SAME PROBLEM, ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES: COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM IN CONTEMPORARY CANADA

MEGAN HOLLINGER

Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctorate of Philosophy degree in Religious Studies

Department of Classics and Religious Studies
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

© Megan Hollinger Ottawa, Canada, 2026

This thesis is dedicated to my late mother, Patricia Hollinger, a true ally.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... *vii*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... *viii*

INTRODUCTION *1*

Research Questions and Thesis Statement 9

Outline of Chapters 10

CHAPTER 1: METHOD, METHODOLOGY, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TIME AND PLACE *14*

1.1 Method 15

1.1.1 Recruitment 15

1.1.2 Interviews and Transcription 22

1.1.3 Coding Framework 23

1.1.4 Theme Development 23

1.2 Methodology 24

1.3 Ottawa 27

1.3.1 History of Ottawa's Jewish Community 27

1.3.2 Contemporary Ottawa: Context and Observations 29

1.4 Victoria 31

1.4.1 History of Victoria's Jewish Community 31

1.4.2 Contemporary Victoria: Context and Observations 33

1.5 Montreal 35

1.5.1 History of Montreal's Jewish Community 36

1.5.2 Montreal: Context and Observations 39

1.5.3 The Sephardic Community 42

1.6 Timing Matters: Combatting Antisemitism in a Post-October 7 Social Landscape 44

1.7 Conclusion 48

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW 50

2.1 Theory 50

2.1.1 Intergroup Relations 51

2.1.2 Intergroup Contact Theory 54

2.1.3 Conspiracy Theories, Scapegoating, and Stereotyping 58

2.1.4 Other Considerations for Fighting Antisemitism 62

2.2 Literature Review: Understanding Antisemitism Globally and in Canada 64

2.2.1 Historical Roots 64

2.2.2 Contemporary Antisemitism 68

2.2.3 Combatting Antisemitism 75

2.2.4 The Early Beginnings of Antisemitism in Canada 79

2.2.5 The Troublesome Era: The 1930s and World War II 81

2.2.6 Responses to the Holocaust within Canada's Jewish Community 85

2.2.7 Postwar Transition and Transformation: The 1960s to Today 87

2.3 Conclusion 91

CHAPTER 3: THOSE WHO PLAY TOGETHER STAY TOGETHER (WELL, NOT ALWAYS BUT OFTEN): THE FOUNDATIONAL ROLE OF SOCIAL BONDS 93

3.1 Friendship and Personal Connections 94

3.2 Allyships and the Importance of Community 98

3.3 "You're all just wearing a jersey": Identity Salience and Recategorization 103

3.4 Another Outcome: Demystification 112

3.5 The "How" of Social Bonds 118

3.6 Relationships Gone Awry: Challenges and Limitations 122

3.6.1 Ignorance and Lack of Exposure to Jews 123

3.6.2 Logistical Constraints 126

3.6.3 Insularity within Canada's Jewish Community 128

3.7 Conclusion 132

CHAPTER 4: THE "EMOTIONAL CAPITAL": THE NON-NEGOTIABLE ROLES OF EMPATHY AND OTHER RELATIONAL FACTORS *134*

4.1 Unlocking Key Social Dynamics: Empathy, Relating, and Perspective-taking 135

4.2 The "Other" as Human: Love, Compassion, Kindness, and Respect 143

4.3 The Intentional Quilt of Diversity: Fostering Curiosity 149

4.4 Partners in Peace: Supportive Communities and Relationships 155

4.5 Conclusion 162

CHAPTER 5: FIGHTING FIRE WITH WATER: COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM, DIGNITY, AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT *165*

5.1 A Shared Humanity: Understanding the Impacts of Self-Esteem and Dignity 166

5.2 Empowerment 173

5.3 Again, Time and Place Matter 176

5.4 Conclusion 185

CHAPTER 6: A RIGHT-BRAIN FORM OF HATE: UNDERSTANDING THE NON-LOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF ANTISEMITISM AND COMBATTING IT *187*

6.1 Creativity and Learning 188

6.2 Motivation, Impact, and Exposure 197

6.3 What Right and Wrong Get You: Emotional Resonance and Inclusion 202

6.4 Conclusion 207

CHAPTER 7: B'TAYAVON, BUON APPETITO, BAIN SULT AS AN MBÉILE: FOOD, INTERGROUP CONTACT, AND ANTISEMITISM *209*

7.1 Something Easy to Start With: Food as a Motivator 210

7.2 Food as Fun and Experiential 214

7.3 Food as an Educational Tool 218

CHAPTER 8: THE CAMPUS DIFFERENCE *223*

8.1 The Role of Ignorance 225

8.2 The Literal Triple Threat: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion 229

8.3 Red Tape and a Lack of Infrastructure for Combatting Antisemitism 233

8.4 Allyships and Partnerships: The Missing Pieces 238

8.5 But Wait! There's Food (and Fun) 242

8.6 Conclusion 245

CONCLUSION *247*

Summary of Findings 249

Limitations 254

Toward a Brighter Future… 256

APPENDIX *262*

REFERENCES *263*

ABSTRACT

Antisemitism, or hatred of Jews, has been on the rise in Canada for most of the 21st century. Research on combatting antisemitism both within and beyond Canada is urgently needed, but evidence-based research is severely lacking in the literature. Current research suggests that traditional, dominant approaches, such as legal and educational strategies, are inadequate on their own to combat antisemitism effectively. This thesis offers data that challenges these dominant approaches and proposes an alternative: social strategies.

The social strategies this thesis explores centre on Intergroup Contact Theory, which, supported by social psychologists, posits that sustained, positive contact between competing outgroups is the most effective way to reduce bias and prejudice. Specifically, I examine intergroup contact in the context of antisemitism and Jewish and non-Jewish relationships. By exploring the roles of social bonds, empathy and relational factors, and resilience and ingroup confidence, I show that intergroup contact between Jews and non-Jews is a promising, proactive and preventive approach to combatting antisemitism in the long run.

This thesis also explores mechanisms of intergroup contact programming in Canada between Jews and non-Jews and ties them to the deeper cognitive and emotional processes that I also suggest maintain antisemitism in different temporal and spatial contexts. This thesis draws on data from 54 participants across three Canadian cities, namely Ottawa, Victoria, and Montreal, to highlight the potential of intergroup contact to promote long-term positive change for Canada's Jews.

Keywords: antisemitism, Jewish, anti-Zionism, anti-Israel, Intergroup Contact Theory, Canada

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank many people for their generous support of me and this project. First, I want to thank my supervisor, Lori Beaman, for her tireless support throughout the twists and turns of producing a doctoral thesis. She always made time to speak with me, answer emails, and offer thoughtful, thorough advice, without which this project would never have happened. It has been an honour to work with her through my MA and PhD.

I also want to thank my committee and the professors who have helped shape this thesis. Without their guidance and service on my various committees and in my coursework, I would not have reached this point. Dr. Adele Reinhartz, Dr. Peter Beyer, Dr. Aaron Hughes, Dr. Randal Schnoor, Dr. Hernan Tesler-Mabé, and Dr. Pierre Anctil. Thank you also to Dr. Natalia Vesselova, Dr. Deidre Butler, and Dr. Pamela Walker, who have offered professional opportunities and guidance.

I also thank the administrative staff at the University of Ottawa. Thank you for always being available to answer questions and guide me through the many administrative processes involved in completing a PhD!

Thank you to the University of Victoria's Centre for Studies in Religion and Society for their academic guidance, resources, and networks.

To my fellow graduate students, thank you for your guidance, support, and allyship. There are too many people to thank by name. However, I would like to mention Hannah McKillop, who was always there to offer a calm, encouraging word when I was overwhelmed. I'm glad we could go through both degrees together.

To my fellow staff at The Ottawa Mission, I have known many of you since my volunteer days during my BA and MA and since I became staff during my PhD. Without your support, wisdom, and accommodation, I could not have completed this graduate school journey. I thank the organization for offering me a real-life example of how exposure and contact can make all the difference in de-stigmatizing a population and creating allies. Specifically, thank you to Stephanie Rattelade and Simon Gurofsky for their continuous support and encouragement. The wisdom you provided from your PhD days saved me!

I thank my family and friends, whose support has been the emotional fuel I needed to complete this process. Again, there are too many of you to mention, but please know how much your love and support have meant to me, and without them, I would never have finished.

To my sister, Lauren Hollinger, I thank you for your ongoing support and for providing comfort and a good laugh when I needed them. When I was discouraged, you would bring me a treat or a surprise, and that would brighten my day. Shoutout to M.G.H, T.F.H., and S.S.H. as well.

Lastly, I thank my parents, Jonathan Hollinger and the late Patricia Hollinger. If this thesis and degree would have been difficult without everyone else, they would never have happened at all without you. Thank you to both for your constant love, support, encouragement, and everything

else. You are invaluable. Through her own devotion, my mother taught me that non-Jews can unconditionally support Jews and that empathy, love, and compassion are necessities. Every holiday, every Passover Seder she helped me throw, I would not have understood the power of what I discuss in this thesis.

I also thank the University of Ottawa, the Government of Ontario, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for their financial support of this project.

INTRODUCTION

My desire to research how to combat antisemitism dates back several years. What began as a journey in Holocaust education, primarily through Anne Frank's story and diary, evolved into an interest I pursued throughout high school and university. When the time came to apply for a Master's degree, I had to choose a research topic that I was passionate about, one I could sustain throughout a long graduate school career. I recalled my interest in Anne Frank and the Holocaust and wondered how I could turn that into a religious studies project. It was Anne Frank's Jewish identity and the fact that she was murdered for being Jewish that inspired me to study antisemitism. I cannot remember the exact link between that idea and the legal strategies I explored in my MA research for combatting antisemitism in Canada. However, I do remember wondering, Why is antisemitism increasing in Canada today? I reflected that while we most frequently turn to law and education to fight it, those are clearly inadequate because the problem was worsening.

The above took place in 2017. At the time in Canada, antisemitism was on the rise, and I wondered if there were limitations to popular approaches to fighting it.[1] I decided to centre my master's research on the growing crisis of antisemitism, which to this day remains under-researched and in desperate need of effective solutions. I began examining legal strategies because community leaders and major Jewish advocacy organizations continuously promoted legal and even political strategies to fight antisemitism. I wondered what, if anything, was amiss with these strategies that prevented them from slowing the rise of antisemitism. When I examined legal approaches, namely the use of hate crime legislation and court responses, I

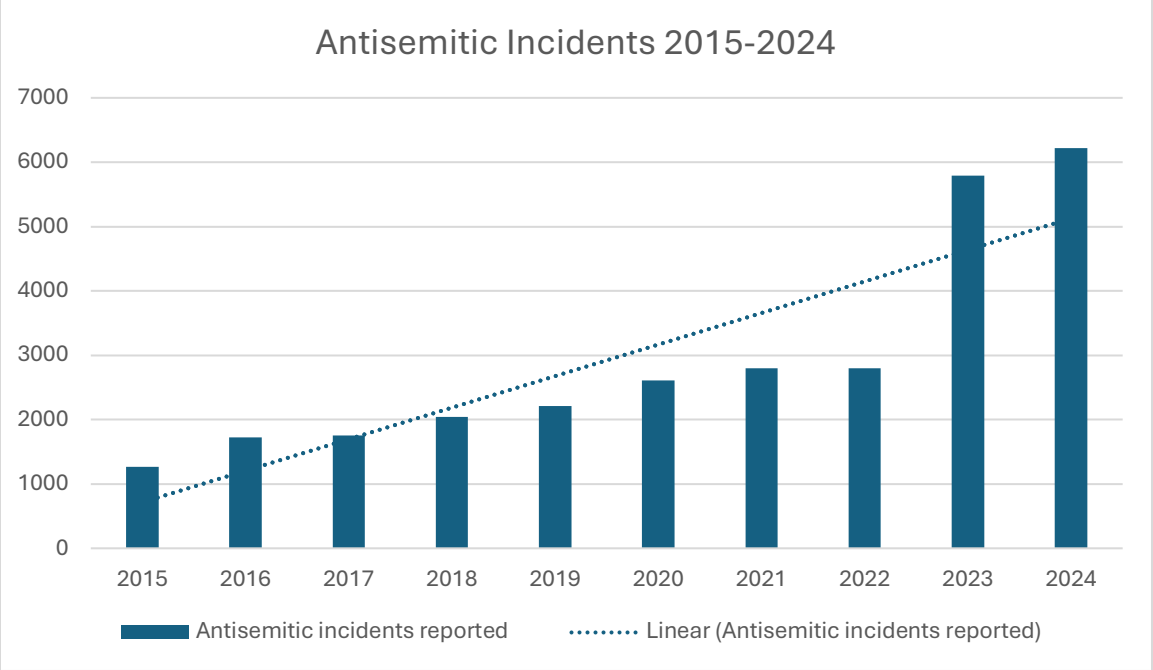
---

[1] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2017*, Audit no. 36 (B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2018), 11.

uncovered flaws and weak spots in our current criminal justice system that, I still argue, help explain why law is not an effective tool and may never be. Canada's legal tools seemed superficial in their impact on the problem, and so I decided that my doctoral work would explore strategies that targeted antisemitism's deeper cognitive and emotional roots in ways that law evidently did not. I began a search for ways to combat prejudice and turned to social psychology, which strongly suggested that continuous, positive social contact between outgroups (different identity groups) was most effective at reducing prejudice. That suggestion, which the literature calls Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT), became my lead. Very little of the work I found on ICT discussed antisemitism specifically, but I wondered if it had potential to help fight antisemitism. My doctoral work, therefore, considers how ICT might reduce antisemitism and the role played by cognitive and emotional mechanisms in sustaining antisemitic hate. My goal has become to determine whether "social" strategies can effectively combat antisemitism in Canada by targeting the mechanisms that underpin it.

However, when I awoke on the morning of October 7, 2023, I was unprepared for the imminent fallout for the Canadian and global Jewish population. I was conducting my research in Victoria at the time, and several days before October 7, I had completed my first four interviews there. I had already finished my Ottawa interviews and had yet to do the Montreal ones. The fallout after Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023 highlighted the acute need for my research, as antisemitism studies in general is severely lacking in critical evaluation of both the nature of antisemitism and what to do about it. Although the existing literature contains speculation about how to fight antisemitism that this thesis will discuss in Chapter 2, it does not offer insight into strategies that effectively target the root causes of antisemitism, which, again, are not well known.

