleyan grants goes to moderately well-to-do suburban families, ...we may find a shift in the proportion of aid to low-income rural and urban families..."

John Hoy faced several obstacles in his attempt to carry out these policy changes. He inherited an admissions staff that was heavily biased in favor of preparatory schools and suburban high schools, and thus he had to introduce them to the practices of urban and rural recruitment. Additionally, Hoy battled to persuade prominent Jewish families that Wesleyan was good place
for Jewish students. During his first several years as director of admissions, John Hoy transformed the average proportion of Jewish students in the entering freshman class from the entrenched standard of ten percent to approximately thirty percent. The significant increase in Jewish students contributed to the establishment of Judiaca studies and the post of campus rabbi. The increased number of Jews within the student body created a more visible, more active, and more secure Jewish identity at Wesleyan.

The contemporary Jewish presence at Wesleyan is a product of the institution's long struggle with the opposing values of diversity and sectarianism. Even in its earliest incarnation as a Methodist school, Wesleyan embodied both of these ideals. As the school entered the nineteen-fifties, the tension between diversity and sectarianism demanded resolution.

The ideals of diversity and tolerance sprang from the Enlightenment-influenced academic orientation of the institution. Wesleyan students and professors recognized the importance of tolerance and diversity in the intellectual atmosphere long before the social environment at Wesleyan accepted Jews as equals. The process of Jewish integration in the nineteen-fifties and sixties resulted from the application of these enlightened ideals to the school's curriculum, admissions policy, religious policy, and social institutions.

Among the factors which contributed to the abandonment of sectarian values for the ideals of tolerance and diversity at Wesleyan were the financial growth of the institution, the conscious decision to aspire to a "liberal-arts university", and
the presence of progressive and vocal individuals within the faculty of the nineteen-fifties.

The phenomenal increases in Wesleyan's endowment during the nineteen-fifties dictated specific changes in the composition of the student body. The institution's augmented resources provided more attractive financial-aid options for applicants while creating a demand for a more academically competitive applicant pool. Both of these developments brought more Jewish students to Wesleyan.

Wesleyan's transition from a men's college to a liberal arts university also served to attract Jewish students. The university model required a diverse mixture of students who exhibited excellence in specific areas. The broadening of admissions policies under John C. Hoy, which was a response to dissatisfaction with the status quo of the predominantly homogeneous student body, created an influx of Jewish students in the late nineteen-sixties. These Jewish students were able to construct a vital Jewish community because of the elimination of the institutional anti-semitism during the fifties and early sixties.

The changing composition of the faculty also directly effected the growth of Wesleyan's Jewish community. Specific professors formed a vanguard of integration in the nineteen-fifties. The Educational Policy Committee and the Committee of the Junior Faculty helped to create the impetus for the ascendance of the ideals of tolerance and diversity over the ideal of sectarianism.
The ultimate realization of the integration of Judaism and Jews into the Wesleyan community is the transcendence of diversity and the establishment of pluralism. The distinction between the ideals of diversity and pluralism is central to the developments outlined in his essay. Even amidst the discrimination of the nineteen-fifties, Judaism was nominally tolerated under the auspices of diversity. The development of institutional encouragement of Judaism and Judiaca during the late nineteen-sixties indicates a move beyond tolerance towards the actualization of a pluralistic religious orientation, under which Judaism is not merely allowed, but celebrated.

Author's Note

Due to restrictions of time and the scope of the essay, it became necessary to limit the number of specific examples cited within the piece, as well as the number of interviews with
individuals who figure in the events described. Given the time and resources to continue the project, one could contact many of the key figures within the faculty committees, the Board of Trustees, and the student body during the relevant time period. The nature of the project provides a wealth of individuals who hold valuable personal insight into the role of Judaism at Wesleyan.

The related topic of Jewish integration within the faculty, which I believe figures prominently in the integration of the student body, merits a distinct investigation. That project shares a difficulty with this essay, in that the identification of individuals' religious affiliation can be problematic. For this reason, in my essay, I neglect the possible impact that specific individual's religious identity may have had on their role in encouraging Jewish integration.

Finally, as a piece of advice to anyone considering continuing this project or any endeavor into Wesleyan's history, the archives in Olin Library provide primary sources of information which are filed according to specific subject categories. The archives' files on fraternities proved particularly useful in my research, as well as helping my search for relevant information within the unindexed *Argus* issues.

Endnotes

1 Early History of the Jews in Middletown Connecticut

2 Lindenthal, p.41.
3 Lindenthal, p.42.
4 Wesleyan Argus, April 26, 1926. p.2.
6 Wesleyan University Bulletin 1930 Volume 24 Number 3 Announcement of Courses, p.13.
7 Wesleyan University Bulletin 1910 Volume 4, p.105.
8 Wesleyan University Bulletin 1915 Volume 9, p.15.
10 Argus, April 12, 1926. p.2.
11 Ibid.
12 Argus, April 15, 1926. p.2.
13 Ibid.
14 Wesleyan University Bulletin 1951 Volume 45, pp.93-94.
17 Argus, May 1, 1901. p.237.
22 Wesleyan University Bulletin 1915 Volume 9, p.33.
26 Wesleyan University Bulletin 1947 Volume 40, p.16.
29 <i>Argus</i>, January 15, 1931, p.3.
32 Ibid.
34 <i>Argus</i>, October 31, 1958, p.1.
35 Ibid.
36 <i>Argus</i>, June 6, 1958, p.1.
37 <i>Argus</i>, March 6, 1959, p.2.
38 <i>Argus</i>, March 20, 1959, p.1.
39 <i>Argus</i>, November 6, 1956, p.1.
41 Interview with Edgar Beckham, April 1987.
42 Correspondence with Robert Cohen, April 1987.
43 Letter from President William A. Shanklin to Mr. William C. Levere, 1914. Filed in Olin Archives.
44 <i>Wesleyan Alumnus</i>, November 1954, inside front cover.
45 Quoted in Committee of One Hundred Memorandum, Appendix K, p.66. Olin Archives.
46 Ibid., p.64.
47 <i>Argus</i>, February 11, 1958, p.1.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., p.2.
51 <i>Argus</i>, October 1, 1957, p.1.
52 <i>Argus</i>, October 8, 1957, p.1.


Ibid.


Argus, October 10, 1958, p.1.

Ibid.


The Plot Against the Fraternities, Committee of One Hundred Memorandum, December 6, 1958, p. 8. Olin Archives.

Argus, January 10, 1958, p.2.


Argus, April 8, 1959, p.2.


Argus, October 6, 1961, p.1.

This detail and several others throughout the section on admissions draw from an April 24 interview with John C. Hoy.

quoted from Committee of One Hundred Memorandum, Appendix J p.1. Olin Archives.
75 Argus, January 17, 1958, p.1.
76 Ibid.
77 Beckham interview.
78 Hoy interview.
79 Argus, April 17, 1964, p.1.
80 Argus, October 6, 1964, p.1.
81 Hoy interview.
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The Alumni Record, various years.

The Wesleyan University Bulletin, 1910-1965

The Wesleyan Argus, 1901-1964 (see endnotes)


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