

The Intersection of Antisemitism and Misogyny

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The Intersection of Antisemitism and Misogyny

Lesley Klaff

Introduction

The Hate Crime (Misogyny) Bill 2019-21 is currently being debated in Parliament. When the Bill becomes law, it will make motivation by misogyny an aggravating factor in criminal sentencing and require police forces to record hate crimes motivated by misogyny. This means that the Hate Crime (Misogyny) Act, when it is enacted, will recognise misogyny as a hate crime in the United Kingdom. For this reason, the time is ripe to develop a policy argument to recognise gendered antisemitism as a unique sub-category of misogynistic hate crime. The term 'gendered antisemitism' is used to refer to the abuse that occurs at the intersection of antisemitism and misogyny. Its recognition would be given legal effect by means of an amendment to the Act which provides that antisemitism is an additional aggravating factor.

Taking an intersectional approach to misogynistic hate crime is important because women's experience of abuse appears to differ according to their different intersectional identities. Sociologist and antisemitism scholar, Dr David Hirsh, believes that the sexual violence of published abuse of women becomes far worse when an element of conscious antisemitism enters into it, but there has been very little empirical sociological work done to support his belief.¹ In fact, although gendered antisemitism is an important issue, nothing significant, including nothing that is empirically well supported, has been written about it. The 2018 *Sara Conference Against Misogyny and Antisemitism*² noted that research on women and antisemitism has hitherto largely only focused on the "Jewish Princess" or "Jewish American Princess" ("JAP") stereotype. This stereotype has been described as a combination of antisemitism and misogyny because it remodels the traditional antisemitic tropes into a female form: she is materialistic, money-grabbing, manipulative, shallow, crafty and ostentatious.³ Other empirical work, albeit limited, has focused on the experience of Jewish women at the hands of the Nazis. In her 2018 book, *Women's Experiences in the Holocaust: In Their Own Words*, Agnes Grunwald-Spier narrates the personal experiences of Jewish women in the Shoah to show how they were different, and in many respects, were worse than the experiences of Jewish men⁴. Women were disproportionately chosen for the death camps, for example, to prevent Jews from breeding⁵. Other than the attention that has been given to the JAP stereotype, and one book on female Shoah victims, there is no available academic work on the nature, function, and impact on its victims of gendered antisemitism.

There are several possible reasons for the lack of attention given to gendered antisemitism. One may be that the theory of intersectionality, which recognises that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of discrimination, only burst onto the academic scene in 1989 and has been slow to garner mainstream interest⁶. Feminist sociologist and antisemitism scholar, Professor Karin Stoegner, believes that antisemitism is rarely included in intersectional theory because the latter relies on binary markers, such as white-black, male-female, hetero-lesbian/gay, and antisemitic theory places Jews beyond binary categorisation⁷. She further suggests that the vehement anti-Zionist orientation of some feminist, anti-racist social movements contributes to the exclusion of antisemitism from the intersectionality framework⁸. It may also be the case that antisemitism scholars have lacked a general interest in women and their experiences.

The function of this chapter will be to attempt, in a preliminary and limited way, to start the social - scientific ball rolling in the area of gendered antisemitism by considering some of the places where evidence of it exists, and where one might expect further enquiries and research to reveal interesting results. This will be done by noting carefully at each point where evidence of gendered antisemitism requires further research on its nature, function, and impact.

Understanding Antisemitism

To consider the nature and function of gendered antisemitism, an elementary understanding of antisemitism is necessary. Whilst a good place to start is with the definition, defining antisemitism is problematic because the concept of antisemitism is contested. This was evident in the political dispute that arose within the Labour Party when its National Executive Committee (NEC) refused to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism in July 2018, claiming that it stifles free speech on Israel and allows antisemitism to be weaponised for political reasons. This was because the definition recognises that antisemitism can “also target the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity.”⁹ When the NEC finally adopted the definition in September 2018 following considerable pressure from centrists within the Labour Party, as well as from Jewish communal bodies, it did so subject to a caveat that its adoption would in no way constrain criticism of Israel¹⁰. This effectively rendered several of the definition’s examples of antisemitism redundant and allowed the Labour Party to extricate itself from accusations of antisemitism by altering the definition of the term¹¹.

Nevertheless, the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism has been widely adopted overseas and within the UK¹² and is therefore frequently referred to as the “International Definition”¹³. It defines antisemitism as “a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”¹⁴ This statement is then followed by eleven examples which “could taking into account the overall context” manifest antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and religious institutions.¹⁵ The examples include making “mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical” claims about Jews as a collectivity; charging Jews individually or as a people with inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust; or accusing Jews of dual-loyalty with respect to Israel. In addition, there are several more explicit examples of how antisemitism can be manifested, when context is taken fully into account, with respect to the State of Israel. These include denying the Jewish people the right to self-determination; applying double standards by expecting from Israel a behaviour not expected of any other state; applying the images and symbols of traditional antisemitism (e.g. the blood libel) to Israel; comparing contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis; or holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel. The IHRA Definition emphasises that criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country is not a manifestation of antisemitism¹⁶.

