

# **“An American, Not a Jew:” A History of the Jewish Women of Barnard<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Barnard Dean Virginia Gildersleeve to Barnard Student Ruth Saberski Goldenheim. Author’s interview with Janet Alperstein, Ruth Saberski Goldenheim’s granddaughter, November 29, 2018, Phone Interview.



*To My Mother, Rifka Rosenwein, a" h.  
The strongest Barnard woman there ever was.*

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## **Introduction**

Between the years 1881 and 1924, as the United States Congress was passing increasingly restrictive immigration laws, more than two million Jewish immigrants arrived in America. With this, “the Jewish population in America increased from 250,000 (less than 1% of the total United States population) to nearly 4 million (more than 3% of the total US population).”<sup>2</sup> Many of these Jewish immigrants—mostly coming from Eastern European countries—resided in the growing Jewish community on the Lower East Side, so much so that it quickly became the most “densely populated area in the city... By 1890 it had 522 inhabitants per acre, by 1900 more than 700.”<sup>3</sup> Irving Howe, a New York City native and first generation American Jew in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, articulated his experience growing up in a New York City immigrant Jewish community. Though life for immigrant communities was hard, living accommodations were cramped, and families were often battling with poverty, Howe describes a resilient sense of community that the Jewish immigrant community of Eastern Europe brought with them to the United States. In his book, *The World of Our Fathers*, Howe writes:

Bound together by firm spiritual ties, by a common language, and by a sense of destiny that often meant a sharing of martyrdom, the Jews of Eastern Europe were a kind of nation yet without recognized nationship. Theirs was both a community and a society internally a community, a ragged kingdom of the spirit, and externally a society, impoverished and imperiled.<sup>4</sup>

This strong sense of community served as an anchor as the Eastern European Jewish community thrust itself into the perils of American life. America was the country for new

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>4</sup> Irving Howe. *World of our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life they Found and Made* (New York: NYU Press, 1976), 22.

beginnings. Through all of the hardships of their immigration, the Lower East Side Jewish immigrant community hoped for salvation through their children. As Howe describes:

America was different from all other countries, America – land of sweat and swishnes!-- meant that the sons could find a path such as Jews had never been able to discover. The fathers would work, grub, and scramble as petty agents of primitive accumulation. The sons would acquire education, that new-world magic the Jews were so adept at invoking through formulas they had brought from the old world.<sup>5</sup>

Young Jews were charged to forge a life for themselves that would be more prosperous than the world from which their families came. They were primarily expected to do this by attaining a prestigious education, as, “Scholarship was, above all else, honored among the Jews – scholarship not as ‘pure’ activity, not as intellectual release, but as the pathway, sometimes treacherous, to God.”<sup>6</sup> Education was a means to enable young, poor Jews to scale the social ladder. This thesis explores the challenges these aspirational young Jews faced as they embarked on this climb.

In this thesis, I focus on the experiences of Jewish Barnard students during the tenure of Dean Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve. Dean Gildersleeve, a Barnard graduate of the Class of 1899, was Dean of Barnard College from 1911-1947.<sup>7</sup> She was one of the first female faculty members of Columbia University, and devoted her life to the advancement of women in higher education, by winning entrance for women into the Columbia graduate schools, allowing married women to remain on Barnard’s faculty, and even ensuring paid maternity leave for her staff.<sup>8</sup> Beyond her career successes at Barnard, she was a United States delegate to the United Nations

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Dilley, *Transformation of Women’s Collegiate Education: The Legacy of Virginia Gildersleeve*, (Carbondale: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

and the only woman to sign the U.N. charter. Despite all of these accomplishments, her legacy is overshadowed by what many perceive as her anti-Semitism.<sup>9</sup>

I focused on her administration particularly because it was during the Gildersleeve years that Columbia University actively attempted to limit the number of Jewish students in their University. After Barnard was founded in 1889, it took a few years for it to be officially introduced into the Columbia University system. Once it was, however, “Barnard took the same position as Columbia College,”<sup>10</sup> meaning the policies enacted on a University level impacted Barnard as well, both institutionally and socially. Barnard’s history of anti-Semitism is not particularly unusual, though many of my sources affirmed what I had assumed, which was that due to Barnard’s location in Manhattan, its history has been particularly interesting in this regard.

Some of my preliminary interviewees informed me that claims of Gildersleeve being an outright anti-Semite would be vindicated through my research. Instead, as elucidated in this thesis, though there are certainly many instances in which Gildersleeve shows dislike, and even disdain, for Jewish applicants, as Shirley Adelson Siegel, Barnard class of 1937, articulates; “Gildersleeve was too worldly to be anti-Semitic.”<sup>11</sup> With this, Siegel, a student during Gildersleeve’s time nuances the simplicity of labeling Gildersleeve as an anti-Semite.

Gildersleeve’s relationship with Columbia University President Nicholas Murray Butler, however, substantiates claims of Gildersleeve’s anti-Semitism, as Butler’s anti-Semitism often proved more obvious. Their relationship is described as one of mentor and mentee, with Butler serving as Gildersleeve’s “supporter and role model as a college administrator.”<sup>12</sup> As explored in

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<sup>9</sup> Dilley, *Transformation of Women’s Collegiate Education*.

<sup>10</sup> Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women’s Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 249.

<sup>11</sup> Author’s interview with Shirley Adelson, November 29, 2018, New York City.

<sup>12</sup> Dilley. *Transformation of Women’s Collegiate Education*, 17.

this thesis, Butler actively tried to limit the number of poor Jewish students at Columbia University. Gildersleeve was quick to follow her mentor. The Eastern European Jewish immigrant became particularly vulnerable in the face of Columbia University admissions.

New York Jews were certainly not an anomaly before this massive wave of immigration, though, before 1881, they tended to originate from wealthier, western countries. Through this thesis, I discuss the experiences of Annie Nathan Meyer, daughter of the prominent Gershom Mendes Seixas lineage, who is an example of one such wealthy Jew.<sup>13</sup> Meyer attended Columbia's Collegiate Course for Women, where she became increasingly frustrated with a lack of full access to education for women.<sup>14</sup> Like others of her time, Dean Gildersleeve created the distinction between wealthy, established Jews such as Meyer and poor, newly immigrated Eastern European Jews. When Jews such as Meyer came to Barnard— Jews who were typically from either Spanish or German origins who had immigrated to America between the mid-17th and late 19th centuries— they found that their assimilation into Barnard was easy, and they were received enthusiastically.<sup>15</sup> This was not necessarily the case for Jews of Eastern European descent.

Through my thesis research, I wanted to better understand the history of Jewish students at Barnard focusing particularly on the Gildersleeve administration in order to understand how this history has impacted the modern-day Jewish student experience at Barnard. In my first

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<sup>13</sup> Gershom Mendes Seixas was the first American born Jewish leader. He lived from 1745-1816. "Gershom Mendes Seixas," Jewish Virtual Library, Accessed April 14, 2019 <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/gershom-mendes-seixas>.

<sup>14</sup> This course began in 1883 in response to then Columbia College President Fredrick A.P. Barnard's suggestion that Columbia go co-ed in 1879. The trustees instead decided to launch the Collegiate Course for Women in 1883, which allowed women could take examinations offered to men, but could not attend lectures. "History of Women at Columbia College," Columbia College Alumni Association, Accessed April 14, 2019, <https://www.college.columbia.edu/alumni/connect/ccw/history>.

<sup>15</sup> To clarify, Meyer herself never attended Barnard, but was instrumental in its founding. Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 258.

chapter, I examine how the Gildersleeve administration—influenced by policies enacted on the University level and admissions policies that Columbia College adopted—reacted when faced with an influx of poor Jewish applicants to Barnard. Though Barnard never enacted an official quota system for Jewish students, rough estimates presume that Barnard’s Jewish student population remained at a dubious 20% throughout the interwar period, even as New York’s Jewish population grew. Some even speculate that Gildersleeve wanted to impose a strict 10% top line.<sup>16</sup> This chapter navigates the complexities of such institutionalized anti-Semitism.

In my second chapter, I explore how Barnard Jewish students acted in the face of institutionalized anti-Semitism. Through interviews and archival research, I present a narrative of the experience of a Jewish Barnard student during this period. I was especially lucky to interview the wonderful Shirley Adelson Siegel, whose experiences provided me with further information to paint the experience of a Jewish Barnard student at this time. My third chapter strings together interviews from Jewish Barnard students today, in order to create a narrative of the continued experiences of Jewish women on Barnard’s campus, especially within the perspective of the events of a century ago on the same campus.

My goal for my thesis was to understand the experience of Jewish students at Barnard under the Gildersleeve administration. My mention of Columbia’s policies, therefore, serve only as a backdrop to elucidate why and how certain policies were enacted at Barnard College. Columbia College has its own wildly fascinating history with regards to its Jewish students, some of which I touch on in my thesis, though certainly not most. As a Barnard Jewish student myself, the history of my predecessors was more specifically interesting to me,

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<sup>16</sup> Barnard College, “Making Barnard History: ‘Who’s Afraid of Virginia Gildersleeve? Notes for a Biography.” Youtube video. 1:10:37. February 16, 2016. Posted April 3, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWc9a2EPATs>

## **Chapter One**

“Are we to assume that no Jew was ever a villain or in any way reprehensible.” Disdain for the New American Jew.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Jewish Problem*

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish immigrants quickly utilized education as a means of social mobility. Within a decade of New York City’s first public high schools, almost half their graduates were Jewish.<sup>18</sup> As one contemporary noted, “the Hebrews far exceed all others, including the native-born Americans, in their appreciation and use of the New York City high schools.”<sup>19</sup> Jewish immigrants in particular were more likely to graduate from high school than other immigrant communities. This was happening at the same time that Columbia University’s President Nicholas Murray Butler was growing increasingly inclined to accept graduates of public schools over private schools, believing that “most private schools were wedded to the traditional classical curriculum and would not expand their offerings to accommodate the many students with the ability to do college work.”<sup>20</sup> Butler assumed that the public schools would direct only the best and brightest students towards Columbia, but he did not expect that “the high schools would become vehicles for upwardly mobile but socially undesirable Jews.”<sup>21</sup> What Butler did not anticipate were the ways in which young Jews would want to take advantage of an elite institution like Columbia.

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<sup>17</sup> Virginia C. Gildersleeve, *Self-Segregation of American Jews: Address Before the New York Chapter of the American Council for Judaism*, May 25, 1950. (Courtesy of the Barnard College Archives.)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 128

<sup>19</sup> As quoted in Joseph King Van Denburg, “Causes of the Elimination of Students in Public Secondary Schools of New York City (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1911), 38. The same contemporary also suggested that “the Hebrews despite all limitations of poverty or deprivation send from the very first their children to the high schools in large numbers.” As quoted in Ibid., 38.

<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Murray Butler was the President of Columbia University from 1902-1945. Wechsler, *The Qualified Student*, 142.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

The administration at Columbia University could not foresee how the massive wave of Eastern European Jewish immigration would impact their university.<sup>22</sup> Though the administration at Columbia University was certainly aware of the large immigrant Jewish population residing on the Lower East Side, the assumption was that a student from an immigrant Jewish community would not consider applying to Columbia, as these young Jews would understand their own unpreparedness for such an institution.

With so many Jewish students graduating from public high schools, however, it foretold many “Jewish students seeking entry into college and from thence to graduate and professional schools.”<sup>23</sup> With this influx of Jewish students seeking and applying for higher education at elite institutions such as Columbia and Barnard, Columbia University administration began referring to a “Jewish problem.” Fredrick P. Keppel, the Dean of Columbia College from 1910-1918, spoke of this “problem” publicly. He articulated that the real problem with so many Jewish students was that such an invasion repels Columbia’s “natural constituency”<sup>24</sup> of students whom other ivy league institutions were attracting.

Dean Keppel’s “Jewish Problem” crossed college borders; Barnard was experiencing the same “problem” that Columbia College was experiencing.<sup>25</sup> Barnard Dean Virginia Gildersleeve, was not pleased with what she saw as a Jewish invasion of higher education. Keppel, as well as Gildersleeve, did not think that all Jews were necessarily socially unfit for Columbia University. During Keppel’s time as Dean he maintained that; “By far the majority of the Jewish students who do come to Columbia are desirable students in every way.... The Jews who have had the

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<sup>22</sup> Frederick C. Koppel, Dean of Columbia College, “understood that Columbia was a unique situation with this ‘problem’ but reassured his constituents of the qualified students that soon every good school would have to face this ‘problem.’” Harold S. Wechsler, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America*, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 130.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 258.

advantages of decent social surroundings for a generation or two are entirely satisfactory companions.”<sup>26</sup> The problem that both Barnard and Columbia were facing was the influx of what they deemed to specifically be “socially unfit” Jewish applicants, though both Keppel and Gildersleeve labeled it simply the “Jewish Problem.”

### *A Quieted History*

Ironically, it is largely due to Annie Nathan Meyer’s efforts that lead to the establishment of Barnard. It was Meyer who recruited Columbia trustees to fund the establishment of Barnard. Jewish philanthropist Jacob H. Schiff is an example of such a trustee.<sup>27</sup> Schiff had previously served as a Commissioner of the Board of Education and was as an early supporter of women’s education.<sup>28</sup> As Meyer chronicled in her memoir *Barnard Beginnings*, “he consented to become first Treasurer and to bear the brunt of the anxiety and responsibility.”<sup>29</sup> Schiff frequently recruited potential donors for Barnard and worked to ensure the financial stability necessary for Barnard to begin and to thrive.

