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Conversations with Jewish Scholars on Institutional Antisemitism: A Delphi Study

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ABSTRACT
Institutional antisemitism is a growing concern across university campuses in the United States of America. Research shows that academic environments do not always welcome Jewish presence and needs. Though contemporary studies examine student lived experiences of antisemitism, few Jewish scholarly perspectives are included in related inquiries. A qualitative Delphi study contributes to this literary gap by sharing Jewish expert consensus on the research question of is institutional antisemitism a problem in the US? Consensus conclusions indicated that (a) institutional antisemitism is often misinterpreted and difficult to define and (b) interpersonal antisemitism is present within Jewish campus interactions. Through theoretical frameworks of critical theory, Afro-pessimism, and study of anti-Blackness, the impacts of Jewish scholar-participants' identities and experiences on field expertise are discussed. Future campus implications for integrating sociocultural critical theory into Jewish historical trauma education and institutional antisemitism prevention are analyzed.

KEYWORDS: Institutional antisemitism, Delphi study, Jewish historical trauma, critical theory, Afro-pessimism, anti-Blackness

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Institutional antisemitism is a growing concern across university campuses in the United States of America (Anti-Defamation League [ADL], 2022). In the American Jewish Committee's (2021) State of Antisemitism in America Report, 24% of the Jewish people surveyed had experienced an antisemitic attack at an educational institution, and 50% believed that antisemitism has increased on campuses over the past five years. Despite this evidence, academic environments do not always recognize Jewish needs (Farber & Poleg, 2019). Not surprisingly, the lack of institutional acknowledgment impacts Jewish identity disclosure on campus.

In 2021, researchers of campus climate distributed the IDEALS (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey) survey to several thousand students at 120 American universities and interviewed 250 students from the surveyed schools. This examination revealed that Jewish students are the least likely of any marginalized group to experience inclusivity in academic environments, and only 27% feel welcome on campus. Study results also showed that Jewish students encounter antisemitic threats, university refusal to accommodate Jewish holidays and complex interfaith relationships (Singer et al., 2021).

Since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war in 2023, belief in anti-Jewish tropes has increased by 24% (ADL, 2024), and Jewish identity disclosure on campus has subsequently

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declined by 50%. Many students feel that university administrators do not address institutional antisemitism sufficiently (Goodman, 2023). Jewish students also report increasing uncertainty when approaching university personnel about campus safety (Farber & Poleg, 2019) and doubt instructor validation of Jewish trauma (Marris, 2024).

In my quest to combat institutional antisemitism, I conducted a previous study that examined the lived experiences of Jewish students at a public university. Two key findings from that inquiry revealed that Jewish students are excluded from multicultural education, social justice advocacy, and minority status on campus. Implementations of historical trauma-informed teaching models and intergroup contact interventions were suggested in the study conclusions (Abrams, 2023).

Before applying educational changes, I realized the necessity for expert consultation on institutional antisemitism for several reasons. First, it is difficult to assess Jewish campus needs due to the absence of a historical trauma-informed model that is specific to Jews (Abrams, 2023). Second, the field of antisemitism studies lacks critical theories that integrate trans-historical antisemitism with socio-cultural and political dynamics (Magid, 2024). These scholarly deficits create an educational incongruence, especially as research explores the limited focus on antisemitism within Holocaust education (Rajal, 2024). Third, a present “divide over diversity” (Marris, 2024, p. 475) among campus personnel is widening because of the Israel-Hamas war. My concern amidst the growing divide prompted the creation of a scholarly panel designed to uphold Jewish voices in higher education. This Delphi study provides consensus (Drumm et al., 2022) for the research question, is institutional antisemitism a problem in the US? by sharing Jewish panelists’ expertise.

I introduce critical theory (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002), Afro-pessimism (Wilderson, 2017), and *Black Study* (Myers, 2023) of anti-Blackness and weave the theories into all manuscript sections. The positionalities of scholar-participants are conceptualized through critical frameworks, as is my positionality as this study’s primary and *wounded* researcher (Romanyshyn, 2010). A statement of positionality follows the description of critical theory, thus inviting the reader into the researcher’s journey.

Critical Theory

Critical theory (CT) was founded in the 19th century, and its original followers were called ‘Young Hegelians.’ Hegelians embraced the *principle of reason*, or interpretation of freedom when opposing the defense of the status quo in cases of oppression. CT’s most central assumption is that society comprises complex but open-ended relationships that are permeable for the greater embodiment of social justice (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). As such, societal transformation is ongoing. CT is primarily defined by societal interest in possibilities that extend beyond the dominant reality. The range of options within a community is, therefore, intuitive and requires deeper futuristic examination. In social and critical studies, the parallel need for a theory of society has been re-proposed and is relevant to the socio-cultural world (Strydom, 2022). When combined, intersected factors contribute to a *dialectical schema* (Adorno, 1970) or an inclusive blueprint that informs what will happen at the core of civilization (Strydom, 2022).

This Delphi inquiry presents ontological questions of how modern Jewish scholars conceptualize, teach, and write about institutional antisemitism (Magid, 2024). According to Rensmann (2017), antisemitism is defined as “a comprehensive world explanation, an ideology that explains the abstract, complex, and transformative aspects of modern society and personifies blame for the shortcomings and failures of the modern world” (p. 407). CT conceptualizes antisemitism as a phenomenon that exceeds scornful attitudes toward Jews and is a distinct form

of social prejudice (Rajal, 2024). CT's focus on society is what prompted Adorno (2005) to include sociology in Holocaust studies, a trend reiterated by current antisemitism scholars.

Despite historical efforts to fight labor antisemitism (Clavey, 2023) and shift toward dialectic conceptualization (Jacobs, 2015), the field of antisemitism studies is undertheorized today (Magid, 2024). A unique combination of religious, communal, and historical Jewish values contributes to this phenomenon (Magid, 2024). First, Jews did not consider Jew-hatred a socio-political problem that could be addressed until recent years. Jewish people sometimes interpret Jew-hatred perpetuated by non-Jews as *eternal antisemitism* (Arendt, 2007) that is "woven into the very fabric of human civilization" (Magid, 2024, p. 372) According to Meir Kahane, founder of the Israeli political party KACH, antisemitism is an integral part of non-Jewish DNA. Kahane (1972) understood that antisemitism is an irreversible law of society. He wrote:

> And above all, let us understand that people, in the best of times, do not like Jews…It is not a thing that is logical and one who can[not] understand it had better search his own psychological condition. For ages, we have sought to diagnose the condition in hope of finding a cure and we have failed. (Kahane, 1972, p. 101)

Some Jewish people occasionally still accept Jew-hatred without question as a rightful punishment in the diaspora. Though modern Jews generally understand that antisemitism is now solvable, religious and historical assumptions still have a strong hold on associated discussions. Jews are often skeptical about ahistorical theories, and just a few experts have challenged the use of antisemitism as an "umbrella term" for all Jew-hatred in present literature (Magid, 2024).

As a result of the Israel-Hamas war (ADL, 2024), Jewish attitudes about eternal antisemitism fluctuate (Magid, 2024), especially when academic environments are contentious (Goodman, 2023). The proposal of analytical theory during this time is imperative, therefore, to strengthen the discourse of institutional antagonism and not "position" the conversation "as proof or weapon" (Magid, 2024, p. 383) of eternal antisemitism. I draw from CT, Afro-pessimism (Wilderson, 2017), and Black Study (Myers, 2023) of anti-Blackness to extend ontological understanding (Weddington, 2019) to this study.

