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**MEDIATING ETHNIC MINORITY
CONFLICT IN THE CLASSROOM:
THE CASE OF BLACKS AND JEWS**

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Mediating Ethnic Minority Conflict in the Classroom:

The Case of Blacks and Jews

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Introduction

This paper will describe the process of mediation and negotiation of ethnic and racial conflict in a classroom setting. Specifically, it will examine the effects that the University of Michigan's University Course 151, "Blacks & Jews: Dialogue on Ethnic Identity", had on areas of potential conflict between Blacks and Jews. While mediation and negotiation efforts are often brought to bear under conditions of stress, or in the very short-term setting of workshops and conferences, the university classroom allows for an extended process that is enhanced with the analytical approach of readings, research, and critical thinking, as well as reflection, confrontation, and dialogue.

One of the most significant social processes of American history has been the conflict and interaction of peoples from different racial and ethnic groups. One particular relationship, that of Blacks and Jews, has drawn considerable attention. Both groups have shared a common bond of oppression and a struggle for freedom, suggesting a natural alliance. At the same time, the history of the two groups in America reveals periods of bitter conflict and anger along with relative harmony, indicating the complexity of the relationship and the inadequacy of simple explanations or short-term and narrowly focused attempts to resolve differences. Our limited purpose here is to provide additional data and insights relevant to this discussion, rather than to suggest any comprehensive analysis or solutions.

"Blacks and Jews: Dialogue on Ethnic Identity" is one of a group of Freshman Seminar courses at the University of Michigan

which stress critical thinking and writing about focused topics in small classroom settings. The emphasis of this class on active learning, through discussion and dialogue, allowed for a deeper understanding of Blacks, Jews, and their intergroup relations through both theory and practice, study of text and personal experience.

Students selected this course out of an intellectual curiosity to learn more about Blacks or Jews, about relations between the two groups, and about their own group. They also came to this class for the personal opportunity it presented to meet and talk with individual Blacks and Jews, to explore first hand, relations between the two groups, and to examine their own ethnic identity as Blacks and Jews.

The data indicates that the class was comprised of students who arrived with virtually no information, historical or literary, about the other group. The classroom setting, therefore, with substantial reading required as a grounding basis for extensive dialogue, was considered essential.

The issues discussed in class were deeply-rooted, emotional, and tied to very sensitive, important and personal life concerns. Discussion of these issues, particularly with members of other groups with whom they have had little or no contact, requires a strong commitment to meet regularly and over time. The experience of this class demonstrated the necessity of ample time for both the level of discussion to reach an appropriate level of honesty and intensity, and also for periods of "cooling out" and reflection, so that the group could properly digest one

discussion and move on to the next. That this was an official credit course helped to insure a continuing commitment to class attendance and study, and the University calendar provided an adequate length of time for meaningful dialogue and learning between the groups.

Students moved in stages from a naive and simplistic notion of Black-Jewish relations to one that was better informed. They began the class expecting to find "answers" or a happy ending to the status of Black-Jewish relations and came away not necessarily with a more positive view, but certainly a more realistic one. Significantly, students expressed both a need and a desire to learn more about the topic beyond the end of the semester.

Students learned about themselves as Blacks and/or as Jews, and also learned about the other group. They found that they were able to participate in a mixed Black-Jewish group, but some indicated at the end of the semester that they preferred separate groups. They learned that apart from examining broad theoretical approaches to intergroup relations and the experience of different groups, they were able on a personal level to like some individuals and dislike others of different groups. Finally, after just about a third of the semester, several of the students had demonstrated their leadership potential and newly learned skills in intergroup dialogue that clearly set them apart from their peers who had not taken a course like this.

Learning Stages

There were six distinct stages of learning and process that were observed during the course of the semester. The description and analysis of the class that follows is organized according to these six stages.

Stage One: Students entered the class guarded, saying they had no prejudices. They looked for similarities between the groups. They were ignorant of the other group's history and experience.

Stage Two: Students listened to each other in a supportive but guarded manner. They looked for simplistic answers to Black-Jewish relations, but started to become better informed.

Stage Three: Students began to open up more and also challenge each other. Disagreements occurred and some expressed anger at one another.

Stage Four: Students attempted to understand concerns of the other group from their own perspective and experience; they also became more defensive. Students began to realize how little they knew about the topic and to appreciate how much they had to learn.

Stage Five: Students realized the dimensions of the complexity of Black-Jewish relations. They grew increasingly frustrated with the difficulty of achieving resolution of conflicts and the futility of looking for easy answers. However, they became more aware of how much they were growing and learning through this difficult process.

Stage Six: Students began to attempt to understand concerns of the other group from the other group's perspective, although they were not necessarily able to do this very well. They were visibly exhausted from the intensity of these emotional discussions; they looked forward to the approaching end of the term for a break, but they also expressed a desire to continue this kind of dialogue after a period of "cooling out."

Methodology

Research Methods

This study was conducted using a variety of research methods, including classroom observations, survey data, and student journals. Data was gathered during the Winter semester at the University of Michigan, from January, 1987 until May, 1987.

The two researchers chose to study a class that Schoem had previously taught for three years (Gold, 1958). Schoem's role was as a full participant: he led the research, organized class sessions, gave lectures, led discussions, held conferences with students, read journals and papers and commented on them, and gave grades to students. In addition, Schoem kept a separate notebook of observations and thoughts regarding the research study.

It is important to note that Schoem is a Jewish white male. Although most students denied that this was a factor in their ability to participate fully and openly, it must be considered as a possible factor in evaluating the description of classroom activities.