As a founding board member, Schiff was part of the team responsible for overseeing the success of Barnard’s establishment. When in 1892 he officially resigned from the Board of Trustees, Schiff nevertheless continued to financially support both Barnard and Columbia College.<sup>30</sup> By 1907, Schiff had contributed critical funding to both Columbia and Barnard College.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> As quoted in Wechsler, *The Qualified Student*, 129.

<sup>27</sup> Schiff was an established and wealthy German Jew who lived between the years 1847-1920. Meyer, *Barnard Beginnings*.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> For example of such donations: “Two years after his resignation he became one of the twenty-five to give five thousand dollars each towards buying the land adjacent to Columbia’s new site. Five years after this, he advanced the sum of thirty thousand dollars as a loan to the College.” Meyer, Annie Nathan, *Barnard Beginnings*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), 177.

<sup>31</sup> Schiff was frustrated that still no Jewish board member had been appointed to the board at Columbia College by this time. He informed Butler that he did “not intend to make further contributions to Columbia until the trustees

Meyer herself served as a trustee for Barnard from Barnard's beginnings until her death in 1951. She as well fund-raised to enable Barnard to open their doors and through her writings and speeches garnered the necessary public support.<sup>32</sup> It was Meyer who, in 1888 in response to her experience at Columbia's Collegiate Course for Women, passionately argued in a letter to *The Nation*: "Ought we not, therefore, to begin at once to organize an association for the collegiate instruction of women by the professors and other instructors of Columbia College."<sup>33</sup> Still, she became increasingly frustrated with her lack of recognition for all she did for Barnard's founding, and worried that this lack of recognition could perhaps be due to her Jewishness. When she once complained to Dean Gildersleeve about this, her complaints went unheard.<sup>34</sup>

In one of her many attempts to honor influential American Jews, Meyer wrote to Gildersleeve to request a donation for one such project. Gildersleeve did donate, while bemoaning the ways in which the influx of Eastern European Jews had polluted the image of an American Jew. Gildersleeve later additionally added:

Many of our Jewish students have been charming and cultivated human beings. On the other hand, as you know, the intense ambition of the Jews for education has brought to college girls from a lower social level than that of most of the non-Jewish students. Such girls have compared unfavorably in many instances with the build of the undergraduates.<sup>35</sup>

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appointed a Jewish member." Butler, in response, was frustrated with Schiff's assertion, arguing that Jews, "in character... are terribly persistent. They realize that there has been for 2000 years or more a prejudice against them, and they are always seeking special privileges for themselves and their people." Butler, though acknowledging that Jewish history is laden with persecution, used that as an accusation against what he saw as Jewish entitlement. A Jewish trustee was not elected until 1928. As found and quoted in Wechsler, *The Qualified Student*, 129.

<sup>32</sup> Meyer, *Barnard Beginnings*.

<sup>33</sup> Annie Nathan Meyer, "Letter to The Nation," *The Nation*, January 21, 1888.

<sup>34</sup> Barnard College, Making Barnard History: 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Gildersleeve? Notes for a Biography.' Youtube video. 1:10:37. February 16, 2016. Posted April 3, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWc9a2EPATs>

Barnard, in its attempts to "become a national institution" had to "downplay its distinctive history." Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 258.

<sup>35</sup> As quoted in Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 258.

This letter to Meyer illustrates how Gildersleeve was grappling with the ways in which immigrant Jews were of such undesirable character as compared to the well-established German Jews. That Gildersleeve wrote this in a letter to Meyer was not a contradiction; Meyer was a “cultivated” Jew.<sup>36</sup> Fewer Jews like Meyer were populating Barnard.

### *Applying to Columbia University*

Administrators at Columbia University believed that an Eastern European Jew did not have the correct social upbringing necessary for them to assimilate well into, as well as to succeed at, Columbia University.<sup>37</sup> Because Columbia University administrators took the quality of their students very seriously, it was alarming that so many low-quality students were applying to their University. In an effort to quickly utilize academia as a means for social mobility, Jewish students were vying for a successful academic record.<sup>38</sup> This created a huge problem for the Columbia University admissions office as an admissions officer who looked simply at an applicant’s high school transcript as a way to determine the applicant’s admission decision might accidentally accept too many poor and socially unfit Jews. Columbia University realized that simply surveying academic superiority would not lead to a qualified student body.

Keppel, Butler, and Gildersleeve all wanted to cultivate an admirable student body, however Butler began noticing that fewer students of Columbia University were coming from Horace Mann School, even though “Columbia’s Teacher College housed, administered, staffed, and supplied it.”<sup>39</sup> Butler wanted to understand what was at the root of this issue, so he charged

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<sup>36</sup> Some would even argue that Meyer herself had a disdain for poor, Eastern European Jews. Barnard College, Making Barnard History: ‘Who’s Afraid of Virginia Gildersleeve? Notes for a Biography.’

<sup>37</sup> Wechsler, *The Qualified Student*, 129.

<sup>38</sup> “An unnamed observer noted that the only boys who completed their high school course were those ‘to whom a high school education is an absolute necessity, as a means of preparation.’ Since within a decade of the opening of the city’s first public high schools at least 41% of their graduates were Jewish, Columbia soon found its assumptions about its student body [namely that they’d be socially qualified] severely challenged.” Wechsler, *The Qualified Student*, 128.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 141

Virgil Pettyman, the Horace Mann's headmaster, to investigate the reasons behind such a steep decline in applicants.<sup>40</sup> Pettyman eventually reported that parents were concerned with the changing nature of the undergraduate community at Columbia, from students of value, to undesirable students: "The University undergraduate body contains...students who have had few social advantages and that in consequence there is little opportunity of making friendships of permanent value among them."<sup>41</sup> Parents were, therefore, electing to send their children out of the city for college. Pettyman essentially Columbia stop accepting so many Eastern European Jews.

Butler took these findings very seriously, but felt that the University could not ask for an applicant's religion, and deny all Jewish applicants. Instead, Leroy Jones, the Admissions Director at Columbia College, along with the Columbia College faculty, eventually altered admissions to include "personal background (...the candidate's place of birth, religious affiliation, and father's name, place of birth, and occupation), leadership in school..., leadership in the community (... Religious and other organizations...), breadth of interests (as measured by outside readings), and finally motivation and potential..."<sup>42</sup> As a result, the character of an applicant would be measured as well as their academic integrity. In addition, in the early 1920's Columbia College introduced a second part to the admissions process that would require applicants to take the Thorndike Psychological Test.<sup>43</sup> "The Thorndike exam was intended to give insight into an applicant's social and mental readiness for collegiate work."<sup>44</sup> In other

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<sup>40</sup> "Butler could not have been unaware that Horace Mann had historically limited enrollment of Jewish students." Wechsler, *The Qualified Student*, 141.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>43</sup> "Edward Thorndike (1898) is famous in psychology for his work on learning theory that led to the development of operant conditioning within behaviorism." Sauld McLeod, "Edward Thorndike: The Law of Effect," *Simply Psychology*, 2018. (Accessed March 7, 2019), < <https://www.simplypsychology.org/edward-thorndike.html>>

<sup>44</sup> Patrick, Diley. *Transformation of Women's Collegiate Education: The Legacy of Virginia Gildersleeve*, (Carbondale, Illinois: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 30.

words, this was added to the Columbia College admissions application in order to weed out undesirable Jewish applicants and maintain the integrity of the undergraduate student body. The great irony is that Columbia was working so hard to derail a socially undesirable Jewish student from admittance in Columbia and, yet, it was proving so hard to assess exactly who these socially undesirable students were.

With this added element to the admissions process in the 1920s and 30s, Columbia saw a decrease in its Jewish students' enrollment. Even just between the years of 1921 and 1922, the Jewish student population at Columbia fell from 40% to 22%.<sup>45</sup> "Columbia's eight page expanded application form--designed to learn as much as possible about each applicant's background and adopted by many other universities during the 1930s--further ensured the schools would stave off the 'Jewish invasion' without having to officially adopt quotas."<sup>46</sup> The justification for such entrance examinations was that the large constituency of socially unfit Jewish students was driving away the students who Columbia believed were best suited to uphold the model of the ideal student.<sup>47</sup>

### *Getting to Barnard*

Though Columbia College and Barnard College maintained separate admission offices, Gildersleeve worked closely with the Columbia College admissions officer. When Columbia College introduced and adopted this additional element to their admissions process in late 1920, Gildersleeve proposed to the Barnard faculty that Barnard adopt the same additional element to their admissions process. Gildersleeve argued the same justification used by Butler and Keppel, that Barnard was having an increasingly harder time attracting "conventional middle-class" New

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<sup>45</sup> Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism*, 57.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 58

<sup>47</sup> Schools that were not so intentional in their admissions process saw a rise in their Jewish student population. Ibid.

York City students because of the widespread conception that, as Gildersleeve told the Barnard faculty, “we have a large proportion of Jews and of radicals.”<sup>48</sup> The Barnard faculty was at first hesitant; Gildersleeve had to assure “the democratically minded among her listeners”<sup>49</sup> that, though she valued diversity in her students, too much of any one kind was proving to be problematic. Eventually, the faculty agreed to a trial period for the following admissions year; ultimately, the entrance exams were administered at Barnard for the next decade.<sup>50</sup> At Barnard as well, these entrance examinations did well to reduce the number of Jewish students.<sup>51</sup>

Gildersleeve strived to ensure that Barnard remained a competitive women’s college, along the lines of other sister schools such as Smith, Vassar, and Radcliffe. Gildersleeve wanted desperately for Barnard to reflect the rigors of other women’s colleges, coupled with the demands of Columbia. In the interwar years, Barnard’s student population was about 20% Jewish, a far greater percentage than at other women’s colleges, which may have had a student body that was only around 7% Jewish.<sup>52</sup> Gildersleeve was frustrated with “the cosmopolitan character of its students. Translated, this means that Barnard attracted and welcomed a significant number of Jewish students at a time when the other colleges reported only one or two.”<sup>53</sup> In order for Barnard to be considered along the lines of other competitive women’s colleges, Gildersleeve needed to ensure that her student body was reflective of this drive. She certainly did not want Barnard to fall behind the other women’s colleges.

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<sup>48</sup> As quoted in Diley. *Transformation of Women’s Collegiate Education*, 31. Diley also writes: “During the Red Scare that followed WWI, Judaism and Bolshevism became synonymous in the minds of many. Gildersleeve did not hesitate to play on that link.” Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> “Any analysis of these policies must bear in mind that data about ethnicity and religion were not uniformly nor verifiably collected.” Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Barnard College, “Making Barnard History: ‘Who’s Afraid of Virginia Gildersleeve? Notes for a Biography.’”

<sup>53</sup> Diley. *Transformation of Women’s Collegiate Education*, 32.

With Barnard's urban setting and its relatively cheap cost, the college was attracting both poorer Eastern European immigrants as well as the daughters of wealthy New York City families whose daughters wanted to remain local.<sup>54</sup> Gildersleeve wanted to downplay Barnard's urban setting and attract more women such as those students who were electing to go to country colleges such as Bryn Mawr and Wellesley.<sup>55</sup> Gildersleeve began actively recruiting students from outside of New York. There were two major developments added to Barnard's campus in order to attract more students from outside of New York City. In 1915, Jacob Schiff was celebrating his fiftieth anniversary in America just when Barnard was celebrating twenty-five years of existence. Barnard students had already been campaigning for a space on campus where they could congregate socially, host club rooms, and as, most students were commuting to Barnard, as space that would serve as a resting area between classes and meetings.<sup>56</sup> Jacob Schiff was courted to donate money for such a building, and ultimately he gave over half a million dollars for the construction of such a building. As Meyer admiringly details:

Mr. Schiff, with splendid generosity, gave a Students' Hall at a cost of more than half a million dollars. It was nobly conceived as a place where students might associate in friendly and happy hours, and learn how to understand one another so that they might work helpfully together in after life, for the good of the community.<sup>57</sup>

Schiff hoped that this building would be a space where "no discrimination [be] made in favor of any particular religious group or class in the use of this building..."<sup>58</sup> By this dedication, Schiff was acknowledging his fear of the changing nature of a Jewish student's experience at Barnard College. However, this building was not to be identifiably donated by a Jewish donor. In

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<sup>54</sup> Barnard's tuition was around \$150.

<sup>55</sup> See "Appendix Item C" for other examples of how Gildersleeve attempted for Barnard to be seen along the long the lines of other sister schools.

<sup>56</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 252."

<sup>57</sup> Meyer, *Barnard Beginnings*, 178.

<sup>58</sup> "In Memoriam," Barnard Mortarboard 1922, Courtesy of Barnard College Archives.

the 1920s, “when the trustees renamed Students’ Hall, they did not give it Schiff’s name, but called it Barnard Hall.”<sup>59</sup> This greatly disturbed Meyer, who did not want to allow for the impression that, as she herself articulated, “the College is unwilling to place upon one of its building the name of a Jew.”<sup>60</sup> When the 1922 Barnard Mortarboard memorialized Schiff, it recognized his role as one of Barnard’s founding trustees as well as his dedication to the advancement of women’s education.