Afro-Pessimism and Anti-Blackness

Afro-pessimism is "a lens of interpretation that accounts for civil society's dependence on anti-Black violence-a regime of violence that positions Black people as internal enemies of civil society" (Douglass et al., 2018, p. 1). Afro-pessimism embraces a position of *political ontology* (Weddington, 2019) that is core to understanding systemic racism in America. Afro-pessimism diverts from CT's assumption that "a common regime of violence" (Douglass et al., 2018, p. 1) is universal to all sentient beings. This assertion categorizes all sentient beings as human beings, a notion that is untrue for Black people.

Afro-pessimists dispute CT's "lumping of Blacks into the category of human" (Douglass et al., 2018, p. 1), thus likening Black suffering to other communal strife. Douglass et al. (2018) compare CT's proclaimed definition of universal torment to a "hobble" (p. 1), or device that binds the legs of an animal to limit its movement. Afro-pessimists fight against white society's invested optimism in the emancipating potential of culture, contending that unseen and unheard Black persons cannot access the liberation attainable to others. That transgenerational violence is at the core of this blockade (Douglass et al., 2018). Afro-pessimists theorize anti-Blackness and Blackness and maintain that whiteness does not define what is universally human. Scholars of Black Study, however, elaborate upon transgenerational hatred because of the power it holds in

restructuring societies and identities (Myers, 2023). According to Hartman (1997), Blackness is the position of anticipating an ontological death rather than experiencing a cultural identity.

Antisemitism scholars are encouraged to learn from the phenomenological aspects of Afro-pessimism and Black Study in addition to historical ones. Magid (2024) coined the term *Judeo-pessimism* from Afro-pessimism to expand the understanding of Jewish marginalization, inclusion/exclusion, and liberation (Magid, 2024). In the next section, I share a snippet of my own relationship with multi-faceted Jewish dynamics and how I approach institutional antisemitism in the public discourse.

Statement of Positionality

I am a Jewish associate professor and dual Israeli/American citizen employed in the United States at a time of heightened campus climate. The Israel-Hamas war has created undeniable academic crises wherein university campuses have become uncertain environments for people of Arab, Palestinian Jewish, and descent. University involvement in antisemitism lawsuits, resignations of academic presidents (Tollefson, 2024), and campus encampments over divestment from Israel (Jarvie, 2024) point toward a trend of politicization in higher education. Moreover, the controversial management of institutional allegations reflects a blatant struggle to address this societal complexity (Tollefson, 2024).

Steeped within an escalating environment, I write this paper with trepidation but also in the hope that the findings prompt true discourse about the sociocultural academic world (Strydom, 2022). I wish to broaden exchanges that neither silence nor threaten the fluid expression of any individual or community on campus. My intent is to minimize the polarization of institutional antisemitism and to make space for dialectical examination (Adorno, 1970) on several systemic levels.

I admit that when my heart aches to the beat of my nation's sorrow, I struggle to represent the "cool, collected Jew in academia rather than the *gevald* hysterical one" (Ben-Atar, 2021, p. 228). Like other Jewish and Palestinian academics, I feel defeated by silenced academic discourse about the Israeli-Hamas war and find little sanctuary on campus. I experience a sense of threat to my identities and well-being as a marginalized person in academia (Douglass et al., 2018).

Despite and because of cultural sorrow, I recognize my calling to critically question (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002) institutional antisemitism and bridge the current academic divide (Marris, 2024). I defend my opposition to the status quo (Strydom, 2022) of Jewish and Semitic campus marginalization for the reader to evoke sociological (Adorno, 2005) curiosity. I begin with a literature review that describes the landscape of Jewish identification in America, the history of institutional antisemitism, and current campus concerns. I compare historical patterns of antisemitism with present trends to track the American Jewish marginalization between 1930 and today.

Literature Review

Jewish Identity in America

Jewishness was considered an unfortunate handicap in America until the 1940's (Gordan, 2021). Writings from the early 20th century reflect Jewish self-hatred (M. Steinberg, 1945), despair (Ferber, 1917), and perception of Jewish identity as an illness (M. Steinberg, 1941). Chronicles published by Gentiles equally regarded Jewish ethnicity as an affliction. In fact, Henry Morgenthau III pronounced Jewishness as "a kind of birth defect that could not be eradicated, but with proper

treatment, could be overcome, if not in this generation, then probably in the next." (Beschloss, 2002; Gordan, 2021, p. 46). These wretched judgments were internalized from a discriminatory climate perpetuated in multiple American environments, such as the labor market (Clavey, 2023), social spaces, and academic institutions (Gordan, 2021).

History of Institutional Antisemitism

Universities accentuated societal contrasts between the "drab and rootless Jewish existence when compared to the rich and colorful lives of their Christian neighbors" (Kaplan, 1934, pp. 3–4). Though institutional quotas barred the entrance of non-white and marginalized prospective students, certain endogenous and exogenous factors contributed to the academic "othering" of minority populations. Economic studies of hate crime highlight that power differentials between dominant and disenfranchised statuses often motivate violence. In addition, minority socioeconomic statuses, crime rates, and involvement in world events impact intergroup relationships (LaFreniere Tamez et al., 2024). When resource accessibility expands for non-dominant groups, threatened consumers of mainstream culture often feel resentment (LaFreniere Tamez et al., 2024; Nagel & Olzak, 1986). These concepts are relevant to institutional antisemitism on social and professional levels (Adorno, 2005). I apply this information further through the context of two historical case studies that occurred at the University of Minnesota and Cornell University.

Case Studies of Institutional Antisemitism

Though institutional antisemitism is transhistorical (Wilderson, 2017), strong case studies from the University of Minnesota and Cornell University illustrate restricted conditions for Black and Jewish students during the 19th and 20th centuries in America (Prell, 2021). The impacts of academic bigotry, Jewish emancipation (Sorkin, 2019), and *exceptionalism* (Gordan, 2021), or the national idealism of American Jews (Pease, 2009; Gordan, 2021) on activism are relevant to the cases.

Minneapolis, Minnesota, is still known as a "notoriously antisemitic city" (Prell, 2021, p. 163). Jews attended the University of Minnesota in the 1930s and were active in campus life while experiencing rampant institutional antisemitism, such as banned participation in public organizations and discriminatory dormitory environments. Antisemitism only worsened after World War I when the affiliated Mayo Clinic linked Jewish acceptance to the overall state percentage of Jewish acceptance. Campus boarding houses and student programs rejected Jewish and Black students and despite dwindling campus opportunities, Jews created independent assemblies such as the Menorah chapter and the Scroll and Key (Prell, 2021).

In 1941, Cornell University openly discussed its "Jewish student problem" (Prell, 2021, p. 158). The administration reported that Jews came and went in "packs," resulting in a "Jew picnic" (Prell, 2021, p. 158) on campus. The administration feared that Jewish packs would overpower the dominant population, a concern consistent with power differentials between majority and minority groups (LaFreniere Tamez et al., 2024). Later that year, a campus concern arose about a Jewish honors student who ran an anti-racist group at UM (Prell, 2021). No other students affiliated with the party were identified by race, ethnicity, or religion other than this Jewish student. Despite creating a program designed to unconditionally accept all students, UM administrative actions against Black and Jewish people remained prejudiced (Prell, 2021). Such acts of injustice propelled marginalized students toward activism and self-advocacy.