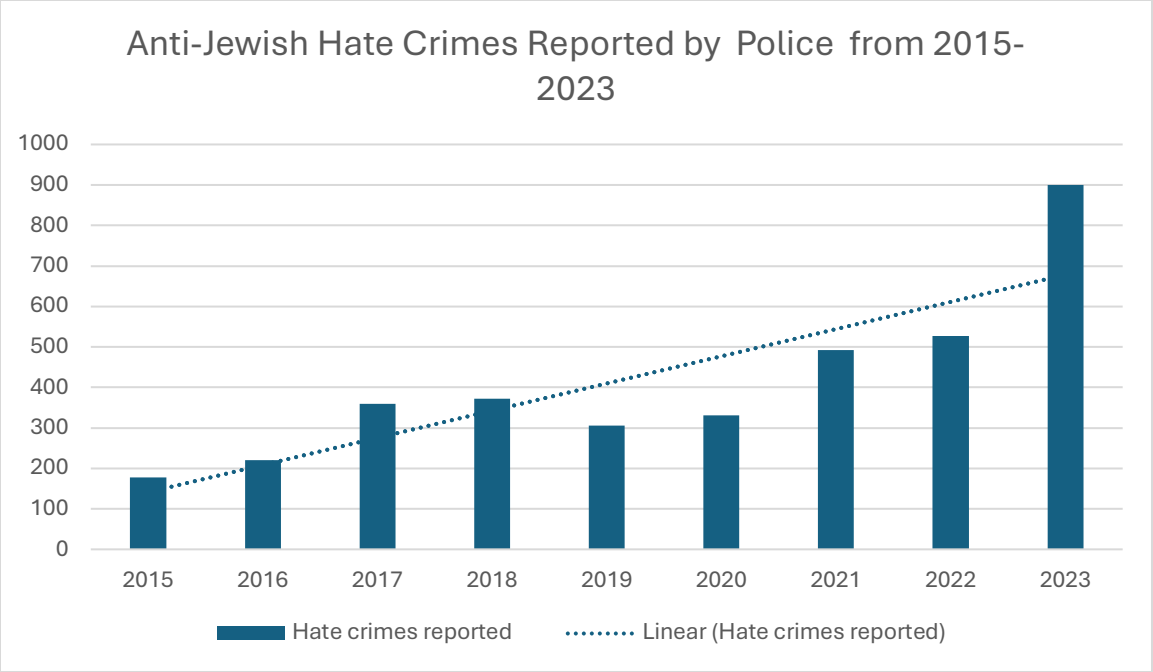
Antisemitism, or hatred of Jewish people, has continued to rise in Canada over the last five years, as the following graphs demonstrate. Table 1 shows the number of antisemitic incidents reported to B'nai Brith Canada over the previous decade (2015-2024). Table 2 shows the number of police-reported hate crimes against Jews over the last decade (2015-2023).[2]



[3]

Table 1: Antisemitic incidents reported to B'nai Brith Canada, 2015-2024.

[2] Statistics Canada only has data available up until 2023.
[3] Data taken from *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2020*, Audit no. 39 (B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2021), 12 and *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024*, Audit no. 43 (B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2025), 18.



[4]

Table 2: Anti-Jewish hate crimes reported by police units from across Canada, 2015 to 2023.

[4] Data taken from Ben Leber, "Police-Reported Hate Crime in Canada, 2015," accessed October 8, 2019, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14832-eng.htm; Maxime Gaudet, "Police-Reported Hate Crime in Canada, 2016," April 25, 2018, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54915-eng.htm; Amelia Armstrong, "Police-Reported Hate Crime in Canada, 2017," April 30, 2019, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm; Statistics Canada, "Number of Police-Reported Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion, Canada, 2018 to 2021," March 22, 2023, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230322/cg-a004-eng.htm; Statistics Canada, "Number of Police-Reported Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion, Canada, 2019 to 2022," March 13, 2024, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240313/cg-b005-eng.htm; Statistics Canada, "Number of Police-Reported Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion, Canada, 2019 to 2023," March 25, 2025, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250325/cg-a004-eng.htm.

The key difference between the two datasets is that the first shows incidents reported by victims to an advocacy organization that tracks such incidents. The second shows incidents that police units across Canada charged as hate crimes. Despite that difference, antisemitic incidents, criminally charged or not, have trended upwards over the last decade.

In his recent landmark study about Canada's Jews, antisemitism, Zionism, and Israel, sociologist Robert Brym notes that pre-October 7, 2023, general surveys of non-Jewish Canadians demonstrated somewhat favourable attitudes towards Jews. Post-October 7, however, is a different story, and Canadians now seem to view Jews less favourably. But although that might correlate with the rate of anti-Jewish incidents and crimes post-October 7, survey data less closely correlate with the increasing rate of incidents pre-October 7. Brym also suggests that post-October 7, the Canadian public's opinion of Israel may be declining, which is of concern because he found a lower-end moderate correlation between anti-Israel attitudes and anti-Jewish attitudes. In other words, there is some reason to believe that, to a certain degree, anti-Israel attitudes predict anti-Jewish ones–though one should note, as Brym does, that although there is some relation between the two, they are not the same or interchangeable. Notably, Brym also shows that rates of antisemitic incidents may differ when we measure attitudinal antisemitism (not always expressed or acted on) versus behavioural antisemitism (overt, expressed, and enacted). Herein, I focus on concrete measures of antisemitic behaviour that show that overt, behavioural antisemitism is on the rise in Canada, and I neither confirm nor deny that attitudinal antisemitism is also on the rise.[5]

---

[5] Robert Brym, "Chapter 2: Attitudes toward Jews," *Canadian Jewish Studies Special Edition: Jews and Israel 2024: A Survey of Canadian Attitudes and Jewish Perceptions* 37 (2024): 27; Robert Brym, "Chapter 3: Attitudes toward Israel," *Canadian Jewish Studies Special Edition: Jews and Israel 2024: A Survey of Canadian Attitudes and Jewish Perceptions* 37 (2024): 44–47; Robert Brym, "Chapter 4: How Strongly Are the Two Sets of Attitudes

The measurable increase in behavioural antisemitism demonstrates the urgent need for strategies to combat it. Various individuals and advocacy organizations call for stronger government measures and stricter law enforcement to combat hate. Because activists and politicians heavily rely on legal strategies, one might think them the most effective. But my MA research has shown that not to be so. In fact, there are limitations and insufficiencies in both legislation and legal method.[6] My discourse analysis of four provincial court cases has revealed that legal discourse perpetuates misleadingly limited conceptualizations of both antisemitism and Jewish identity that neglect their diversity. By acknowledging some aspects of Jewish identity and antisemitism and not others, the law risks enabling certain forms of antisemitism to continue unprosecuted. Additionally, Canada's legal responses to hate are limited in both capacity and effectiveness, resulting in very few cases being prosecuted under the "Hate Propaganda" section of the *Criminal Code of Canada*.[7]

This dissertation instead explores alternative, social strategies for combatting antisemitism in three Jewish communities across Canada. I strongly favour social strategies, such as intergroup contact work between Jews and non-Jews, as more effective in the long term than legal responses for combatting antisemitism. While law responds to instances of antisemitism, social strategies are more context-specific and target the underlying relations and interactions between Jews and non-Jews that might maintain antisemitism. Social strategies go deeper than legal approaches because they are grounded in how people navigate social interactions and develop positive or negative attitudes towards one another. The primary goals of this research are

---

Correlated?," *Canadian Jewish Studies Special Edition: Jews and Israel 2024: A Survey of Canadian Attitudes and Jewish Perceptions* 37 (2024): 57–60.

[6] See my MA thesis "Legal Responses to Antisemitism: Legal Discourse and Anti-Jewish Hate in Contemporary Canada," University of Ottawa, 2020.

[7] Kent Roach, *Criminal Law*, sixth edition (Irwin Law Inc., 2015), 1–2.

to identify which specific strategies are effective in fostering positive relations and reducing antisemitism and to clarify whether those strategies can and should be broadened for more widespread social and policy action.

To further contextualize this project, it is essential to explore what antisemitism looks like in Canada. B'nai Brith Canada identifies three types of antisemitic incidents: harassment, vandalism, and violence.[8] Although individual communities have tried to prevent or reduce such incidents, such efforts are seldom mobilized on a broader scale, and there is a lack of research and centralized knowledge concerning effectiveness. I thus hope to add to the existing toolkit of diverse and nuanced strategies to combat the many types of antisemitic incidents and their motivations.

Combatting antisemitism is complicated for several reasons. First, antisemitism has both religious and nonreligious motivations and manifestations. Instances of antisemitism can also be classified as traditional, based on familiar religious and racial motivations and invoking longstanding tropes and stereotypes about Jews.[9] In addition to such age-old antisemitic tropes, there have arisen contemporary forms of antisemitism that include Holocaust denial and distortion and new antisemitism (the latter characterized by anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric and motivations).[10] Although such contemporary forms are frequently discussed in the scholarly literature, many lay people understand such forms as anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric in

---

[8] Consult B'nai Brith Canada's *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2017-2024*.
[9] Morton Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else But Different: The Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews*, second edition, with Randal F. Schnoor and Michelle Shames, Carleton Library Series 245 (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 317–19; Stephen H. Norwood, "Convergent Anti-Zionisms: The American Far Left and Far Right," in *Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and Delegitimizing Israel*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (UNP - Nebraska, 2016), 129.
[10] Please note that these categories are theorized in the scholarly literature; scholars do not typically judge where certain criticisms cross the line into antisemitism. Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Antisemitism: Here and Now*, first edition. (Schocken, 2019), 144–47; Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else But Different*, 307.

different ways .[11] It is therefore essential to consider the relationship between those rhetorical forms and their context of use, and I do not attempt to make any definitive equations of antisemitism with anti-Israel or anti-Zionist rhetoric. Instead, I report what is said in the scholarly literature and discuss this in more depth in Chapter 2.

Second, B'nai Brith argues that antisemitism arises from multiple bases and identifies three in its 2017 audit: 1) Islamist extremists, 2) Arab nationalists, and 3) white supremacists. B'nai Brith also expresses strong concern about the increase in white supremacist activity in Canada.[12] And it identifies the internet as a platform from which antisemitism is increasingly being perpetuated, noting that Holocaust denial and distortion, as well as calls for anti-Jewish genocide, have been pervasive in reports of online incidents.[13]

Third, just as antisemitism takes multiple forms, so too can Jewish identity. Although Jews are frequently defined in religious terms, Jewish identity can range from fundamental observance of Halakhah (Jewish law) to entirely nonreligious "cultural" expressions. What defines a person's Jewish identity depends on factors specific to the individual.[14] As a result of their complex identities, Jews can experience hate in a variety of ways, meaning antisemitism is an incredibly nuanced form of hatred.[15] The intersectional natures of both Jewish identity and

---

[11] Significant scholars in the field of antisemitism studies include Deborah Lipstadt, Alvin Rosenfeld, Robert Wistrich, and Gavin Langmuir. There are several scholars who have published articles, chapters, and books on both historical and contemporary antisemitism, but these four are notable.

[12] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2017*, 17–21.

[13] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2019*, Audit no. 38 (B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2020), 4.

[14] Lynn Davidman, "The New Voluntarism and the Case of Unsynagogued Jews," in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, ed. Nancy T. Ammerman (Oxford University Press, 2007), 55–56; Howard Wettstein, "Introduction," in *Diasporas and Exiles; Varieties of Jewish Identity*, ed. Howard Wettstein (University of California Press, 2002), 2–14.

[15] Although she writes in the context of the oppression of Black women, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw argues that analyses void of consideration for the intersectional natures of anti-Black, anti-woman oppression are incomplete. In other words, oppression of Black women cannot be understood without considering the various dimensions of Black women's identities that intersect and thus contribute to the totality of their experiences as an oppressed population (Crenshaw 1989, 139-40). In the present case I argue that antisemitism and how to address it cannot be understood without considering its intersectional nature.

antisemitism are essential to consider when searching for solutions that are effective and target the many nuances of both. As we have seen, antisemitism is on the rise in Canada, and to develop appropriate strategies to combat it requires developing a more robust understanding of its nature.

Research Questions and Thesis Statement

This thesis examines social strategies for combatting antisemitism and whether they have the potential to be more effective than other prevailing strategies. I now outline the broader research questions that guided this study and the overall argument to be made from the findings; for details about how I recruited participants, whom I recruited, and how I conducted data collection and analysis, see Chapter 1 below. Herein I pose the following research questions:

1. What are effective social strategies and approaches to combat antisemitism across Canada that are outside the scope of law?
2. What about these strategies works, and what does not?
3. What is being done "at the ground level" to promote inclusion, navigate diversity, and foster positive interactions between Jews and non-Jews in Canada?

To answer these questions, I conducted fieldwork and interviews in three Jewish communities across Canada: Ottawa, ON, Victoria, BC, and Montreal, QC. All three have Jewish populations that have engaged in a variety of social efforts and initiatives to combat anti-Jewish hate.

Through qualitative interviews, I uncovered how different individuals and organizations have combated, or continue to combat, antisemitism, both directly and indirectly, through interfaith and multicultural programming that fosters relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish participants. This thesis argues that social strategies such as intergroup contact programming

have the potential to mitigate antisemitism in Canada over the long term because of how they target and undermine anti-Jewish ideas, assumptions, and actions. Such strategies affect the emotional and beliefs-based areas of the mind as well as social relationships and perceptions, and resemble the root cognitive and emotional mechanisms that, I argue, maintain antisemitic prejudices in individuals and groups.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis analyzes data from 54 qualitative interviews to demonstrate how and why social strategies for combatting antisemitism can be effective. Chapter 1 explores the method, methodology, and contextual factors that impacted the project's findings. The methods section outlines how I recruited participants and conducted interviews, as well as how I coded the data and designed the themes I analyzed. The methodology section discusses the underpinnings of my analysis. The third section discusses contextual factors, such as geographic and temporal considerations, that affected the data. One major contextual factor was the Hamas attacks on Israel that took place on October 7, 2023, which occurred before I had completed most of the data collection in Victoria and any of the data collection in Montreal. The post-October 7 fallout for Jewish Canadians impacted how both Jews and non-Jews spoke about combatting antisemitism. The discussions in Chapter 1 frame what follows.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of my thesis. It reviews the social psychology research on Intergroup Contact Theory, intergroup relations, and combatting prejudice. Chapter 2 also explores some of the psychological factors that that research suggests might be positively affected by intergroup contact programming, namely conspiracy thinking, scapegoating, and stereotyping. On the basis of that theoretical framework, Chapter 2 then reviews the relevant literature on antisemitism, including contemporary antisemitism and efforts

to combat it, before providing an overview of the literature on the history of antisemitism in Canada, which situates my project within the broader Canadian social and historical landscape.

The project's analysis begins in Chapter 3, which presents the first thematic findings. This chapter explores the significance of social bonds by examining the types of relationships participants identified as key to combatting antisemitism. In social spaces where participants declared antisemitism as low or nonexistent, relationships were vital building blocks to that positive co-existence. Chapter 3 explores both personal relationships, such as friendships, and community, as well as the role that relationships and intergroup contact play in identity formation and bonding between groups. Chapter 3 also discusses the limitations of Intergroup Contact Theory in the context of this study and how intergroup contact work, although promising, is not the only effective strategy for fighting antisemitism.

Chapter 4 builds on the essential role of social bonds and explores the relational factors that underpin those bonds and serve as key buffers against antisemitism. Chapter 4 suggests that relational values such as empathy, love, respect, kindness, and support are key in relationships where antisemitism is low or nonexistent. Although the efficacy of intergroup contact work has limits, Jewish/non-Jewish relationships that were resilient during tough times were all underpinned by these factors. Relatedly, Chapter 4 notes that supportive, inclusive social environments are key, and that encouraging individuals' curiosity proved to promote successful Jewish/non-Jewish intergroup contact work. The findings discussed in Chapter 4 reveal how these mechanisms work in greater detail.

Chapter 5 explores a theme that emerged unexpectedly in the data: the roles of social empowerment and confidence. Self-esteem regarding ingroup identity plays a fascinating role in building resilience against antisemitism and in creating the conditions under which groups feel

safer and more trusting when engaging with other groups. This chapter also explores how geographic location influences ingroup empowerment amongst Jews, and how experiences of antisemitism might correlate with this.