In addition to constructing Student’s Hall, another important way that Gildersleeve tried to minimize the cosmopolitan nature of Barnard’s student body was by building another residence hall. Brooks Hall had already been completed in 1910, though it only housed about 200 students, though it was the most expensive dormitory in the country, costing about \$1,100 per year.<sup>61</sup> Gildersleeve, therefore, oversaw the building of Hewitt Hall which was completed in 1925, This ultimately did not have as great of an impact of attracting non-urban students as Gilder sleeve may have hoped, but it did allow for wealthy Barnard students to enjoy a more pleasant college career.<sup>62</sup>

To further Barnard’s status amongst other women’s colleges, in 1926, Gildersleeve founded the Seven College Conference in order to informally discuss common concerns amongst the colleges.<sup>63</sup> Gildersleeve originally cited Barnard fundraising needs as the reason for such a conference, but it was in effect a way to discuss common struggles and promote women’s education.<sup>64</sup> The colleges had already been in constant communication, but this college allowed them to do so in a more formalized manner. Gildersleeve was committed to elevating Barnard to

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<sup>59</sup> As quoted in Horowitz, *Alma Mater* 259.

<sup>60</sup> As quoted in Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 259.

<sup>61</sup> Barnard College, “Making Barnard History: ‘Who’s Afraid of Virginia Gildersleeve? Notes for a Biography.’”

<sup>62</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 252.

<sup>63</sup> The Seven colleges are Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College, Mount Holyoke College, Radcliffe College, Smith College, Vassar College, Wellesley College.

<sup>64</sup> Barnard College, “Making Barnard History: ‘Who’s Afraid of Virginia Gildersleeve? Notes for a Biography.’”

the rigor that other Women's colleges had. As much as Gildersleeve wanted to model Barnard along the lines of other women's colleges, she never introduced a formalized quota system for Jewish students the way that other women's colleges did after World War I.<sup>65</sup>

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Three years after Gildersleeve stepped down as Dean of Barnard, she addressed the New York Chapter of the American Council for Judaism. In this address, she admits:

During my many years as head of a college in New York I was conscious, of course, of the difficulties often experienced by Jews and of the need of a long effort for adjustment and better understanding between our very varied religious and ethnic groups.<sup>66</sup>

Through this chapter, Gildersleeve's selective anti-Semitism has been elucidated. Despite her awareness of the difficulties experienced by many of her students, Gidlersleeve often was the one perpetuating the difficulties she describes. The next chapter explores what Barnard Jewish students did in the face of their administration's anti-Semitism.

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<sup>65</sup> Diley. *Transformation of Women's Collegiate Education*, 35.

<sup>66</sup> Gildersleeve, Virginia C. *Self-Segregation of American Jews*, May 25, 1950. Courtesy of the Barnard Archives.

## **Chapter Two**

“We knew there was a quota, we just didn’t really care.” The Jewish Barnard Student Experience<sup>67</sup>

This quote, from Shirley Adelson Siegel (Barnard Class of 1937), reflects Jewish students’ perceptions of the admissions process at Barnard and Columbia. Even with their active attempts to reduce the Jewish population of Barnard, the Barnard Jewish student population was still able to thrive. This chapter examines what it was like for Jewish students during the Gildersleeve administration to try to succeed in the face of an institution that was grappling with anti-Semitic sentiments and actions within and beyond its gates.

Eleanor Meyers was a Jewish student at Barnard during the years 1911-1914. In her scrapbook, she documents a note written to then newly minted Dean Gildersleeve by a former chairman of the chapel committee. The former chairman was enraged that the Barnard chapel would be hosting a lecture by Rabbi Stephen Wise.<sup>68</sup> In a letter to Gildersleeve, the chairman remarks: “I thought Barnard would go to pieces after 1912 had left it; now I know it!!!” In response to this outlandish anti-Semitism, Gildersleeve attempted to placate the writer of the note: “Cheer up! They just happen to be ‘[...]’.<sup>69</sup> There haven’t been any more! VCG.”<sup>70</sup> The response given to the former chairman, who was herself a student at Barnard, indicates Gildersleeve’s sympathies with the student’s anti-Semitism. That this note was found in Meyers’ scrapbook points to the ways in which Gildersleeve’s anti-Semitic leanings were at least known.

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<sup>67</sup> Author’s interview with Shirley Adelson Siegel, November 29, 2018, New York City.

<sup>68</sup> Rabbi Stephen Wise was an influential 20<sup>th</sup> century Rabbi, who received both a B.A. and doctorate at Columbia University. “Stephen S. Wise (1874-1949),” Ellen Eisenberg, *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, Accessed April 3, 2019, [https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/wise\\_rabbi\\_stephen/#.XKI8wRNKg\\_U](https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/wise_rabbi_stephen/#.XKI8wRNKg_U).

<sup>69</sup> The writing here is unintelligible.

<sup>70</sup> Jewett, Eleanore Myers. “Eleanor Myers Jewett Scrapbook, Vol. 4, 1911-1912.” Barnard Archive; *Scrapbooks*, 1911, pp. 148.

In 1935, Ruth Saberski Goldenheim a student of Siegel's era, was celebrating. She and her fellow Barnard classmates were feeling the excitement of graduation. While some of her friends were unsure of what came next, Goldenheim was anxious to embark on her yearlong fellowship in Spain, where she would have an opportunity to deepen her Spanish studies. Before making her final departure from the halls of Barnard, Goldenheim was asked to stop by her dean's office. She previously had only intermittent interactions with Dean Virginia Gildersleeve. The excitement of the time was short-lived; Dean Gildersleeve wanted only to remind Goldenheim that she "would be going abroad as an American, not a Jew."<sup>71</sup> The embarrassment she felt was so intense that it was not until sixty years later when Goldenheim attended a Barnard event with her recently Barnard graduated granddaughter that she first shared that story.<sup>72</sup>

Dr. Dorothy Denburg spent forty-two years at Barnard, beginning as a student and finishing as Dean of the College, holding various other positions along the way. Dr. Denburg relates that early in her Barnard tenure as Dean of the College, she received a letter "from a woman saying that her sister had gone to Barnard and had been expelled by Dean Gildersleeve a year or two before her graduation."<sup>73</sup> This woman informed Dr. Denburg that her sister was now sick and dying and it would give her pleasure if her sister could posthumously get a Barnard degree. "I dug up the file--turned out the student had submitted to the annual poetry contest a plagiarized poem, so she was suspended. When she applied for re-administration, Dean Gildersleeve responded to her, and in the response there was the language along the lines of 'you people' and it was the most blatant and concrete example of anti-Semitism that I knew of to embolize the Gildersleeve era."<sup>74</sup> Dr. Denburg added that the Jewish student population at

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<sup>71</sup> Author's interview with Janet Alperstein, Goldenheim's granddaughter, November 29, 2018, Phone Interview.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Author's interview with Dr. Dorothy Denburg, February 6th, 2019, New York, NY.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Barnard maintained an eerily steady twenty-five percent over the course of the Gildersleeve administration.<sup>75</sup>

These stories are telling, deeply upsetting, and yet, not shocking. That Dean Gildersleeve, her institution, and Columbia University, leaned towards anti-Semitism specifically in the early twentieth century was well known. Meyers attended Barnard on the eve of WWI when what was called the “Jewish Question” or “Jewish Problem” had been integrated within European and American socio-political discourse.

### *Social Exclusion at Barnard*

Socially, as well as institutionally, Jewish students were not encouraged to succeed. Even once a Jewish student fought her way to the halls of Barnard, she was excluded from the social fabric of life on campus. A Jewish Barnard student could participate as a committee member of Barnard’s Christian Association, and yet would still not be invited to its annual encampment at Silver Bay, where “women students from colleges and universities gathered each summer for fun and inspiration.”<sup>76</sup> As one of the reigning social clubs on campus, the Christian Association presumed to speak for the whole college, much like others of its kind on other campuses. Such exclusion of Jewish students from the annual retreat served to perpetuate the conception of a Jewish student as different and therefore not welcomed in all aspects of the club. When in 1912, Barnard’s Christian Association opted to associate with the national Young Women’s Christian Association, Jewish students were entirely expelled from participation, as the Y.W.C.A required each member to “pledge herself to the spirit of Jesus ‘as presented in the Gospels.’”<sup>77</sup>

Organizations such as the Christian Association could provide networks for students both during

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<sup>75</sup> Dr. Denburg concluded this by her studies in the Admissions records in the Barnard archives, though the accuracy of this particular percentage is unclear. Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 258.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

and beyond Barnard. Systematically excluding Jewish students from such networks allowed for the continual “othering” of Jewish students.

This exclusion extended to Greek Life as well. When Barnard had prominent Greek Life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, sororities did not accept Jewish students, even Jewish students who were active in different prominent roles on campus. Alumni of Greek life organizations graduated with connections with greater opportunities to be connected to promising careers. “Throughout much of the twentieth century, Greek-letter college fraternities played an important role in the lives of millions of Americans both during and after their college years.”<sup>78</sup> By 1912, The first Barnard sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma, 18 years after its founding, still included only a quarter of Barnard students. The fact that three quarters of the student body was, indeed, excluded indicated that Barnard was unique in its Jewish population as well as the economic range of its students. This exclusion was occasionally ignored for a Jewish student who was able to cover up their Jewish roots.<sup>79</sup>

In October 1912, Jewish student Freda Kirchwey openly condemned fraternities in the *Barnard Bear*. Her article, titled “Fraternities vs. Democracy,” described the harmful nature of Barnard’s Greek life, and argued that fraternities should be eradicated from Barnard’s campus:

Without secrecy and petty regulations, without exaggerated loyalty and artificial bonds, without social distinctions, and the snobbery that inevitably accompanies them, without a certain unavoidable amounts politics -- without all these, no fraternity can exist and be a fraternity.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Sororities as well as Fraternities were, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, referred to only as fraternities. Marianne R. Sanua, *Jewish College Fraternities in the United States, 1895-1968: An Overview*, (Journal of American Ethnic History, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2000), 3.

<sup>79</sup> Students of color were as well excluded from Greek Life and did not have such an option as to “cover up,” except for lighter-colored Blacks who may have “passed” as white.

<sup>80</sup> Freda Kirchwey, *Observation and Discussion: Fraternities versus Democracy*, *Barnard Bear*, October 1912, 3-6.

Kirchwey's article accused Greek Life of exclusive and harmful elitism, adding that "no Hebrews are taken in, and this fact alone is damning evidence that fraternities fails as a college institution."<sup>81</sup> Kirchwey, and others, firmly believed that such an institution should have no place at Barnard.<sup>82</sup> Gildersleeve heeded to this critique and ultimately formed a committee comprised of four students, four alumnae, four faculty, the provost and the dean in order to further examine this.<sup>83</sup> In 1913, the committee voted to dissolve fraternities by disallowing new membership. Gildersleeve – herself a former member of Kappa Kappa Gamma -- was not necessarily in agreement with such a conclusion, lamenting in a New York Times article that "Barnard women wishing to pledge sororities [now] go over to Columbia, and that the social life of these students becomes less centered around Barnard as their time spent across Broadway lengthens."<sup>84</sup> Gildersleeve, here, fails to acknowledge the ways in which fraternities were harmful to many Barnard students, and certainly to all Barnard Jewish students.

### *In Response to Exclusion*

Such exclusion was not unique to Barnard. In 1928, a Jewish student at Brown University articulated what could have been applied to Columbia University as well:

Every conceivable activity at Brown is dominated and controlled by the fraternities. A non-fraternity man is a non-entity at Brown. It is a most miserable and disheartening experience for the young Jewish freshman at Brown to find that with the advent of the rushing season, he is shunted into the questionable category of the unwanted, the ignored, the despised perhaps to be tolerated, but not to be associated with.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> George A. Plimpton, Barnard's treasurer between the years of 1889 and 1932, similarly wrote about fraternities "I deplore the social prejudice which causes the discrimination at Barnard College." As quoted in "Making her bones: Fraternities and Other Challenges," *Who's Afraid of Virginia Gildersleeve*, Accessed on April 14, 2019, <http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/ram31/documents/4-whos-afraid-of-virginia-gildersleeve>.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> As quoted in Sanua, *Jewish College Fraternities in the United States*, 9.

A Jewish student often had to fight many battles just to gain acceptance to an elite institution, only to be excluded from the normal college student experience.