Jewish Activism and Self-Advocacy

Jewish students rallied against right-wing policies and economic inequality at UM and Cornell and assumed leadership positions. The *Jacobins* were the first mixed fraternity group on campus that challenged campus norms and rejected administrative directives. Black and Jewish students requested more rights (Prell, 2021) but were threatened with censorship, surveillance, and enrollment quotas. In fact, American universities did nothing to conceal the startling conviction to "keep America American" (Prell, 2021, p. 160) through minority exclusion.

Jewish students self-advocated when facing academic isolation. Protective factors for Jews during the 1950s-1960s included the evolution of critical theory within labor and Jewish organizations (Clavey, 2023) and a post-war renaissance that celebrated Jewish pride (Michels, 2010). Sorkin (2019) described post-war Jewish success in the following words:

> In the period after World War II, American Jewry's civil defense organizations engaged in a concerted emancipation campaign. Jews collaborated with African Americans, Catholics, and other minorities to end inequality. That campaign succeeded: from the 1940s to the 1960s state and federal civil rights laws, and court rulings prohibiting discrimination, dismantled the structure of inequality. Those events constituted American Jews' second emancipation: it positioned the immigrant's children and grandchildren to realize the promise of American equality. (Sorkin, 2019, p. 347)

Jewish campus resilience mirrored advancing Jewish inclusivity within government and communities. Jewish exceptionalism was prominent during this time (Gordan, 2021). American Jews internalize exceptionalism primarily as a dream expressed from a position of longing. Jewish exceptionalism is shared in multiple documentaries and reflects the singularity of Jewish American experiences (Gordan, 2021).

While exceptionalism is critiqued by contemporary scholars (Michels, 2010; Sorkin, 2019) because it may weaken anti-racism discourse (Gould, 2023), the phenomenon holds traces of historical Jewish angst and personifies a strong postwar response to Holocaust and pre-WWII antisemitism. Exceptionalism offers resistance against Jewish invisibility and a new dialogue for religious freedom in America (Gordan, 2021). Despite the post-war Jewish liberation, antisemitism prevails in multiple environments, compelling historians and scholars to revisit the delicate pendulum of historical and socio-political antisemitism theories (Magid, 2024). I describe modern trends of institutional antisemitism in the sections below.

Current Institutional Antisemitism

A culture of exclusivity is still safeguarded on US campuses today. Experts debate whether institutional antisemitism is ongoing or if America independently refuses to impose legal sanctions for antisemitism (Prell, 2021). The absence of online regulation in the US raises significant concern and is complicated by the rapid spread of hate speech within internet forums (Milanović, 2022). Jewish experiences of antisemitism, therefore, are interconnected on a socio-political continuum known as *social antisemitism* (Prell, 2021, p. 187). The politicization of campus life has paved the way for a sweeping divide in academia (Marris, 2024). Social antisemitism, like CT, recognizes liberatory possibilities within environmental relationships and racial divides.

While studying inter-campus relationships at Ball State University, Cieslik & Phillips (2021) discovered that Jewish students' faculty relationships were impacted by Christian dominance, identity disclosure caution, and stereotyping when professors met their "first Jew" at

the small-town university. Jewish students subsequently altered appearances, group affiliations, and other Jewish-identifying characteristics when feeling "othered" (Cieslik & Phillips, 2021).

Since the 1960s, the politicization of university campuses, America's pro-Israel stance, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have created ongoing deliberations among academics. Though universities condemn Jew-hatred, a universal definition of antisemitism did not exist until 2019. Pamela Nadell's 2019 introduction of the Antisemitism Awareness Act portrayed her positionality as a Jewish historian amidst internal Jewish polarizations. The hearing was compelling because it addressed the divergence between Jewish institutions and the field of Jewish Studies. Nadell sought a clear definition of antisemitism in the realm of speech versus action and exposed Jewish relational discrepancies (Rabin, 2021).

The Antisemitism Awareness Act was updated in 2023 in response to campus protests and simultaneous complaints of institutional antisemitism (Mathur-Ashton, 2024). Despite the update, academics react to the acts in diverse ways. Some believe the acts improve campus climate and echo Nadell's words that antisemitism awareness is "a product of the politics of gesture" (Ben-Atar, 2021, p. 225; Nadell, 2019). Others critique the definition of antisemitism for partial Bible outlaw and for possible infringement upon freedom of speech (Mathur-Ashton, 2024).

Jewish faculty members acknowledge opposition to the Antisemitism Acts on campus. Similarly, *Israel Denial* (Nelson, 2019) is perpetuated at universities as progressive groups speak out against populations deemed inappropriate for campus presence, including Jewish/Zionist communities (Rabin, 2021). Israel Denial intensified in 2024 because of campus protests and growing pressure for universities to divest from Israeli partnerships (Mathur-Ashton, 2024).

While Nadell's speech emphasized antisemitic threats of the radical right, it failed to address leftist influences on campus. Her testimony uncovered only a partial synopsis of antisemitic severity and surprised the public when historical antisemitism toward women was ignored (Ben-Atar, 2021). She and other like-minded scholars did not discuss the anomaly of *virtuous antisemitism* or antisemitism committed in the name of social justice (Yakira, 2015). Instead, they allied with a larger anti-racist coalition that condemns alt-right antisemitism, but did not elaborate upon lived experiences of institutional antisemitism.

Like Nadell, Jewish Gen Z students are moving away from organized religious practice (Pew Research Center, 2023) and leaning toward alternative inclusive practices (Ben-Atar, 2021). As assimilation grows, it is important to understand the motives and perceived benefits behind campus intermixture for Jewish students. I elaborate upon a study conducted at Ball State University below to highlight the impact of campus relationships on Jewish identification.

Jewish Assimilation on Campus

Cieslik and Phillips (2021) did not focus on antisemitism when examining Jewish students' relationships with professors. Instead, intersectionality between Jewish identity, Christian hegemony, and campus assimilation was explored. The authors understood that absorption is often contested among minorities and therefore documented transformational aspects of inter-campus relationships based on a model created by Brubaker (Brubaker, 2003). Ethno-graphic interviews were conducted, followed by participant discussion about campus acclimation and Jewish identity (Cieslik & Phillips, 2021).

Judaism extends well beyond practice and tradition. For many, Jewish identity includes a connection to Israel, racial belonging, and community contact. Trends of Jewish externalization vary from one location to another. At Ball State, limited cultural resources increased Jewish isolation. Participants revealed that the exclusion they experienced on campus led to decreased Jewish identification. Students hoped that shedding signs of Jewish belonging would improve

environmental acceptance (Cieslik & Phillips, 2021). Like the historical case studies from UM and Cornell University, students de-identified Jewishness to gain better employment, partake in academic organizations, and avoid antisemitism (Cieslik & Phillips, 2021). Few host societies have accommodated Jews in cultural and political positions throughout the diaspora (Clifford 1994), resulting in Jewish transhistorical challenges (Wilderson, 2017).

Jewish Campus Challenges

Hostile Campus Climate

At present, Jewish students face significant campus concerns, including (but not limited to) antisemitic slurs, violence within Jewish buildings, online threats, and hostile environments. In response, The Office of Civil Rights published a fact sheet in 2023 designed to protect students from discrimination of shared ancestry and ethnic concerns (Lyerly, 2023) and specified the facts to university personnel. This action was symbolic of the White House's attempt to fight institutional antisemitism.