It is not only the hard left of the Labour Party that opposes the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism. It has plenty of other critics, too¹⁷. The controversy that surrounds it, as is evident from the controversy within the Labour Party, is because of its explicit acknowledgment, by means of its short list of examples that refer to Israel, that there are historical continuities between traditional antisemitism and contemporary, or post 1948, anti-Zionism. Critics of the definition claim that it wrongly stigmatises contemporary anti-Zionism as antisemitic. They argue that anti-Zionism is not antisemitic because it is merely opposition to Zionism, and Zionism is a political movement or ideology that is independent of, and unrelated to, a person’s race or religion. They frequently point to anti-Zionist Jews to support their claim. Zionists and proponents of the IHRA Definition disagree with them. They assert that antisemitism is implicated in contemporary anti-Zionism because it is opposition to Zionism, which is

the Jewish project of establishing, developing, and protecting the State of Israel as the ancestral homeland of the Jews. Further, this opposition is frequently expressed in the language of prejudice against Israel or the Zionist project. It is this meaning of anti-Zionism that is found in the official 2002 definition contained in the report of the Berlin Technical University's Centre for Research on Antisemitism, drafted for the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)¹⁸. The report defines anti-Zionism as "the portrayal of Israel as a state that is fundamentally negatively distinct from all others and which therefore has no right to exist."¹⁹ Thus, the controversy surrounding the IHRA Definition is directly related to the fact that anti-Zionism, like antisemitism, is a contested concept.

Anti-Zionism's relationship to antisemitism can be explained by the fact that an affinity with Israel and the Zionist project is an aspect of the identity of the majority of British Jews who assume an obligation to support Israel and to ensure its survival as the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people²⁰. This affinity does not equate to unconditional or unstinting support for the government of Israel or its policies; rather it amounts to a sense of connection with Israel and a sense of its importance in the context of Jewish history and the persecution of the Jewish people. For this reason, hostility to Israel engages Jews not only in conventional political terms but also because Israel is an aspect of their identity. It is also the case that hostility towards Israel is frequently directed at individual Jews who, because of their assumed role in the creation of the State of Israel and their support for its continued existence, are collectively taken to be "Nazis", "racists", "warmongers", and "apologists for settler-colonialism and apartheid". Such expressions of hostility towards Jews are often serious and sometimes violent. This is why the IHRA Definition stigmatizes as antisemitic certain expressions of hostility towards Israel which characterise the country as an essentially racist, Nazi state and settler-colonial society that poses a permanent threat to peace, both in the region and in the world²¹.

The fact that much contemporary anti-Israel hostility shrouds significant continuities with traditional antisemitism is because of the nature of antisemitism: it is not reducible to a single essence. Instead, there are many antisemitisms. This is because antisemitism is protean and capable of shifting its shape in response to different events, milieus, contexts, and cultural anxieties. Critical social theorists, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, understood antisemitism as ever changing, as an evolving social phenomenon²²; while lawyer, writer, and antisemitism scholar, Anthony Julius, has described antisemitism as an "heterogeneous phenomenon, the site of collective hatreds..."²³ and as "a repertoire of attitudes, myths and defamations in circulation at any given time."²⁴ It is because of the plurality of its forms of existence that antisemitism is, in the words of the late historian Robert Wistrich, the world's "longest hatred."²⁵

Julius's description of antisemitism as a collection of defamations in circulation at any given time is useful to explain antisemitism without specific reference to the IHRA Definition. This is because all versions of antisemitism libel Jews, whether as individuals or as a collective²⁶. These libels may be grouped under three headings: the blood libel, the conspiracy libel, and the economic libel. All three libels substantially derive from three distinct aspects of Christian thinking and practice and share the premise that Jews hate or despise non-Jews²⁷. The blood libel, which originated in 12th Century England, holds that Jews entertain homicidal intentions towards non-Jews (at first Christians and now predominantly Muslims). The principal charge is that Jews kill non-Jewish children. The blood libel has become the governing trope in the characterisation of Israel and the Zionist project, with Israelis and Zionists frequently described or characterised as child-murderers²⁸.

The conspiracy libel supposes that Jews act as one, in pursuit of goals inimical to the interests of non-Jews. A good example is the assertion that the Jews were behind 9/11 or that Jews control Hollywood or the media. For antisemitic conspiracy theorists, the Jews are everywhere and are well-organised.

Their goal is world domination, and their actions are clandestine and sinister. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a Russian forgery first published in 1903 which told of a secret meeting of Jewish leaders who were plotting world domination, is perhaps the most notorious example of antisemitic conspiracy theory²⁹.