Jewish students decided to ensure their own social success apart from Greek life. In 1898, Professor Richard J.H. Gottheil, along with fourteen young men founded the fraternity Zeta Beta Tau at the Jewish Theological Seminary. They began by calling themselves by the acronym "Z.B.T." Beginning as a Zionist organization, ZBT originally stood for *Zion Bemishpat Tipadeh, Zion shall with judgment be redeemed*.<sup>86</sup> Over time, the acronym was changed to the Greek letters Zeta Beta Tau and was centered around wealthy German Jews. Eleven years later, Alpha Epsilon Phi, considered ZBT's female counterpart, was founded at Barnard College.<sup>87</sup>

At Barnard and other colleges, the "desire of young people not to be different and to fit in with an existing campus culture was a key factor in the popularity of these fraternities. The chance to enjoy a pleasant and well-organized social life with other Jews of congenial background was an additional factor."<sup>88</sup> How religion played into Greek life is a bit unclear, but it is certain that Jewish students in these fraternities and sororities cared for Jewish continuity. "From the 1920s through the 1950s, good matchmaking was a preoccupation of the Jewish Greek sub-system."<sup>89</sup> It was not uncommon for Jewish students to find a spouse at these gatherings. All who arrived were drawn together by a shared experience of exclusion and a hope for a shared community. The sheer determination is palpable, but the need for a community of people who shared their determination was key to their individual success as students. Focusing on spousal relationships was part of that determination – a feeling that smart and determined

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<sup>86</sup> Sanua, *Jewish College Fraternities in the United States*, 10.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

fellow Jews were attracted to such gatherings and could pass on such a will to the next generation.

Policies that were specifically designed to keep out undesirable Jewish students were sometimes adopted by Jewish students in Jewish dominated spaces. The Greek life system specifically created for Jewish students often included all the benefits of participation in Greek life. Often, though, the Jewish fraternities reflected the language their University system used to ensure only the acceptance of “qualified” Jewish applicants; “The application forms for the highest ranking Jewish fraternity and sorority required not only the applicant's birthplace with no acknowledgment of possible overseas birth but also the mother's maiden name and the birthplace of both parents.”<sup>90</sup> If an applicant’s name was too obviously Jewish, was from the wrong area, or was obviously Eastern European, rejection from the fraternity was most likely the response the applicant would receive. Indeed, “...the pejorative terms "kike" or "yid" were hurled not only by Christians but by Jews against other Jews as well during rushing season.”<sup>91</sup>

As much as elite universities introduced new admissions policies to discourage Jewish students in the 1920s, Jewish collegiate organizations continued to grow. “Jewish students’ affiliation on campus continued to shift, based in large part on their increasing options.”<sup>92</sup> On nearly all college campuses, especially in the Ivy League institutions, Jews were excluded from mainstream clubs and organizations. Similar to the creation of a Jewish fraternity, Jewish students wanted to rectify this problem by creating their own social network. As Jewish students increasingly began attending higher institutions, their critical mass allowed them to begin defining and creating their own college social scene. In 1906, a group of Jewish Harvard students

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism*, 58.

abandoned the desire to be fully absorbed into the larger university life -- as Jewish fraternities were attempting to do-- and instead focused on deepening their own Jewish practices: “These Jewish students, a still small but increasingly noticeable presence at Harvard by 1906, instead began to discuss how to promote Jewish culture within a college environment.”<sup>93</sup> The goal was to take pride in their Judaism rather than just attempt to be absorbed in the larger culture.

German Jews typically had an easier time with such an absorption and thus often utilized exclusionary tactics in their attempts to be absorbed into the larger culture through Greek life.

Children of immigrants from Russia or Poland typically did not have such options. Students wanted to maintain Jewish continuity by “foster[ing] the study of Jewish History and Culture,”<sup>94</sup> though specifically did not emphasize religion, in an attempt to be modern Jews.<sup>95</sup>

In 1906, the Menorah Society emerged out of this context. The Menorah movement was created out of a yearning of men and women across college campuses to be a part of the “New Judaism,” and as a hub for the study of “Jewish history, literature, religion, philosophy, jurisprudence, art, manners, in a word, Jewish culture, and to the academic discussions of Jewish problems.”<sup>96</sup> Whereas Jewish Greek Life was created out of a desire to be accepted within the wider campus culture and often employed internalized anti-Semitism to do so, the Menorah Society was established to develop a sense of Jewish identity entirely separate from the larger

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> As Daniel Green posits, “A religious society was also out of keeping with the much touted ‘university spirit.’ Although a Newman Club serviced the needs of Catholic students and the Y.M.C.A those of Protestants, a similar body administering to the needs of the Jews on campus was thought to be untenable. First, largely for economic reasons, Harvard's Jews commuted to school; their religious life, if it existed, was experienced within the home. Second, and more important, given the fact that Menorah's members were by and large relative newcomers to America, it is conceivable that they might have felt that the formation of a religious society at Harvard would jeopardize their newly acquired status of Americans. Accordingly, they eschewed anything that smacked, however remotely, of religion.” Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Alexander M. Dushkin, “Next Decade of Jewish Education in New York City.” (*Jewish Education*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1940) 65.

campus culture. Leaders of the Menorah Society hoped to advance “the educational activities of the Jews of New York City in light of their relation to American national aspirations, as the activities of a community that wishes to preserve its group life in this country.”<sup>97</sup> The Menorah Society at Harvard was started in order to negate the feeling of inferiority many Jews were experiencing, as well as to provide a space for all Jews, whether of German or Eastern European descent.

Beginning at Harvard, Menorah Societies quickly began spreading to other campuses mainly between the years 1906 and 1913: “The formation of Menorah societies at campuses around the nation provided fellowship between Jewish students and also allowed some Jewish students to create a stronger bond with their own universities.”<sup>98</sup> Students wanted to gain resources and interact with their fellow Menorah Society members from other campuses. This led to the formation of the Intercollegiate Menorah Association, the IMA, in 1913. Campus chapters could get support from the IMA and a Menorah Society Charter as long as students agreed to “act in the spirit of the Menorah Association and report regularly to the national organization.”<sup>99</sup> The main offices for the IMA were located in Manhattan, making Columbia central as well to the development of the IMA and its own Menorah Society. By the time Columbia University’s Menorah Society chapter hosted the second annual IMA convention in December 1913, there were thirty one Menorah Societies on campuses across the country, more than double the amount that existed just a year prior.<sup>100</sup> At the center of the IMA was Henry Hurwitz, one of the pioneers of the Menorah Society at Harvard, who made the success of the

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<sup>97</sup> Alexander M. Dushkin, *Next Decade of Jewish Education in New York City*, 67.

<sup>98</sup> Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism*, 38.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Due to the Menorah Society’s decentralization prior to the establishment of the IMA, it is unclear when exactly Columbia first established their own Menorah Society, though it was certainly between the years of 1906 and 1913. Jenna Weissman Joselit, *Without Ghettoism: A History Of The Intercollegiate Menorah Association, 1906- 1930*, (American Jewish Archives, 1978), 139.

IMA one of the central missions of his life's work.<sup>101</sup> By 1919, eighty campuses were attempting to carry on the idea of some twenty Harvard students.

The members of the IMA all shared a common frustration of having gained entry into an elite institution only to contend with alienation at these institutions. The Jewish Greek Life system that was created similarly tried to combat these frustrations, though employed anti-Eastern European tactics to do so, furthering divides between Jews on campus:

The intercollegiate Menorah Association officially remained opposed to fraternities throughout its history and claimed that fraternities of any kind represented the worst form of discrimination and exclusion... the Menorah Association's leadership worked hard to distinguish its intellectual goals from the social purposes at the heart of the fraternity movement.<sup>102</sup>

This movement wanted to cultivate a space that would be welcoming for Jews of all backgrounds, attempting to provide a middle ground between the wealthy fraternity Jews and the "politically oriented Zionist youth movement on the other."<sup>103</sup> At its prime, the IMA influenced hundreds of first-generation American Jews (and sometimes even longtime American German Jews). "If, on one level, the story of the IMA can be seen as a study in institutional history, on another more profound level the history of the IMA reflects much of the American Jewish college experience of the first thirty years of this century."<sup>104</sup> The drive of the "socially unqualified" Eastern European Jewish college student to use education as a means of upward mobility was met with disdain from administrators of elite institutions. The creation of the

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<sup>101</sup> Hurwitz was born in 1888 to an Orthodox family in Lithuania. At the age of five, his family immigrated to America where he learned from a Hebrew tutor and started developing Zionist leanings. He graduated from Harvard, though did not finish his law degree, and set off on his life work to understand the nature of the American-Jewish identity and how it can be nurtured through institutions such as the Menorah Society and *The Menorah Journal*. Lewis Fried, *Henry Hurwitz, "The Menorah Journal," and the Last Years of an American Romance*, *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 44, (2002-2003). 285-286. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25091941>

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>103</sup> Joselit, *Without Ghettoism*, 140.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 134.

Menorah Society, and the IMA, attempted to embolden such students to succeed in elite institutions.

Along with wanting to create a space for Jewish students, the Menorah Society was also actively working to illustrate Jewish contributions to the larger Western culture: “The crux of the problem, according to [IMA Chancellor] Hurwitz and his cohort was ignorance of these Jewish contributions...Too many professors taught that Jewish culture and civilization had ceased to develop. Menorah Association leaders claimed instead that Jewish culture had continued to evolve with great consequences for the course of modern civilization.”<sup>105</sup> What Hurwitz, as well as many other founding members, felt was necessary was illuminating the Jewish contributions to the Western world. With a greater understanding of Jewish history, Jewish students could feel a sense of pride in a religion that was under constant antagonization. “As early as 1914, the Menorah Association’s leadership noted that the ‘new type’ of Jewish professors would not have to ‘hide or minimize their Jewishness,’ but instead should remain ‘attached to Jewish interests’ and thereby influence their Jewish students also to remain so attached.”<sup>106</sup> The Menorah Association succeeded in developing various Jewish studies departments on campuses across the country. Jewish students were eager to feel a sense of Jewish pride and to demonstrate the value of the Jewish religion and culture.

#### *A Peak into the Life of the Barnard Student*

Shirley Adelson Siegel loved her experience at Barnard. Spending much of her childhood near Barnard at 110th and Broadway, she and her family were part of a very large community of Jews in New York City who immigrated to the United States early in the century from Jewish communities in Europe, specifically Lithuania. As Siegel remarked, “A very large number of

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<sup>105</sup> Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism*, 101.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

Jews in this [Siegel's] area came from the same area where my family came from.”<sup>107</sup> Her family valued religious observance through attendance of Synagogue, although, as she mentioned: “We were rather poor, which was true of so many immigrants, and therefore we really could not afford to belong to a synagogue. But there was a synagogue on our block between Broadway and Amsterdam and if it was not too packed with people who subscribed, you could sort of slip in.”<sup>108</sup> Siegel reminisced on this with a smile: Judaism was important in their home. She often looked to her older sister, Dorothy, for guidance on such matters. “But my mother believed we should be having a Jewish education so, I was one of 3 sisters, and my oldest sister was a real part in the Jewish community, later in life as well. She went to Barnard also. She was also head of the Menorah Society as I became.”<sup>109</sup>

In 1926, Barnard students established their own chapter of the Menorah Society which Siegel, like her sister, headed during her time.<sup>110</sup> Siegel remarked proudly on her role as leader: “We had interesting monthly meetings, and with Dorothy’s help I was getting good speakers.”<sup>111</sup> Speakers were often invited to Barnard’s Menorah Society to address the question of the modern American Jew in the face of antisemitism. Speakers included David de Sola Pool,<sup>112</sup> who argued that “Factors which today tend towards their further integration are anti-Semitism, fostering as it does religious consciousness and the national element in Judaism.”<sup>113</sup>

From the postings in *The Barnard Bear* it seems that speakers tended to disagree on the correct tactic to face the prevalence of Anti-Semitism. The students, as well as speakers, of the

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<sup>107</sup> Author’s interview with Shirley Adelson Siegel.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> “Menorah Club,” Barnard Mortarboard 1937, 107. Courtesy of the Barnard College Archives.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Rabbi of the Spanish Portuguese Synagogue in Manhattan A leading Sephardic 20th century Rabbi

<sup>113</sup> Published in the *Barnard Bulletin*. Found in the Shirley Adelson Siegel Papers, Courtesy of Barnard College Archives.

Menorah Society were grappling with what the future of the American Jew could and would look like. Other speakers included Mordechai Kaplan,<sup>114</sup> Mr. Morris Rothernberg,<sup>115</sup> Dr. Robert Gordis<sup>116</sup> and Rabbi Milton Steinberg of Park Avenue Synagogue.<sup>117</sup> In this sense, Jewish Barnard students were very fortunate that Barnard was located in the cultural metropolis that was Manhattan. With the Jewish Theological Seminary located just a few blocks uptown, the Columbia/Barnard Menorah Society took advantage of its unique urban setting.<sup>118</sup>

When the Menorah Society was established in 1906, it was the best option for Jewish students who were hoping to maintain and deepen their Jewish identity. In the early 1920s, however, there grew competition amongst different Jewish social groups, despite institutions working to minimize the Jewish population on campus. “The restrictions... proved to be less damaging to the Menorah Association than its own inability to respond to Jewish college students’ changing interests and needs.”<sup>119</sup>

Still, by the time Siegel began Barnard in 1933 at the age of fourteen, the Menorah Society was still a thriving place for cultural meetings and meeting other Jews. As Siegel describes,

Since we had at least one social event with the Jewish boys at Columbia every year, any Jewish girl who did not join the Menorah Society was stupid, so they all joined. Pretty much all the Jewish girls at Barnard belonged to the Menorah Society and came to the meetings because the meetings were interesting. With help from my sister Dorothy, I

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<sup>114</sup> A leading 20th century figure, credited with founding the Reconstructionist Movement of Judaism. At the time of this invitation, he was teaching at The Jewish Theological Seminary. In the Barnard archives there exists a letter that Kaplan actually wrote to Siegel regarding the time he would be able to address the Columbia/Barnard Menorah Society.