A second factor that clearly influenced the nature of classroom discussion and attitudes was that students self-selected to apply for admission to the course as had been the case in prior years. Admission to the course was by permission of the instructor, (in this case, the researcher as well, Schoem), primarily on the basis of a willingness to participate honestly and fully and be open to different viewpoints. Eighteen students enrolled, including eight Black students, nine white Jewish students and one Black and Jewish student. Fifteen students were female and three were male. About thirty to forty other students were turned away. Students were informed of the research project the first day of class. All agreed to participate and continue in the class.

A third factor that obviously influenced the nature of classroom discussion was Schoem's structuring of the course. The extent to which Schoem encouraged participation and dialogue and controlled the levels of intensity of discussions likely had an impact on learning and on the focus and outcome of mediation.

The second researcher, Stevenson, attended all class sessions as a participant observer (Gold, 1958). Like Schoem, Stevenson's role as researcher was made clear to students on the first day of class. Stevenson took extensive notes during class, had access to student journals, and occasionally spoke with students outside of class at the students' request. Stevenson also participated in class discussions, although infrequently, and gave a lecture. Stevenson is a Black, non-Jewish male.

The role distinctions between Schoem and Stevenson were established for several reasons. First, the degree of intensity and involvement that the class demanded of the teacher made it valuable to have one researcher who could observe and take notes without being fully absorbed as a full participant in the class. Second, funding for the project was not sufficient to permit Stevenson to teach. Third, the inspiration for the research was Schoem's previous experience teaching this class as the sole teacher; it was that classroom model that was the desired research focus of this study. Certainly it would also be interesting to study, as another project, this same class with Schoem and Stevenson sharing teaching responsibilities equally.

The researchers administered a survey to all students (appendix 1) at the start and at the end of the semester. The majority of survey questions asked about personal, racial, and ethnic attitudes and stereotypical notions. While Stevenson examined the survey results during the semester, Schoem, as teacher, waited until after the completion of the class so as not to alter the class structure from previous years or to unfairly influence his perceptions of student attitudes.

At the conclusion of the semester, the researchers together reviewed their notes, re-read the student journals, and analyzed the survey data.

Instructional Methods

The class met twice weekly for fourteen weeks over a four month period for two hours per session. Class sessions included lectures, films, group exercises, and student presentations of

research. However, class time was devoted primarily to discussion and analysis of readings and of personal feelings and attitudes on personal and public issues and events.

The syllabus (appendix 2) was organized into four equal parts. The first part was devoted to a general discussion of majority-minority relations and ethnic identity and introduced students to group processes that were facilitative of the developing dialogue. The second part focused on the Black experience in America and the third part focused on the Jewish experience in America. Throughout, there was considerable opportunity and encouragement for students to raise questions of one another within each group and between the groups. Finally, the group discussed Black-Jewish relations in America during the last section of class.

Students were required to read eight books and an extensive coursepack of readings. An extended journal, 30-50 pages, including personal reflections as well as formal responses to specific questions posed by the instructor, was also required. Finally, a short research paper (about 10-15 pages) jointly authored by two students, was the final requirement. Students were evaluated and graded in this course based on their journal, class participation, and research paper.

Historical Context

The way in which the body of literature on Black-Jewish relations has grown is significant. For the most part, it corresponds with issues and events in the history of the groups' relations. One can trace the tone and emphasis of the literature

in three chronological phases. The first phase began in the early 1940's and lasted through the very early 1960's. Its main focus was on the immediate problems of Blacks and Jews in urban America that originated in the 1930's.

As the so-called alliance sought to consolidate itself among Black and Jewish elites involved in the work of the NAACP and other organizations, catastrophe struck. The Great Depression transformed the United States from a nation of prosperity to a nation whose citizens lived on the edge of poverty. A crucial development in most northern urban areas was increased tensions among Jewish merchants and landlords and the predominantly Black clientele. The diminished economic state of affairs and the shortage of jobs throughout the decade influenced many Blacks and Jews to try to take advantage of each other. In cities like New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Detroit, Black-Jewish relations deteriorated into sometimes violent and overt cases of Black anti-semitism and Jewish racism. The very early literature focused on these events. (Reddick, 1942; Owen, 1942; Vedlock, 1942; Wolfe et al, 1944; Clark, 1946; Merchant, 1947).

Despite the tensions, the explicit message in a number of writings toward the mid- to- latter 1950's was that Blacks and Jews were somehow "natural allies" because of the similar discrimination each had faced. (Goldner, 1953; Ruchames, 1955; Lerner, 1957) Yet, by the second phase of historiographic literature (1965-1975), the period that has produced most of what has been written on the subject, the tone and message again shifted to the emerging tensions. During the second phase,

Blacks and Jews seemed to be in conflict more than cooperation. (Ellis, 1966; Hatchet, 1967; Howe, 1968, 1969; Hentoff, 1969; Weisbord & Stein, 1970; Berson, 1971; Polos, 1975)

The vast majority of writings emphasized specific issues and aspects of social interaction that polarized the Black and Jewish communities. Most distressing was the sometimes overt but more often latent anti-Semitism of the late 1960's Black Power movement. Jews feared that Black demands for a greater share of America's economic pie threatened their economic and occupational security. (Gans, 1969; Sinder, 1980) These disagreements continued into the 1970's over the idea of affirmative action. Thus, by 1975, the so-called alliance was often nothing more than a spiteful dialogue. (Pearlstein, 1980; Shapiro, 1979)

The third phase of literature on Black-Jewish relations began in the late 1970's and continues through today. Its emphasis is on objectivity and solid historical documentation rather than the polemical opinion of certain Blacks and Jews so close to the issues that they were overly influenced by emotion and bias. The present work is an extension of the third phase, but is more sociological than historical. However, it relies heavily on past works and the general history of Black-Jewish relations in the use of its methodology and conclusions. (Diner, 1977; Williams, 1977; Singer, 1978; Washington, 1984; Toll, 1987; Stevenson, 1988).