Research conducted by Cambridge University in 2018 indicates that as many as 60% of Britons believe in conspiracy theories of one sort or another³⁰. Evidence from recent antisemitic incident reports published in Britain, Europe and America indicates that there has been a significant rise in antisemitic conspiracy theories on both the left and the right of the political spectrum³¹. On the hard left, the tendency is to see “the hand of Israel” behind everything that is bad in the world. Examples include the actress Maxine Peake’s claim in an interview and subsequently tweeted that the Israeli Secret Service trained the American police in the knee-on-the-neck tactic that killed George Floyd³². Another hard-left example is the claim by the actress Miriam Margolyes that former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn was “forced” to resign due to “a conspiracy within the party motivated from Israel.”³³ The tendency of the far right, on the other hand, is to regard the Jews as destroying white nations³⁴. This conspiracy myth involves the idea that Jews control migration flows and are therefore responsible for the immigration of people regarded as ethnically and culturally inferior, resulting in the destruction of ‘native’ identity. Known as “white genocide”, the famous Jewish investor and philanthropist, George Soros, is frequently accused of being its mastermind³⁵. It was a delusional belief in the ‘white genocide’ conspiracy myth that drove a white supremacist named Robert Bowers to shoot dead eleven worshippers and injure six others in the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in October 2018. More recently, the coronavirus pandemic has sparked a wave of antisemitic conspiracy theories which blame Jews for spreading the disease and profiting from it³⁶. A recent report by the government’s independent advisor on antisemitism, Lord John Mann, reveals that anti-vaxxers on both the left and the right of the political spectrum are spreading online hate linking the pandemic to “Jews plotting to take over the world.”³⁷ Sara Khan of the Commission for Countering Extremism summarises antisemitic COVID-19 conspiracy theories as the claim that “the virus is fake and part of a Jewish plot to mislead the public, that it’s real and was deliberately created for malevolent purposes, that the Jews are the primary spreaders of the virus, that Jewish people are dying in disproportionately higher numbers, and posts that incite others to deliberately spread the virus to Jews.”³⁸

The economic libel supposes that Jews, who are self-interested, acquisitive, and unproductive by nature, financially exploit non-Jews. Stereotypes of Jews as greedy, miserly, stingy, wealthy, and connected to money lending and usury have stoked antisemitic sentiment throughout history and still influence the perception of Jews today³⁹. Often the economic libel is bound up with the conspiracy libel in the same expression of antisemitic sentiment. Examples may be found in the following tweets reported to the *Community Security Trust* in March and April 2018 respectively: “There is no argument here. Global banks are ripping everyone off because they are run by Jews...”⁴⁰ and “Jews make money out of the gas chambers and six million supposedly dead cadavers. Can you imagine any other ethnic group profiting from the dead?”⁴¹ Another example of the operation of the economic libel in conjunction with the conspiracy libel may be found in the anti-vaxxer claims that Jews created the coronavirus and are colluding behind the scenes to destabilise banks and countries through its spread⁴².

An understanding of traditional and contemporary antisemitism is needed to recognise and assess the gravity of the abuse that occurs at the intersection of antisemitism and misogyny. Evidence of this abuse will be offered throughout the chapter and will be referred to as ‘gendered antisemitism’. The chapter begins with a consideration of the published experience of Jewish female politicians who spoke out about antisemitism in the Labour Party during Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership.

Gendered Antisemitism Directed at Jewish Female Politicians.

While there has been no shortage of antisemitism within the left tradition historically, its emergence into the mainstream of the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership has provided the opportunity for a more extensive public debate about left antisemitism⁴³. It is in this context that experiences of antisemitism combined with misogyny were reported to the House of Commons by Jewish female politicians during its first general debate about antisemitism on April 17, 2018, and to the subsequent *Sara Conference Against Antisemitism and Misogyny* in October 2018. The Sara Conference was organised to specifically examine the intersectionality of antisemitism and misogyny and this was the first time that attention had been given to gendered antisemitism in the UK. The following section will therefore focus on three specific examples of abuse that were reported by Jewish female politicians to the House of Commons and to the Sara Conference following their complaints about antisemitism in the Labour Party during Corbyn's tenure as leader

These three examples provide an opportunity to consider the nature and impact of gendered antisemitism.

In considering the experiences of Jewish female politicians it should be remembered that there is nothing new about misogyny in politics. Defined as "dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women,"⁴⁴ misogyny is thought to consistently feature in politics because of male resentment against women taking positions of political power. The *Sara Conference* noted that both antisemitism and sexism involve notions of power, control and domination, and that Jewish women are at the intersection of both⁴⁵. Such notions of power, control and domination are even more concentrated in the case of Jewish women who hold political power. This may help to explain the vicious abuse that was directed at Jewish female politicians who spoke out about antisemitism in the Labour Party while Corbyn was its leader. This chapter will focus on three of these women, namely, Ruth Smeeth, Dame Margaret Hodge, and Luciana Berger⁴⁶. All three were, at the relevant time, Labour members of parliament.