In 2023, the White House released one hundred actions to protect Jewish communities from antisemitism. Though universities are encouraged to prevent antisemitism (Lyerly, 2023), non-government organizations (NGOs) request freedom of speech to critique its definition. Considering the heightened Israel/Zionism critique, Jewish students sometimes feel unprotected on campus (G. M. Steinberg, 2023). As the Israel-Hamas war progresses, Jewish students across the US report antisemitic incidents staged as free speech. Name-calling, labeling, and the use of Nazi propaganda are now commonplace at universities (Hagstrom, 2024). As I absorb this excruciating reality, I consider how the origins of free speech affect the current escalation of institutional antisemitism.

Freedom of Speech

The constitutional right of free speech has become a focal point in conversations surrounding institutional antisemitism. Liberalism has been associated with academia for decades. "Communication of all with all" (Julius, 2022, p. 16) is, therefore, at the core of academic life. However, the acknowledgment of free speech in higher education does not automatically integrate academic free speech with political free speech, though the two do sometimes merge (Julius, 2022).

The case of David Miller is relevant to the discussion of academic free speech. Miller was a sociology professor who critiqued Zionism in his scholarship and lectures. After his dismissal, he sued his employing university for unwarranted termination. Miller's supporters argued that he was an anti-racist and that freedom of speech justified his work. A counterargument was raised, however, that claims for free speech did not render Miller's spread of antisemitic propaganda appropriate (Julius, 2022).

The Liberal Doctrine sustains discourses of liberal democracies and two emancipating qualities in the doctrine support the argument of free speech. Though the Liberal Doctrine is both pro and anti-speech, the pro-speech aspect is most dominant. The doctrine provides a collective intellectual foundation in public discourse, but critics are concerned it falls short in addressing current academic and political controversies (Julius, 2022).

One systemic problem within liberalism is the absence of a non-liberal theory for free speech. Some scholars express discomfort surrounding academic political affiliations (Julius, 2022). This stance was reflected in Nadell's (2019) failure to broach progressive influences on campus social justice and provision of a partial testimony on antisemitism (Ben-Atar, 2021). Some

scholars debate the definitions of antisemitism provided in the Antisemitism Awareness Acts and believe the implications may silence free speech in institutions (Mathur-Ashton, 2024).

Although the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definitions are universally adopted in the United States, the European Union, and communities of higher education, academic receptivity to the statements varies (IHRA, 2018). For example, a book review of *Erasing Palestine: Free Speech and Palestinian Freedom* revealed author Gould's position that IHRA's definition silences discourse (Bustos, 2024). In her book, Gould (2023) described academic encounters she experienced to address how university administrations handle cases of free speech associated with Israel and Palestine.

Claiming that discourse has weakened since October 2023, Gould recommended swapping IHRA's definition of antisemitism with a relational approach for combating racism. Drawing from Jewish Marxist philosophies, she encouraged a process called *dialectical materialism* (Gould, 2023). This theory honors marginalized experiences while simultaneously discouraging alignment with political entities. Gould's defense of free speech aims to prevent antisemitism and broaden discourse (Bustos, 2024). Gould is not alone in her convictions. Kenneth Stern, author of IHRA, indicated that the definition's original intent was for data collection only (Jacoby, 2023). Though dialectical materialism differs from the political ontology of Afro- (Weddington, 2019) and Judeo-pessimism (Magid, 2024), it presents a critical challenge for more socio-cultural conversation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in academia.

During Delphi study rounds, scholar-participants articulated some fears surrounding institutional antisemitism, but free speech and academic discourse were barely mentioned. Because most panelists declined the completion of a third Delphi round, I wondered about participant experiences of campus hostility or perceived belonging within academic communities (Julius, 2022). The experts' silence was a mystery to me, and I pondered whether some experienced *captured speech* (Hooks, 2015) within academic roles or intentionally masked their Jewishness. *Masking theory* refers to the meaning behind carrying a secret identity and masking or unmasking this persona in scholarship (Caplan, 2021, p. 53).

Though masking theory is correlated with the experiences of Jewish comic book authors, it is relevant to any form of *cloaking* Jewishness for self-protection (Caplan, 2021). In my own academic experiences, I move back and forth between open disclosure of my Jewish and Israeli identities and the recent (and heart-rending) decision to safeguard my personhood in the public discourse. With an embodied level of empathy for the participants, I introduce the study methodology to the reader and explain participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Methodology

The Delphi Method

The chosen methodology for this study is a Delphi design. The Delphi technique promotes anonymity by avoiding direct contact between experts. Though the original study version was affiliated with the defense industry, it has been extended to other fields (Drumm et al., 2022). Delphi studies encourage the integration of each scholar's independent thoughts, which are then grouped to form a general opinion (Barrett & Heale, 2020).

The primary aim of this inquiry was to reach a consensus among Jewish scholars on the research question: is institutional antisemitism a problem in the US? Delphi methodology structures a group communication process to allow unified individuals to address a complex problem (Linstone and Turoff, 1975). Consensus methods collected from expert communities are used to foresee future field implications, prioritize gaps in the literature, resolve impasses, and

generate innovations. Consensus is most valuable to the research community when congruent, valid, and reliable (Drumm et al., 2022).

Delphi study characteristics involve several rounds of questioning, where information changes based on findings from previous rounds (Barrett & Heale, 2020). Participants access personal responses and the anonymous responses of other experts. Findings from each round are shared anonymously with the full panel to promote transparency and reduce biases. A risk that specialists sometimes face is the "bandwagon effect", or the possibility that individual insights may go unspoken when pressure for conformity rises within the group. Panelists are, therefore, encouraged to perceive broader phenomena rather than focus on partial details (Barrett & Heale, 2020). Delphi studies may be varied to meet the needs of surveyed populations (Barrett & Heale, 2020). This study required flexibility due to the small number of participating scholars and the execution of two study rounds. Study rounds included exploratory interviews and narratives instead of numerical analyses (Drumm et al., 2022), as is typical in qualitative design.

The Delphi technique has strengths and deficits. First, the approach accommodates plasticity and reconsideration of responses. Second, the Delphi design guarantees anonymity and promotes humility. Multiple rounds of questioning in Delphi inquiries can be time-consuming; however, dropouts reduce the validity of results (Drumm et al., 2022). My experience with the recruitment and maintenance of panelists was arduous. Several potential scholars declined participation because of commitments, and one was unresponsive after the first interview. Other Delphi critiques are lack of clarity about consensus and heavy reliance on expert opinion in qualitative research (Barrett & Heale, 2020). These circumstances emerged in the Delphi inquiry, and I integrate panel encounters in the following sections.

Participant Recruitment

I began the study with historical data about institutional antisemitism derived from conversations with three Jewish/Israeli scholars during a trip to Israel in 2022. When I returned to the US in 2023, I moved forward with the study due to campus contention surrounding the Israel-Hamas war. After gaining IRB approval, I utilized a purposeful sample and reached out to the Israeli academics through email. Two agreed to join the Delphi panel, and one declined. I then combined a snowball sample with the purposeful one by requesting that the Israeli professors recommend other suitable Jewish scholars for study participation. The set criteria for panel engagement were existing Jewish and/or Israeli identities and expertise in fields of genocide studies, Holocaust/Jewish studies, collective memory, anthropology, history, or antisemitism studies. I publicized inquiry information within two Jewish online professional groups and my LinkedIn profile.

I was surprised after reaching out to over twenty recommended scholars when only three more joined the panel. Some held concerns of time commitment and preoccupation with other projects, but most simply declined without explanation. After four months of futile attempts, I began the study with just five participants. All participants were Jewish males; three held Israeli citizenship, while the other two were American. Scholars' areas of expertise included historiography of Holocaust literature, history of the Holocaust, political theory, genocide studies, and modern Jewry studies. In addition to professorship, several panelists directed or were affiliated with Jewish Studies programs at American universities. All expressed interest in the study because antisemitism directly relates to their teaching and scholarship. Prior to data collection, I emailed consent forms to all scholars, and once they were signed, I scheduled online interviews with the participants.