Description

CLASSROOM FORMAT: STAGE ONE

On the first day, students eased into discussion by talking about themselves in relation to external

characteristics - home-town, focus of study, residence hall on campus - and they made a brief comment on why they chose the class. Later, a chapter from "Black and White Styles in Classrooms," (Kochman, 1981) provoked consideration of how students would talk to each other in this class setting. Another article on mediation and negotiation (Fisher and Ury, 1981) also gave students an opportunity to directly focus on their own communication skills in a setting with different groups and people with different backgrounds and different perspectives. Throughout the course, the importance of listening skills, openness to new ideas, expression of honest opinions and of critical analysis along with sensitivity to targeted individuals were discussed as a group.

An "in-group/out-group" exercise was used to help students relate to some of the "feelings" of minorities in minority-majority relations. The exercise called for students to describe situations in which they had been part of an "in-group" or "out-group". Students were then asked to consider the economic, social, political, and often life-threatening implications beyond the "feelings" associated with ascribed minority-majority statuses in society. Subsequently, there were readings and discussions about a variety of ethnic and minority-majority conflicts beyond the Black and Jewish experiences. Discussion also focused on different definitions and perceptions of what it means to be a "minority". The class examined now and throughout the semester the varied socio-economic success and experience of different ethnic groups in America, the widely held "myths" that have been used to explain those differences and alternative explanations for those differences (Steinberg, 1981; Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967).

Classroom Format: Stage Two

During the third week of class students participated in a "fishbowl" discussion of Black identity and Jewish identity. At the first session Jewish students were seated in a small circle surrounded by a circle of Black students. The seating arrangement and process was reversed the second day. Students were asked to describe their Jewish or Black identity, what it meant to them to be Jewish or Black. Members of the inner group spoke one at a time with no interruptions permitted. This was followed by questions and discussion only by members of the inner circle and, finally, by questions and discussions with members of both the inner circle and the outer circle.

The next section of the course marked a shift in focus to an introductory examination of the Black experience in America. In the first session two films were shown, including "I have a Dream: Martin Luther King" and "El Hajj Malik El Shabbaz: Malcolm X." The next session allowed for a lecture and discussion comparing and contrasting these two men's philosophies. Students were required to read King's

Why We Can't Wait (1964) and Malcolm X's On Afro-American History (1970).

Classroom Format: Stage Three

The syllabus was altered to allow for discussion of a racist incident on campus that had involved two Black women from the class as victims. Discussion focused on the incident itself involving a racist flier, its meaning, and the appropriate response, if any, to be taken by Black and Jewish students. This particular incident, other incidents, and the subsequent engagement of the entire University population in protest, demands, negotiation, and debate about issues of overt and institutional racism influenced the content and tone of discussions for the remainder of the term.

Classroom Format: Stage Four

Students played a re-conceptualized Parker Brothers "Monopoly" game to look at the influence of class differences apart from racial differences. This was part of the discussion of socio-economic issues. The class had a single "circle" discussion in the "other" classroom to talk about personal racism and to react to class discussions. The class also read and discussed Shange's Betsey Brown (1985) as part of the discussion of personal racism and experiences as victims of racism. At the close of this section, students viewed and discussed the film, "In Search of a Past" about Black high school students visiting Africa and examining issues of identity, roots, struggles for freedom, Black American and Black African relations.

The third part of the course shifted the focus to an introductory examination of the Jewish experience in America. The first session was devoted to a film and discussion on the Holocaust, and others to Wiesel's Night (1970) and Timerman's Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number (1982).

Classroom Format: Stage Five

Discussion during the next few weeks focused on topics such as Jewish identity, Israel, education, and socio-economic issues.

Classroom Format: Stage Six

At the end of the third section of the class there was again a full circle discussion to address unanswered questions and express unspoken feelings from the previous weeks' work.

The final section of the course focused on relations between the two groups, Blacks and Jews. Two sessions were devoted to lecture and discussion of assigned readings. The

remaining sessions were given over to students presentations of research they were conducting on specific topics within Black-Jewish relations.

Issues Arising and Analysis: Stage One

For most students, this class represented their first opportunity to talk with individuals of the other group, Jews or Blacks, in anything more than a passing superficiality. Most students were cautious in their initial presentation of self, and while just a few actually commented, "I am not prejudiced", several others felt that way in the first class discussions.

Students initially expressed disdain for the need to talk about how to talk to one another, presenting themselves as being sufficiently sophisticated to engage in this dialogue without discussion of process issues. One said, "We can argue and not be offended". Yet, students referred to the discussions of "process" in their journals and in private conferences throughout the semester as they struggled with feelings of hurt and anger.

Although each group included themselves as members of minority groups, Jewish students did so on the basis of being a numerical minority and Black students did so on the basis of current and historical socio-economic oppression. Each group, in turn, attempted to understand the other as a minority in terms of its own definition, and not according to the definition of the other group. The result was that Black students had difficulty accepting the Jews' self-definition as a minority and Jewish students had difficulty accepting the depth of feeling that Blacks associated with their sense of themselves as a minority.