<sup>115</sup> Former president of the Zionist organization of America.

<sup>116</sup> An “author, rabbi and biblical scholar at the Jewish Theological Seminary,” and a trailblazer for the Jewish Conservative movement.

Ari Goldman, “Rabbi Robert Gordis, 83, Dies; Defined Conservative Judaism,” *The New York Times*, January 7, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/07/nyregion/rabbi-robert-gordis-83-dies-defined-conservative-judaism.html>

<sup>117</sup> Congregation Park Avenue is a leading Conservative Synagogue on the Upper East Side.

<sup>118</sup> Author’s interview with Shirley Adelson Siegel.

<sup>119</sup> Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism*, 58.

found out who was who in the Jewish community, and I invited good people to come to do a monthly meeting and speak.<sup>120</sup>

Siegel was shocked to hear that many categorize Gildersleeve as an anti-Semite; She stated “We had no conflicts with the Barnard administration... We had absolutely no conflicts. We were just one of several organizations which were similar. The Catholic girls had their organization and then there were some protestant organizations also.”<sup>121</sup> The Menorah Society did exist under the student government, and it was given mostly free reign with its events. “It was a well-established relationship [with the administration] and there was no problem.” Siegel talked about Dean Gildersleeve only with fondness:

Dean Gildersleeve was a special woman. She was an impressive woman. She was well acquainted with people who were important in the world. I think she used to go to meetings of the League of Nations in Europe. I think she knew a lot of the delegates. A woman of substance... A serious woman, one never saw anything of her family. She lived in an apartment that was a part of Barnard College, in the deanery. She actually lived there!<sup>122</sup>

Siegel talked about Gildersleeve with excitement, awe, and admiration. Siegel only had positive interactions with Gildersleeve. “I think she was too worldly to be anti-Semitic. She was a worldly person, as probably many of these women were. And she was a quiet president, she wasn’t messing around our organizations.”<sup>123</sup>

When Siegel was getting ready to graduate, she entered her name to be considered for a fellowship abroad.

The [Barnard] *Bulletin* interviewed us to ask what our ambitions were, what we would do if we won the fellowship and as a government major... I realized I needed to decide what I’d do if I won... [I decided] if I win I’ll go to London School of Economics though I never applied. When I won, it suddenly occurred to Gildersleeve that here was a girl that we don’t know where she’s going... Gildersleeve thought it was strange that I hadn’t been

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<sup>120</sup> Author’s interview with Siegel.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

in touch with them, so she wrote them a letter! A lovely letter, indicating that Barnard thought I'd do well, explaining that she was part of Columbia University building herself up as someone they should listen to.<sup>124</sup>

Gildersleeve intervened when Siegel needed help. Even after Siegel went abroad, they shared a cordial correspondence. Gildersleeve even wrote to Siegel a few months after she departed for her year abroad: "Thank you very much for your letter of October 13<sup>th</sup>, which I have been reading with great interest."<sup>125</sup> Gildersleeve may have expressed anti-Semitic views and simultaneously recognized the merits of Siegel and other talented Jewish students.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Dean Virginia Gildersleeve, *Letter to Shirley Adelson*, October 23, 1937. Box 1 of the Gildersleeve Papers, Courtesy of Barnard College Archives.

### **Chapter Three**

**“People love the Jews here is my takeaway!” Barnard Jewish Students Today.<sup>126</sup>**

2018 was a significant year for Barnard Jewish students. During the Spring 2018 semester, Barnard’s Student Government Association (SGA) posed a referendum to the Barnard student community asking whether SGA should write a letter to the administration asking it to divest from eight companies that “profit from or engage in the State of Israel’s treatment of Palestinians.”<sup>127</sup> Barnard students split into a “yes to BDS” faction and a “no to BDS” faction.<sup>128</sup> A Facebook group called “Barnard United” was quickly formed, advocating three main reasons why Barnard students should vote “no” to divest. Columbia University Apartheid Divest advocated the moral violations Barnard was committing by continuously profiting off of these eight specific companies, thus petitioning for students to vote “yes.” The dividing line was not entirely predictable; Jewish students on both sides cited the possibility of feeling unsafe were either of the outcomes to come to fruition. In the end, fewer than 30% of Barnard students participated in the voting, though 64% voted “yes.” In response, newly minted President Sian Beilock wrote that, though Barnard deeply appreciated the voice of its students, the referendum did not meet the standards required for issues relating to Barnard’s endowment and that choosing

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<sup>126</sup> Quote of Participant, Focus group discussion of Jewish Barnard students, January 29, 2019, New York City.

<sup>127</sup> Aubri Juhasz, “Barnard SGA Referendum on Divestment from Companies with Ties to Israel Passes with 64 Percent Support,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 18, 2018.

<sup>128</sup> Boycott, Divstment, Sanctions (BDS) attempts to enact pressure on Israel to end their “oppression of the Palestinian people.” “What is BDS,” BDS: Freedom, Justice, Equality Accessed April 16, 2019. <https://bdsmovement.net/>.

Though, it is important to note that that vote did not call for Barnard to participate in the BDS movement, but rather for Barnard to divest from eight specific companies which Barnard works closely with. This distinction is important because many accuse the BDS movement of being anti-Semitic but recognize boycotting as a legitimate form of civil engagement.

a side would inhibit free discourse on campus. Importantly, Beilock added that “thousands of alumnae have also voiced their opposition to the referendum.”<sup>129</sup>

On October 27, 2018 an armed man walked into the Tree of Life Synagogue in the community of Squirrel Hill in Pittsburgh during Sabbath morning prayers and murdered eleven congregants. In response to this tragedy, the Office of University Life at Columbia sent an email, identifying the ways in which America has grievously seen an increase in attacks on minority groups.<sup>130</sup> Some students found comfort in this email, and still others noticed a lack of any mention that this tragedy was specifically anti-Semitic. In response to that and the tragedy itself, a statement was composed that asked Columbia University to affirm its commitments to its Jewish community – all four undergraduate governing boards were asked to sign.<sup>131</sup> All governing boards immediately agreed to sign except for Barnard’s Student Government Association (SGA), which caused intense uproar from the larger Columbia University Jewish community. In response to this backlash, SGA did eventually sign the statement, and composed their own, Barnard-specific statement as well.<sup>132</sup> Still, accusations that SGA was blatantly anti-Semitic surfaced.

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<sup>129</sup> President Sian Beilock, “Messages from President Sian Leah Beilock | Barnard Student Government Association's Referendum,” May 1, 2018.

<sup>130</sup> Suzanne B Goldberg, “On Yesterday's Tragedy in Pittsburgh,” *On Yesterday's Tragedy in Pittsburgh*, 28 Oct. 2018.

<sup>131</sup> This statement was passed around in a Google Document. The four undergraduate colleges of Columbia University are (in no particular order): School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, School of General Studies, Columbia College and Barnard College.

<sup>132</sup> The statement can be found here:

[https://barnard.edu/sites/default/files/a\\_statement\\_in\\_against\\_antisemitism.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23qz\\_DPZDDGR\\_j\\_gs uSrRHw-wiZct89buXsqalTR\\_YcF0a\\_b1dxI6rTbI](https://barnard.edu/sites/default/files/a_statement_in_against_antisemitism.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23qz_DPZDDGR_j_gs uSrRHw-wiZct89buXsqalTR_YcF0a_b1dxI6rTbI)

The main paragraph states: “The Barnard College Student Government Association wishes to offer our deepest condolences and support for all those affected by this act of violence and anti-Semitism (3). We vehemently condemn this act and all anti-Semitic acts and sentiments. Our college is lucky to have a vibrant Jewish community, and we aim to support them as our classmates, friends, and integral members of the larger Barnard and Columbia community. We unconditionally accept and agree with International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of anti-Semitism, in all its forms, as linked below. We decry all acts and sentiments that meet this definition.”

On November 28, 2018, an unidentified perpetrator painted swastikas on the walls of psychology professor and Holocaust scholar Elizabeth Midlarsky's office at Teachers College of Columbia University. Though President Beilock sent an email out affirming the college's disdain for such a hate crime, there were students on Barnard's campus who were left feeling targeted and vulnerable by this attack. I was sitting in the Barnard Archives, exploring Dean Virginia Gildersleeve's relationship to President Nicholas Murray Butler, a notorious anti-Semite, when I received President Beilock's email with the subject line "Denouncing antisemitism," in which she affirmed the College's strong denouncement of such hate crimes. It was surreal; as I was exploring a former dean's lack of support for Jewish students on campus, and at times her active opposition of some Jewish students, I received an email from the current president affirming a strong stance against anti-Semitism and in support of the Jewish students on Barnard's campus. I felt comforted by this email, yet many students were irritated that Beilock sent an email out one full day after the event occurred and that the perpetrator had still not been found.

In light of these three salient though radically different events, I felt compelled to explore the reactions of the Barnard Jewish community within the context of this thesis. In order to do this, I collected 26 survey responses from current Jewish Barnard students across lines of Jewish affiliations, between January 4 and January 28, 2019. Among the 26 who answered the survey, all but three identified in some way with being "well-off" financially, about half were from the Tri-State area, and mostly all identified with having grown up with a rich Jewish background, though what that looked like varied from years of Jewish Day School to occasional synagogue attendance. In addition, on January 29, 2019, I gathered a group of twelve politically diverse Barnard students to participate in a discussion where I posed questions that were similar to those that were asked of them in the survey in an attempt to hear how these questions were approached

in a focus group context. The major theme of both the survey and the focus group was antisemitism. The questions asked for the financial and religious background of the respondents, as well as asked questions regarding their experience of being a Jewish student on campus, with questions such as “Do you feel you were brought up with a strong Jewish identity? Why or why not?” and “Has Barnard been a welcoming place for you as a Jewish student?”<sup>133</sup> All the respondents had some story to share that reflected a time when they felt uncomfortable being a Jew at Barnard, and the stories varied dramatically.<sup>134</sup>

There are two notable differences between the American Jewish landscape today and that of the early 20th century; the financial, political and social resources Jewish students have today that they did not have on campus in the early 20th century (which came with the change of the perception of Jews from the low-income immigrant community to the high-income influential class) and the establishment of the modern nation-state of Israel. Jewish students make up roughly 30% of Barnard’s student population and the administration seems to unwaveringly support them. And yet, many admit to feeling uncomfortable being a Jew on Barnard’s campus.. In this chapter, I focus on the experiences of Jewish students at Barnard today within the historical frame of experiences one hundred years ago.

### *Anti-Semitism as Experienced Through Anti-Zionism*

I think the fear of anti-Semitism and the conflation of that with anti-Zionism is more prevalent than actual anti-Semitism... [it] excludes a lot of thoughtful committed Jews from Jewish spaces.<sup>135</sup>

In December 2016, *The Algemeiner*, a publication that purports itself as “an independent media voice covering the Middle East, Israel and matters of Jewish interest around the world,”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> See Appendix Item B for full list of questions

<sup>134</sup> All the names mentioned in this chapter are pseudonyms.

<sup>135</sup> Quote of Participant, Focus group discussion of Jewish Barnard students, January 29, 2019, New York City.

<sup>136</sup> “About Us.” *Algemeiner.com*, [www.algemeiner.com/about/](http://www.algemeiner.com/about/).

published a report rating Columbia University the number one worst place to be a Jewish student.<sup>137</sup> Much of the reason for such a classification was due to anti-Israel sentiment on the Barnard and Columbia campus. Despite the many resources offered to Jewish students on campus, primarily through the Columbia/Barnard Hillel, the report still held that it was due to “the extraordinarily high number of anti-Jewish incidents and the presence of a constellation of anti-Israel groups on campus that have pushed Columbia to the top of the list.”<sup>138</sup> This report was anathema to the Barnard I experienced as a sophomore student in 2016. But it certainly piqued my curiosity about why there was so much talk about Columbia being a hostile and unwelcoming place for Jewish students. *Algemeiner’s* list declared other campuses as anti-Semitic as well, but the only reason for such a classification was due to the anti-Zionist voices on campus. The response given by the Director of the Columbia/Barnard Hillel for such a rating similarly utilized the statistics of students who go to Israel through Hillel as indicative of the ways in which Columbia University is a welcoming place for Jewish students.<sup>139</sup>

Such a conflation of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is not uncommon. In September 2018, General Studies student Ophir Dayan articulated in a *New York Post* article that “There’s no difference between being anti-Israel and anti- Semitic [at Columbia].”<sup>140</sup> In no uncertain terms, Dayan declared that to stand against Israel is to stand against Jews. Dayan is a member of Students Support Israel (SSI), a pro-Israel group whose mission is to be a “clear and confident Pro-Israel voice on college campuses, and to support students in grassroots Pro-Israel

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<sup>137</sup> “The 40 Worst Colleges for Jewish Students, 2016,” *The Algemeiner*, 2016, [www.algemeiner.com/the-40-worst-colleges-for-jewish-students-2016/](http://www.algemeiner.com/the-40-worst-colleges-for-jewish-students-2016/).