Chapter 6 explores mechanisms that may contribute to and maintain antisemitic attitudes in individuals and groups. It discusses the types of intergroup contact programming that emerged in my data, such as activities and events, and highlights the nature of those activities and events, suggesting what might be active emotionally, socially, and cognitively in spaces where antisemitism is low or nonexistent. The events and activities participants described almost always had a creative or experiential component, and so Chapter 6 explores the roles of creativity and lived experience in making intergroup contact activities more effective. It also discusses the broader role of social, emotional, and cognitive mechanisms in how antisemitism persists.

Whereas Chapter 6 discusses general creative and experiential programming, Chapter 7 explores the particular role of food and food-related activities in combatting antisemitism. In this study, several events in which Jews and non-Jews interacted involved meals or cooking. In fact, almost all of the 54 participants mentioned food, either intentionally or unintentionally, as an offhand remark. Food served several functions that may enhance the positive effects of intergroup contact, and this chapter discusses these functions in more depth. Food experiences may play a more significant role in combatting antisemitism than scholars have thought, and so Chapter 7 examines food's unexpected but crucial role for combatting antisemitism.

Chapter 8 explores the university campus environment and the factors that make combatting antisemitism in this setting distinctive, as well as the common challenges that prevent antisemitism from being addressed more effectively on campuses. It seems that the challenges for Jews outweighed the positives on university campuses, and most intergroup contact work on

campuses reflected that. This chapter, therefore, presents findings that are specific to the university environment and emphasizes factors that are particularly significant in that setting. Before we can understand a specific space, however, we must first lay a foundation. The following chapter will set the stage for data collection and analysis to examine how intergroup contact may reduce antisemitism in the long term, on campuses or elsewhere.

CHAPTER 1: METHOD, METHODOLOGY, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TIME AND PLACE

Combatting antisemitism is complex, and social strategies, as this thesis will demonstrate, have great potential to help. As the Introduction noted, this thesis examines the social, emotional, and cognitive components of antisemitism and fighting it, as well as their discursive underpinnings. How does one begin to understand how to combat an already under-researched phenomenon at a deeper level? The present chapter not only describes how I developed this project, including its recruitment strategy, interview process, and transcription, but also how I developed its coding scheme. This chapter also outlines my methodological process and the underpinnings of my themes and data analyses used to generate findings.

In addition to presenting the project's research design, this chapter explores the geographic and temporal factors that affected the data. It first discusses my three field sites and how I strategically chose them to ensure the data would shed light on antisemitism across different geographic contexts in Canada. The sites are Ottawa, ON, Victoria, BC, and Montreal, QC. Canada's Jewish communities are diverse and have unique histories, and social, cultural, and political factors have continuously shaped their members' experiences with contemporary Canadian antisemitism.

Following its discussion of geography, this chapter reviews the primary temporal factor that affected the data in real time. I completed the Ottawa interviews in the spring and summer of 2023. Following Ottawa, I went to Victoria, where I completed four interviews in less than a week and a half before October 7, 2023 and its fallout. On that date, Hamas members and supporters broke through the border fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip and committed various violent terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians in nearby kibbutzim (communities), as well as at a nearby music festival. Terrorists murdered around 1,200 innocent civilians and

military personnel, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and took 251 civilians and military personnel hostage in Gaza.[16] What ensued has become an ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. In the weeks and months following the onset of the war, rates of antisemitism skyrocketed in Canada.[17] The social landscape for Jews in Canada had changed significantly, and this was particularly noticeable in Montreal, where I conducted all those interviews in the early months of 2024. Several participants in Victoria and Montreal suggested that there were severe limitations to relationship-building after October 7, necessitating consideration of these constraints in this thesis. This chapter, therefore, provides essential background information that frames my thematic discussions in the following chapters.

1.1 Method

1.1.1 Recruitment

To understand this project's findings, we must understand how I collected data. I conducted 54 semi-structured interviews during the data collection period from April 2023 to July 2024. I conducted 17 interviews in Ottawa, 19 in Victoria, and 18 in Montreal. Once I selected field sites, I spent several months in each location collecting data.[18] Although I did not have ethics approval to include any data from participant observation, I also attended several community events and networked in each community to find potential interview participants. The programs I analyzed included various events and recreational activities, often involving food. For example, many participants discussed their experiences attending Shabbat dinners or holiday celebrations.

---

[16] TOI Staff, *Report: New IDF Assessment Shows Some 6,000 Gazans Invaded Israel on Oct. 7*, August 31, 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-new-idf-assessment-shows-some-6000-gazans-invaded-israel-on-oct-7/.
[17] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024*, 9.
[18] My conceptualization of fieldwork in this project is based on Graham Harvey, "Field Research: Participant Observation," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (Routledge, 2011).

Often, the programs brought together Jews and non-Jews to engage in a common activity, such as making challah bread for charity or attending an arts devotional. Some programs were more educational in nature, such as dialogue initiatives and lectures. Chapter 6 discusses in more detail specific examples of intergroup contact programming and the social, cognitive, and emotional underpinnings of these programs.

To recruit, I contacted key informants in each location, such as Jewish community organizations, congregations, and individuals who participated in programs that created contact between Jews and non-Jews.[19] The key informants then passed me to other potential participants. My recruitment strategy, therefore, combined targeted recruitment and snowball sampling. In accordance with my ethics regulations, I shared my name with prospective contacts and asked them to contact me for an interview if they were interested. There were some exceptions in which I reached out to participants. Even though this was not the method outlined in the ethics approval, some preferred that I contact them, so I took their contact information and reached out. I allowed this exception because I wanted to conduct participant-centered research and respect their communication boundaries. Before the interviews, I emailed participants the consent form. We then set a mutually agreed-upon time, date, and location (in-person or via Zoom).

In terms of participant identities, and because of the nature of snowball sampling, the participants I recruited were somewhat random in their religious and ethnic identities. Figure 1 below shows the religious identities of participants from all field sites.

[19] All email templates and forms, including the consent form, questions, and recruitment poster, were approved by the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board (REB).

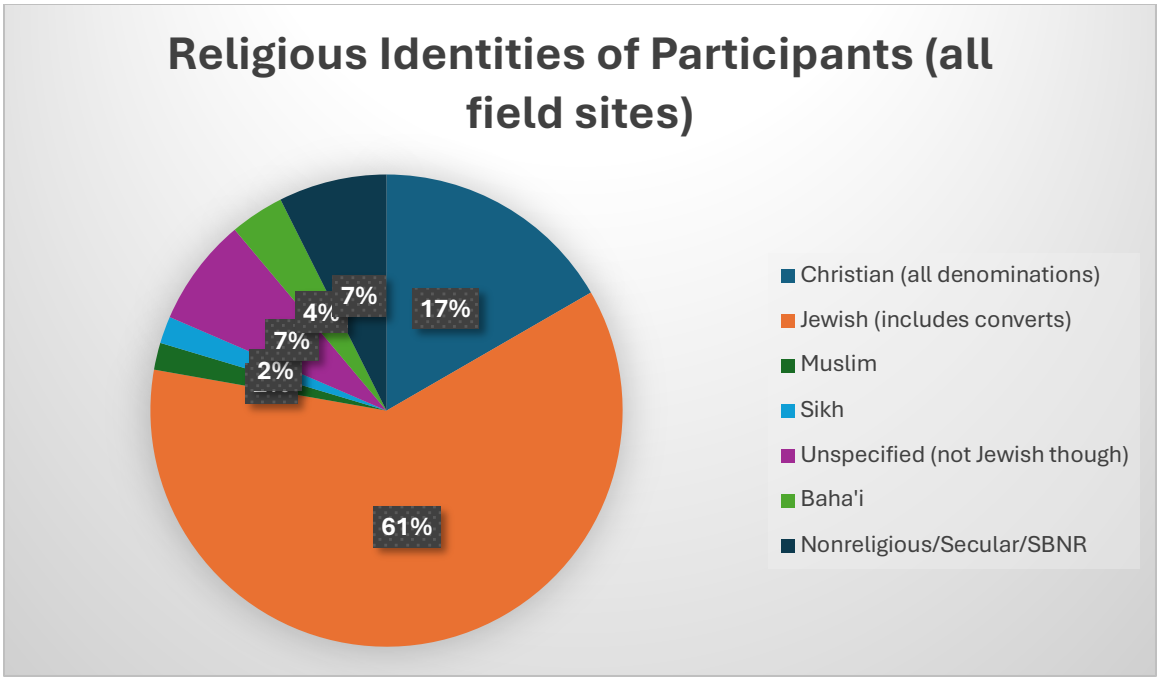


Figure 1: Religious identities of all participants (all field sites).

It is essential to identify who participated in the programs I examined and whether this affected the relationships that formed between Jews and non-Jews in those programs. Here, I focus on religious identity because ethnic identities would have been too complicated to track and were not always relevant to the programming itself. The religious identities of participants across locations were disproportionately Jewish. I spoke to Jews of varying levels of religious observance, as well as converts and those who chose to become Jewish (a term used by participants who converted to Judaism) from various non-Jewish backgrounds; the latter perspectives were distinctive because those Jews had straddled both worlds and understood non-Jewish and Jewish perspectives firsthand. But regardless of those nuances, I classified these participants as Jewish because, at the time of data collection, their self-identification was Jewish.

Religious identity varied by location (see Figures 2-4 below). In Ottawa, about a third of participants identified as Jewish. Just over a third identified as Christian (of various denominations), while the only Muslim and Sikh participants in the entire study were from

Ottawa. The greater religious diversity among Ottawa participants reflected the bridges that Ottawa's Jewish community has been building with non-Jewish communities, as also evidenced by the diversity of programming I examined there. A few participants also did not specify a religious identity. Like in Ottawa, most participants in Victoria were Jewish but here, there were no Christian participants of any denomination. However, there were two Baha'i participants, a few who identified as nonreligious, and a few who did not specify a religious identity of any sort. Montreal participants were overwhelmingly Jewish or Christian (mostly Roman Catholic), with some identifying as nonreligious or unspecified.

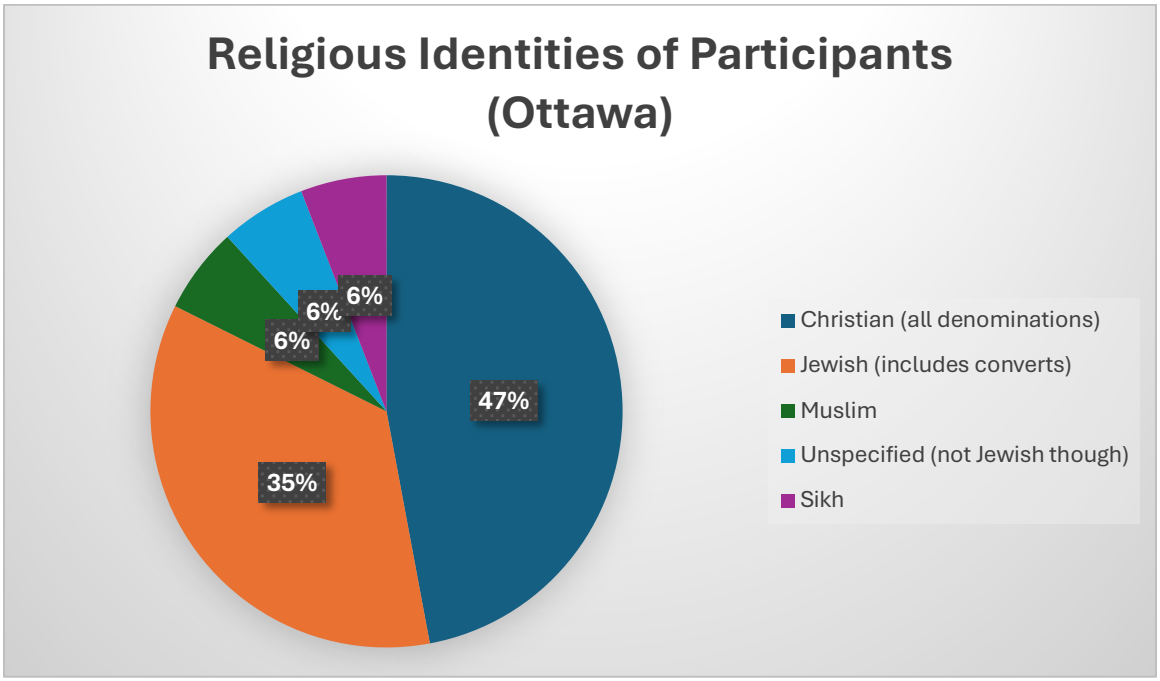


Figure 2: Religious identities of participants (Ottawa).

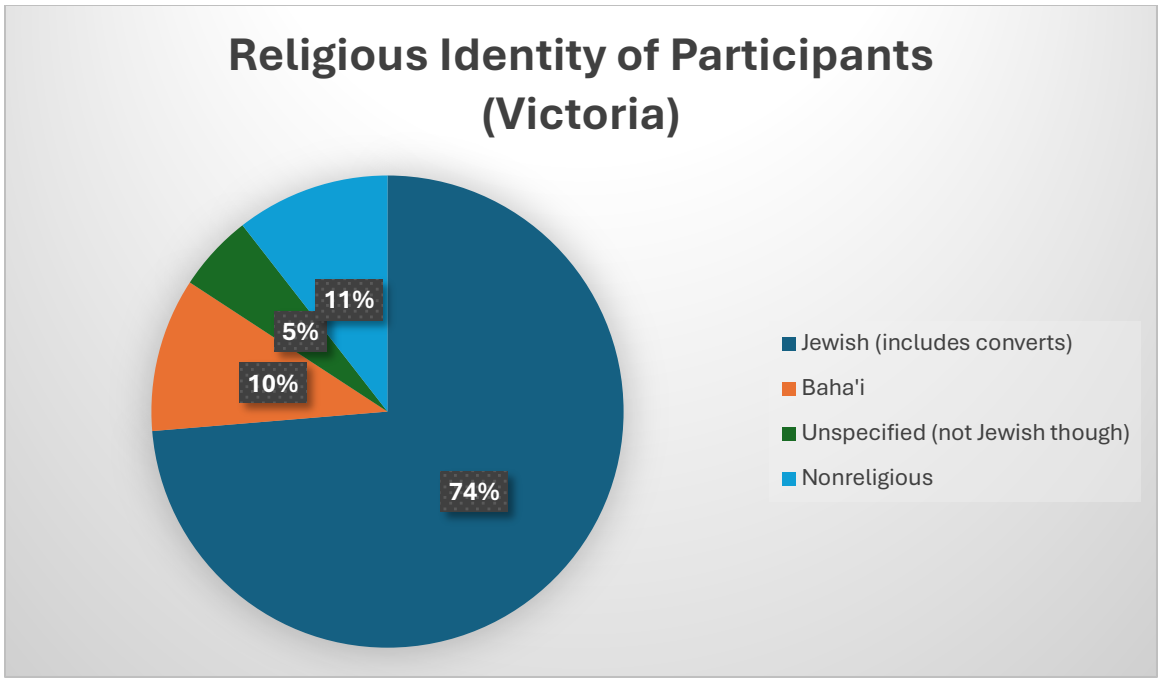


Figure 3: Religious identities of participants (Victoria).