Issues Arising and Analysis: Stage Two

The "fishbowl" structure allowed each group to form a bond, sitting closely together and talking about somewhat personal opinions and important group issues. At the same time it made clear that within each group there were important differences in attitude and experience, and that neither group was monolithic. Each group also had a rather unique opportunity to "listen-in" to an insider's conversation that, in most cases, they had never been privy to before (and likely would not be again after the end of the semester).

The Jewish students talked about their strong ties to Israel and their undefined but strong sense of Jewish values. Although none of the Jewish students were religiously observant by traditional standards, a rather sharp and lengthy discussion took place over the "correctness" or "rightness" of the different Jewish denominations represented, i.e. Reform and Conservative Branches of organized Jewry. Black students took note of this debate with some surprise and were eager to learn more about the different denominations that seemed to be the cause of intra-group antagonism.

The Black student discussion was more affirming of the group, yet was no less emotional. Discussion raised some difficult issues, such as the ability to unite as a people, conflict between lighter and darker-skinned Blacks, and the comparative (to Jews) strength of their cultural heritage because of slavery. However, the focus of this discussion was on their sense and strength of identity coming from the historic struggle

to overcome oppression. The Jewish students took note of what the Black students said but did not seem to fully comprehend the Black students' feeling and emotion about their history of oppression and discrimination.

During this time frame, one Jewish student was anxious to have answered the question of why Jews in America had achieved greater socio-economic success than Blacks. Despite readings, lecture, and discussion of that question directly and comparatively, she continued to ask the question, either not comprehending, not listening, or not hearing the "answer" that she wished to hear.

Both Black and Jewish students greatly admired Martin Luther King, Jr., but Jewish students disliked and feared Malcolm X's ideas and statements. Black students identified with the forceful and direct preaching of Malcolm X, particularly his pointed description and analysis of white racist behavior toward Blacks. However, in the journals of Black students the praise for Malcolm X was mixed with ambivalence compared to King. In class, in reaction to the very negative comments of Jewish students about Malcolm X, Black students verbally defended and applauded Malcolm X.

Through various exercises and discussions, an initial trust was developed that allowed for issues of difference and conflict to begin to be stated. However, both groups still worked under a shield of "feeling good," allowing that while prejudice and discrimination and conflict existed, the members of this class were not a part of those problems and, in fact, this group,

through their study and these discussions, would find the solutions and the way around such conflicts and problems.

The instructor made a largely unsuccessful attempt to use the experience of Blacks and Jews as examples of minority-majority experience in a much broader context. The immediacy of exploring their own and the other group's identity initially inhibited the students' interest and ability to look beyond the classroom for a broader comparative experience.

The decision to discuss the Black experience before the Jewish experience was one attempt to balance the white Jewish instructor's influence. Although Jewish students questioned this format later into the semester, it did seem to be a useful symbolic measure: the Black students saw that their concerns and experience would not be studied or considered "second" to the concerns and experiences of the Jewish students.

Issues Arising and Analysis: Stage Three

In the course of continuing discussions about minority-majority relations, Black students spoke of discomfort at the experience of being one of only two or three Black students in a 300- person lecture hall, and being aware of stares from the majority white students as they would walk into class to take their seats. Jewish students could not relate to this experience, and some suggested that the experience was more imagined than real for Blacks. These Jewish students said that they and their white friends never took notice of the race of students in their classes and denied staring at the few Blacks in

their classes. A source of tension in this recurring debate came over the denial by some Jewish students of an experience reported as real by Black students. This was a difficult, yet important discussion, because of the broader issues involved regarding an understanding of the other party's perspective and the resultant ability to mediate differences.

The racist incident on campus mentioned earlier was an inflaming spark to what eventually became an enormous political issue on campus addressing long-standing charges of institutional racism and neglect as well as immediate overt racist harassment on campus. Many Black students on campus had begun to mobilize a rally against racism on campus. In class, discussion centered around whether the Jewish students understood how the Black students felt and whether they would participate in the rally.

Copies of the flier were distributed in class to all of the students who had not seen it. The initial Jewish response was that it was "more than just a joke." All of the students, Black and Jewish, felt that more vigorous action should have been taken by the student body and the administration.

When the Black students questioned the Jewish students if they were going to participate in the rally, many felt placed on "the spot." After a brief discussion, several Black students voiced the opinion that "whites were not taking enough interest in stamping out racism."

This was the first case of Blacks and Jews directly challenging one another and tensions reached a high level. Most of the Jewish students seemed offended because the Blacks kept

pressing them for a commitment to participate in the rally. To do so would have involved missing classes. In this case, Blacks openly sought out and seemingly expected the support of whites - no less Jews, as they had recently read of Jewish support for Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. One Black student said, "Just don't disappoint us; don't say you're going to be there to show support and then not show up. That would be the worst thing to do."

The Jewish students' response to the rally and to these issues, was as whites, not as Jews. In their own minds, their analysis and personal reaction to these events had little or nothing to do with their being Jewish; to them, this was a Black-white issue.

Although tension levels had increased in classes, most students felt good towards each other on an individual basis. Blacks were clearly the leaders in these discussions, with Jews reacting to issues that Blacks put forward.

Issues Arising and Analysis: Stage Four

Another class session was similarly shaped by the external events around campus. The focus of the discussion dealt with the issue of Jews allegedly having become assimilated. Black students were of the opinion that since Jews were part of the larger white majority and had risen to occupations of "power" (doctors, lawyers, etc.), they were more inclined to be apathetic on civil rights issues. The Jewish students challenged this Black view that they were "on top," and drew upon the Holocaust experience to demonstrate the tenuousness of the Jewish position

in the social order. In that case, all Jews, regardless of occupation or social status, were marked for persecution and death. The Jewish students pointed out that regardless of the way it might appear, they viewed themselves as marginal and always on guard against anti-semitism.