Data Collection

First Delphi Round

The first Delphi round consisted of semi-structured online interviews that featured five open-ended questions. The advantages of online interviews include the capacity for participation from multiple locations, and no costs (McLeod, 2010). Semi-structured interviews avoid dominance among group members and are both inclusive and rigorous. Though some Delphi studies do not utilize interviews or multiple questions, the approach is adaptable for use in diverse fields (Drumm et al., 2022).

To evoke richness in Delphi design (Greason, 2018), I inserted participant quotes rather than Likert scale ratings. My goal was to awaken the reader's deepest associations with expert experiences (Ellis et al., 2011) and feature human scripts that "make hearts skip a beat" (Spinazola et al., 2021, p. 36). The Delphi process is, therefore, ideal for exploring institutional antisemitism in a collaborative manner (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2020).

After the first round of interviews, I uploaded all the information to a confidential folder for analysis. I reviewed Zoom recordings and then utilized thematic analysis for two Delphi rounds. Thematic analysis is a recursive method that identifies, selects, and reports themes from the data while maintaining theoretical transparency (Braun & Clark, 2006). The flexibility inherent in thematic analysis allows for the integration of contextual dynamics (Braun & Clarke, 2006), such as institutional antisemitism. Critical theory informed the analysis by appealing to the systemic aspects of academic relationships (Strydom, 2022). I discuss the limitations of thematic analysis and my biases in the data analysis and discussion sections.

Second Delphi Round

I distributed a second-round document to all scholar-participants that listed anonymous quotes from all interview questions. Panelists were asked to read the quotes and then write notes, comments, corrections, or agreement/disagreements about all statements. I expected to share written feedback among participants in a final study round. Upon data compilation, however, I discovered that one participant withdrew from the study, and all others declined a third study round aside from one panelist. After discussing this phenomenon with my research mentor and re-reviewing responses, I realized that open academic conversations about Judaism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and antisemitism (Rabin, 2021) may have challenged the panelists. For example, one participant reiterated how his words and beliefs are questioned or assumed in academia:

> This topic is deeply personal because, as an American Jew, people and institutions hold assumptions about what I am expected to believe about the current crisis (as well as the ongoing one) in the Middle East. When I deviate from that assumption by, say, expressing my concern for Palestinian lives, they often communicate that I am not the "right" type of Jewish person or scholar of Jewish studies. This, itself, is another form of antisemitism.

Data Analysis

Trustworthiness

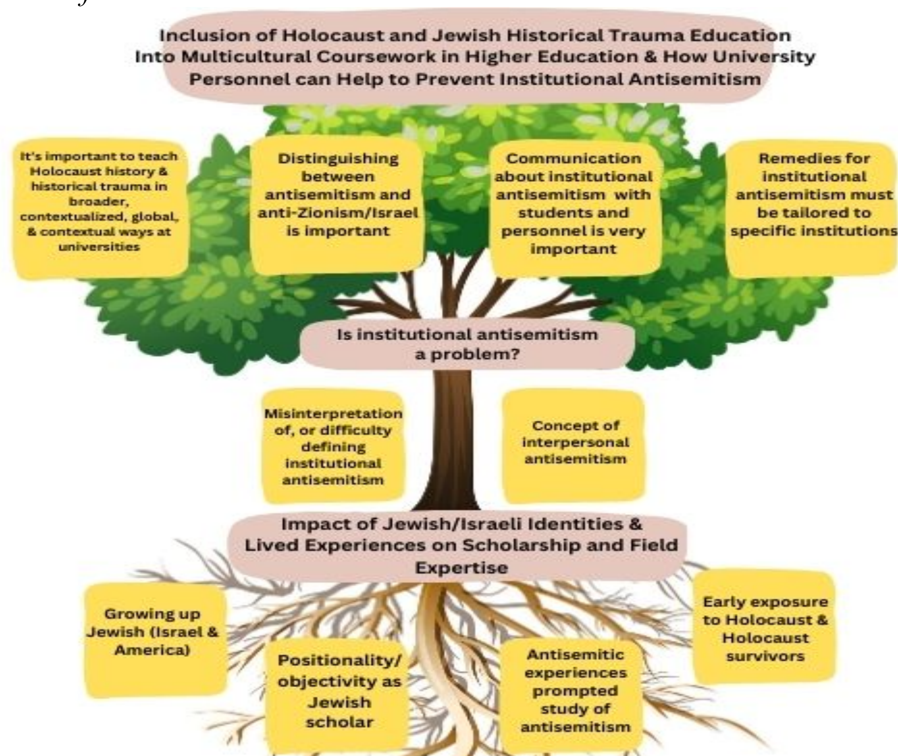
Though I resonated with the panelists' uncertainty about voicing independent thought in academia (Ben-Atar, 2021), I needed to demonstrate trustworthiness within my position. I therefore completed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) qualitative strategies of (a) peer review, (b) clarifying researcher bias, (c) triangulation, and (d) providing rich descriptions for the purpose of transferability. For peer review, a non-Jewish scholar reviewed the manuscript and provided objective feedback. I clarified my biases and feelings as a Jewish scholar from the beginning and drew upon ancestral strength throughout the study to establish "epistemological humility" (Romanyshyn, 2010, p. 278). when representing a controversial topic in scholarship.

Triangulation incorporates coded themes, member checking, and provision of thick data to enhance a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I engaged in triangulation through thematic analysis and expert consensus. Thick data descriptions were documented in group responses and quotes, and the second data round included a member-checking process for participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I created *The Tree Heuristic for Jewish Scholars* (see Figure 1) to integrate Jewish developmental impacts on scholars' field expertise, gain consensus for the research question, and present future study implications. All study items are perceived from critical theory, Afro-pessimism, and theories of anti-Blackness.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1

Tree Heuristic for Jewish Scholars



Note. Source retrieved from: https:/freepik.com

Impact of Jewish and Israeli Lived Experiences on Scholarship and Field Expertise

The Tree heuristic represents Jewish panelists' backgrounds as foundational roots that inform the research question. Data analysis clarified that the scholars' developmental encounters, familial legacies, and academic milestones informed the study consensus. A tree diagram projects the critical recognition that Jewish disempowerment and liberation are at the core of sociocultural existence and identity construction (Adorno, 2005). I share poignant encounters below from participant interviews about growing up Jewish and Jewish positionality in academia.

Growing up Jewish

All panelists agreed that growing up Jewish in the US and/or Israel motivated related scholarly expertise. Two common developmental experiences among scholars were early exposure to the Holocaust and premature antisemitic incidents. Generational differences were relevant to childhood encounters, as several scholar-participants had Holocaust-surviving parents or grandparents. One member said, "There was…a lot of Holocaust…probably exposed at too young an age, and that absolutely…helped forge a Jewish identity and led me to make *Aliyah* (move to Israel)."

After the second study round, I discovered that predispositions of Holocaust ancestry and early introduction to Jew-hatred were central to all panelists. Another scholar added, "I would say that being Jewish and being the son of two Holocaust survivors specifically was instrumental in leading me to go into the field that I'm in." The collaborative Delphi design prompted camaraderie among experts (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2020) when commenting on the topic of Jewish positionality. Some Jews access a pre-Holocaust heritage relayed by older generations (Wilderson, 2004). However, I apply the concept of *ancestral bonding* (Abrams, 2022) or "the desire to become acquainted with the past, present, and perceived future of ancestors' legacies" (p. 48) to the transgenerational relationships described by participants.