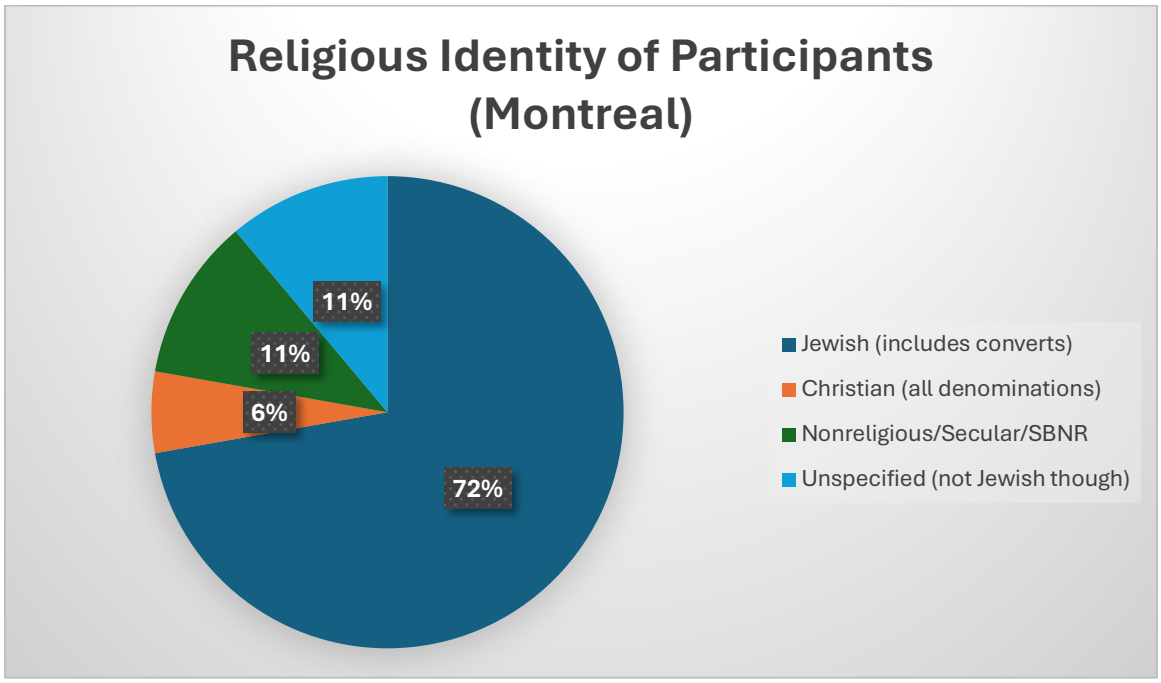


Figure 4: Religious identities of participants (Montreal).

I mention the broader category of nonreligion (including atheist and spiritual-but-not-religious labels) because although participants' identities were categorized by religion, some clearly did not identify with a traditional religious group.[20] Many of the programs I examined were run by religious groups and involved programming of a religious nature (e.g., holiday celebrations). Nonreligious participants also engaged in these programs but may not have been religiously motivated. Instead, they were intrigued to engage with people of diverse backgrounds for various reasons explored throughout this thesis. They were, therefore, still engaging with religiosity, and the fact that nonreligious and religious individuals engaged with each other did not seem to affect the interactions between the parties nor the contact outcomes.

Lastly, the higher percentage of Jewish participants in Victoria and Montreal is noteworthy because I completed most of the data collection in those locations after October 7, 2023, and, in several cases, relationships between Jews and non-Jews had taken a turn for the worse. As a result, it became increasingly difficult to identify and examine intergroup contact programs and to interview non-Jews. This challenge may reflect general tensions and fault lines that existed before October 7, albeit not as obviously. It could also reflect sudden changes in attitudes about Jews. Subsequent chapters explore these tensions and local differences, shedding light on whom Jews were engaging with before and after October 7.

The previous paragraphs described the religious composition of my participants by location and in the overall data. The primary focus of this project was to understand how Jews and non-Jews navigate relationships in healthy and resilient ways in both times of peace and times of tension. One of the main goals was to discover what worked in those relationships and what did not. Inevitably, as a groundbreaking study, the research raised more questions than

---

[20] Common nonreligious identities amongst participants included atheist and spiritual but not religious (SBNR).

answers, but those questions are arguably research leads. Such questions include how Jewish identity and the texture and diversity within Jewish Canada shape experiences and attitudes toward antisemitism. Canadian Jewish research needs more focus on these experiences and on understanding, for example, how identity within the Jewish community plays a role. For example, how do Sephardic experiences of being Francophone from the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East shape their experiences with antisemitism in Canada as compared to Ashkenazi Jews? This study had limitations, such as an English-language requirement, that limited my exploration of these questions. Relatedly, much research on antisemitism in Canada draws more on English-language sources than on French-language sources, suggesting another avenue to consider in order to understand the nuances of antisemitism in Canada and how to respond to its many manifestations.

Another direction to consider is how Jews of different religious denominations experience antisemitism and engage with non-Jews. For example, what are the differences between how Reform communities engage with non-Jews versus how Orthodox communities, who tend to be more insular, engage with non-Jews? If there are limitations unique to different Jewish groups in Canada, what would make these groups feel more comfortable interacting with non-Jewish communities? A question for further research, therefore, is how these strategies could be mobilized even within different Jewish communities throughout Canada based on religious sect. Also, do families who are directly descended from or are related to Holocaust survivors feel differently about interacting with non-Jews in a bridge-building setting, and what challenges might be unique in those contexts? This last consideration leads to the question of what role intergenerational trauma could or could not play in feeling safe engaging with non-Jews. Likewise, what about Jews and Muslims, versus Jews and Catholics? Or Jews and

Indigenous communities? This thesis will later discuss contextual differences in Jewish interactions with different non-Jewish communities.

While scholars such as Ira Robertson, Yolanda Cohen, and Morton Weinfeld have addressed questions of Jewish intra-community diversity in Canada and Jewish identity in a multicultural Canada, we need more evaluation in the context of combatting antisemitism and learning how to bridge divides between Jews and non-Jews that consider micro-tensions and nuances. Again, these questions remain unanswered and were beyond the scope of this project.

1.1.2 Interviews and Transcription

When it came time to interview participants, I prepared six questions for the semi-structured interviews.[21] During the interviews, I asked everyone to tell me about themselves, including their background information, education, employment, and religious identity (or if they had none, to indicate that). These responses helped me understand who the participants were and how their respective backgrounds influenced their subsequent responses. I designed the questions to elicit information about combatting antisemitism and about relationship-building between Jews and non-Jews. They were specific enough to keep participants on topic and within the project's scope, while still allowing them to raise ideas and points important to them.[22]

To record the interviews, I used Otter.ai, which prepares transcripts as it records. Once I completed the interviews and the transcripts were ready, I listened to the recordings to catch and fix any grammatical and wording issues. I ensured the transcript's grammar and syntax matched what I heard on the recording; however, there were slight differences due to my interpretation.

---

[21] Please see "Appendix" for the complete list of interview questions.
[22] The interview questions can be found in "Appendix."

Once I edited the transcripts, I coded and analyzed them. For the final presentation of the quotes in the analysis and subsequent chapters, I cleaned up any remaining grammatical errors and word repetition for clarity's sake. Each quotation otherwise remains consistent with participants' phrasings.

1.1.3 Coding Framework

To develop the coding framework, I began by reading each transcript to get a general sense of the ideas that participants mentioned in their interviews, which helped me identify recurring concepts. This preliminary reading enabled me to eventually highlight the underpinnings of and discourses surrounding the various strategies participants discussed. Several participants discussed multiple strategy-types, so to organize the data more clearly, I categorized each interview to determine which strategy-type it fell under for analysis (namely social, community, or educational). I designed the coding framework by reading each transcript two more times so that I could identify the central ideas and concepts that participants discussed. The first read was to do a general sweep for codes, while the second was to identify any I may have missed. I recorded all codes into an Excel sheet I called the "Master Coding Dictionary." In this dictionary, I noted the code and any notes or sub-categories that helped me specify which strategy the code referred to (e.g., an individual community strategy, such as policing). I also tracked the interview where I found the code. Following coding I conducted theme development, as outlined in the following section.

1.1.4 Theme Development

During the coding process, I noted significant ideas and concepts that participants introduced (directly or indirectly) in their interviews. I noted these in the transcript using Microsoft Word's

comment function. I then recorded all the codes in the "Master Coding Dictionary" and sorted them alphabetically to count how many times each code appeared in the dataset. By noting the frequency of each code, I developed a sense of the themes in the interviews. I repeated the alphabetization function to identify groups or categories of codes for each location and strategy-type. For community strategies, which included a broader mix of initiatives, I sorted by strategy-type (e.g., policing or online hate) and identified themes for each.

To develop concrete themes, I looked for commonalities among the emerging codes. For example, several codes emerged for social strategies that could be grouped under a theme of forming deeper relationships between Jews and non-Jews. I therefore called this theme "social bonds." Several other codes denoted emotional and cognitive factors that emerged as essential for forming and maintaining relationships, many of which were related to empathy. I therefore called this theme "empathy and other relational factors." The remaining codes fit well into other themes, such as "mediating factors" or "outcomes." The former described codes denoting ideas that helped make the contact successful at challenging bias and anti-Jewish prejudice, while the latter denoted what the intergroup contact accomplished. I repeated this process for the various strategy types.

1.2 Methodology

After coding, I analyzed the emergent themes. This section outlines the methodological framework I used to interpret the data and develop more robust answers to the research questions. The methodological framework differs from the theoretical framework in that while the former describes the rationale for my analysis, the latter describes the scholarly underpinnings that informed my conceptualizations, findings, and claims. In sum, I conducted a

thematic discourse analysis of the data by developing an analytical approach that met the project's needs while drawing on established methods and conceptualizations of discourse.

There are many ways to define discourse and its role in different contexts. Likewise, there are several ways to analyze discourse. Because I wanted to examine the social forces and underpinnings of the data's themes and how they contribute to the efficacy of social strategies to combat antisemitism, I chose a more socially oriented definition of discourse. I therefore drew primarily on Michel Foucault and Jean Carabine's conceptualizations of discourse because they consider the broader social influences and attitudes at play in forming and normalizing discourses, in this case, about Jews and learning to live well with them. As quoted in Jean Carabine's "Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis," Michel Foucault's definition of discourse is as follows: "…sometimes… the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements."[23] According to Carabine, who builds on Foucault, discourse involves a group of statements that, when used together, create social meaning and effects, and there are several ways to read or understand it.[24]

Returning to Foucault's view, discourse comprises various meaning-making statements woven together to create truths in different times and places. In other words, these statements produce what we call knowledge or truths. Discourses, in turn, become socially relevant via power. For Foucault, power is a force that permeates society. Truths and knowledges become sites of "activated" power; thus, power operates relationally between competing discourses.

---

[23] Jean Carabine, "Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis," in *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis* (SAGE Publications, 2001), 268. Quote originally found in: Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1972 (originally published 1969).
[24] Carabine, "Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis," 268.

Power activation depends on various socio-cultural factors that interact at any given time to influence which discourses become normative.[25] The name for mainstreaming discourses is normalization, one process through which discursive power is activated.[26]

According to Carabine, discourses are productive because they actively produce knowledge about phenomena.[27] Knowledge is, therefore, governed by power, and all that we as humans claim to know is determined by external factors and our responses to those discourses, which we simultaneously project outward. In addition, knowledge is perpetuated through the interaction of certain discourses with other related and often more prominent discourses. Carabine argues that these discursive interactions continuously create new meanings about issues and phenomena.[28] In the context of antisemitism, discourses about Jews can be constructed and normalized socially, and antisemitism may be maintained through discourses that flow through society. Strategies for combatting antisemitism can, in turn, be understood in relation to broad social and cultural influences.

In this project, however, I followed a less rigid process than the one I outlined above. I drew loosely on Foucault's and Carabine's conceptualizations of discourse to understand how people perceived different strategies for combatting antisemitism and whether those strategies could be helpful. I define discourse as a set of related conversations, ideas, and feelings about a particular topic or object. I then examined those elements in relation to combatting antisemitism and improving social relations. The objects of discourse in this project were the themes; hence,

---

[25] Steven L. Winter, "The Power Thing," *Virginia Law Review* 82, no. 5 (1996): 832–35.
[26] Carabine, "Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis," 278.
[27] Carabine, "Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis," 268–69.
[28] Lori G. Beaman, *Defining Harm: Religious Freedom and the Limits of the Law*, Law and Society Series (Vancouver, B.C.) (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 7; Carabine, "Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis," 269.

when I reviewed the interviews, I compared the conversations, ideas, and feelings of some participants to those of others. I analyzed competing discourses, absences, and silences in the interviews. Lastly, I examined the interrelationships among competing discourses and the limitations in the project's data, literature, and methods.[29] This approach is in line with Carabine's process for Foucauldian discourse analysis, and I have adapted it to apply to a more open-ended thematic analysis.

1.3 Ottawa

1.3.1 History of Ottawa's Jewish Community

To understand Ottawa's contemporary Jewish community, one must understand its history. The Jewish community of Ottawa is at least 100 years younger than Montreal's, with Jews settling in Ottawa since the second half of the 19th century (Jewish Ottawans dispute the exact year). Most Jewish immigrants came to Ottawa during the Great Migration a few decades later. Moses Bilsky was one of Ottawa's first Jews, and it was largely due to his efforts that Ottawa's Jewish community was able to have kosher food and its first synagogue, Adath Jeshurun, which it established in 1892.[30]

Like Montreal's, Ottawa's early Jewish immigrants knew little to no English (or French) and had almost no formal education. Many were peddlers, although some entered the professions or owned small storefronts. Most settled in Lowertown, the area around and including the Byward Market. A few even settled as tenant farmers in Gloucester Township, in what is now

[29] I adapted the analysis's methodology and method from Jean Carabine's steps for performing Foucauldian discourse analysis (Jean Carabine, "Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis," in *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis* (London; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2001), 281).
[30] Anna Bilsky, *A Common Thread: A History of the Jews of Ottawa* (General Store Publishing House, 2009), 2–10.

the Billings Bridge area.[31] Although small, Ottawa's early Jewish community had a significant impact on downtown Ottawa, with many Jews eventually opening businesses (stores and restaurants in the Byward Market and Rideau Street especially). As the community established itself, they could move into other neighbourhoods such as Sandy Hill, with most eventually moving to the West End.[32]

By the 1930s, perhaps out of necessity given the community's small size, many Ottawa Jews could speak English in addition to Yiddish. They had created several welfare organizations, and volunteerism was strong.[33] Education was also important for Ottawa's Jews, and throughout the 20th century, especially in the second half, the community established several Jewish schools (supplemental and day schools) to accommodate its growing religious diversity. The community had a prominent social and cultural life, a significant feature of integration into broader Ottawa society.[34]

Postwar, Ottawa received an influx of Jews from Winnipeg, many of whom came for federal government jobs. Socialist ideals heavily influenced Winnipeg's Jews, and thus they were more liberal than Ottawa's traditional community. The arrival of Winnipeg's Jews, and with them the arrival of less religious forms of Judaism, influenced Ottawa's Jews, and the community gradually became less traditional.[35]

There is little research on the history of antisemitism in Ottawa, but we do know that it existed similarly to other places in Canada. Overt antisemitism existed in Ottawa during the 20th century, and British racial antisemitism was the most significant influence on anti-Jewish hate in

---

[31] Bilsky, *A Common Thread: A History of the Jews of Ottawa*, 14–30.
[32] Bilsky, *A Common Thread: A History of the Jews of Ottawa*, 57–190.
[33] Bilsky, *A Common Thread: A History of the Jews of Ottawa*, 30-55.
[34] Bilsky, *A Common Thread: A History of the Jews of Ottawa*, 77–144.
[35] Bilsky, *A Common Thread: A History of the Jews of Ottawa*, 120–43.

the city, although there were also some tensions between French-Canadians and Jews. During the first half of the 20th century, Jews were often excluded socially from organizations or clubs and experienced educational and employment discrimination.[36]

One notable example of antisemitism in the city was the "Tissot affair." Jean Tissot was an Ottawa police detective who sympathized with the views of French-Canadian antisemite Adrien Arcand. Tissot called on non-Jews to boycott Jewish businesses and drive the Jews out of Ottawa. He also "indicted" Jewish merchants on Rideau Street for supposedly taking over French Catholic businesses there. Tissot was brought to trial, found guilty, and fined $50.[37] Despite isolated episodes such as the Tissot affair, Ottawa's Jews found themselves able to integrate into Ottawa's social and cultural fabric, likely due to their smaller community size and willingness to integrate into non-Jewish society. The non-traditional nature of the community after the Second World War may have also influenced its willingness to integrate more easily. These factors helped shape Ottawa's Jewish community into the diverse and integrated population that it is today.