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Brian Cohen, “Columbia Is Far From ‘The Worst College’ For Jews Read More: <https://forward.com/Scribe/358156/Columbia-Is-Far-from-the-Worst-College-for-Jews/>.” *Scribe*, 23 Dec. 2016, Columbia Is Far From ‘The Worst College’ For Jews Read more: <https://forward.com/scribe/358156/columbia-is-far-from-the-worst-college-for-jews/>.

<sup>140</sup> Doree Lewak, “Israeli Student at Columbia Says She’s Being Bullied by Palestinian Group.” *New York Post*, 29 Sept. 2018.

advocacy.”<sup>141</sup> Miranda Roth, a graduating senior from the tri-state area, is a part of the same pro-Israel group, and yet identifies with Marks’ assessment on the hostility within the Jewish community: “I have felt very unsupported by the Jewish community... I joined a pro-Israel club that was slightly controversial and found myself hated by many Jews on campus...”<sup>142</sup> Roth here expresses feelings of alienation from the community which she expects should be embracing her warmly.<sup>143</sup>

When Jewish identity is intertwined with a love for Israel, the experience of feeling like Israel is under attack can be truly destabilizing. Debbie Lawrence, a senior from the New York area, writes:

Jewish identity was always a feature in my household... My parents enforced this in me by taking us on frequent trips to Israel, by sending us to a pluralistic Zionist summer camp, by sending us to Jewish Day school and making sure we knew both traditional Jewish songs as well as early songs from the Zionist movement.<sup>144</sup>

Lawrence here is articulating a Jewish identity that is shaped through a love of Israel. A Barnard student who was raised with an unwavering support for Israel, as an extension and expression of her Judaism, is perhaps at greater risk for feeling under religious attack when Israel is being labeled an Apartheid state. Tehila Markovitz, a senior at Barnard who grew up with a strong modern orthodox upbringing, posits: “[Anti-Semitism can be felt] because of the connection Judaism has to Israel which tends to heighten anti-Semitic comments.” This is felt especially by students who grew up with a love of Israel as a core tenant of their Jewish identity.

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<sup>141</sup> “Students Supporting Israel at Columbia University - SSI Columbia.” *Facebook*, [www.facebook.com/pg/SSIColumbia/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/SSIColumbia/about/?ref=page_internal).

<sup>142</sup> Miranda Roth, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>143</sup> SSI is not a Hillel-affiliated clubs, which further perpetuates their alienation from the mainstream Jewish community on campus. The decision to not be a Hillel affiliated group was intentional.

<sup>144</sup> Carly Fishman, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

When many Jews are raised with Israel at the center of their Judaism, it is expected that anti-Zionism will get interpreted as anti-Semitism. When asked about their relationship to Judaism, many survey respondents included their relationship to Israel as indicative of their strong Jewish practice and/or upbringing. Carly Fishman, a junior from San Francisco who grew up with a strong reform identity, takes it one step further, saying that not only may anti-Zionism be interpreted as anti-Semitism, but “the way that Israel is handled on campus can be anti-Semitic because even though Israel and Judaism are not one and the same some, people don't understand how [anti-Zionist] events... can hurt Jews.”<sup>145</sup> As Fishman astutely points out, often the rhetoric around events opposing the state of Israel can lead to anti-Zionism bleeding into antisemitism. The most common sentiment among the survey respondents was that anti-Zionism was indeed the key catalyst for anti-Semitism. The respondents often did not separate these two but rather saw them as one.

Samantha Schwartz, a senior at Barnard from the tri-state area, expands on such sentiments: “Very sadly, this [anti-Semitism] is probably the major negative downside that I have felt throughout my four years at Barnard. I have felt judged, and even targeted (not individually but as a member of the larger Jewish community) on many occasions... through the loud BDS movement.”<sup>146</sup>

#### *Anti-Zionism as a Jewish Identity*

“The division on campus has forced Jews to take a side; they're either for or entirely against Israel. And that can lead to hostility between Jews.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Quote of Participant, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

It can be nearly uncontested that anti-Zionist rhetoric is strong on the Columbia University campus. Over three thousand students like and follow Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a group whose mission is to “organize around the principles of the Palestinian Civil Society call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of Israel.”<sup>148</sup> Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) works closely with SJP, adding that their work is inspired by “Jewish tradition to work together for peace, social justice, equality, human rights, respect for international law, and a U.S. foreign policy based on these ideals... JVP seeks an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.”<sup>149</sup> Both groups work together to host Apartheid Week on campus through Columbia University Apartheid Divest, which is a week dedicated “to shed a light on the settler colonial project and apartheid policies of Israel and build the growing Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.”<sup>150</sup> With so many Jewish students a part of an anti-Zionist organization, what does it do to the overall campus Jewish community when anti-Zionists are immediately alienated as anti-Semites?

Eliana Marks was just a freshman in college when, as she relates, “I got yelled at by someone in the Jewish community while I was in my pajamas in the bathroom who called me a terrible person for attending a JVP event on Facebook. And I wasn't even in JVP, I was literally just a Facebook event-clicker.”<sup>151</sup> Marks had grown up with many years of conservative Jewish education and was dumbfounded by this attack by her by her fellow Jewish student. As Marks relate:

When I came to Barnard, I was in the thick of my journey to figure out what Israel and Palestine and all of this means to me. I came really ready to meet other Jewish people,

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<sup>148</sup> “Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine.” Accessed April 16, 2019, *Facebook*, [www.facebook.com/pg/ColumbiaSJP/about/?ref=page\\_internal](http://www.facebook.com/pg/ColumbiaSJP/about/?ref=page_internal).

<sup>149</sup> “Jewish Voice for Peace,” *Facebook*, Accessed April 16, 2019, [www.facebook.com/pg/JewishVoiceforPeace/about/?ref=page\\_interna](http://www.facebook.com/pg/JewishVoiceforPeace/about/?ref=page_interna)

<sup>150</sup> “Israeli Apartheid Week,” *Facebook*, Accessed April 16, 2019, [www.facebook.com/events/255575044895042/](http://www.facebook.com/events/255575044895042/).

<sup>151</sup> Eliana Marks, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

specifically those who wanted to talk about broader notions of Palestine and peace and whatever that means.<sup>152</sup>

Unfortunately, Marks felt continually alienated from communities that she had hoped would provide her with a space to continue this journey. Specifically feeling alienated from the mainstream Jewish space on campus, Hillel, added an additional layer of isolation for Marks.

The Columbia/Barnard Hillel has a staff of 21 professionals all dedicated to “to help students, regardless of their origin or destination, find their own interpretation of Jewish values, culture, community and religion..”<sup>153</sup> As much as the Hillel purports to do this, it commits to create communities around multiple core values, including a love of Israel. JVP, though a Jewish organization, and one that has provided Marks with a Jewish community on campus, is not granted access to the mainstream Jewish community on campus because of its anti-Zionist stance.

The problem for many Jews is the ways in which normative American Jewish culture presumes a love of Israel, which permeates religious spaces as well as political spaces.. Nora Herman, a current junior at Barnard who identifies as having grown up with a strong conservative background, was out on the steps of Low Library on Columbia’s campus celebrating *Simchat Torah* with her fellow Jews.<sup>154</sup> There, Herman experienced “One of my most uncomfortable moments of being a Jew.” Unbeknownst to her, there was a tradition to sing *Hatikvah* during this celebration.<sup>155</sup> Herman, who is a member of JVP, decided to remove

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<sup>152</sup> Eliana Marks, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>153</sup> “Our Mission,” Mission and Core Values, Columbia/ Barnard Hillel, accessed April 14, 2019, <https://columbiabarnardhillel.org/about/mission-and-core-values>.

<sup>154</sup> The Jewish holiday of *Simchat Torah* is an annual holiday celebrating the completion of the reading of the bible. There are large celebrations for this holiday, including the Columbia/Barnard’s Jewish community’s tradition to dance with the bible on Low steps.

<sup>155</sup> *Hatikvah*, literally translated as “the hope”, is the Israeli national anthem. Its lyrics are adapted from Naphtali Herz Imber’s 1886 poem.

herself from this rendition and was “called a *Kapo*<sup>156</sup>... by a member of my community for choosing to not participate in the *Hatikva*.” Herman, like Marks, joined JVP for its ideologies as well as for its access to a Jewish community. Herman experiences her anti-Zionism and participation in JVP as an extension of her Jewish values, just like many see their Zionism as an extension of their own Jewish values. Calling a fellow Jew a “*Kappo*” effectively banishes them from any respectable place in the Jewish community. Herman’s account illuminates the divisiveness that the Israel conversation has created on campus, not only between Jews and other communities, but within the Jewish community itself.

Herman was describing her experiences in a space that was meant to serve as a distinctly Jewish religious space, namely the celebration of a Jewish holiday. It was in this religious space where she was called a derogatory and anti-Semitic name. Claire Muller, who identifies with what might be considered more mainstream views on Israel – at least by standards of the Columbia/Barnard Hillel – expressed shock at the ways in which the Jewish community alienates those with anti-Zionist leanings, particularly referencing the custom to sing *Hatikva* in a religious Jewish space. Though Muller herself would feel comfortable singing *Hatikva*, she nonetheless was<sup>157</sup>

...so upset by people taking out the Israeli flag and making everyone sing *Hatikvah* and not because it wasn’t in line with my general feelings [but] that we were taking this moment where we’re really trying to bring together the entire Jewish community on campus and to deliberately have this thing that so clearly not everyone agrees on, it was ruined and I was really upset about it.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> *Kappo* is a derogatory term that comes from German reliance on certain Jews in the Holocaust who were called “*Kappos*.” The German concentration camps “depended on the cooperation of trustee inmates who supervised the prisoners. Known as *Kappos*, these trustees carried out the will of the Nazi camp commandants and guards, and were often as brutal as their SS counterparts.” “Concentration Camp: *Kappos*,” *Jewish Virtual Library; A Project of Aice*, Accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/kapos>.

<sup>157</sup> Quote of Participant, Focus group discussion of Jewish Barnard students, January 29, 2019, New York City.

<sup>158</sup> Claire Muller, Focus group discussion of Jewish Barnard students, January 29, 2019, New York City.

For Marks, it is really that anti-Semitism is often defined as anti-Zionism. Though, as she notes:

Of course, I also agree that there is such thing in this world as someone who is both anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic - it definitely happens in all kinds-of spaces! But I don't see that happening in my communities, and I spent a pretty long time involved in those activist communities. I see anti-Semitism happening among the right-wing organizations that perpetuate white supremacy, on this campus and in this city.<sup>159</sup>

Marks' points elucidates that viewing anti-Zionism as anti-Semitism works to drive a wedge between Jews who support Israel and Jews who do not, often leading to hostility amongst the Jewish community, and specifically the Columbia/Barnard Jewish community. Marks' point could almost be read as a plea; is it time for Jews to stop harming each other, especially at a time when anti-Semitic hate crimes are on the rise.<sup>160</sup>

#### *Outside of Barnard College*

"I think people (especially outsiders) overestimate how big of a problem it [A-S] is. I usually feel safe on campus, even during Israeli Apartheid week. I think some anti-Semitism exists on campus, but I think it's fairly mild, and no worse than anywhere else in the U.S. (and a lot better than a lot of places)."<sup>161</sup>

This quote from Becky Kraus, a junior at Barnard, points to the ways in which other factors outside of the reality of the experience as a Jew on campus contribute to the classification of Barnard as a toxic place for Jewish students. How the national media presents anti-Semitism on Columbia's campus will have an impact not only on how Columbia University students experience their campus, but also on how others conceive of Columbia University students. A

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<sup>159</sup> Quote of Participant, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>160</sup> See page 53 for this source.

<sup>161</sup> Becky Krauss, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

student shared that while studying abroad in France, she told someone she went to Columbia University and

his entire demeanor changed, he was like ‘Oh my gosh, how terrible is it there?!’ and I was like ‘it’s one of the most Jewish schools, it’s great.’ Like I was in France, someone literally spat on me earlier that day [for being a Jew] and he was all concerned about my experience at Columbia University!<sup>162</sup>

Similarly, Abby Lerner who grew up in a strong modern orthodox home in New York, once cried to her father about an anti-Semitic email she received as a Barnard student, but she was not met with the sympathy she had hoped to elicit. Instead, “my dad was just like ‘What do you expect? You go to such an anti-Semitic school, you’re going to experience anti-Semitism.’” However, Lerner does not share such a sentiment in her lived experience at Barnard: “I think Barnard is one of the best campuses in the country to be Jewish... While my experiences with anti-Semitism have been exhausting and upsetting, they do not outweigh the positives of being Jewish on campus... I have ample opportunity to experience Jewishness in a variety of ways and take on leadership positions in those spaces.” Even for someone who does experience anti-Semitism on campus, the resources provided for Jewish students outweigh any harm Lerner feels she can legitimately experience.

Lawrence takes it even further “I don’t feel antisemitism ever. I know there have been some recent incidents of this. But, I’ve never firsthand felt it (especially because the school is so Jewish). I do feel anti-Zionism at times.”<sup>163</sup> This quote exemplifies three key elements that other students shared in a as well in their survey responses; Lawrence is aware that antisemitism is around, and even on this campus but does not feel a personal relation to it. In addition, even if

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<sup>162</sup> Abby Lerner, Focus group discussion of Jewish Barnard students, January 29, 2019, New York City.