The first example involves Ruth Smeeth and Dame Margaret Hodge. They reported to the House of Commons and the Sara Conference in 2018 that they were accused on Twitter by a Labour Party member of being "a couple of shit stirring cum buckets bought and paid for by Israel."⁴⁷ This short statement manages to be profoundly disparaging of both women and Jews. The term "cum bucket" is a synonym for "slut". The Urban Dictionary's top definition for a "cum bucket" is "one whom you would imagine to be containing enough semen within various orifices of their body to fill a receptacle of some kind, such as a bucket."⁴⁸ Smeeth described this language as "obscene."⁴⁹ What primarily makes this social media attack on Smeeth and Hodge antisemitic is the suggestion that they are not only traitors to the Labour Party because they complained about antisemitism, but that they are also traitors to the country because they are paid servants of a foreign power ("paid for by Israel"). It is the thought that each woman is paid, as a whore is paid, that is then presumably taken by the abuser to "justify" the sexual abuse. In other words, it is by way of the thought that Smeeth and Hodge are paid for by Israel - the great whoremaster of the world in far left thinking - that their abuser arrives at the thought that these women are literally whores, "cum buckets." Thus, the sexual abuse in this social media attack on Smeeth and Hodge appears to be driven by the antisemitism. Had their abuser said, "Ruth Smeeth and Margaret Hodge are Blairite cum buckets," the logic of the thought – the nature of the connection supposed to obtain between being a follower of Tony Blair and being a cum bucket – would have been much less easy to follow and therefore much less effective as a means of abuse. It would appear, therefore, that the antisemitism, the verbal violence, and the sexual obscenity are all

intrinsically connected in this attack on Smeeth and Hodge. Research on the connection between antisemitic and misogynistic ways of thinking is necessary to develop a sound policy position advocating the legal adoption of gendered antisemitism as a subcategory of misogynistic hate crime.

There are other examples of the link between antisemitic and misogynistic ways of thinking. For instance, Smeeth reported that in early 2018 she received the following abusive tweet: “The gallows would be a fine and fitting place for this dyke piece of yid shit to swing from.”⁵⁰ The use of the word “dyke” is interesting. Its most obvious use is its original sense as a homophobic and misogynistic slur to denote a masculine or a butch woman. However, the term might also have been used in an antisemitic sense as many images in the late 19th and early 20th century portrayed Jews as having an ambiguous sexuality and gender. Antisemitism has traditionally considered Jewish men to be effeminate and Jewish women to be masculinised⁵¹. The debasement and antisemitism inherent in the description of Ruth Smeeth as a “piece of yid shit” needs no explication: it is well known that the word “yid” is a derogatory term for a Jew and the suffix “shit” is considered the height of incivility when making a personal attack. The suggestion that Smeeth deserves to swing from the gallows likens her to the criminal who was hanged as punishment for his crime. It could be interpreted as a death threat because it deploys violent language. Indeed, Smeeth told the House of Commons that she experienced this abusive tweet as threatening and as undermining of her sense of personal security⁵². One is left with no doubt that the intention behind the language was to cause distress, humiliation, and fear.

It should be acknowledged that the use of violent language in relation to female politicians is not new. Theresa May as prime minister, for example, experienced violent rhetoric in the form of certain lynch mob sentiments expressed by her own party members, such as the suggestion that she “bring her own noose” to a forthcoming meeting of the backbenchers 1922 Committee⁵³. The language of politics has reputedly always been aggressive, often drawing on the metaphors of battles and big guns, especially during heated political debates. In the case of the female Jewish MPs who voiced concerns about antisemitism in Corbyn’s Labour Party, the violent rhetoric they reported was invariably coupled with misogynistic and sexually violent references to their Jewishness. For example, Ruth Smeeth, Dame Margaret Hodge, and Luciana Berger told of repeated rape threats accompanied by the terms “Zionist bitch” and “Zionist cunt”⁵⁴. Feminists have argued that the words “bitch” and “cunt” act to reinforce the dehumanisation of women by reducing them to the image of a dog or to a mere body part, the female genitalia⁵⁵. As before, the language used in these examples of gendered antisemitism is evidence of a connection between sexual obscenity, verbal violence, and antisemitism. The antisemitism resides in the use of the pejorative term “Zionist” to characterise a Jewish person as a “racist”, a “Nazi”, a “white supremacist”, a “coloniser” and an “imperialist”.⁵⁶ This derogatory use of “Zionist” to mean “Jew” is the result of the perceived connection between Jews, Israel and the Zionist project, and the far-left anti-Zionist narrative which portrays Israel as a racist, colonialist, imperialist, Nazi state.

UN women have emphasised that online violence against women, as in the case of the rape threats described above, can be just as harmful and damaging as physical violence⁵⁷. Research on the harm and damage caused to women by offline threats is also needed. Jewish MP Luciana Berger reported feeling physically ill following the receipt of violent threats that were delivered to her Wavertree constituency office in Liverpool when she was a Labour MP⁵⁸. One such threat was in the form of a hand-written letter in September 2018 which was signed by people describing themselves as “Corbyn supporters.” It opened with the words, “Hello Luciana, You nasty, stinking, lying, Zionist, ‘Jew-Bitch’” and ended with, “Attached is correspondence of what Brother Lewis (sic) Farrakhan thinks about you stinking Jews. Have a good read, cunt.... And see you later!! Yeah!!”⁵⁹ This letter provides further

evidence of the connection between antisemitism and misogyny. Not only did it use dehumanising and degrading misogynistic words like “bitch” and “cunt”, the Medieval antisemitic stereotype of Jews as liars⁶⁰, and the antisemitic stereotype of Jews as “stinking” made popular in Nazi Germany, but it also included correspondence by Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam leader whose antisemitism is well-documented. According to the *Anti-Defamation League* which monitors antisemitism in North America, Louis Farrakhan has railed against Jews for over 30 years, accusing them of all manner of conspiracies, of being “Satanic”, of being “termites,”⁶¹ and describing Hitler as “a great man”⁶². It was Farrakhan’s antisemitic Independence Day sermon on July 4th 2020 that was responsible for the public embrace of antisemitic sentiments by several African American football players, musicians and celebrities⁶³, as well as for the claim made by British grime artist Wiley that Black people are the “real children of Israel.”⁶⁴