1.3.2 Contemporary Ottawa: Context and Observations

There are several reasons why I chose Ottawa, home to a mid-sized Jewish community, as a field site (14,950 people identified as Jewish in 2021).[38] First, Ottawa's Jews are in a unique position, as the community has one of the highest Jewish/non-Jewish intermarriage rates in Canada. As of

---

[36] Bilsky, *A Common Thread: A History of the Jews of Ottawa*, 99–100.
[37] Monda Halpern, *Alice in Shandehland: Scandal and Scorn in the Edelson/Horowitz Murder Case* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 6–7.
[38] Robert Brym, "Canada's Jewish Population, 2023: Focus on Minorities and Attitudes Toward Israel's New Government," in *American Jewish Year Book 2023: The Annual Record of the North American Jewish Communities Since 1899*, ed. Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 123:299.

2018, 40.4% of married Jews in Ottawa are married to non-Jews (Shahar 2019, 359).[39] Anecdotally, Ottawa's Jewish community is quite integrated into the broader Ottawa community. Ottawa's Jews are more dependent on non-Jewish institutions than Jews in larger communities such as Toronto or Montreal. I suspected increased interactions with and dependence on Ottawa's non-Jewish community was a potential sign of interaction and exposure. And indeed, Ottawa provided rich data about how Jews and non-Jews learn to live well together every day. Several programs and organizations in Ottawa relied primarily on intergroup contact as their modus operandi.

Another reason I chose Ottawa was that it is the national capital, where much Jewish advocacy occurs. Ottawa's Jewish community has access to resources and networks that are not as readily available elsewhere in the country. For example, political advocacy is strong here. Ottawa's Jews have access to the front line of the public fight against antisemitism, and although I want to steer clear of legal and political strategies in this thesis, engaging politicians for funding, publicity, and awareness, as well as for bringing advocacy ideas into communities across Canada, is potentially helpful. This is, I argue, the Ottawa advantage.

In terms of size, it is a slightly newer community. It does not have all the resources that the communities of Toronto and Montreal have built up, nor does it have the variety of Jewish institutions that would otherwise allow the community to be completely self-sufficient. Ottawa's Jews must, therefore, rely on public institutions and services. The community does have social service agencies and resources for members who might be facing challenges as marginalized

---

[39] Charles Shahar, "Canadian Jewish Population, 2018," in *American Jewish Year Book 2018: The Annual Record of the North American Jewish Communities Since 1899*, ed. Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2019), 118: 359.

members of the Jewish community, but nothing to the extent that Montreal and Toronto have in terms of institutions, such as hospitals. The necessity of Jewish/non-Jewish exposure made Ottawa an enticing field site. Ottawa seemed to do well in intergroup contact, with plenty of collaboration between Jews and non-Jews. Several Jewish organizations serve people beyond the Jewish community, signalling willingness and possibly a priority for much of Ottawa's Jewish community to build bridges with non-Jews. Evidently, there are non-Jews in Ottawa willing to engage with the Jewish community.

1.4 Victoria

1.4.1 History of Victoria's Jewish Community

The main reason I chose to conduct research in Victoria was because of the generally positive historical experience of the Jewish community there compared to other communities in Canada. Victorian Jews had a relatively easier time integrating into non-Jewish Victorian society than did Jews in other parts of the country. Victoria's Jewish community formed in 1858, coinciding with the general arrival of immigrants, mostly of European and Asian origin, in the region.[40] Many came from the United States as prospectors searching for gold. Victoria was initially the economic centre of British Columbia and, between 1858 and 1863, was home to 117 Jewish families. The smooth transition of Victoria's early Jews into broader society was largely due to their already being acculturated to 19th-century English social norms, as they came primarily from the United States. Victoria's Jews were generally well educated, spoke English, and worked

[40] Lillooet Nordlinger McDonnell, "In the Company of Gentiles: Exploring the History of Integrated Jews in British Columbia, 1858-1971" (University of Ottawa, 2011), 1.

within a Western economic framework, and thus they could enter professions shortly after arrival in Victoria. Many worked as merchants, traders, and even wholesalers.[41]

By the 1860s, Victoria's Jews had established a burial society and planned a synagogue. Many had joined organizations and institutions within the broader Victoria community and formed social relationships with non-Jews. When their first synagogue, Congregation Emanu-El, was established and opened in 1863, Victoria's Jews had become a welcome part of the city's social fabric. A unique and intruiging fact is that 70% of the funding for the synagogue came from non-Jews, and some non-Jews even marched in the synagogue's opening parade.[42] As a result of these factors, antisemitism was milder in Victoria than in Ontario and Quebec, and diversity characterized Victoria's Jewish and non-Jewish communities. And although not positive, another factor for the lower rates of antisemitism in BC was the prevalent anti-Asian prejudice there at the time.[43] The West's pluralism made for a unique situation in Victoria in which Jews were not the primary targets of hate due in large part to their high level of integration.

It is important to note that in Victoria's history, Jews came around the same time as non-Jews and for similar reasons. One participant in this study, Rabbi Lynn, noted that because Victoria was so small and Jews and non-Jews arrived around the same time and shared motivations for migration there, there was a stronger tendency for non-Jews to view Jewish newcomers with greater curiosity and appreciation than in larger cities such as Montreal and Toronto, where Jews joined already established non-Jewish communities. What Rabbi Lynn seemed to say was that

---

[41] Nordlinger McDonnell, "In the Company of Gentiles: Exploring the History of Integrated Jews in British Columbia, 1858-1971," 5.
[42] Nordlinger McDonnell, 15-74.
[43] Nordlinger McDonnell, 4-81.

Jews could be noticed more, and in a more positive context, than elsewhere in Canada, and thus could more easily become a welcomed part of the fabric of Victorian society.

1.4.2 Contemporary Victoria: Context and Observations

Victoria is small, both in its general population and its Jewish community. Due to its smaller size, Jews have had to integrate into the greater society to survive because of the lack of Jewish-specific resources and services. Additionally, Victorians are isolated in that they are located on Vancouver Island, which is separate from the mainland of British Columbia and Canada. So although the Jewish community there is more isolated than some, so too are the other populations living in Victoria, and so they are all, according to one participant, Rick, forced to share and navigate a limited geographic space. Also, the Jewish community there has very few material resources and is not particularly wealthy. Victoria's Jews tend to be low-key, and that is another reason why their infrastructure is limited. Jews are not numerous enough to completely segregate and be self-sufficient, unlike the Jews in Montreal for example, and so Jewish integration is relatively high in Victoria.

Before October 7, 2023, British Columbia had seen lower rates of antisemitic incidents than other regions in Canada, and that, coupled with Victoria's historically welcoming attitude towards Jews, drew me to the city.[44] I wanted to uncover what may have been happening in the social relationships between Jews and non-Jews that positively impacted their interactions with and perceptions of each other. Although rates of antisemitism in British Columbia increased in 2023 and 2024, the region, as defined by B'nai Brith Canada, still experienced significantly

[44] See B'nai Brith Canada's *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2020*.

lower rates than Ontario and Quebec, the other areas of focus in this project. In 2023, British Columbia was also grouped with Yukon, which may account for some of the rise that year.[45]

Victoria, as a city, has a unique feel compared to other places out West, like Vancouver. Its style as a city is very "West Coast," with a laid-back "vibe" and an emphasis on the environment and wellness, which are not as prominent in eastern Canada. It was clear to me that people tended to be more left-leaning than those in eastern and central Canada. And even though we know that antisemitism has come and is coming from spaces on the left of the political spectrum, the atmosphere in British Columbia, at least when I arrived, was open, inclusive, and welcoming.

Victoria's Jews are what I would call *socially resilient*. I would also describe the community as small but mighty. They are a community of a few thousand people (4,385 in 2021), but they are deeply involved in the broader Victoria community and are highly engaged with their non-Jewish neighbours. Until October 7, non-Jewish neighbours were also openly engaged with them.[46] The post-October 7 climate highlighted the fault lines and cracks that seemed to lurk beneath the surface but arguably remained dormant due to the perceived lack of social power for antisemitic rhetoric and attitudes.

Victorians' shared interest in the environment and community-minded attitudes. Prior to October 7, the city evoked a sense of inclusivity and belonging. That said, participants in this study highlighted Victorians as favouring polite, often disingenuous demeanours as socially normative, and so Jewish participants described being spoken to in manners that seemed almost patronizing, as if non-Jews were just being performatively inclusive and polite, but not genuinely

---

[45] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2023*, Audit no. 42 (B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2024), 23; *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024*, 21.
[46] Brym, "Canada's Jewish Population, 2023: Focus on Minorities and Attitudes Toward Israel's New Government," 299.

so. Jewish participants frequently noted this strange, almost disingenuous kind of underlying antisemitism there, and it was unclear to them if Jews were truly thought of as equal members of society or as a minority group that should merely be tolerated. Either way, and other than small slights or off-hand remarks, participants did not describe antisemitism as a significant or overt problem before October 7.

I left in December 2023, but a question remained with me about whether the city's dominant social discourses (e.g., left-leaning, social justice-oriented) were exacerbating antisemitism rather than causing it, because if antisemitism was simply unfashionable there, the anti-Zionist rhetoric that became more overt and bothersome to participants after October 7 may have found fertile discursive fuel because of the power of these discourses and how they relate to antisemitism.[47] The subtle antisemitism participants described could have been the tinder and the left-leaning, social justice discourses the spark.[48] That question remains unanswered, but underscores the importance of understanding discourse and rhetoric in decoding contemporary antisemitism and its fuel. Being a small city with a small Jewish population, Victoria's antisemitism is certainly more focused in impact and thus may be easier to discern patterns from than antisemitism in larger cities.

1.5 Montreal

Unlike Victoria with its small Jewish population, Montreal hosts Canada's second-largest Jewish community (numbering at 90,254 in 2021), and antisemitism in Quebec is contextually different

[47] Chapter 2 discusses in further detail anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism and the scholarly debates surrounding these concepts. Here, I simply describe how Jewish participants felt about the rhetoric that became more apparent in Victoria post-October 7, 2023.
[48] See Chapter 2 for a deeper discussion about anti-Zionism, anti-Israelism, and antisemitism.

than elsewhere in Canada.[49] According to the data, Montreal's Jews experience a plethora of challenges that Jews elsewhere in Canada do not. As this section explores, Montreal's Jewish community has been and remains quite insular. However, as one participant, Rabbi Ellis, noted, there is significant diversity within the Jewish community, and Montreal is a fertile place for Jewish life. Still, Montreal and Quebec have a reputation for being home to the most persistent and overt antisemitism in Canada. In fact, one of the most prominent debates amongst historians of Canadian Jewry is whether antisemitism in Quebec is historically worse than antisemitism elsewhere in Canada. This section explores that question and the debates that feature prominently in Quebec's socio-political landscape.

1.5.1 History of Montreal's Jewish Community

Antisemitism in Quebec has had two main sources of fuel: French Catholics and Anglophone Protestants. In terms of French Catholic antisemitism, Pierre Anctil explains that at the beginning of the 20th century, many in the educated French-Canadian elite read and were influenced by the work of French intellectuals, many of whom espoused antisemitic views (though most French Canadians did not engage with such intellectual works and were most likely unaffected by them). The Catholic Church mainly influenced anti-Jewish hatred from the Francophone base, as it remained a strong presence in the province.[50] While French Catholics formed a demographic majority, Anglophone Protestants, mostly of British origin, came to dominate Quebec's economy after New France was incorporated into British North America following the Seven Years' War. Despite these developments, Quebec's Jews carried on establishing their community. The first

---

[49] Brym, "Canada's Jewish Population, 2023: Focus on Minorities and Attitudes Toward Israel's New Government," 299.
[50] Pierre Anctil, "Finding a Balance in a Dual Society: The Jews of Quebec," in *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 72-77.

synagogue in Canada was established in Montreal in 1768 and was called Shearith Israel. The early Montreal Jewish community was relatively small but economically well-established.[51]

Although these early Jewish Montrealers were mainly of German and British origin, Montreal's Jewish population grew dramatically during the Great Migration (the late 1800s to about 1919).[52] Most Jewish immigrants were impoverished, spoke only Yiddish, were tradespeople (working mainly in the garment industry), and were largely uneducated (illiterate or relatively uneducated in secular subjects).[53] They settled almost exclusively in urban Montreal and not in rural Quebec, and so they hardly fit the French Canadians' image of the ideal member of Quebec society. That, coupled with the strong influence of Catholic anti-Judaism, meant that Jews were barred from Catholic institutions, including schools. Quebec had a dual, confessional education system (English Protestant and French Catholic schools) at the time. So Jewish parents had no choice but to enroll their children in the English-Protestant schools. Although not apparent at the time, education laid the foundations for eventual rapid economic mobility among many of Montreal's Jews. Nevertheless, there was anti-Jewish discrimination in the English-Protestant community as well. Jews in Montreal and Quebec, therefore, experienced multi-layered hate.[54]

As a Yiddish-speaking, non-Christian group forced to find their place in a society riven with religious and linguistic tensions, Jews became what Anctil describes as a "third solitude" in the

---

[51] Pierre Anctil, "A Community in Transition: The Jews of Montréal," *Contemporary Jewry* 31, no. 3 (2011): 228; Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 28–43.
[52] Jews also came to Montreal during other waves of immigration, most notably Holocaust survivors in the postwar period and the Sephardim from the late 1950s to the early 1970s (in *History of the Jews in Quebec*). Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 55–119.
[53] Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 52–97.
[54] Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 161-195; Anctil, "A Community in Transition: The Jews of Montréal," 229.

province.[55] In response, Montreal's Jews established welfare organizations and other institutions to meet their community's needs.[56] Anctil notes that Montreal's Jewish community, compared to others in Canada, became institutionally complete and could be almost entirely self-reliant if needed. The community's institutional completeness was inspired mainly by the social and, to some degree, economic isolation of Jews in Quebec.