<sup>163</sup> Quote of Participant, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

Lawrence were to feel a sense of antisemitism on this campus, it would not seem to impact her in a meaningful way because, contrary to what *Algemeiner's* article may suggest, "Barnard is so Jewish."<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, though Lawrence uses her strong Zionist upbringing as indicative of her strong Jewish upbringing, she does not perceive the anti-Zionist rhetoric on campus as an expression of antisemitism.

*In Response to SGA*

When politically charged topics like Israel come up, though, I find that I am sometimes afraid to truly speak about the way my identity intersects with those views of mine, incidents like the delayed signing of the statement on antisemitism by SGA at the least make me roll my eyes and at most I find really upsetting...<sup>165</sup>

Here, Claire Muller is commenting on the delay with which Barnard's SGA took in signing the statement denouncing anti-Semitism, written as a response to the tragedy in Pittsburgh. When interviewing an anonymous member of SGA, I found that what was most apparent in SGA's hesitation were all the unknowns: Who brought this statement, why was it written, and what do all the definitions refer to? "It was difficult because no one came to us but we felt the need to address it... one came directly to us! We had no idea what was going on."<sup>166</sup> As in, it was simply unclear by whom this statement was composed and for exactly what purpose.

Once this hurdle was addressed, the issue of SGA's role as representative of the student body became the central issue: "The problem was, the letter we received... Everyone felt that it didn't appropriately address Barnard students directly and people didn't want to allude to

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<sup>164</sup> Quote of Participant, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>165</sup> Claire Muller's survey response, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>166</sup> Quote of anonymous SGA representative, February 6, 2019, New York City.

specific definitions of anti-Semitism because they wanted to make it more inclusive.”<sup>167</sup> The definition of anti-Semitism that was used in the statement comes from the website of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and most notably in this case defines anti-Semitism as “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.”<sup>168</sup> SGA felt that not all of their constituents would agree with such a declaration.

This SGA Representative recognized the ways people then began to see SGA as anti-Semitic: “I get it because if you’re not responding then you’re also not being supportive. [But we felt that the statement] Wasn’t Barnard specific, we could do something better [and] a lot of members of SGA had a problem with the definition of Anti-Semitism used.”<sup>169</sup> She expressed that, among SGA, the feeling was that they could not understand if this was the mainstream way to define anti-Semitism. “People said I want to do my own research, I don’t understand this. And that’s where the part of us writing our own statement came.”<sup>170</sup> She was certainly aware of the accusations being thrown at SGA, and remarks:

I’m not sure the reaction would have been the same if we weren’t coming off of last spring where campus or SGA became a place for world politics when in the past it’s been really a reactionary body. But people were assuming SGA was being proactive [with regards to the BDS referendum], but students came to SGA with this.<sup>171</sup>

When SGA proposed a BDS referendum on campus, there was strong uproar from parts of the Jewish population of Barnard. When the referendum ultimately passed, it left these sub-communities to develop a lack of trust for SGA. Though Claire Muller was not on campus

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> The definition used can be found at “Working Definition of Anti-Semitism,” *Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>

<sup>169</sup> Quote of anonymous SGA representative, February 6, 2019, New York City.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid,

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

during this vote, her perception from social media platforms such as Facebook elucidates some of the communities reactions “The conversation around the BDS vote that she saw on sites such as Facebook mad “I don’t have a good sense of what actual campus vibes were like at this point aside from Yavneh<sup>172</sup> social media vibes which were honestly extremely scary. I’m sure those were true sentiments on Facebook but it definitely painted my understanding of what it would be like were I to talk about Israel on campus...”<sup>173</sup> Muller’s assessment of the ways parts of the Jewish community were reacting to this vote on campus could help to clarify the mistrust that these same communities would bring to SGA’s delay in signing a statement that is about denouncing anti-Semitism.

### *Jewish Wealth*

“[I do see] resentment towards Jewish students for having a lot of resources.”<sup>174</sup>

Dr. Dorothy Denburg, Barnard class of 1970, stepped down from her 17-year position as Dean of the College at Barnard just five years ago. Dr. Denburg herself went to Barnard in the late 60’s when, amongst Jews at least, Israel was primarily a bipartisan issue. In her time as Dean of the College beginning in the 90s, she certainly understood the ways in which that was no longer necessarily the case. While she was serving as Dean of the College, there was a staged intervention between the Jewish students on campus and the students of color on campus, who were then sharing space in Earl Hall. With the building of the seven-floor Kraft Center, which was to house the Columbia/Barnard Hillel, a staff of now twenty one had been hired to service only the needs of the Jewish community. Dr. Denburg remarked “I think the building and

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<sup>172</sup> Yavneh is one of the four religious communities housed in the Kraft center for Jewish Life on Campus, i.e. the Columbia/Barnard Hillel. Yavneh is the Orthodox religious life and is typically associated with more right-leaning views on Israel or an unwavering support for Israel.

<sup>173</sup> Clair Muller’s survey response, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>174</sup> Abby Lerner’s survey response, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

opening of the Kraft Center transformed the whole thing. It became possible for you to feel like a CU student and a member of the Jewish community, and it was identifiable it had a place.”<sup>175</sup>

The American Jewish community today is arguably in a Jewish prosperity epoch. The American Jewish community today has become one of America’s “most successful ethnic groups with the nation’s highest per capita income and high representation in legal, technocratic and academic professions.”<sup>176</sup> American Jews have gone from the depths of the predominately poor immigrant class to the heights of a wealthy, educated, class.

Such a display of gravitas can certainly be comforting to many; when the BDS referendum was sent to the Barnard administration, one of the reasons given for not following through on such a referendum was that alumni were not supportive of this. As one participant asked in our discussion; “Can Anti-Semitism exist on this campus with the fact that Jewish philanthropy supports this campus? There is power in the purse... [it] feels comforting.”<sup>177</sup> Another participant quickly chimed in: “To echo that, when the BDS thing was going down, people were like Jewish alumna would never let that happen.” This is, in fact, exactly what President Beilock wrote in her message to SGA in response to the BDS referendum.

As illuminated in this chapter, the experience of Jewish Barnard students is not uniform; it varies, from students feeling entirely isolated to students feeling wholly supported and welcomed. The underlying factor could perhaps be likened to a Jewish students’ experience with the Columbia/Barnard Hillel. Hailey Wood, a senior at Barnard from the tri-state area remarked:

I think being Jewish at Barnard is pretty ideal. That's not to say it doesn't have its shortcomings - sometimes being part of such a large community can make it feel intimidating and unapproachable, and can also make it easier to take a step back and be

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<sup>175</sup> Dr. Denburg’s interview, February 6, 2019, New York City.

<sup>176</sup> Jacob Sheer, “The American Jewish Affirmative Action About-Face,” *Tablet Magazine*, July 31, 2018, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/267470/the-american-jewish-affirmative-action-about-face>.

<sup>177</sup> Quote of Participant, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

less involved, but overall, I wouldn't say there are many other schools that offer a better Jewish Life experience than Columbia/Barnard. I feel supported and it is very easy for me to continue my Jewish practice/beliefs and live out my Jewish identity.<sup>178</sup>

Though, if you feel alienated from the Columbia/Barnard Hillel, the experience of being a Jew on Barnard's campus might look radically different than Wood's description.

### *The Barnard Administration*

On April 15, 1931, a Barnard student requested a special examination date for a test that was being offered over a Jewish holiday. The response she received was: "It is against the policy of the Committee on Instruction to grant special examinations to undergraduates,"<sup>179</sup> thus effectively forcing her student to choose between her religion and her academics.

Today, Barnard's policy on religious holidays affirms its respect of each students' religious practice, asserting that "each student who is absent from school because of her religious beliefs will be given an equivalent opportunity to register for classes or make up examination."<sup>180</sup> On policy, Barnard is committed to allowing students space to both practice their religious identities' while succeeding academically at Barnard.

Ariela Kraus, a senior at Barnard, understands this principle, though still finds it frustrating that the administration does not

take into account the dates of major Jewish holidays when starting school, like I just don't think we should ever have Rosh Hashanah [the Jewish new year] on the first week of classes in a school that's like 30% Jewish.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Hailey Wood, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>179</sup> Registrar's Office Records, Box 8, Courtesy of Barnard College Archives.

<sup>180</sup> "Policy on Religious Holidays," Barnard College, Accessed on April 16, 2019, <https://barnard.edu/provost/institutional-policies/religious-holidays>.

<sup>181</sup> Ariela Kraus, Focus group discussion of Jewish Barnard students, January 29, 2019, New York City.

Though Kraus believes that Barnard has allowed her to deepen her Jewish identity amongst a supportive community, she expresses an expectation that Barnard should consider its large Jewish population when creating its yearly academic calendar. On the other hand, Erica Boiarsky asserts “Our professors are ridiculously accommodating to Jewish holidays.”<sup>182</sup> Putting Kraus’ comments in conversation with the response given to a Jewish student in 1931 sheds light on the ways in which the American Jewish community perhaps feels in a position to demand more from their institutions.

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Early in 2018, the *New York Times* reported that anti-Semitic incidents had risen by 57% in 2017.<sup>183</sup> In New York City alone, anti-Semitic hate crimes made up two-thirds of the reported hate crimes of just 2019, and this finding was reported in February. In a period of two months, 36 anti-Semitic hate crimes have been reported.<sup>184</sup> Our campus is certainly not divorced from world news. In recent months, I have witnessed the Columbia University Jewish community rally against Barnard as an anti-Semitic institution, citing that students feel unsafe as Jews on campus. Esther Weinberg, a junior at Barnard, argues: “I find that the administration has handled anti-Semitism on campus and in general extremely poorly and I found that extremely anti-Semitic.”<sup>185</sup> Samantha Schwartz similarly argues that the “mishandling of national Jewish/anti-Semitic tragedies in addressing the university and unequivocally standing with and supporting our Jewish community here at Barnard.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Erica Boiarsky, Survey conducted of Jewish Barnard students, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>183</sup> Maggie Astor, “Anti-Semitic Incidents Surged 57 Percent in 2017, Report Finds,” *The New York Times*, 27 Feb. 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/02/27/us/anti-semitism-adl-report.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/27/us/anti-semitism-adl-report.html).

<sup>184</sup> Sharon Otterman, “Anti-Semitic Attacks Fuel Continuing Rise in Hate Crimes in New York,” February 18, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/18/nyregion/anti-semitism-brooklyn-new-york.html>.

<sup>185</sup> Esther Weinberg’s survey response, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

<sup>186</sup> Samantha Schwartz’s survey response, January 4 through January 19, 2019, New York City.

I deeply sympathize with such claims, as I do believe that the experiences of American Jews has dramatically changed in light of recent events. I cannot, however, agree that Barnard as an institution would ever support anti-Semitic rhetoric. But beyond that, I think Barnard actively supports its students regardless of religion. One of the main differences between Gildersleeve's era and 2019 is that present-day Jewish students of Barnard feel a confidence that their earlier counterparts did not. So they are more likely to speak up, protest and demand action, when they feel their disappointed with the administration's reactions to world or campus events, or if they feel antagonized by other students.

## Conclusion

The experience of being a Jewish student at Barnard today is radically different than it was in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There has been an incredible accumulation of power and status amongst the American Jewish community.<sup>187</sup> What my interviews with Jewish Barnard students today indicated was perhaps the ways in which such an accumulation of power has not resonated with the Jewish community on college campuses and elsewhere. As Shira Telushkin articulated in *Tablet Magazine*, the reality of such power “raises new questions for Jews, who in the span of a few decades went from being castigated outsiders to part of the establishment on Ivy League campuses. The speed of those changes means we’re still adapting our sense of self to the reality of our new social position.”<sup>188</sup> I think this discomfort with the changing role of the Jewish American community is found in the expressions of fear of anti-Semitism on a campus that is not only 30% Jewish, but where the administration has—in recent history—time and again displayed an unwavering support for its Jewish students.

It is due to the efforts of the early American Jews that Jewish students today regard the world of Jewish quotas in Ivy League institutions almost as folklore. The 1960s brought about an entire eradication of Jewish quotas; as a result, a Jewish quota may even be regarded as an absurd, historical tale by Jewish students today. The status of American Jews today is so drastically different than it was when Ivy Leagues were trying to limit Jewish enrollment that, “today, acceptance at a top school is, for a clever boy or girl at many elite Jewish day schools, desirable but, in the attainment, not groundbreaking.”<sup>189</sup> Any smart Jewish high schooler will be expected to enter into the world of the Ivy Leagues. This expectation will come from themselves,

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<sup>187</sup> Sheer, “The American Jewish Affirmative Action About-Face,” July 31, 2018,

<sup>188</sup> Shira Telushkin, “The Vanishing Ivy League Jew,” *Tablet Magazine*, October 15, 2018, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/272350/the-vanishing-ivy-league-jew>.

<sup>189</sup> Telushkin, “The Vanishing Ivy League Jew.”

their high schools, their families, and larger social pressures. With such an expectation and with an increase in Jewish student enrollment in Ivy league institutions, what does it mean for a Jewish student to claim she might feel unsafe on campus?