There is evidence in this abusive incident of an intention on the part of the perpetrators to offend, insult and intimidate Berger as both a woman and as a Jew. Other hand-written letters to Berger’s constituency office threatened that she would be “raped, stabbed, and covered in acid.”⁶⁵ Not only were these violent threats profoundly intimidating, but the effort required to hand-deliver them to her place of work might have suggested to Berger that the offenders not only wished her serious harm, but that they possessed the inclination and means to carry it out. It might well be the case, therefore, that Berger felt her physical safety to be more threatened by the receipt of these hand-delivered letters than by the receipt of the threats online, however bad they happened to be. Research on the difference, if any, between the impact on Jewish women of offline as opposed to online threats is necessary to understand the range and nature of the harms that arise in the context of gendered antisemitism. This is important to argue for gender antisemitism’s criminalisation.

The next section will address what is already known about gendered antisemitism and online abuse. This section also provides a further opportunity to consider examples of gendered antisemitism directed at Jewish women who are in the public eye.

Gendered Antisemitism and Online Abuse

According to the limited data available it appears that online abuse involving a combination of antisemitism and misogyny is directed at specific female politicians, television journalists and entertainers who are known to be Jewish rather than at women who are not involved in public life⁶⁶. It is likely, however, that Jewish women who are not in the public eye are also the victims of online targeted abuse and that the absence of available data is a reflection of the lack of research on non-public-life women, whether Jewish or otherwise. Elsewhere it has been shown that the so-called “gender trolling phenomenon” is targeted at women who assert their opinion, whether they are in the public eye or not⁶⁷.

Some statistics on online abuse and women are in order. Research by a UN Commission in 2015 found that globally, women are 27 times more likely than men to be harassed online⁶⁸; and a report entitled, “Hidden Hate: What Google Searches Tell Us About Antisemitism Today,” published jointly by the *Antisemitism Policy Trust* and the *Community Security Trust* in 2019, stated that Jewish female politicians are the subject of more antisemitic Google searches than Jewish male politicians.⁶⁹ Moreover, Jewish female politicians are more likely to be the subject of an antisemitic Google search than a search about a political issue. For example, there are more searches for “Luciana Berger Jew” than for “Luciana Berger policy,” “Luciana Berger votes”, or “Luciana Berger Brexit.”⁷⁰ Only about 3.3 per cent of searches for Luciana Berger are looking for information relating to mental health, even though this was a policy area of particular interest to Berger when she was in parliament and which she represented in Labour’s shadow cabinet from September 2015 to June 2016⁷¹.

The website Stormfront, a far right internet hate site, shows a clear connection between antisemitism and misogyny : the two Jewish parliamentarians with the most mentions on Stormfront are Luciana Berger and Dame Margaret Hodge, and in the history of Stormfront there have been 14% more mentions of Jewish female MPs than Jewish male MPs⁷². On the other hand, British Jewish female entertainers do not get as many mentions on Stormfront as British Jewish male entertainers do⁷³. The conclusion drawn from this is that Jewish women with political power are particularly subject to antisemitic abuse⁷⁴. This reflects the fact that women in positions of political power cause male resentment and Jewish women with political power combine the notions of power associated with both sexism and antisemitism. A 2019 report based on the *Sara Conference* concluded that for politically active Jewish women, online abuse acts as a direct barrier to their freedom of expression and political participation because it undermines their sense of personal security.⁷⁵ This, in turn, has an “anti-democratic impact.”⁷⁶

Overall, there are more than 9,000 threads on the far right Stormfront website related to feminism, 60 per cent of which also mention Jews⁷⁷. To put this statistic into context, Jews are mentioned in 39% of all Stormfront threads on any subject, while blacks are mentioned in 33%⁷⁸. Stormfront members appear to believe that Jews are leading the feminist movement. A common theme is the claim that “feminism is a Zionist conspiracy” and one thread called feminism “an entirely Jewish invention.”⁷⁹ Margaret Hodge told the Sara Conference that she received messages via social media claiming that “feminism is a Zionist conspiracy.”⁸⁰ This again shows that there is a clear connection between antisemitism and misogynistic attitudes towards Jewish women, as do Stormfront’s negative comments about the appearance of Luciana Berger who is described as an “equine-faced Zionist”.⁸¹ Berger’s appearance is also a major theme of Google searches about her, but unlike Stormfront, they tend to be more positive with the most common Google search being “Luciana Berger is hot.”⁸²