Political and demographic developments during the 1960s and early 1970s, including the Quiet Revolution, Sephardic immigration to Montreal, and the advent of bilingualism and multiculturalism, led to changes for Montreal and Quebec's Jews. Quebec's attitudes towards religious minorities and public culture shifted in a direction that threatened a positive public perception of Jews in the province. Jews in Montreal, now more prosperous and able to form new subcommunities in more affluent areas of the city, such as Westmount, had to renegotiate their identity within a secularizing Quebec society.[57] And with the help of Sephardic immigrants, Ashkenazi Jews learned how to be Jewish and Quebecois simultaneously.[58]

Montreal's Jewish community remains noticeably insular, and its self-sufficiency contributes to this apparent insularity and, quite plausibly, the lack of Jewish/non-Jewish interaction and programming compared to elsewhere in Canada. The Montreal data in this project confirm that Jewish insularity poses a challenge to implementing effective social strategies to combat antisemitism, and there are several political obstacles to combatting antisemitism effectively in the region, including the multifaceted nature of Quebec antisemitism. To shed insight on the data

---

[55] Anctil, "A Community in Transition: The Jews of Montréal," 228.
[56] Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 54.
[57] Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 131–290.
[58] Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 290–306.

discussed in subsequent chapters, the following section explores some of the current issues and general observations about the city.

1.5.2 Montreal: Context and Observations

The previous sub-section briefly explored the history of antisemitism in Montreal. There are unique historical, social, linguistic, and religious fault lines in Quebec that have contributed to different forms of anti-Jewish hate in the province. The interviews in this project revealed that those influences continue to leave a legacy for contemporary antisemitism in Montreal and Quebec, but that further, independent political challenges exacerbate existing intergroup tensions and divisions. One factor specific to Montreal at present is that, according to some participants such as James, there is a large Arab population. That population comes from former French colonies and moves to places such as Quebec, drawn by the French language and the region's historical ties to France. Given the tensions between Israel and several Arab states, as well as the base of Arab and Islamist antisemitism in Canada, inter-ethnic and inter-religious fault lines in Montreal are a serious concern and highlight the need for social interventions that help ease intergroup tensions of that sort.[59]

Related to the presence of historic and current antisemitic fuel in Quebec is the province's influential protest culture. There were several protests in Quebec, both related to and unrelated to Israel, before and after October 7, 2023. I encountered several during my stay. Nevertheless, the protests I witnessed in the province were largely against Israel, loud, well-attended, and prevalent in densely populated areas, such as downtown Montreal and several university campuses. Given the various bases for antisemitism in Quebec, such as anti-Judaism, racial

---

[59] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2017*, 17.

antisemitism, and anti-Zionism/anti-Israelism, the loud protest culture could normalize antisemitic generalizations and tropes or offer platforms for existing anti-Jewish sentiments. The strategies I examined can foster empathy and social resilience, ideally helping people avoid engaging in hostile discourse or actions towards the Jewish community when political tensions arise. The concern is not political protest in and of itself. Instead, it is about the ease with which political protest and antisemitism have collided since October 7 especially, highlighting the need for social resilience, social strategies, community building, and bridge building in the region.

Compared to other field sites, Montreal seemed the weakest in terms of intergroup contact efforts. Several participants I interviewed were connected to Temple Emanu-El Beth Sholom, Montreal's only Reform synagogue and Canada's oldest.[60] It was challenging to find any bridge-building initiatives or groups outside of Temple Emanu-El, though I did find some. Montreal both is a large city and has a large Jewish community, and perhaps because historically they were pitted against Anglophones and Francophones and have often been excluded from institutions and faced discrimination on multiple fronts, they have continuously tended to remain insular. And that has reinforced their separateness, even if it has understandable roots in communal self-defence. Ideally, there would have been more bridge-building between Jews and non-Jews in Montreal, though perhaps during calmer times, that will become easier.

Various socio-political factors in Quebec also affect Jewish experiences in the province, particularly in Montreal. These factors pose challenges for the potential efficacy of intergroup contact work in Quebec because they normalize broader discourses about minorities and religion in general. The first factor is the controversial Bill 21, which bans public-sector employees from

---

[60] "Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom," Wikipedia, May 18, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_Emanu-El-Beth_Sholom; *The History of Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom* (Temple Emanu-El-beth Sholom, n.d.), 2.

wearing religious symbols in the workplace.[61] This, coupled with the laïcité approach characteristic of Quebec's relationship to public displays of religion, has created an increasingly hostile environment for religious minorities, like Jews, in the province. A few Montreal participants discussed the political tensions around religious identity and suggested that for Jews who want to observe their Charter right to freedom of religion and be a public sector employee in Quebec, it is challenging. They noted how Bill 21 normalizes broader negative attitudes towards religion and that when religion becomes something normatively negative, attitudes directed at specific minority religious communities, such as Jews, increase as well.

Another challenge in Quebec's socio-political sphere is the issue of French-language rights. It was apparent to me from the participants that prioritizing the French language over English contributes to hostile antisemitism in Quebec. It seemed that Quebec was trying to make it increasingly difficult not only for outsiders to enter the province but also for them to integrate successfully after arrival, due to new requirements that residents primarily use French in the public sphere to receive public services. The increasingly strict laws also put much of Montreal's Jewish community at a disadvantage because Jews have for so long been overwhelmingly associated with English. These socio-political factors are making it increasingly difficult for Jews and other communities to integrate comfortably and openly in Quebec society, and animosities and hatreds may find fertile ground in the province because of the normative values these factors reinforce.

[61] Bill 21: An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State (2019), 5–14.

1.5.3 The Sephardic Community

One of the distinctive features of Montreal's Jewish community is its sizable Sephardic population. Although I intended to include more Sephardic perspectives in the project, I struggled to recruit any participants because they had to be able to communicate in English to participate in the study. Given that the Sephardic community in Montreal is predominantly French-speaking, it was difficult to incorporate Sephardic perspectives into this research. However, I conducted one interview with a rabbi who worked closely with Montreal's Sephardic community, Rabbi Ellis (Ashkenazi by ancestry), and the following summary is based on that interview.

Rabbi Ellis and I connected through a mutual acquaintance, and although I had already left Montreal, we had an enriching conversation via Zoom about Montreal's Sephardic community. Rabbi Ellis is Ashkenazi by ancestry, but he has training in Sephardic Jewish norms and traditions, and so his insight into Sephardic Jewry was deep and meaningful for this project. According to Rabbi Ellis, there is a distinct sense of citizenship among the Sephardic community. For example, recall that Sephardic Jews integrated differently into Quebec society than Ashkenazi Jews did, mainly because they arrived speaking fluent French.[62] They also share commonalities with other ethnic communities in Montreal, such as the Arab community, because they came predominantly from Arab lands. Many Sephardic Jews can speak French as well as Arabic, and they are familiar with Arab culture, which has helped them integrate into Quebec in a way that Ashkenazi Jews could not. Sephardic Jews in Montreal are also diverse. For example, Iraqi Jews are different from Syrian Jews, who are different from Egyptian Jews, who are different from Libyan Jews, Moroccan Jews, and so on. So there are geographical and cultural

---

[62] Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 290–306.

differences within the umbrella term *Sephardic*. Rabbi Ellis also explained that the Sephardic Jews of Montreal tend to be more uniformly religiously traditional. They do not have the divisions (e.g., Reform, Conservative, Orthodox) that Ashkenazi Jews do.

One of the questions I had about Montreal's Sephardic population was whether they, because they are visible minorities, experience hate differently from Ashkenazi Jews. Interestingly, Rabbi Ellis thought that being visible minorities contributed insubstantially to Sephardic experiences of hate. If anything, there is a great Jewish pride amongst Sephardic Jews, and he suggested that there was a more unconditional protection or support for Israel than amongst Ashkenazi Jews, where you do see a marginal, but sometimes stark, difference of opinion. Still, there exist some anti-Zionist, harsh anti-Israel sentiments in the Sephardic community. Regardless, Rabbi Ellis noted that the Sephardic community strongly values Zionism, even though they do not necessarily understand Zionism in the same way as Ashkenazi Jews.

Sephardic Jews also have a history of persecution that is different from that of the Ashkenazi Jews. Rabbi Ellis gave me a crash course in this history, describing how Ashkenazi Jews experienced greater violence in the lands they lived in for much longer. Violence against Sephardic Jews did not really happen until after 1948, following the creation of the State of Israel. But the fallout was violent enough that the vast majority of these Jews were expelled in the years following. Sephardic Jews, therefore, have a different sense of trauma as the impact of the violence they experienced was more sudden and uncharacteristic of their host societies.

What was clear from Rabbi Ellis's interview was that Montreal's Sephardic Jews have had a different relationship vis-à-vis the broader Montreal community. Thus, they experienced prominent fault lines in Quebec society in different ways from Ashkenazi Jews. And given that

Sephardic Jews tend to be more uniformly religiously traditional, I wonder how the Sephardic community might struggle with navigating a society centred around laïcité. Their strong affinity for Zionism may also affect how they continue to relate to Arab groups, considering that anti-Zionist rhetoric tends to be stronger from that base. Although I do not have much insight into strategies for helping the Sephardic community specifically, there are cultural and linguistic differences prominent among Sephardic Jews that we must consider when developing strategies going forward.

1.6 Timing Matters: Combatting Antisemitism in a Post-October 7 Social Landscape

The fieldwork for this project took place largely during a time of radical change for Canada's Jews. Again, I completed the first four interviews in Victoria less than a week and a half before October 7, 2023. On that date, Hamas attacked Israel. The Montreal data were particularly reflective of this shift in the precarious social situation of Jews in Canada, as an element of the fallout of October 7 was an exponential increase in antisemitism.[63] If I had completed all of the interviews before October 7, the data may not have been as raw as they turned out to be, and the limitations of intergroup contact work may not have been as apparent or well understood. Most Victoria participants, and almost all Montreal participants, discussed October 7 and how it affected Jewish/non-Jewish relationships in their respective communities.

Also, several participants noted how the fallout after October 7 led to a break in many of their relationships with non-Jews. The post-October 7 fallout demonstrated the limitations of social strategies because of the immense social pressure, polarization, and flared emotions people experienced, all of which I argue contribute to the normalization of antisemitism. According to

---

[63] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2023*, 5; *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024*, 6.

several participants, including Rabbi Lynn below, the post-October 7 social climate demonstrated that allyships did not always materialize in tough times:

> *So, I think it's a really interesting question to ask vis-à-vis October 7. I think if you had come last year, I would have probably given you a different answer than I'm going to give you this year. And that's the reality that you're going to get anywhere in Canada right now. October 7 totally shifted how we are seen, how we're perceived, and how people are responding… I've seen a pretty significant change. So, for example, I had a local politician in here… He had come just last week in response to October 7 and then the antisemitism that's been expressing itself around town, and he said, I'm sure you've been inundated with calls from local politicians. And I said, No, you're the only one. And he couldn't believe it. I had to repeat it. I said, No, you are the only one.*

Rabbi Lynn was a firecracker. Trained as a Reform rabbi and a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community, she was one of the most open and matter-of-fact participants in the project's entire dataset. We met in her office at Victoria's Jewish community centre, a small building that houses the city's Reform congregation. Rabbi Lynn never refused to answer a question with brutal honesty, and shying away from tense subjects was not her practice. She shared with me many examples about how Jews felt abandoned by fellow Canadians and in various spaces, such as workplaces and social environments, and by people they thought were their friends. She explained:

> *I had one guy sitting exactly where you're sitting. He came on October 10, maybe. Like, almost immediately. Man in his 40s, married, two kids. Hasn't been in shul for probably 30 years, weeping because he's working with a company. [It's] very devoted to cultivating this image of being very diverse, positive, and very inclusive on all these fronts. Right? And he has taken all the courses very willingly, like paid time off to take this diversity class for Indigenous and for Black and for this and for that, and then October 7 hits and not a word. And there's been no inclusion of antisemitism. And he hasn't said anything, and then on October 7, nobody says a word. And he starts sending letters up the pike, and nobody responds, and he realizes nobody cares. He's a Jew. He doesn't matter. And he thought he mattered. He thought he mattered in that whole equation. And, you know, [my partner has] been working at UVic for a lot of years. And he still is struggling to get the DEI people to recognize antisemitism as an issue. And that's not just UVic, that's everywhere.*

Participants noted that one reason so many Jewish/non-Jewish relationships did not withstand strain was that intergroup contact may not have been a priority for many before October 7. Relationships, therefore, could not become resilient enough to withstand the onslaught of public displays of antisemitism post-October 7. Monika, a wise, elegant woman involved with Jewish women's empowerment, was one of the participants I interviewed who was not born Jewish but chose to be Jewish (converted) later in adulthood. I met her at various synagogue events, and she also spoke about losing people in her life post-October 7:

> *I can only talk from our side, the Jewish side. And there is no denying that I think the Jewish community was in shock. We were paralyzed when it first happened. And nobody really knew. What do you do? We just didn't know. I think the fact, and it's not just with the partners that we had worked with, but it's really, as we know, right across the world, that there was no or very little empathy shown by our friends, by other countries, particularly to the atrocities that were committed against women. Women's organizations did not come out deploring what happened. So, I think there was just such disbelief about how it's possible. I mean, everybody was paralyzed, really, about the news, and nobody knew how to go forward with anything. But to not deplore publicly what has happened to any human being, [inaudible] this onslaught, I mean, it was just something that we still haven't quite come to terms with.*

Another participant, Rabbi Dolin, also discussed this issue and posited that relationships may not have been as strong as they could have been. I met with Rabbi Dolin via Zoom, and what I recall most about him was his peaceful, contemplative demeanour. He had spent a great deal of time as a rabbi and Jewish community leader in Montreal, building relationships with non-Jews from various backgrounds. When October 7 happened, and many relationships fell apart, he encountered the same frustrations as other Jews. Rabbi Dolin explained to me:

> *In my time here in Montreal, I've worked with imams and ministers and been in many groups trying to figure out how we create dialogue when there are challenges and obviously, since October 7, things have been complicated, and a lot of that work has been difficult to hold on to. And during the past few months, I've been trying to reflect on how we can move forward when things are more challenging than they've ever been.*

Like Rabbi Dolin and the others, Rabbi Grushcow, also from Montreal, described the fractured nature of Jewish/non-Jewish relationships in this new social climate: “I would say when we started thinking post-October 7 of the people with whom we have relationships, some have stayed, and others have become untenable. And that's been tough, obviously.” Rabbi Grushcow was the last participant I interviewed. I spoke to her on Zoom after I left Montreal, but one of the hallmarks of her tenure as a senior rabbi has been her work building bridges with non-Jews in Montreal. She carried a lot of wisdom, and what stood out in our conversation was her humility and honesty about the delicate yet worthwhile nature of bridge-building and its potential to combat antisemitism. She was aware of the nature of post-October 7 Jewish/non-Jewish relationships but still held hope that real, lasting, and meaningful bonds could form and create positive change for Jews in Canada.