Some of the Black students maintained a view that discounted Jewish apprehension and saw the issue as purely one of color. As they viewed the issue, there was no way a white person could be persecuted to the same degree that Blacks have been or are. Thus both groups digressed into what can simply be called "who has suffered the most" syndrome.

The discussion of Betsey Brown (Shange, 1985) led to wider discussions of students' first contact with racism growing up. One of the most intriguing discoveries for Black students was to learn that half of the Jewish students first experience with Blacks was through their housekeeper. The Jewish students expressed nothing but positive feelings and experiences from the interactions with their Black housekeepers. Yet this example pointed to the wide socio-economic disparities of the two groups and the mostly separate worlds they came from.

The Jewish students, with one exception, indicated that they had had no personal experience with anti-semitism in their lives. Yet they spoke of their concern for anti-semitism often and attempted to equate their own personal/group struggle against oppression with that of their Black peers in the class. Nevertheless, when the specific racist incidents occurred on campus, the Jewish students had no response or connection to

those incidents as Jews and even challenged that question being raised. It appeared that their definition of their Jewish self included memory of Jewish oppression and concern for Jewish survival. That memory, however, was from history and not from personal experience and the survival concern did not extend to a broader sense of struggle against oppression. As whites, the Jewish students carried a class perspective that had difficulty understanding the issues of lower and lower middle classes and a social and racial perspective that generally "felt badly" about overt racism.

Students did considerable reading and participated extensively in discussions of socio-economic issues. However, it was the experience of role playing different economic positions in the revised "Monopoly" that seemed to bring home the reality of the disparities between economic privilege and disadvantage and to make concrete the substance of the readings.

The ability of this course to incorporate the experience of outside events such as the racist incident, to learn from it, and to move on and go beyond it, reinforces the value of the extended length of this dialogue.

As one example, when a teach-in on confronting racism took place on campus, Black students from this class were able to lead discussion sessions precisely because of their experience and comfort in engaging with others in these types of discussions. The Jewish students, as well, distinguished themselves in this respect. While they were not leaders at the teach-in, their attendance and participation in the teach-in set them apart from

their Jewish friends and from most other white students (who stayed away in large numbers).

The Jewish students were deeply moved by the readings on the Holocaust and on anti-semitism and were anxious to discuss with Black students this aspect of the Jewish experience. However, the Jewish students did not report direct or personal experience with anti-semitism and had great difficulty articulating the depth of pain and emotion they had learned and felt about anti-semitism and the Holocaust in particular.

It seemed that Jewish students were frustrated in their own inability to satisfactorily express their feelings. At the same time, they were disappointed that Blacks in class did not seem stirred by the readings and discussions, and they were angry at what they felt was a lack of interest, close attention, and even careful reading of books by Black students on this topic.

Black students responded that they did sympathize and were horrified by what they saw in the film, but they felt that their own experience was worse and more personal - it had happened to them. They acknowledged the horror of the Holocaust but also questioned whether Jews gave it too much attention. When they asked, "Why do people hate the Jews?", because they didn't understand the answer, or, "Does it have to do with physical distinction", the Jewish students inferred a lack of sympathy by Blacks and almost a denial of the history of oppression faced by Jews.

The discussion of Jewish identity was highlighted by the resistance of Jewish students to acknowledge the importance of

religion to their identity. It was the Black students who raised the issue of religion frequently in this discussion. They were surprised and confused to hear Jewish students describe their Jewish identity by saying "I'm not religious, but...". Blacks wondered aloud, "What makes you Jewish, then?" and Jewish students struggled to give anything but ambiguous and unclear answers.

Issues Arising and Analysis: Stage Five

The experience of the last two months of class were at once the most painful and the most educational. There was emotional exhaustion and, in fact, some students missed classes because they needed an emotional break. There were tears shed and tears held back during this period.

Tension grew for several reasons. There was a reliance on comparison between the two groups to a point where it was no longer useful. The comparison had served a purpose in helping each other understand the other at first. But as the class progressed, students expected the understanding to go from "understanding on the other group's terms" to "understanding on our own terms." In terms of the class' expectations, it was no longer sufficient, for example, for Blacks to understand the Holocaust from a Black perspective; now the Jewish students expected them to understand it from a Jewish perspective. The same comments and level of concern that would have been "acceptable" and appreciated earlier were not enough now.

The brief discussion of Judaism and Israel made students realize how much they had to learn just as they had when

discussing Black history a month earlier. Some suggested that students be required to take a Jewish history and Afro-American history course as prerequisites for this course.

The discussion of socio-economic issues at this point focused on the possible roles and the lack of models for minority groups (in this case, Jews who had become socio-economically successful) and for individuals (in this case, Blacks who had "made it") from groups that Ogbu (1978) calls "caste minorities".

At the same time, each group wanted a degree of understanding from the other that could not be achieved. At a certain point, each group felt enormous frustration that the other still "didn't really understand" and they blamed one another for not trying hard enough. However, it became clear during the calm of the circle discussion just how much each person had attempted to listen and understand the other, and yet it was also clear that each side still wasn't satisfied. At that point, students began to realize that neither group could ever fully appreciate the other's pain as the other experienced it. Nevertheless, what they could do and did do, was to try as fully as possible to understand, and then to realize and remain aware that there was much more feeling that only the "in-group" could ever know and experience.