Researchers at American media watchdog MediaMatters looked at 4chan – an online forum with a reputation for racism and antisemitism as well as misogyny, homophobia and transphobia – and found that the number of antisemitic posts that were also misogynistic had drastically risen, growing by 180% between 2015 and 2017⁸³. Given its prevalence on Stormfront and 4chan, it is inevitable that the harmful combination of antisemitism and misogyny would filter into the more mainstream social media sites like Facebook. In April 2018 *The Sunday Times* reported that not only was Luciana Berger a frequent victim of pro-Corbyn Facebook trolls with comments like “She is a vile Zionist”⁸⁴ and “Deselect the cunt”⁸⁵ but BBC political editor, Laura Kuenssberg, who is not Jewish, was the victim of comments such as, “I wonder what vested interests this confirmed Zionist might be protecting?”⁸⁶ and “She is an evil lackey, sold to the big money and corporations”.⁸⁷ The context for these antisemitic and misogynistic comments, of which there were many more on Corbyn-supporting Facebook sites⁸⁸, was that Corbyn supporters perceived Luciana Berger as deliberately manufacturing a crisis within the Labour Party by making false accusations about antisemitism. They also believed Laura Kuenssberg to be biased against Jeremy Corbyn following a BBC Trust ruling in 2017 that she had inaccurately reported his views⁸⁹.

Much antisemitic discourse is expressed in subtle and coded ways, especially online.⁹⁰ The belief that Berger was acting in bad faith to smear the Labour Party when she raised concerns about antisemitism is antisemitic because it is based on the conspiracy belief among Corbyn supporters that the allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party were a smear or a witch-hunt invented by Zionists, Tories or Blairites⁹¹. This belief was best summed up by the celebrity Corbyn supporter, director Ken Loach, when he wrote that “exaggerated or false charges of antisemitism have coincided with the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader.”⁹² The ECHR Report, released on October 29, 2020, concluded that the culture of denial of antisemitism in the Labour Party, coupled with the allegation that

antisemitism was being exaggerated for instrumental purposes, was itself evidence of institutional antisemitism⁹³. The claim that Kuenssberg is a “confirmed Zionist” protecting vested interests and in the pay of “the big money and corporations”, is antisemitic because it replicates the conspiracy belief that the BBC is a Zionist-controlled enterprise, and it deploys the economic libel which associates Jews and Zionists with money and influence. The impact of this online antisemitism is made even more powerful by the misogynistic descriptions of Berger and Kuenssberg as “vile” and “evil” women. It has been suggested that the allegation that Kuenssberg is biased in her reporting about Labour, when the same was never alleged in relation to any of her male BBC colleagues or her predecessor, Nick Robinson, is merely because she is a woman⁹⁴. Moreover, the claim that Kuenssberg is a “lackey, sold to the big money and corporations”, denies her any female agency.

Other victims of online antisemitic and misogynistic abuse, such as the actress Tracy-Ann Oberman and the *Countdown* co-presenter, Rachel Riley, have experienced the internet as a toxic place where intersectional abuse is used as a weapon to punish women for speaking out about political issues.⁹⁵ It is no coincidence that Luciana Berger, Ruth Smeeth and Dame Margaret Hodge experienced such abuse following their emotional speeches to the House of Commons about their experiences of antisemitism in the Labour Party on April 17, 2018⁹⁶. Following the published findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission on Labour Party antisemitism in October 2020, Luciana Berger experienced further online abuse, including a message that threatened that she ‘would pay’ for Jeremy Corbyn’s suspension from the party.⁹⁷ As Tracy-Ann Oberman explained, “The misogyny I found, the hatred and vitriol that came towards me as a Jewish woman, the rape threats, the death threats, the sexualisation – all of it was so pointed” because “I stuck my head above the entertainment parapet and spoke out” about antisemitism in the Labour Party⁹⁸.

The goal behind gendered antisemitism appears to be to dehumanise, scare, threaten, humiliate, embarrass, and silence. It is abundantly clear that online technology enables many channels for its personal public expression. It is all too easy to produce a storm of antisemitic and misogynistic tweets and posts aimed at a specific Jewish woman or group of women in the public arena. Targeted campaigns directed at individual victims often involve dozens of social media accounts and hundreds, or even thousands, of anonymous tweets, images, and posts⁹⁹. Not only does the internet permit a huge economy of scale, but the anonymity it provides allows for the proliferation of gendered antisemitic abuse which, as illustrated in this chapter, uniquely combines graphic, sexualised and gendered insults with age-old canards about the malevolence of the Jew. At best, gendered antisemitism risks silencing its victims by threatening their security and morale and at worst, it encourages physical assaults on them. Its perpetrators, moreover, corrupt public discourse. These individual and societal harms are good reasons to argue that gendered antisemitism should be deterred. Deterrence can only be achieved by the threat of criminal sanctions for its commission. This is further justification for making gendered antisemitism a sub-category of misogynistic hate crime.

Gendered Antisemitism Directed at Jewish Females in Public Spaces.