I return to Rabbi Lynn who, like Rabbi Grushcow, noted the difficulty in forming allyships in tough times. That raises the question of whether such work should be done only in calmer times, as people feel less socially and emotionally inflamed and thus potentially more willing to engage. One of my participants, Rick, described how fear may play a significant role post-October 7 and how he hoped for a better outcome in more peaceful times:

> *It’s not about fear. It can’t be. We ended last night with the music Kol Ha’Olam Kulo. You know, I said, this is what we have to end our music with, to my friendly musicians. That’s what we have to remember. I think Rabbi Nachman’s advice is even more important for the Jewish community to realize yes, the world is a narrow bridge. And yes, we cannot be afraid to walk on that bridge.*

Rick, whom I met at Victoria’s YMCA, was a spunky man who had devoted much of his life to Holocaust education, as his mother was a survivor, saved by gentiles. One of his goals was to engage non-Jews in Holocaust programming, such as memorial services, so that the lessons of the Holocaust could impact them positively. Several participants attested that many of the

Holocaust programs in Victoria were attended by large numbers of non-Jews, so his innovative approaches have had some notable traction. However, he spoke for quite a while about limitations within the Jewish community and how those exacerbate experiences of antisemitism. He explained that fear can also be a problem inside the Jewish community. Fear can look like a hesitancy of Jews to expose themselves to non-Jewish society—fear to be authentic and proud, fear of repercussions for doing so. Maybe such fears also underpin the lack of success intergroup contact has had in several cases post-October 7: Fear closes Jews off from non-Jews, starving the oxygen from these efforts, allowing tense emotions and fears to contribute to fearful and tense encounters (i.e., anxiety breeds anxiety).

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the temporal and geographical factors that impacted this project's data. The stark increase of antisemitism in Canada after October 7, 2023, and following an antecedent increase before that date, enabled a social climate in which Jewish and non-Jewish social bonds became increasingly strained. Jewish participants made it clear that they experienced increased fear and hostility from several non-Jews after October 7, including former friends and supposed allies. The faultlines in these relationships seemed not merely to be political or military disagreements over the Israel-Hamas war; the relationships themselves seemed to be rejected. The data demonstrated geographic variation shaped by local and contextual factors unique to the politics and histories of each region I examined, suggesting that historical and political contexts and other idiosyncrasies of place and time have played, and continue to play, a key role in how Jews relate to and bond with non-Jews, above and beyond the tensions post-October 7.

The antisemitic fallout in Canada following October 7 powerfully demonstrates the limitations of intergroup contact, providing valuable insight into the parameters and pitfalls of

social strategies for combatting antisemitism. In what follows, I argue that researchers and policy-makers must consider the aforementioned factors when designing effective proactive and preventive strategies for combatting antisemitism. By doing so, stakeholders in this fight can more effectively respond to the socio-cultural, historical, and political factors unique to, or more prevalent in, certain regions that differentiate the social experiences of Jews. Although the following chapters discuss the general themes that emerged across all field sites, readers should keep in mind regional nuances to better understand the varied experiences with and responses to antisemitism across Canada.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter describes the major theoretical underpinnings of this research. There is a large and growing body of research in social psychology and sociology that suggests that fostering constructive, continuous, intentional, and positive contact between groups can improve relationships and reduce prejudices. The theory that emerges, called Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT), describes several cognitive, emotional, and relational processes that determine the success rate of intergroup contact programming. This chapter explores the social-psychological literature on intergroup relations and ICT to situate the research presented in the following chapters. It also discusses concepts that directly pertain to the emotional and cognitive elements of antisemitism, which this thesis also discusses throughout. I argue that to design effective strategies to combat antisemitism requires understanding the underpinnings of hate. Following the discussion of the social-psychological literature, this chapter assesses other scholarly literature relevant to my research. First, this chapter examines the seminal literature on current antisemitism and combatting it. Second, it provides a broader overview of work on Canadian Jewish history and antisemitism in Canada.

2.1 Theory

The following sections discuss in greater detail the literature on the psychology of prejudice that supports the theoretical framework I use throughout this thesis. My thesis relies heavily on the psychological literature on intergroup relations and Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT). It also suggests that emotional and cognitive underpinnings sustain antisemitism in individuals and groups. So this section discusses the most common underpinnings, namely conspiracy thinking, scapegoating, and stereotyping, before offering some literature-based points for considering how to address antisemitism more effectively.

2.1.1 Intergroup Relations

This section discusses the processes underlying intergroup dynamics and relations most frequently noted in the literature. Lynne Jackson, for example, highlights the structural and societal underpinnings of prejudice and inequalities. She argues that it is vital to develop empathy to challenge the social hierarchies and structures that maintain inequalities. Jackson also says that recategorization, a social and cognitive process explained in the following paragraphs, can be helpful, as can intergroup contact. Contact, Jackson argues, is effective when it fosters positive cooperation and friendships.[64]

If intergroup tensions play some role in prejudice formation, from where do intergroup tensions arise? Although several psychologists have addressed that question over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Gordon Allport is perhaps the best known for his seminal work *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954, 1979) in which he lays a foundation for understanding prejudice in individuals. Although earlier works in the field, such as Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality*, were influential, Allport's work paved the way for how social psychologists and sociologists came to understand the many facets of prejudice in the decades that followed. *The Nature of Prejudice* still forms the basis of contemporary research on prejudice, particularly on reducing and combatting it. Allport was a pioneer in studying intergroup relations and in developing the contact hypothesis to reduce prejudice at both the individual and group levels.

Allport categorizes the progression of prejudice and discrimination into five stages: antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination. Those stages form the basis for understanding how prejudice manifests between groups and how negative attitudes

---

[64] Lynne M. Jackson, *The Psychology of Prejudice: From Attitudes to Social Action*, second edition (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020), 88–123.

can transform into harmful actions. Allport argues that prejudice can have various causes, but prejudiced people have different cognitive processes from those with less prejudice. He also suggests that positive contact between groups can reduce prejudice.[65]

Another explanation about what causes prejudice in individuals is social categorization, a process by which we shape our perceptions of and engagement with others.[66] Our interactions and perceptions influence our biases and prejudices. How one group categorizes another shapes the emotional experiences between the groups. Diane Mackie et al. argue that strategies for improving intergroup relations should consider social categorization and appraisals, mainly how ingroup emotions affect positive or negative relations between groups. They distinguish empathy from intergroup emotions, with the former referring to caring about how others feel and the latter about putting yourself in another's shoes.[67] Mary Douglas adds that othering groups and individuals is relevant to understanding why people act in prejudiced ways, and how we might, as a result, combat that prejudice. Douglas's seminal work, *Purity and Danger*, follows well from Allport as she discusses the influential theory of social categorization as a mechanism by which groups, including Jews, are othered and portrayed negatively. Douglas posits that there is a human tendency to sort things and individuals into pure and impure categories that stems from a need to impose order on perceived chaos. As people impose different social categories on others, they exclude, avoid, or even suppress those who are considered different. Rituals of separation help us maintain boundaries and determine who is "us" and who is "them".[68] Thus, categorization may cognitively underpin and maintain antisemitic prejudices in humans. Perhaps

---

[65] Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, 25th anniversary edition (Addison-Wesley, 1979), 22–175.
[66] Jackson, *The Psychology of Prejudice: From Attitudes to Social Action*, 33.
[67] Diane M. Mackie et al., "Intergroup Emotions Theory," in *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, second edition, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Psychology Press, 2016), 150–67.
[68] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Routledge Classics, 1966), 5–51.

antisemitism expresses some mental and emotional process or meets some such need. That need is not yet known, but that there might be one deserves further research.

More recent work, such as that of Julie Garcia and Jennifer Crocker, suggests that intergroup tensions arise primarily from threats to ingroups and to self-identity, and that non-marginalized groups often downplay or deny their prejudices to avoid negatively affecting their self-image. Behaviour can be affected by cognitive processes that are themselves influenced by threats to group self-image and ego. When group self-images are threatened, groups may be less likely to maintain positive outcomes and behaviours, which are the goals of intergroup contact. Intergroup efforts should therefore aim at communal or situational outcomes rather than be directed at individuals' attitudes within a group.[69]

Walter Stephan et al. further develop the role of threat by discussing Intergroup Threat Theory, which posits that an ingroup may perceive an outgroup as threatening its beliefs, morals, and customs. As a result, the ingroup either avoids contact with the outgroup or approaches it with negative assumptions, and, in turn, these assumptions foster harmful contact, ultimately reinforcing prejudice.[70] Threat appears to contribute to adverse outcomes in intergroup contact, as it can lead to and reinforce fear and, in turn, negative outgroup stereotypes. Fear and threat can also impede progress when trying to create positive contact. Intergroup Threat Theory describes four types of threats: realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. Stephan and Stephan argue that stereotypes can be countered by creating differentiated views about group members and individuals. However, ingroups may be unlikely

---

[69] Julie A. Garcia and Jennifer Crocker, "Upward and Downward Spirals Intergroup Interactions: Compassionate Goals and Transcending the Ego," in *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, second edition, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Psychology Press, 2016), 66–81.
[70] Walter G. Stephan et al., "Intergroup Threat Theory," in *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, second edition, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Psychology Press, 2016), 255–72.

to perform this differentiation when faced with realistic and symbolic threats.[71] Contact, however, can mitigate prejudiced tendencies in certain people because it reduces group anxiety and threat, disproves stereotypes, and increases trust, empathy, and knowledge about outgroups. Intergroup contact can even have effects beyond the immediate members involved. This thesis will explore the mechanisms and outcomes of intergroup contact in the case of antisemitism more thoroughly.[72]

2.1.2 Intergroup Contact Theory

According to work on intergroup relations, the most proven approach to reducing prejudice is fostering positive contact between groups. That approach, known as intergroup contact, has theoretical underpinnings in Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT), which is based on the work of social psychologist Gordon Allport. Allport notes the following essential factors to ensure the efficacy of intergroup contact: "equal status between the groups in the situations, common goals, no competition between groups, and authority sanction for the contact." Thomas Pettigrew later added a fifth, which he called "friendship potential."[73]

Ulrich Wagner et al. also suggest that intergroup contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice and intergroup bias and that, with contact, outcomes often differ between minority and majority groups due to varying levels of intergroup trust within each group. Reducing anxiety and developing empathy within individuals within a given group can positively

---

[71] Walter G. Stephan and Cookie White Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," in *Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination*, ed. Stuart Oskamp (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000), 27–46.
[72] Thomas F. Pettigrew, "In Pursuit of Three Theories: Authoritarianism, Relative Deprivation, and Intergroup Contact," *Annual Review of Psychology* 67, no. 1 (2016): 4–34.
[73] As quoted in Christiana Vonofakou et al., "The Impact of Direct and Extended Cross-Group Friendships on Improving Intergroup Relations," in *Improving Intergroup Relations: Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, ed. Ulrich Wagner et al. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 108.

affect relations with other groups.[74] Pettigrew and Linda Tropp agree with this and add that identity salience dramatically influences the potential for intergroup contact to shift attitudes in a positive direction. Research suggests three fundamental mediating conditions that increase the likelihood of positive contact: reducing anxiety toward outgroups, increasing empathy toward them, and increasing general knowledge about outgroups, though the last is of more minor significance than the first two. Those conditions can also encourage prejudiced individuals to engage in contact with outgroups.[75] Despite such positive outcomes, Pettigrew and Tropp add that contact can sometimes worsen prejudice and conflict, particularly when threat is involved.[76]

Friendships are also important. As Pettigrew explains, cross-group friendships can reduce prejudice within an ingroup. If one ingroup member has positive relationships with outgroup members, other ingroup members who observe this positive contact may soften their prejudiced views of the outgroup. What is crucial there is witnessing a fellow ingroup member participate in positive, trusting, and constructive intergroup contact. The vicarious trust of an outgroup member through the trust one has in their friend can reduce prejudice. Cross-group friendships can also reduce intergroup anxiety, which in turn reduces prejudice.[77] Tropp adds that cross-group friendships can be more effective at reducing prejudice than some types of indirect contact. Cross-group friendships also allow people to form diverse friendships and focus on relations, not just the conditions of a contact situation.[78] Christiana et al. state there are "four affective

---

[74] Ulrich Wagner et al., "Editors' Introduction," in *Improving Intergroup Relations: Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, ed. Ulrich Wagner et al. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 3–5.
[75] Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact* (Psychology Press, 2011), 73–119.
[76] Pettigrew and Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*, 200.
[77] Thomas F. Pettigrew et al., "Direct and Indirect Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice: A Normative Interpretation," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 31 (2007): 412–22.
[78] Linda R. Tropp, "From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias," in *Improving Intergroup Relations: Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, ed. Ulrich Wagner et al. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 109–11.

processes in direct contact with friends: reduced intergroup anxiety, reciprocal self-disclosure, and the promotion of empathy and perspective taking," with empathy having the highest significance.[79]

Walter Stephan and Cookie Stephan also argue that interactive programs and activities may help improve intergroup relations, primarily through learning techniques and dialogue. Those reduce intergroup anxiety, negative stereotypes, and fear and threat.[80] Perspective-taking exercises, especially those that foster compliments between group members, can reduce prejudice and develop empathy. Even interpersonal touch can help.[81] Marilynn Brewer also notes the importance of how groups understand and construct their complex identities vis-à-vis those of outgroups. Finding common identities reduces bias toward dominant-group identities and reinforces shared identities.[82]

Returning to the topic of identity salience, John Dovidio et al. suggest that ingroup identity salience can affect behaviour, cognition, and perception of outgroup identity. Recategorization and decategorization are strategies that target categorization biases in ingroup members. Decategorization influences whether people identify as part of a larger group or as individuals. Decategorization decreases the attractiveness of ingroup identities, allowing people

---

[79] Christiana Vonofakou et al., "The Impact of Direct and Extended Cross-Group Friendships on Improving Intergroup Relations," 107.
[80] Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 28–42.
[81] Eliot R. Smith, "Rediscovering the Emotional Aspect of Prejudice and Intergroup Behavior," in *Improving Intergroup Relations: Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, ed. Ulrich Wagner et al. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 47–50.
[82] Marilynn B. Brewer, "Deprovincialization: Social Identity Complexity and Outgroup Acceptance," in *Improving Intergroup Relations: Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, ed. Ulrich Wagner et al. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 161–73.

identity flexibility, making it easier to dissociate from their dominant ingroup identity and be open to identity differentiation.[83]

Regarding recategorization, Samuel Gaertner et al. highlight the "Common Ingroup Identity Model" (CIIM). CIIM rests on the premise that people with shared identities or social affiliations can use those commonalities to bridge divides and reduce prejudice against their differences. Specifically, the model promotes recategorization, in which individuals from different groups come together to reform their identities around commonalities rather than divide based on religion, ethnicity, or race. Participants do not erase their religious, ethnic, or racial identities; instead, they consciously highlight aspects of their identities that align well with those of other participants in the interaction.[84]

With all that in mind, it is essential to highlight the limitations of ICT. Stefania Paolini et al. note that research has shown a strong bias toward understanding positive contact rather than negative contact and its influences. They explain that contact can yield negative outcomes when conducted in unstructured settings. As a result, identity salience is reinforced, which can positively or negatively affect contact outcomes.[85] And according to Mikey Biddlestone et al., positive intergroup contact has generally been ineffective in combatting conspiracy theories.[86] Regarding antisemitism, I consider below all the above information to contextualize the data

---

[83] John F. Dovidio et al., "From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias," in *Improving Intergroup Relations: Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, ed. Ulrich Wagner et al. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 94–96.
[84] Samuel L. Gaertner et al., "A Common Ingroup Identity: Categorization, Identity, and Intergroup Relations," in *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, second edition, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Psychology Press, 2016), 434.
[85] Stefania Paolini et al., "Negative Intergroup Contact Makes Group Memberships Salient: Explaining Why Intergroup Conflict Endures," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36, no. 12 (2010): 1723–34.
[86] Mikey Biddlestone et al., "Conspiracy Theories and Intergroup Relations," in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. Michael Butter and Peter Knight (Routledge, 2020), 220.

analysis in subsequent chapters and evaluate the potential efficacy of social strategies like intergroup contact work for combatting it.