Issues Arising and Analysis: Stage Six

The level of frayed emotions led the instructor to direct a full circle discussion for the class. Students were again given an opportunity to "tell" so that everyone felt that they had an adequate opportunity to speak to the other group and be heard.

Each student was able to complete both of the following: 1) "What I want to say about being Black/Jewish is.." and 2) "What I want the Black/Jewish students to hear is...".

By April, students were emotionally exhausted from the intensity of class discussions which during this particular semester were exacerbated by campus events. As in previous years, students had been directed to work in Black/Jewish pairs to conduct research on Black-Jewish relations and to report to class. In almost all cases, students reported all sorts of problems in doing the work together. The quality of the work produced was not very good and tensions developed between some individuals.

The paired research papers had a negative effect. While the idea of some required joint effort is probably worthwhile, this was the wrong project. The enormous pressure of grades at the end of the semester and the total lack of experience students have in cooperative research projects made this attempt unnecessarily difficult for the purpose it intended to serve.

At the end of the semester, students were ready for a vacation. There had been enormous learning and growing; there were now complicated feelings about Black-Jewish relations; and there were both good and bad individual relationships. If the reaction of former students is any indication, all would be ready to take a second semester of the course after an extended cooling-off period.

Survey Analysis

Two surveys were conducted, one at the beginning of the class term and one at the end, in an effort to measure attitudinal change. The analysis here will only focus on those questions which registered significant change from the beginning of class to the end.

An important statistic among the fourteen class members (seven Black and seven Jewish) who completed the surveys was their socio-economic class membership. While 64.2% of all class members considered themselves middle class, only 57.2% of the Blacks did so in comparison to 71.4% of the Jews. Moreover, 42.8% of the Blacks considered themselves and their parents working class in comparison to 0% of the Jews. Among the Blacks, only 42.8% came from families where at least one parent was a college graduate in comparison to 100% among the Jewish students. Moreover, 85.7% of the Jewish students had at least one parent with a graduate degree in comparison to only 28.5% among the Black students.

An overwhelming majority of the class as a whole (85.7%) felt the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's had helped Blacks. This percentage was reflected by both Blacks and Jews. Likewise, there was a general consensus (64.2%) that the socio-economic condition of Blacks in the United States was getting better. However, 71.4% of the Black students felt that socio-economic standards had worsened, while none (0%) of the Jewish students viewed the Black situation as worse. By the end of class, based upon class activities, discussion, personal

dialogue and external events, only 42.8% of the entire class felt the Black situation was getting better. While only 42.8% of the Blacks said the situation had worsened, 42.8% also responded that it was, statistically, the same. These attitudes, coupled with a rise by 28.6% among the Jews concerning worsened conditions, led to the overall decline.

In questions relating to Jews, Blacks initially accepted or agreed with some of the traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes. For example, of the 50% of the entire class who agreed with the statement, "Jews have more money than other whites", 71.4% were Black. By the end of class only 28.5% of the students agreed with this statement. Yet of this percent that agreed 75% were Black. Thus, in general, Black attitudes stayed the same on this question.

Sixty-four percent of the class agreed that "Jews were discriminated against at the present time in America." Of this number, 75% were Jewish and 25% Black. By the end of class, only about half (57%) felt that Jews were discriminated against while 35.7% said they were not. More Jews than Blacks felt that Jews were not presently discriminated against.

Among Blacks in the class first surveyed as to whether "Jews were more in favor of civil rights for Blacks than other whites", only 14.2% felt they (Jews) were more in favor. The overwhelming majority of Blacks (71.4%) felt their (Jews) attitudes-actions, were the same as other whites. However, by the end of class 43% of the Blacks felt Jews, compared to other whites, were more in favor of civil rights for Blacks.

The area of greatest change concerned neighborhood integration. In the first survey Blacks and Jews expressed the same preferences with 28.5% of the class preferring to live in either an all-white or all-Black neighborhood compared to 71.5% who expressed no particular racial preference or preference for a mixed neighborhood (57% preferred mixed). By the end of class, more than half the Blacks preferred to live in an all-Black neighborhood (57%); by contrast 100% of the Jews either had no preference or preferred a mixed neighborhood.

Implications for Future Research

The data from this case study suggest other important research questions in the areas of pedagogy, intergroup relations and conflict, Black-Jewish relations, and Black and Jewish identity.

In the area of pedagogy, it suggests more research in the best ways to teach and learn in courses on diversity, race & racism, ethnic studies, and intergroup relations. Researchers may want to study the impact of the dialogue approach versus more traditional methods and whether different teaching methods and different sequences of exercises and readings lead to different learning outcomes. It would be interesting to know whether there are differences in learning if such a course is compulsory or voluntary. It would be valuable to learn more about the role and influence of the instructor in effecting change and understanding in this type of class and what if any difference the ethnic & racial background of the teacher makes or whether there is a single teacher or the course is team-taught.

It would be helpful to learn more about the effect courses such as these have on individual student attitudes, and those of student groups, on issues of intergroup relations and conflict. It would be useful to know how valid are the stages of intergroup understanding observed here and whether they could be replicated in other classes.

There are other areas of research as well that this study suggests. It would be interesting to explore whether the historical path of Black-Jewish relations bears any resemblance to the development of Black-Jewish relations during the course of the academic term. Also, it would be interesting to study what Black-Jewish relations mean to this post civil-rights era generation that is so highly segregated in the University and in society. Researchers might look at how socio-economic differences of individuals affect the discussion of intergroup relations and conflict. Along these lines it would be useful to know whether the experience of the Jewish group as an autonomous minority relating to caste minority groups is similar to the experience of upper middle class Blacks relating to lower and underclass Blacks.