While online antisemitism has become the single biggest contributing factor to the increasing number of antisemitic incidents recorded by the Community Security Trust¹⁰⁰, the single highest category of offline antisemitic incident type involves abusive behaviour directed at (perceived) Jewish people in public spaces.¹⁰¹ This includes, but is not limited to, verbal abuse using threatening language. Typically, in around one-half of these cases, the victim is visibly Jewish and can be identified by their religious or traditional clothing, the wearing of religious symbols such as a Star of David, or by the wearing of a Jewish school uniform. In the remaining cases, the victim is presumed to be Jewish, generally because the area has a high concentration of Jews. The spontaneous, verbal abuse of strangers who are identifiably Jewish or presumed to be Jewish as they go about their lives in public spaces is often

associated with anti-social behaviour or local patterns of street crime rather than with political activism or ideologies¹⁰².

In terms of the gender breakdown of the victims of antisemitic abuse in public spaces for the first six months of 2020, which are the only available figures for 2020 at the time of writing, 58 per cent were male, 33 per cent were female, and nine per cent were mixed groups of male and female¹⁰³. This data is in line with that produced for the year 2019, when the Community Security Trust recorded 57 per cent of victims as male, 37 per cent as female, and six per cent as a mixed group of males and female¹⁰⁴. These 2019 figures are also consistent with those recorded for 2018 where 60 per cent of the victims were male, 34 per cent were female, and seven per cent were mixed groups of females and males¹⁰⁵.

The section below illustrates the fact that Jewish female victims in public spaces tend to experience a combination of antisemitism and misogyny. This contrasts with Jewish male victims who only experience antisemitism. Unfortunately, there is no available data on the effects of this. The relative impact on Jewish women and Jewish men of the abuse that they are subjected to in public spaces is an area that needs research attention. Data on the harm caused to Jewish women who are abused in public spaces is important to construct a persuasive policy position advocating the criminalisation of gendered antisemitism.

In terms of the gender of the offender for the first half of 2020, it was male in 83 per cent of cases, female in 15 per cent of cases, and a mixed group of male and female in two per cent of cases¹⁰⁶. In 2019, the gender of the offender was male in 82 per cent of cases, female in 16 per cent of cases, and a mixture of male and female in two per cent of cases¹⁰⁷. These figures are in line with the figures recorded for 2018, where of the cases in which gender was reported, 84 per cent of offenders were male, 14 per cent were female, and two per cent were a mixture of male and female¹⁰⁸.

Accordingly, the picture that emerges is one of incidents of offline antisemitic abuse typically involving a male perpetrator and a female victim, with the female victim experiencing misogynistic abuse alongside the antisemitism. This is evident in sections a) and b) below, which consider those antisemitic incidents reported to the Community Security Trust by women and girls between 2016 – 2020. It should be noted that no research has been done on the nature of the gendered antisemitism that occurs in public spaces, or on the harm it causes.

a) Abuse targeting Jewish schoolgirls

Data on the incidence and nature of antisemitic and misogynistic abuse experienced by Jewish schoolgirls is limited. As most schools were closed on March 20th, 2020 as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, there were only 20 recorded incidents of antisemitic abuse in the school sector for the period January to June 2020¹⁰⁹. Further, while the figures for the school sector are higher for the two previous years, with a total of 122 recorded antisemitic incidents in 2019¹¹⁰ and a total of 96 in 2018¹¹¹, there has never been a breakdown of incident according to the victim's gender. This means that to consider the nature of any possible intersectional abuse of Jewish schoolgirls, it is necessary to comb through the Community Security Trust's antisemitic incident reports to look for concrete examples. This exercise reveals that the antisemitic abuse of Jewish schoolgirls typically involves an element of misogyny.

Two separate incidents reported to the Community Security Trust in 2018 concerning the abuse of girls at a Jewish school in Hertfordshire involved the word "cunt" coupled with the word "Jewish". Specifically, it was reported that in May 2018, a group of Jewish girls from the school were verbally and physically attacked by girls from another local school who shouted slurs such as "you Jewish cunts!" and pulled their hair¹¹². One month earlier, in April 2018, it was reported that two girls from

the same school witnessed girls from another school fighting on a public bus. Upon spotting the Jewish girls the offending individuals shouted at them, “What are you fucking looking at you Jewish cunts?”¹¹³ The fact that the perpetrators of abuse in both incidents were also female is not entirely surprising given their relatively young age and the popular use of the word “cunt” as a generic insult in contemporary youth culture¹¹⁴. It has also been noted that some females are just as prone to using misogynistic language as their male counterparts¹¹⁵. A third incident reported to the Community Security Trust in April 2017 involved a Jewish girl in school uniform standing on the pavement waiting to cross the road when she was abused with the words, “Jewish cunt” from a passing car¹¹⁶. On this occasion, the perpetrator was described as male.

b) Abuse targeting Jewish women

As with Jewish schoolgirls, there is no independent data analysing the quantity and quality of the abuse that targets Jewish women. A consideration of recent antisemitic incident reports produced by the Community Security Trust over the last few years reveals that the antisemitic abuse of Jewish women is invariably accompanied by misogyny. For example, an incident that took place in Manchester in June 2016 involved a visibly orthodox Jewish woman walking home when a white female shouted at her, “You fucking Jewish whore!”¹¹⁷ The use of “whore” in this context was presumably intended to be disparaging and offensive.