There are two ways to consider this within the contemporary context. One, Jews are particularly weary of feeling too comfortable in a diasporic community, as history has only indicated that this leads to devastating consequences. An America that loves the Jews might be an even scarier America than one which ignores the Jewish community. This is especially the case today when anti-Semitic hate are on the rise. Are Jewish misgivings vindicated in this sense? Is the fear that many Jewish Barnard students expressed an anomaly or an astute feeling of trepidation? Not only is there apprehension with feeling too comfortable in America but it does not feel secure. Telushkin states:

But after working from the outside to build up influence and power, being told that they have not only succeeded, but in fact become part of the old elite, can rankle. Especially at a time when we feel newly vulnerable in American society, this can be a difficult shift in self-perception. After all, we knew we were forcing our way into such institutions, not being welcomed, and, especially given the current nativism and anti-Semitism in American discourse, a few decades seem thin evidence to confirm our new status as comfortable insiders.<sup>190</sup>

Power was certainly not inevitable; and even in places where Jewish power was prominent, history has indicated that even that can turn into utter destruction.

And, secondly, Israel has entirely changed the diasporic Jewish landscape. Whereas the Holocaust displayed the devastation a diasporic government could wreak on to its Jewish citizens, the establishment of Israel brought about a new hope and a new marker of power. The responses of Jewish students today convey the fracturing that Israel has brought to the modern day American Jewish community

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<sup>190</sup> Telushkin, "The Vanishing Ivy League Jew."

In 1946, Gildersleeve wrote to the chairman of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine on January 10, 1946, one year after the monstrosity that was the Holocaust, and one year before she would step down as Dean of Barnard. She implored the chairman to understand that, the Jews are homeless, they cannot simply be allowed in to rule Palestine: “I urge that you do not approve imposing by force on Palestine the political domination of a minority of its citizens.”<sup>191</sup> Writing as well, that the establishment of such a state would not be good for the Jews themselves, she remarked: “Such a solution, which would make Palestine a Jewish political state, would not further the interest of the Jews.”<sup>192</sup> She urged the committee to not “confuse the rescue and rehabilitation of the homeless Jewish with the Jewish political domination of Palestine.”<sup>193</sup> Though there are Jews today who may agree with this, it is hard to read this as anything but anti-Semitism when her plea was written one year after the attempted elimination of European Jewry. Ultimately, her stance against the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel Zionist hurt her reputation, and therefore her legacy. Gildersleeve is largely remembered by the public as anti-Semitic, if remembered at all.<sup>194</sup>

Based on my research during this academic year, it is important to consider that anti-Semitism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> was salient institutionally; whereas, anti-Semitism today is mainly perceived socially. It is critical to explore this and understand more of Barnard’s role from an administrative stance. What is the impact of this history today? Now that Jews have, in many ways, reached the top tiers of American society, how can we take what we have learned from our history and positively impact our diasporic community and others now and in the future?

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<sup>191</sup> Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve Papers, Series 02.04, Box 2, Barnard College Archives.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid,

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>194</sup> Diley. *Transformation of Women’s Collegiate Education*.

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### **Appendix Item A: A Timeline**

- 1883:** Columbia University establishes Collegiate Course for Women
- 1888:** Annie Nathan Meyer argues for the founding of Barnard in a letter to *The Nation*
- 1889:** Barnard is founded, due in large part to the efforts of Annie Nathan Meyer
- 1890:** Barnard is officially incorporated into the Columbia University system
- 1892:** Jacob Schiff resigns from the Barnard Board of Trustees
- 1898:** The Jewish fraternity *Zeta Beta Tau* is established at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Manhattan
- 1899:** Virginia C. Gildersleeve graduates from Barnard College
- 1900:** Lower East Side has more than 700 residents per acre, including many Eastern European Jewish immigrants.
- 1902:** Nicholas Murray Butler is elected President of Columbia University
- 1906:** Menorah Society is established at Harvard College
- 1910:** More than half the graduates of New York City Public High Schools are Jewish; Fredrick C. Koppel is elected Dean of Columbia College; Barnard opens their first residential building, Brooks Hall
- 1911:** Virginia Gildersleeve is elected Dean of Barnard College; Both Keppel and Gildersleeve begin discussing the “Jewish Problem”
- 1912:** Freda Kirchwey, a Jewish Barnard student, condemns sororities in the *Barnard Bear*
- 1913:** Committee votes to dissolve sororities on Barnard’s campus; Formation of the Intercollegiate Menorah Society.
- 1915:** Jacob Schiff donates money to establish “Students’ Hall”
- 1920:** Columbia and Barnard add Entrance Exams to their application in an effort to reduce the number of poor, Jewish students on both campuses
- 1925:** Hewitt Hall, Barnard’s Second Residential building, is opened
- 1926:** Gildersleeve forms the Seven College Conference; Barnard establishes their chapter of the Menorah Society
- 1937:** Shirley Adelson Siegel graduates Barnard
- 1947:** Gildersleeve steps down from her career as Dean of Barnard College

### **Appendix Item B: Survey Questions for Barnard Jewish Students Today**

1. What is your name? (If you wish to remain anonymous, you can simply write N/A to this question or write a name that you'd like to use for this thesis!)
2. Are you comfortable with your real name being used in this thesis? (If you answered N/A to the previous question, you may skip this question, or write N/A here again.)
3. What is your class year at Barnard?
4. Where are you from originally?
5. If you feel comfortable, please describe your family's financial background. I.e., would you consider your family "well off" financially?
6. Please describe, as best as you can, your Jewish background. Some guiding questions include: Did your family attend synagogue regularly? Did you attend day school and/or a supplementary religious school?
7. Do you feel you were brought up with a strong Jewish identity? Why or why not?
8. How would you describe your Jewish identity today? Elaborate as much as you can!
9. Has anyone in your family ever attended Barnard before? If yes, please elaborate with who and when and what their experience was like.
10. Why did you choose Barnard and what has your experience been like?
11. Please describe your experience of being Jewish at Barnard. Guiding questions may include: Is it an enjoyable experience? Do you feel supported? Do you feel like there is space to continue living out your Jewish identity?
12. How would you describe your Jewish network on campus?
13. Has Barnard been a welcoming place for you as a Jewish student?
14. Are you a part of any Jewish clubs or organizations on campus?
15. How do you perceive Anti-Semitism on campus? Please elaborate.
16. What was your response to the vandalization at Teacher's College? Did it impact your experience of being a Jewish student on campus and, if so, how?
17. Anything else you'd like to share?

### Appendix Item C: Pictures



*Five Barnard students from the class of 1889 and 1890. Virginia C. Gildersleeve is second from the left. This photo was taken while Gildersleeve was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma. Courtesy of Barnard College Archives.*

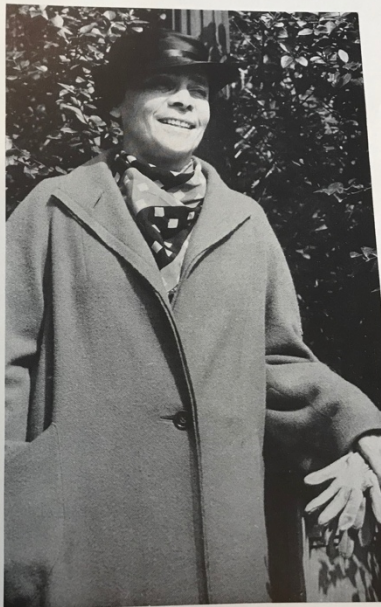


*Shirley Adelson's yearbook photo, 1937. Courtesy of Barnard College Archives.*

VIRGINIA CROCHERON  
GILDERSLEEVE

Dean and Professor of English

A.B., Barnard College (Columbia University), 1899; A.M., Columbia University, 1900; Ph.D., 1908; Litt.D., 1929; LL.D., Rutgers College, 1916; Assistant in English, Barnard College, 1900-1903; Tutor, 1903-1907; Lecturer, 1908-1910; Assistant Professor, 1910-1911; Dean and Professor of English, 1911-; Phi Beta Kappa; Kappa Kappa Gamma.

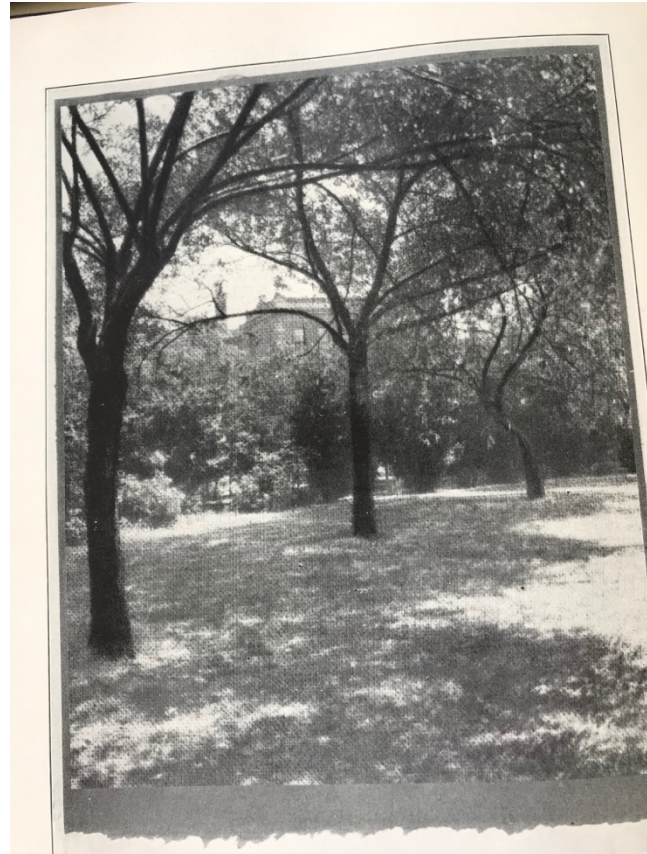
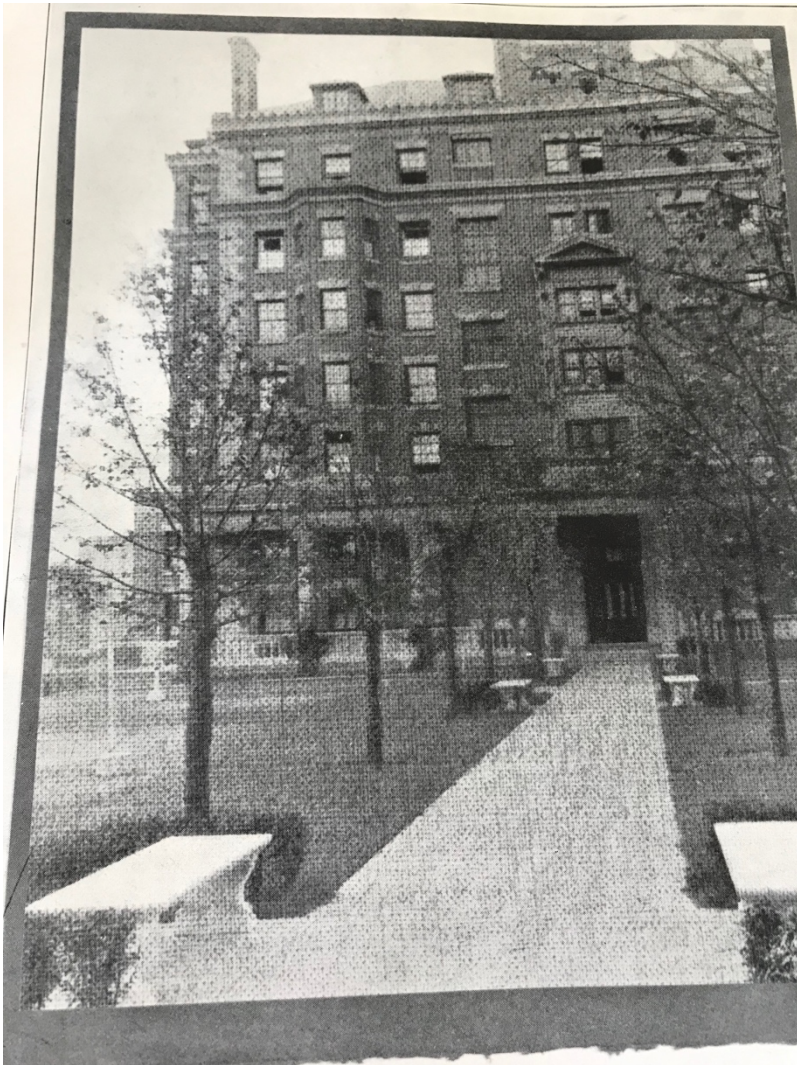


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*From the 1937 Barnard yearbook.  
Courtesy of Barnard College Archives.*



*Gildersleeve with President Butler in 1936,  
her 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Dean of Barnard. Courtesy of Horowitz, Alma Mater.*



*As Gildersleeve wanted to attract the students that were attracted to other Sister Schools, she hoped to hide Barnard's urban campus.<sup>195</sup> These photos from the 1937 Barnard yearbook are meant to showcase Barnard while downplaying its urban campus.*

*Courtesy of Barnard College Archive.*

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<sup>195</sup> Barnard College, "Making Barnard History: 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Gildersleeve? Notes for a Biography.'"