Several experts referenced antisemitic incidents, though most did not provide details of such scenarios. One scholar simply said, "I have a personal relationship with the topic of antisemitism." Another indicated a correlation between his identities and scholarship expertise in the following words: "The topic is, of course, very close. I learn and teach about the Holocaust and about antisemitism, and of course, it's connected to my Jewish and Israeli identities." Here, I reiterate the Afro-pessimist fight against the dominant culture's desire for transformative resilience in all people, regardless of marginalization. Jews have been silenced and disregarded throughout generations and, therefore, may not fully access emancipation attainable to others (Douglass et al., 2018). Similarly, almost all scholars recognized individual and collective levels of positionality. The degree of intentionality infused in the experts' intellectual pursuits accentuated academia's complex relationship with Jewish *intelligentsia* or progressive Jewish intelligence (Chalmers, 2015).

Positionality & Objectivity of Jewish Scholars

All panelists confirmed that positionality and objectivity are deeply ingrained in their identities and that clear discerning is required between personal and professional Jewish experiences. Indeed, Jewish scholarship is a controversial topic in higher education. In 2005, the American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) placed visiting Israeli professors on university campuses in the US. The program's goals were exposure to Israeli academic rigor and increased understanding of Israel's culture and government. The initiative encouraged recognition of

domestic and international challenges that Israeli and Jewish people face. AICE urged host US institutions to expand Israel study and facilitate balanced conversations about Judaism (Koren & Einhorn, 2010).

Since then, many studies have examined Jewish reactions to campus hostility and facilitation of Judaic dialogue at American universities (Mousavi & Kadkhodaee, 2016). Related factors were woven into scholar-participants' responses pertaining to positionality and objectivity. One member said,

> Being a Jew in America…I …think, brings a personal aspect to the study of antisemitism, and it also forces me to think about my relationship to the topic…Obviously, it's where my investment in the topic, in part, comes from.

While the impact of lived experiences on research focus was clear to participants, the ever-present question of how to broach identities within higher education was ongoing. Another panelist noted:

> Being a Jew in America, one of Ashkenazi ancestry, means that I move between being part of the (racial) majority and part of the (religious) minority at the same time. I try very hard to stay conscious of this positionality and to discuss it openly with my students. It means that talking about issues such as antisemitism requires a recognition of this simultaneous stance of power and vulnerability.

"Checking in with oneself" about biases and privileges was a mutual ritual among the scholarly panel. An Israeli professor who had not taught on US campuses for extended periods acknowledged his privilege as a citizen of the State of Israel:

> …And on the other hand, (antisemitism) is also a bit far from my heart in the sense that I grew up and lived my whole life in Israel and I didn't experience antisemitism on my skin and so there's a specific distance from this, so it's only a theoretical understanding. I'm exposed to it, but not on my skin.

The cultural humility (Foronda, 2020) embedded in this statement was reflected in all expert responses. This was not surprising since Jewish faculty often align with campus social justice activism (Goodman, 2023). In fact, three other panelists commented on the need for objectivity in similar statements. One emphasized:

> I think that the conclusions I reach, the methodologies I use, the choices I make about what to talk about, what to talk about in the classroom, how to talk about them…reflect more of a kind of professional intellectual set of decisions than a personal one.

Another member added thoughts about his constant attunement to the proximity of experiences in the following words: "But I also try to pay close attention to the way in which my proximity to antisemitism-both through experience and through community history- how that may influence my understanding."

All scholar-participants differentiated between personal experiences of marginalization and professionalism. Group members avoided political alignment on campus and encouraged inclusive discourse in scholarship and teaching (Gould, 2023). In contrast, Afro-pessimists and anti-Blackness theorists do not avoid talking about political ontology and its necessary place in academic literature (Wilderson, 2017). As I report the study consensus, I contemplate whether results may have differed if the panelists held a higher comfort level with socio-political discussions (Adorno, 1970) or if I invited them to do so intentionally.

Consensus

Defining and Misinterpreting Institutional Antisemitism

All panelists answered the research question: is institutional antisemitism a problem in the US? Data analysis confirmed that this was a difficult question for participants to answer as there are many misinterpretations of institutional antisemitism, and defining the term is challenging. One scholar said, "It's a bit tricky…because I'm sure that it exists. It exists in higher education institutions in the U.S. and in other places…but I think that too many times people interpret what happens as antisemitism." His statement reflects Magid's (2024) discussion of over-utilizing antisemitism as an overarching term in the Jewish study of historical trauma.

The same expert thoughtfully added, "People don't have to love you, and it's not necessarily antisemitism." He acknowledged complaints of campus discrimination, anti-Zionism, and university refusal to accommodate Jewish holidays among Jewish students. Regardless of those concerns, all experts concluded that boundaries in conceptualizing and naming institutional antisemitism vary. Another member said,

> I think that some people in the Jewish world are employing a broader definition of antisemitism, much like people in the general population employ a broader definition of racism…and this makes it harder to make distinctions that need to be made.

During the second round, this quote generated responses from all panelists. An Israeli participant agreed about the application of a broader definition and added, "Especially when it comes to Israel. What people define as antisemitism is so broad when it comes to the question of Israel-Palestine that basically every pro-Palestinian position is perceived as antisemitic." This struggle to define antisemitism mirrors parallel academic debates about the risks of undiscerning interpretations of antisemitism (Jacoby, 2023). Another participant raised the possibility that a generational gap generates differences between Jewish faculty and students' perceptions of antisemitism. He said:

> I think many of our Jewish students…employ a broader definition of antisemitism than I, and many of the Jewish faculty do not. So, there may well be a generational factor. Faculty are also more sensitive to issues of academic freedom than students nowadays are.

Likewise, another member was concerned that "... Many Jewish students express fears for their safety yet do so loudly and repeatedly - drawing attention to themselves." Jewish faculty members are sensitive to positionality within academic institutions (Julius, 2022) and often prefer a thoughtful presentation over a tumultuous one (Ben-Atar, 2021), as personified by Nadell in her 2019 testimony.

Despite an alliance with progressive institutional culture, scholar-participants found that other academics disregarded Jewish expertise in related forums. One panelist said, "Too often our administration ignores the expertise of the (Jewish) faculty and makes ill-informed statements purportedly to reject antisemitism, but which only tends to exacerbate tensions and produce more alienation." When non-Jewish personnel "know better" about antisemitism than those with lived experience, Jewish suffering and transhistorical discrimination is silenced (Douglass et al., 2018).

Interpersonal Antisemitism

Along with academic silencing, all experts concurred that insensitivity toward Jewish identity and needs is sometimes displayed within institutional interactions. One participant coined

the felt sense of indifference to *interpersonal antisemitism*. He noted: "Institutional antisemitism isn't a problem, but institutions are guilty of not handling cases of interpersonal antisemitism…though universities aren't openly antisemitic, they do almost nothing to address antisemitism among faculty and students." After the Israel-Hamas war began, this scholar altered his response in the final study round and said that attunement toward interpersonal antisemitism varies at each university and overgeneralizations about institutions should be avoided. He recommended assessing institutional remedies for antisemitism on a case-by-case basis.