An example of antisemitic abuse that was less obviously accompanied by misogynistic abuse occurred in Scotland in August 2018. A woman who was going through a conversion to Judaism was wearing a Star of David. She was riding on a bus in Edinburgh when a male passenger boarded the bus and spat in her face as he walked past her, calling her a “Jew.”¹¹⁸ While the offender’s act of spitting into the victim’s face could have been to merely express hatred and contempt for her as a Jew, it is reasonable to assume that the act also involved an element of misogyny because of the phallic significance of spitting¹¹⁹, as well as the disrespect that spitting signifies. It would be interesting to know whether the perpetrator would have been equally inclined to spit in the face of a Jewish passenger who was male.

There are instances, albeit infrequent, where the antisemitism is not directed at the female victim but where we nevertheless see a link between the misogyny that is directed at her and antisemitism. For example, an incident reported to the Community Security Trust in January 2018 involved a non-Jewish woman travelling on the London underground. A man struck up a conversation with her during which he began to make racist remarks. When the woman protested, the man said, “I suppose you are a Jew-loving cunt!”¹²⁰ This phenomenon is referred to as “intersectional discourse” because a link is made between the female identity of the victim and Jewish identity and both are disparaged.¹²¹

Other instances of gendered antisemitism do not start out as antisemitic and misogynistic but become so during the exchange. An incident of this nature was reported to the Community Security Trust in February 2016. A Jewish woman was at a pub with two female friends. She accidentally bumped into a man on her way back from the toilet and after she apologised to him, he said, “You should be sorry, you Jewish looking cunt”. He then poured drinks over her and her two friends¹²². This was an aggravated act of antisemitic and misogynistic verbal abuse because it also entailed physical assault.

In the final example, an incident recorded by the Community Security Trust in London in June 2016 once again shows the coupling of the word “Jewish” with the word “cunt”. In this case, a Jewish woman told a man to stop shouting in the street and he responded with, “Fuck off you Jewish cunt.”¹²³

To conclude this section on gendered antisemitism in public spaces, all but one example of reported antisemitic abuse that targeted a female between 2016 and 2020 included misogynistic words like “cunt” and “whore”, while an example of misogynistic abuse directed at a non-Jewish woman also

included an antisemitic reference to Jews. The one example of antisemitic abuse which did not contain a misogynistic word involved the misogynistic act of spitting. The abuse experienced by Jewish men in public spaces, on the other hand, is very different. The majority of antisemitic abuse Jewish men experience takes place online but that which takes place in public spaces tends to occur in the context of a football match, or in the form of a direct physical attack on the street.¹²⁴ The antisemitic rhetoric used in these instances generally involves the word “Yid” or the phrase “Dirty Jew.”¹²⁵ There are no recorded instances of antisemitic rhetoric using gendered abusive terms like “cunt” where the victim is male. It appears, therefore, that a Jewish woman’s experience of antisemitic abuse is shaped by her female identity.

Conclusion

There is very little available work on the topic of gendered antisemitism. The goal of this chapter has been to examine such evidence of it that does exist, and to locate within that evidence points at which future research might usefully be directed. Limited though the evidence is, it is sufficiently indicative to suggest that David Hirsh’s belief that the expression of sexual violence against women becomes far worse when an element of conscious antisemitism enters it, is basically sound. Further research into the intersection of the two is urgently needed to provide empirically supported data on the nature, function, and impact of gendered antisemitism. Once such data becomes available, it will hopefully be a relatively small step to the legal recognition of antisemitism as an aggravating factor in misogynistic hate crime.

¹ David Hirsh, “Labour’s intersection of antisemitism and misogyny,” The Times of Israel blog, April 21, 2019.

² This was organised and hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism with support from the Antisemitism Policy Trust (AST) and the UK Government. The AST is a charity which focuses on educating and empowering decision-makers in the UK to effectively address antisemitism.

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⁴ Agnes Grunwald-Spier, “Women’s Experiences in the Holocaust: In Their Own Words,” (Amberley Publishing, 2018).

⁵ See, Mary Felstiner, “To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era” (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 205, quoted in Agnes Grunwald-Spier, “Women’s Experiences in the Holocaust,” p. 10

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- ⁶ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine. Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8.
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- ⁸ *Ibid.* These movements include *Women's March on Washington*, *Chicago Dyke March*, and *Black Lives Matter*. Linda Sarsour, organiser of the *Women's March on Washington*, argues that Zionism (the belief in the existence of a Jewish state) and feminism exclude and contradict each other.
- ⁹ The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>
- ¹⁰ "This does not in any way undermine the freedom of expression on Israel and the Palestinians," see, "Labour adopts antisemitism definition, but guarantees free speech on Israel," BICOM 5 September 2018, <http://www.bicom.org.uk/news/labour-adopts-antisemitism-definition-but-guarantees-free-speech-on-israel>
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- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Bernard Harrison and Lesley Klaff, "In Defence of the IHRA Definition", *Fathom*, January 2020, <https://fathomjournal.org/in-defence-of-the-ihra-definition/>; Bernard Harrison and Lesley Klaff, "The IHRA Definition and Its Critics," in *Contending with Antisemitism in a Rapidly Changing Political Climate*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington, IN, 2021).
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