Researchers should explore at what points Jews and Blacks make cognitive identity leaps from being Jewish to being white and from being Black to being Christian. It would be worthwhile to explore how widespread and for what reason there exists a disconnection of Jewish identity from involvement in social issues and to chart the change in this phenomenon from the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's

Given the setting of a university for such a course, it would be interesting to examine the impact of the university setting on the course in terms of widely held assumptions on campus about Blacks and Jews, percentages of each group among the faculty and student body, and the impact of campus events on issues such as racism and diversity. Finally, it would be most interesting to explore the costs and benefits for faculty teaching and innovating in this area in terms of professional status, reputation and career advancement.

Course Syllabus

"Blacks & Jews: Dialogue on Ethnic Identity"

University course 151 Section 001

4 Credits TTH 1-3

David Schoem

Office hours: TTH 3-4
and by appointment

The course will explore a wide variety of questions on ethnic identity focusing primarily on the experience of Blacks and Jews. Discussion will move from a study of the experience of being a member of a minority group to a review of dominant historical issues for Blacks and Jews. Attention will also be given to issues such as socio-economic mobility, education opportunity, etc. The class will also discuss relations between Blacks and Jews, probing alliances and rifts as well as Black anti-semitism and Jewish racism. Dialogue among students in the class will be an essential component of the course and it is expected that students will be prepared to openly, actively, and sensitively participate to further an understanding of the issues. Films and guest speakers will supplement the regular discussions. An extended journal, 30-50 pages, including personal reflections as well as formal responses to specific questions posed by the instructor will be reviewed every two or three weeks. A short research paper (about 10 pages) will also be required in the final month of the term.

January 08 Introduction

January 13 Exploring Ethnic Identity

Readings

Thomas Kochman "Classroom Modalities" p. 16-42

Fisher & Ury "Separate the People
from the Problem" p. 17-27

Definition of the Ethnic Group

John Ogbu "Types of Minority Groups" p. 21-25

"Inquiry is Opened into Campus Fight"

"Asian Students From Top Colleges Use
Quota System"

January 15 Exploring Ethnic Identity and the Minority
Experience:

Readings

George Orwell, "Shooting An Elephant" p. 16-42

Carmichael & Hamilton, "White Power:
The Colonial Situation" p. 2-23

John Hostetler, "Amish Culture and
Educational Goals" p. 1-11

Stephen Steinberg, The Ethnic Myth,
Part One p. 3-74

January 20/22 FishBowl Discussions - Personal Statements

- January 27 The Minority Experience:
 Readings
 Steinberg, The Ethnic Myth, Part two p. 77-166
 "The Jeweler's Dilemma" p. 18-22
- January 29 The Minority Experience
 Readings
 Steinberg, The Ethnic Myth, Part three p. 169-262
- February 3 Racism and Black Responses
 Films: "El Hajj Malik El Shabbaz: Malcom X"
 "I Have a Dream"
- February 5 Racism and Black Responses:
 Readings
 Roy Reed, "If He Were Alive"
 Albert Vorspan "What He Meant to Jews"
 Martin Luther King, Jr. Why We Can't Wait
 Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6
 Malcom X On Afro-American History All
 The Honorable Louis Farrakhan: A Minister
for Progress All
- February 10/12 Socio-Economic Issues
 Readings
 "King's Dream & Legacy"
 "Discrimination- Past, Present, and Future"
 Reynolds Farley "A Scorecard on Black Progress"
 p. 192-203
 Kenneth Keniston "The Stacked Deck"
 Kenneth Maurice Jones "The Buppies"
 "Social, Financial Barriers Blamed for Curbing
 Blacks' Access to College"
 "Corporate Disappointments Sending Blacks
 Elsewhere"
 "Whites Protest Black Families in Philadelphia"
 "In the Fishbowl: When Blacks Work at
 Predominantly White Colleges"
 (Optional) James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time
- February 17 Identity Issues
 Readings:
 Ntozake Shange, Betsey Brown All
- February 19 Black, Afro-American, Africa
 Films: "In Search of A Past"
 "You Have Struck A Rock"
 Readings:
 Desmond Tutu, "Black South African Perspectives
 and the Reagan Administration" p. 103-117

SPRING BREAK

- March 3 Anti-Semitism and Jewish Responses
Film: "Let My People Go"
- March 5 Anti-Semitism and Jewish Responses
Elie Weisel, Night All
Jacobso Timerman, Prisoner Without a Name,
Cell Without a Number All
- March 10 Identity Issues
Readings
David Schoem: "Exploring Jewish Student
Failure" p. 308-322
(Optional) Paul Cowan, An Orphan in History
- March 12 Identity & Socio-Economic Issues
Readings
"Jews in the Corporate Establishment"
- March 17 Israel
Readings
Menachem Begin, "From the Perspective of a
Generation" p.iii-xxvii
Abba Eban, "Summing Up, Looking Forward" p.13-17
- March 19 Judaism
Readings
Milton Steinberg, "Preliminaries" p. 3-17
Harold Schulweis, "Jewish Apartheid" p. 23-28
Chaim Potok, The Chosen All
- March 24-26 Clean-up
Readings
"Black Students' Average Aptitude Test Scores..."
- March 31/
April 2-7 Black Jewish Relations
Michael Kramer, "Blacks & Jews: How Wide the Rift"
p. 26-32
Alice Walker "To the Editors of MS. Magazine"
p. 147-354
Julius Lester "The Time Has Come"
Fred Barnes "Farrakhan Frenzy"
James Baldwin "Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because
They're Anti-White" p. 3-12
Perry & White "The Post-Civil Rights
Transformation of the Relationship between
Blacks and Jews in the U.S." p. 51-60
(Optional) Teshome Wagaw "Ethiopia, Israel, and
the Resettlement of the Falashas" p. 1-11
Articles From: Joseph Washington, Jews in Black
Perspective: p. 105-211
Nathan Glazer "Jews & Blacks: What Happened to
the Grand Alliance"
Claybourne Carson, Jr. "Blacks & Jews in the Civil
Rights Movement"