The question of what constitutes interpersonal antisemitism generated much conversation among panelists. First, institutional accommodation of Jewish necessities was raised. One scholar stated, "When university personnel respond differently to Jewish students' needs for accommodations than those of other marginalized communities, it's not antisemitism, but it's insufficient sensitivity to antisemitism." Another panelist said that at his place of employment, academic quarters begin on Jewish holidays. While he did not name this choice overtly antisemitic, he admitted,

> To me, there's something…I would say hypocritical and kind of…I wouldn't say it's antisemitic…I would say it's…profoundly insensitive when they start our academic quarters on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur…but it just sticks in my craw; how about that?

The caution in this professor's words is ubiquitous among Jewish students and academics. Judaism has been ignored on campuses for generations, so Jewish Baby Boomer and Generation X have accepted that "it's just the way it is" (Ben-Atar, 2021) or normalized virtuous (Yakira, 2015) antisemitism. Millennial and Generation Z Jews understand the danger of accepting Jew-hatred unconditionally, however, and are actively challenging campus interactions (Magid, 2024). Regardless of evolving awareness, campus isolation is a primary reason for the denial of Jewish identity among students (Cieslik & Phillips, 2021). From Delphi study results, I suggest that this loneliness affects Jewish faculty members as well. The act of concealing Jewishness is a form of silencing discourse (Rabin, 2021). Another scholar-participant raised the topic of institutional ignorance in failure to recognize Judaism beyond religion:

> At my formerly Christian institution, now non-affiliated, there are a lot of patronizing attitudes towards Jewish students and faculty. They tend to see Jews mostly as a religious group and, therefore, cannot really contend with the multifaceted expressions of Jewish identity that exist among students and faculty.

This statement describes social antisemitism on a continuum of "othering" (Prell, 2021, p. 187) and highlights the need for a critical social theory of society (Strydom, 2022) to examine systemic oppression. Reducing Jewish intersectionality to single identities could be a form of interpersonal antisemitism as it lacks regard for the totality of Jewish distinctiveness. From such a narrow perspective, shared Jewish ancestry, ethnicity, and marginalization are easily disenfranchised (Lyerly, 2023).

When university personnel are unattuned to Jewish expression, callous responsiveness is more prevalent. One panelist said, "University personnel are either indifferent, afraid, or secretly sympathetic about antisemitism…it is very hard to read their motives, but it's getting worse." This observation generated reactions from other participants, especially due to current campus hostility. Another scholar commented about academic responsiveness in the final round, "This seems to be changing at the moment…the landscape of American higher education is large, and one needs to avoid overgeneralization." He implied that depending on the institution, some reactions reflect antisemitism, but others do not. In sum, participants reached a consensus for the research question: is institutional antisemitism a problem in the US with conclusions that (a) it is difficult to define

institutional antisemitism, and the term is often misinterpreted, and (b) interpersonal antisemitism exists and manifests in lack of sensitivity for the needs of Jewish people on campus. In the following section, I discuss panelist responses to two final questions about future educational implications and prevention of institutional antisemitism.

Future Educational Directions and Campus Support

Within study rounds, scholar-participants answered two future-oriented questions about Jewish historical trauma education and the prevention of institutional antisemitism. The questions addressed Jewish exclusion from multicultural courses and social justice endeavors (Abrams, 2023) and feelings of "intimidation" (Goodman, 2023, p. 4) about public Jewish expression. Per the Tree Heuristic (see Figure 1), panelists reached two conclusions about historical trauma education and two regarding antisemitism prevention.

All scholar-participants agreed that (a) it is crucial to teach about Jewish oppression in global and contextualized ways and (b) distinguishing between antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and Israeli criticism is important. Experts conceded that prevention of institutional antisemitism is possible through venues of (a) communication with students and personnel about institutional antisemitism and (b) remedies or approaches tailored to specific institutions.

Holocaust and Jewish Historical Trauma Education

Scholar-participants offered many examples of contextualizing Jewish history during the two study rounds. One response indicated a need to "emphasize more human encounters" and "...teach a broader sweep of experience." To this generalized opinion, experts added detailed perceptions from professional interactions. Another panelist said,

> I do strongly support Holocaust studies and include them in my…Jewish literature course…so, in all those…courses, I will teach some work or multiple works that relate to Holocaust history and memory, but they are contextualized, not just this one period.

Another scholar-participant shared his concern that "Holocaust studies should be taught with a couple of caveats and should not have an outsized place within training courses. I'm sometimes concerned that they do, and therefore, this obscures other genocides…of other marginalized communities." While his comment reflects the integration of dialectical materialism (Gould, 2023), an additional member counter-commented that Ethnic Studies programs sometimes exclude antisemitism studies. Two remaining panelists were skeptical about teaching historical trauma education within multicultural coursework. One said, "…I'm not sure…a lot of energy is put into Holocaust education…and I don't see the results as commensurate with the effort…maybe a different approach is needed."

Panel opinions did not surprise me because Holocaust education is often taught with the intention to evoke empathy for marginalized suffering, but rarely to counter antisemitism (Pistone et al., 2021). Though a common institutional reaction to rising antisemitism is to increase Holocaust education (Pearce et al., 2020), research has not found that historical trauma studies reduce Jew-hatred (Pistone et al., 2021). Scholars of antisemitism acknowledge this concern and are investigating pedagogical gaps to create alternative and meaningful interventions (Rajal, 2024).

The first problem found in Holocaust education is the "limited focus on antisemitism" (Pistone et al., 2021, p. 8). After reviewing 117 Holocaust education studies published mainly in the past 20 years, Pistone et al. (2021) discovered that 43% of the inquiries did not mention or discuss antisemitism. In addition, contemporary research indicates that few students can define

antisemitism even after receiving related education (Foster et al., 2016). Younger generations often misinterpret the reasons behind the mass targeting of Jews (Pearce et al., 2020). This may be correlated with a newer trend of broad Holocaust education that is often generalized out of historical context and, therefore, not exclusively aligned with Jewish experiences (Metzger, 2012). American students learn about anti-racism, but not about critiquing antisemitism (Spector, 2005). This phenomenon worsens anti-Jewish attitudes (Rajal, 2024).

Rajal (2024) suggests integration of social critical theory to improve Jewish historical trauma education. Though Holocaust education prevents "a relapse into barbarism" (Adorno, 2005, p. 191), appealing to student values or emphasizing positive aspects of marginalization may be ineffective. Instead, "roots must be sought in the persecutor, and not in the victim" (Adorno, 2005, p. 192). In other words, CT addresses the Jewish image projected by antisemites, who are at the center of analysis instead of Jews (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). CT is also relevant to the panel's second conclusion that differentiation must be made between antisemitism and anti-Zionism.

Differentiation Between Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism

Scholar-participants recognized the importance of differentiating between antisemitism and anti-Zionism when engaging students and personnel. One senior scholar expressed fear that "it is also common that criticism of Israel is expressed using antisemitic tropes, often by students too inexperienced and uninformed to recognize the antisemitism in their own words." Another participant voiced a need for discernment, specifically with Jewish students, and said, "It is…important to talk to Jewish students about the lines separating criticism of Israel, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism. Most of them do not take courses dealing with these issues, and they form their opinions from social media." Other experts counter-commented about Jewish students' misunderstanding of long-standing antisemitic tropes within anti-Zionism.

The debate was redirected by a heartfelt response from an Israeli professor that resonated with all members. He said, "Holocaust studies can serve as an opening for future learning, including other genocides if presented correctly." Participants appreciated his statement, and one panelist concluded, "I agree. I think that too much insistence on the supposed uniqueness of the Holocaust has generated resentment toward the field."