Richard Sklar, "Africa & the Middle East:
 What Blacks & Jews Owe to Each Other"
 Naomi Chazan "The Fallacies of Pragmatism:
 Israeli Foreign Policy Toward South Africa"
 Matthew Holden, "Reflections on Two Isolated
 Peoples"
 Articles from Weisbord & Kazarian, Israel in the
 Black America Perspective Chapters 1,2,6,7
 p.3-28; 121-170

April 9-14-16-21 Student Papers - Oral Reports

Class Texts

The Honorable Louis Farrakhan: A Minister for Progress
 Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can't Wait
 Malcolm X, On Afro-American History
 Chaim Potok, The Chosen
 Ntozake Shange, Betsey Brown
 Stephen Steinberg, The Ethnic Myth
 Jacob Timerman, Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number
 Elie Wiesel, Night
 Coursepack from Dollar Bill Copying
 Readings from: Joseph Washington, Jews in Black Perspective
 Robert Weisbord & Richard Kazarian, Israel in
 the Black American Perspective

Optional for Extra Credit

James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time
 Paul Cowan, An Orphan in History

Evaluation

Grades will be assigned as follows:

Journal	50%
Participation	30%
Research Paper	20%

Survey Results*

1. Socio-economic Class

	Overall	Blacks	Jews
Upper	2 (14.2%)		2 (28.5%)
Middle	9 (64.2%)	4 (57.2%)	5 (71.4%)
Working	3 (21.4%)	3 (42.8%)	
Lower			

2. Education Level

	Overall	Blacks	Jews
High School	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	
1-3 years. College	3 (21.4%)	3 (47.8%)	
College Grads.	10 (71.4%)	3 (47.8%)	7
Graduate Degree	8 (57.1%)	2 (28.2%)	6

3. Are things getting better or worse for Blacks?

	Overall		Blacks		Jews	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Better	9 (64.2)	6 (42.8)	2 (28.5)	1 (14.3)	7	5 (71.4)
Worse	5 (35.7)	5 (35.7)	5 (71.4)	3 (42.8)		2 (28.5)
Same		3 (21.4)		3 (42.8)		

4. Civil rights movement helped Blacks.

	Overall		Blacks		Jews	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Great Deal	12 (85.7)	11 (78.5)	6 (85.7)	6 (85.7)	6 (85.7)	5 (71.5)
A little	2 (14.2)		1 (14.2)		1 (14.2)	
None						

*Before indicates attitudes at the start of the semester. After indicates attitudes at the end of the semester. Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

5. Blacks who work hard can get ahead just like anyone else.

	Overall		Blacks		Jews	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Agree	2 (14.2)		2 (28.5)			
Disagree	12 (85.7)	14 (100)	5 (71.4)	7 (100)	7 (100)	7 (100)

6. Blacks blame too many of their problems on whites.

	Overall		Blacks		Jews	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Agree	4 (28.5)		3 (42.8)		1 (14.3)	
Disagree	10 (71.4)		4 (57.2)		6 (85.7)	

7. Would you rather live in a Black, white, mixed or no preference well kept neighborhood?

	Overall		Blacks		Jews	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Black	2 (14.2)	4 (28.5)		4 (57.2)		
White	2 (14.2)					
Mixed	8 (57.1)	5 (35.7)	4 (57.1)	1 (14.3)	4 (57.1)	4 (57.2)
Don't Care	2 (14.2)	5 (35.7)	1 (14.2)	2 (28.5)	1 (14.2)	3 (42.8)

8. Are Jews a minority group?

	Overall		Blacks		Jews	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Yes	9 (64.2)	12 (85.7)	3 (42.8)	5 (71.4)	6 (85.7)	7 (100)
No	5 (35.7)	2 (14.3)	4 (57.2)	2 (28.5)	1 (14.3)	

9. Are Jews discriminated against at the present time in America?

	Overall		Blacks		Jews	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Yes	9 (64.2)	8 (57.1)	3 (42.8)	4 (57.2)	6 (85.7)	4 (57.2)
No	1 (14.3)	5 (35.7)	1 (14.3)	2 (28.5)		3 (42.8)
Don't Know	4 (28.5)	1 (7)	3 (42.8)	1 (14.3)		

10. Are Jews more in favor of civil rights for Blacks than other whites?

	Overall		Blacks		Jews	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
More	6(42.8)	7(50)	1(14.3)	3(42.8)	5(71.4)	4(57.2)
Less		1(7)		1(14.4)		
Same	5(35.7)	5(35.7)	5(71.4)	3(42.8)	1(14.3)	2(28.5)
No Response	2(14.2)	1(7)	1(14.3)		1(14.3)	1(14.2)

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MEDIATING ETHNIC MINORITY
CONFLICT IN THE CLASSROOM:
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David Schoem and Marshall Stevenson

PCMA Working
Paper #15

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