When I reviewed expert responses, I found it interesting that Jewish students shared misunderstanding about the context and history of antisemitic tropes, much like non-Jewish pupils (Rajal, 2024). From a political-ontological perspective (Wilderson, 2017), some Jewish millennial and Gen Z students lean toward progressive stances and conceptualize antisemitism from an anti-racist perspective (Spector, 2005). Sociological dynamics among Jewish students are equally important, therefore, in preventing institutional antisemitism and should be included in communication and advocacy.

Preventing Institutional Antisemitism

Communication about Antisemitism

Panelists responded to a final question about preventing institutional antisemitism with two conclusions: (a) communicating with students and personnel about antisemitism is helpful, and (b) remedies must be tailored to specific institutions. Participants cited communication methods such as informing students about Title IX reporting in cases of harassment, speaking to administration, discussing differences between non-inclusive behavior and antisemitism, and addressing social justice warriors about discourse. Dynamics of tenure, privilege, and academic relationships

influenced panelist comfort levels when reporting antisemitic incidents. Scholarly discerning was also rooted in individual commitment to address personal biases (Gould, 2023). One professor said, "...And you know, so much of my work is trying to separate those two out."

Several comments focused on the importance of encouraging social justice warriors to acknowledge personal biases. An Israeli scholar said that a strong future direction for the Delphi study would be "to discuss and research the experience of Jewish students alongside the experience of Palestinian/Muslim students. These tend to be separated, although they seem to directly reflect upon each other. Investigating them together could shed light on both." His hope for broader inclusivity of intersectional identities adheres to CT's goal of a dialectical schema (Adorno, 2005) in academia. Dialectal approaches are helpful when adapting specific approaches to combat Jew-hatred for diverse institutions.

Tailored Approaches to Specific Institutions

All panelists understood that remedies for institutional antisemitism vary by institution and must match the academic culture and community. One participant said, "I think the remedies must be tailored to the situation and specific universities." Another scholar added that it is easier to see the problems, but he is unsure about solutions. Final comments indicated that "because of the variability (from one school to the next), it's hard to generalize" and that some schools have set up task forces to address antisemitism, "which is a step in the right direction," according to one participant.

Researchers of antisemitism recognize institutional uniqueness and the need for adaptive approaches in historical trauma education. In a study that examined Scottish and Austrian student attitudes toward Jew-hatred, Rajal (2024) found that Holocaust history in both locations informed government, scholastic, and regional standards. In Austria, for example, Holocaust education isolates Jews from the dominant society, thus creating a process of *de-Judaisation* of Jewish Holocaust experiences (Gerstenfeld, 2009), while this is not the case in Scotland. Though universal recommendations for Jewish historical trauma education address deeper questions of guilt and teaching a "personalizing way of remembering" (Rajal, 2024, p. 14) to counter de-humanization, delivery and pedagogical materials differ.

Overall Discussion

This qualitative Delphi study responds to escalating institutional antisemitism in the United States of America (ADL, 2022). The examination is poignant in 2024 as antisemitic attitudes have worsened by 24% (ADL, 2024) since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, and some Jews feel unprotected on campuses (Goodman, 2023). Though related studies feature student lived experiences, scholarly perspectives on institutional antisemitism are scarce in related literature (Abrams, 2023). The Delphi panel addresses this literary gap and contributes an expert consensus to related scholarship.

Despite contemporary examination of Jew-hatred, the field of antisemitism studies is undertheorized. Critical theories are needed to integrate trans-historical antisemitism into socio-cultural contexts (Magid, 2024) and to balance the existing incongruence between ahistorical and historical interventions for antisemitism prevention (Rajal, 2024). Due to an absence of frameworks and assessments specific to Jews (Abrams, 2023), it is difficult to assess Jewish needs on campus. The current "divide over diversity" (Marris, 2024, p. 475) among university scholars also contributes to campus tension. Empowerment of Jewish voices is crucial, therefore, for the recognition of marginalized experiences within academic discourse (Weddington, 2019). This

inquiry is conceptualized from the theoretical lenses of critical theory, Afro-pessimism, and the study of anti-Blackness.

The backgrounds and lived experiences of scholar-participants are discussed prior to consensus formulation in accordance with critical theory (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). The consensus for this Delphi study is that (a) it is difficult to define institutional antisemitism and the term is often misinterpreted, and (b) interpersonal antisemitism exists and manifests in a lack of sensitivity to the needs of Jews on campus. Future study implications concluded that (a) it is crucial to teach about Jewish oppression in contextualized global ways and (b) distinguishing between antisemitism and anti-Zionism is needed. On antisemitism prevention, participants conceded that (a) communication with students and personnel about institutional antisemitism is helpful, and (b) remedies must be tailored to specific institutions.

Study limitations included a small and completely male-dominated sample, online interviews, and lack of comparison with participants holding other intersectional identities. Despite the smaller sample size (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), the examination contains a strong sociocultural component of institutional encounters among Jewish academics, an underrepresented population (Howard, 2020). Through the study consensus and lived experiences of Jewish scholars, this Delphi inquiry fills a gap in academic literature (Drumm et al., 2022).

I share several important recognitions about the Delphi study here with the reader. First, I was struck by the constant and delicate balance that Jewish scholars hold between personal marginalization (Wilderson, 2017) and academic positionality. Second, I acknowledge that the choice of expressing Jewishness varies and must be fully embraced in all cases (Caplan, 2021). Third, I recognize Jewish liberation from a marginalized context rather than that of the dominant culture (Douglass et al., 2018). Thus, I avoid the “hobble” (Douglass et al., 2018, p.1) of binding minority experiences to mainstream responses (Douglass et al., 2018). Fourth, while the integration of anti-Blackness theories is helpful in antisemitism studies (Magid, 2024), scholars must be cognizant of de-Judaisation (Gerstenfeld, 2009) or Jewish trauma minimization that occurs because of over-generalizing minority traumas.

Conclusion

It is clear to me that all academic personnel must partake in the conversation and theorization of institutional antisemitism. I hope that integrating critical theory into related discussions will not only honor marginalization (Wilderson, 2017) but extend deeper appreciation for Jewish resilience into academia. All scholar-participants modeled such strength when sharing vulnerable and powerful encounters within study rounds. In both cloaked and openly expressive sentiments (Caplan, 2021), panelists personified stamina that is unique to the Jewish people. A combination of trans-historical and phenomenological sentiments was shared in the study, thus embodying a dialectical schema (Adorno, 1970) for the reader and the field of antisemitism studies at large.

As the primary investigator of this inquiry, I witnessed group members’ opposition to the status quo (Strydom, 2022) of institutional norms through study interactions and manuscript compilation. At times, I unveiled the wounded researcher within myself (Romanyshyn, 2010) when interviewing this brilliant Delphi panel and was humbled by the participants’ courage and authenticity. I encountered panelists’ wisdom, contributions, and endless commitment to the field of antisemitism and found camaraderie in working toward mutual academic and humanitarian goals.

Though I learned a great deal about institutional antisemitism from Jewish perspectives, I realized the need to include other identities and voices in ongoing inquiries. Future study

implications include (a) completing a Delphi study with non-Jewish scholars of intersected identities, (b) featuring a comparison study between Jewish and non-Jewish voices, (c) engaging panelists in personal narrative studies to evoke the power of story (Ellis et al., 2011) and (d) creating critical theories that are specific to Jewish lived experiences. Ultimately, "eradicating antisemitism is as much a question of responsible citizenship as it is of historical responsibility" (Rajal, 2024, p. 15), and the power of community is endless.

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