2.1.3 Conspiracy Theories, Scapegoating, and Stereotyping

This thesis uncovers some of the emotional and cognitive mechanisms at work in intergroup contact programs and activities involving Jews and non-Jews. It also argues that some of the main mechanisms that maintain antisemitism in individuals are emotional and cognitive. Thus to combat antisemitism requires examining the primary cognitive factors involved in prejudice and antisemitism: conspiracy thinking, scapegoating, and stereotyping.

Starting with conspiracy thinking, sociologists and psychologists debate how to define conspiracy theories and whether we should. They also try to understand the social underpinnings of conspiracy thinking and how it functions.[87] Olivier Klein and Kenzo Nera offer a helpful definition, stating that conspiracy theories are "beliefs about a group of actors who join together in secret agreement to achieve a hidden goal that is perceived as unlawful or malevolent."[88] Serge Moscovici adds that one group, usually larger in number, expresses its disdain for a weaker minority through "gross" accusations. The crazier the allegations against a minority group, the more believable the conspiracy. Typically, the targeted minority group is foreign.[89]

Why do people believe in conspiracy theories? It may be because people who believe in one conspiracy theory are prone to accepting others, even if the theories are unrelated. Social psychologists have also found that factors such as complex mental constructs underlie the spread

---

[87] Türkay Salim Nefes and Alejandro Romero-Reche, "Sociology, Social Theory and Conspiracy Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. Michael Butter and Peter Knight (Routledge, 2020), 96–104.
[88] Olivier Klein and Kenzo Nera, "Social Psychology of Conspiracy Theories," in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. Michael Butter and Peter Knight (Routledge, 2020), 121.
[89] Serge Moscovici, "The Conspiracy Mentality," in *Changing Conceptions of Conspiracy*, ed. Carl F. Graumann and Serge Moscovici (Springer-Verlag New York Inc., 1987), 151–61.

of conspiracy theories.[90] People who believe in conspiracy theories tend to see the world as more dangerous and divide people into strong and weak. Conspiracy theorists also tend to have higher narcissistic traits, interpersonal distrust, and suspicious tendencies.[91]

Various cognitive processes lead to and maintain conspiracy thinking, such as pattern perception and agency detection. Teleological thinking can also increase the risk of conspiracy thinking.[92] Mikey Biddlestone et al., for example, argue that people's perceptions of others are based on cognitive schemas or stereotypes. Ingroup-outgroup interactions can worsen attitudes towards outgroups. If conspiracy theories are based on these interactions, perceived outgroup threat and anxiety can also increase distrust and increase the probability of conspiracy thinking. Targeting psychological and social factors can help reduce the likelihood of conspiracy thinking.[93]

The difficulty in combatting conspiracy theories may stem from their complexity. Péter Kréko argues that there are two approaches to counter conspiracy theories. The first is prevention, which involves tackling a theory before it reaches people. The second is harm reduction, which refers to responding to a conspiracy after a person has acquired it. The harm reduction approach addresses the actual sources of information and self-service, known as the supply side, and the people who receive the information, the demand side. Therefore, there are four possible approaches to combatting conspiracy theories. The first is intervening with the information source before misinformation spreads, akin to a preemptive strike. The second is to

---

[90] Klein and Nera, "Social Psychology of Conspiracy Theories," 130–32.
[91] Anthony Lantian et al., "Personality Traits, Cognitive Styles and Worldviews Associated with Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories," in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. Michael Butter and Peter Knight (Routledge, 2020), 156–62.
[92] Jan-Willem van Prooijen et al., "Social-Cognitive Processes Underlying Belief in Conspiracy Theories," in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. Michael Butter and Peter Knight (Routledge, 2020), 168–72.
[93] Biddlestone et al., "Conspiracy Theories and Intergroup Relations," 219–26.

immunize the audience before conspiracy theories infiltrate them. The third is to target the theory once it has spread, akin to striking back. Lastly is to target the theory's recipients after it has spread, akin to healing. Kréko argues that preventive interventions are ideal, but harm reduction can help, too. Social immunization would give audiences critical cognitive, emotional, and motivational skills and ideas to resist conspiracy theories. Preemptive strikes target incorrect information so people will not be exposed to or are less likely to believe it.[94]

Johannes Heil notes four main components to specifically anti-Jewish conspiracy theories that are particularly persistent: 1) Jews emphasize meetings and collective planning sessions; 2) Jews do not operate individually but instead work as a collective; 3) local Jewish groups operate alongside a global Jewish elite; 4) Jews are self-serving, and conduct their anti-social operations in secret to harm others.[95] These ideas have underpinned anti-Jewish attitudes, rhetoric, and action for centuries and continue to find currency in today's society, exemplifying how conspiracy thinking is one of the "stickiest" elements of prejudice.

Related to conspiracy theories is scapegoating. Scapegoat Theory (ST) offers insight into why people blame certain groups rather than others for events and crises. ST describes how people tend to blame marginalized and less powerful groups. Researchers dismissed ST in the late 1960s as an inadequate theory because it was then based on little empirical evidence and inconsistent data. But some prominent scholars, such as Allport, continued to engage with this theory and rework it, constructing new models.[96] More recent versions of ST now posit that

---

[94] Péter Krekó, "Countering Conspiracy Theories and Misinformation," in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. Michael Butter and Peter Knight (Routledge, 2020), 246–48.
[95] Kjetil Braut Simonsen, "Antisemitism and Conspiracism," in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. Michael Butter and Peter Knight (Routledge, 2020), 359.
[96] Peter Glick, "Sacrificial Lambs Dressed in Wolves' Clothing: Envious Prejudice, Ideology, and the Scapegoating of Jews," in *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust*, ed. Leonard S. Newman and Ralph Erber (Oxford University Press, 2002), 113–14.

humans need to explain and categorize stressful incidents, which leads them to search for objects of blame. The scapegoated group is chosen based on pre-existing prejudices and ideas, which Peter Glick calls "an ideology of prejudice."[97] By singling out another group as dangerous, the ingroup enables itself to respond to perceived social threats. Scapegoating relies on stereotyping and conspiracy thinking, and persecution or punishment of the scapegoat is perceived by the ingroup as justifiable self-defence and -preservation. Lastly, Glick adds that high intergroup anxiety and ideological commitments maintain scapegoating actions.[98] Elliot Hammer adds that scapegoating is not necessarily based on accurate assumptions or observations of outgroups. Instead, the accusations are based on ingroup insecurity and perceived outgroup threat. Referencing Sigmund Freud, Hammer suggests that ingroups project their resentments of the more powerful onto the less powerful, which Hammer refers to as "displacement of projection as defence mechanisms."[99]

The last primary factor for understanding prejudice and antisemitism is stereotyping. Conspiracy thinking, scapegoating, and stereotyping interact closely. Stereotyping results from and sustains conspiracy thinking and scapegoating. It is challenging to define stereotypes; however, David Schneider's attempt is among the most critical and includes distinctions in terminology relevant to stereotyping and prejudice: "Roughly speaking, 'stereotypes' are category-based beliefs we have about people; 'prejudice' is a set of affective reactions or attitudes; and 'discrimination' refers to behavioural tendencies."[100] Schneider argues that

---

[97] Glick, "Sacrificial Lambs Dressed in Wolves' Clothing: Envious Prejudice, Ideology, and the Scapegoating of Jews," 18–19.
[98] Glick, "Sacrificial Lambs Dressed in Wolves' Clothing: Envious Prejudice, Ideology, and the Scapegoating of Jews," 114–39.
[99] Elliot D. Hammer, "Scapegoat Theory," in *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs (SAGE Publications, Inc., 2002), 779–80.
[100] David J. Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (Guilford, 2004), 29.

defining stereotypes merely as generalizations is unhelpful because they differ from other generalizations in many ways. Psychologists now focus primarily on understanding the act of stereotyping rather than the stereotypes themselves. Schneider adds that simply offering contradictory information to people cannot counter their beliefs and stereotypes. Education, therefore, is not necessarily a powerful tool to combat stereotypes.[101]

Gordon Allport adds that stereotypes are loving or hateful portrayals of groups or individuals. Stereotypes are generalized, sharpened, and hyper-focused judgments imposed on and applied to a group or person. Many are not based in fact but on select encounters with outgroups. In summary, stereotypes are ways of categorizing groups and individuals that can become internalized over time. Allport explains that stereotypes are "sustained by selective perception, selective forgetting."[102] Understanding those factors—conspiracy thinking, scapegoating, stereotyping, and emotional and cognitive mechanisms more generally—as underpinnings of antisemitism justifies the project's focus on strategies targeting them.

2.1.4 Other Considerations for Fighting Antisemitism

In addition to Intergroup Contact Theory, social psychologists suggest other strategies for reducing prejudice. For example, Allport recommends formal educational programs, contact and acquaintance programs, group retraining methods, mass media, exhortation, and individual therapy. He explains that there are three aspects to evaluating anti-prejudice programs. In such evaluations, (1) an identifiable intergroup contact program is an independent variable while (2) measures of change are dependent variables. Evaluations also need (3) a control group to help

---

[101] Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping*, 230–68.
[102] Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, 189–98.

determine if the program changes people's attitudes toward others. Approaches for improving intergroup relations should be multi-prong.[103]

Another thing to consider when combatting prejudice is what Margo Monteith et al. call the *self-regulation of prejudice*, which involves people self-regulating their prejudiced ideas and behaviours. When trained to look for cues that they were acting or thinking in biased ways, people tended to try to stop behaving in such ways. Suppression of stereotypes can be effective in some instances, but not always, and so Monteith et al. also argue for "counter stereotyping," which involves conditioning people to disassociate the stereotypes from outgroups.[104]

Lastly, Shery Levi et al. argue that all strategies targeting prejudice should address the root processes underlying it. They state that many contemporary strategies already do this, targeting the cognitive, emotional, and social bases of prejudice. They suggest that, because some theories of prejudice highlight the role of social learning in childhood in shaping negative outgroup biases, strategies should centre on social learning. Specifically, strategies could include programs encouraging multicultural and anti-racist education and empathy training.[105] Subsequent chapters reference Levy et al.'s work as they discuss the underlying mechanisms of social strategies for combatting antisemitism and why those strategies have the potential to be effective in reducing antisemitism in the long run. The following section will focus specifically on the phenomenology of antisemitism and its history in the Canadian context, with subsequent chapters painting a more detailed picture of antisemitism in Canada and the long fight against it.

---

[103] Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, 480–514.
[104] Margo J. Monteith et al., "The Self-Regulation of Prejudice," in *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, second edition, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Psychology Press, 2016), 409–32.
[105] Sheri R. Levy et al., "Understanding and Reducing Racial and Ethnic Prejudice Among Children and Adolescents," in *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, second edition, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Psychology Press, 2016), 460–65.

2.2 Literature Review: Understanding Antisemitism Globally and in Canada

This thesis centres on combatting antisemitism and examines social approaches such as intergroup contact programming to preventively and proactively target antisemitism's social, emotional, and cognitive roots. Because the thesis concerns antisemitism as a phenomenon in Canada, this section reviews the history of antisemitism in Canada to ground the project in the context of Canadian Jewish experiences with and responses to antisemitism. But to better understand that and where this project's data fits within the scholarly research, this section first discusses the major literature on contemporary antisemitism as such and on combatting it.

2.2.1 Historical Roots

To understand contemporary antisemitism, it is necessary to understand the term's origins. Although scholars debate the exact origins of modern anti-Jewish hatred, what is agreed upon is that Christian theological works by early church fathers gave rise to some of the conceptualizations of Jews that were solidified into concrete tropes later. Notably, in Augustinian theology, a prominent idea was that Jews were to be punished for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and for killing him. Thus, we see emerging in Augustinian theology the anti-Jewish idea of "deicide," which is the accusation of killing God. Jews were accused of crucifying the Son of God, Jesus, and to kill God or to work against Him was not only to reject Jesus as the Messiah, but to commit a grave sin associated with the Devil. However, Augustine also understood Jews as God's chosen people and thus part of a divine plan for humanity. According to Augustine, Jews should not be killed as a punishment, but rather expelled and be subject to social, political, and economic exclusion and restrictions.[106]

---

[106] Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Cornell University Press, 1982), 19–21.

Steven Beller suggests that Pauline Christian theology from the fourth century gave rise to the later prevalent idea that Jews were wilfully blind to Jesus's role as God's Messiah. This idea helped cement the idea that Jews were indeed evil and associated with the Devil and were God's moral adversaries.[107] As a result, prior to the 11th century, Jews did indeed face economic, social, and legal restrictions. However, it is thought that the First Crusade in 1096 CE was the catalyst for a more openly violent persecution of Jews to emerge, in large part because of the renewed religious vigour that the Crusade brought forth in Europe's population. With the Crusade came renewed calls to avenge Christ's crucifixion, and thus renewed blame, animosity, and hostility towards Jews. These intense sentiments were used to justify increased violence and attacks on Jewish communities throughout Europe, as well as hateful rhetoric. Harmful ideas about Jews being associated with the Devil, as being evil, and working against the betterment of society, which form the basis of many contemporary antisemitic conspiracies, were reinforced and justified at this time and became normative throughout Europe.[108] This earlier religious form of anti-Jewish hatred is referred to in the literature as anti-Judaism, invoking the religious component of Jewish identity. Jews were conceptualized vis-à-vis Christendom's normative understandings of humanity, human behaviour, and political systems at the time.

Some of the key underlying tropes and stereotypes of Jews in contemporary antisemitic ideologies emerged during the early Christian and Medieval periods, and include the association of Jews controlling the economy, being greedy, and being evil doers who undermine the well-

---

[107] Steven Beller, *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction*, Second Edition, Very Short Introductions (Oxford University Press, 2015), 12–13; Alex Novikoff, "The Middle Ages," in *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy (Oxford University Press, 2010), 71–72.
[108] Beller, *Antisemitism*, 12–13; Kenneth R. Stowe, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Harvard University Press, 1992), 3–4; David Berger, "From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions: Some New Approaches to Medieval Anti-Semitism," in *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish Christian Relations* (Academic Studies Press, 2010), 15–39.

being of others in their society. Specifically, the money trope originated from the social, economic, and legal restrictions on Jews that emerged in Christian European politics throughout the Middle Ages. Due to the Christian social and economic organization of society during this time, Jews were relegated to the tasks that, theologically speaking, Christians were prohibited from doing, including lending money with interest to other Christians. Thus, Jews they could legally work predominantly in commerce and banking. Jews, therefore, came to be associated with the upper classes of society, but also as those lending money with interest to people who were at the bottom of the societal hierarchy. Accusations of usury were common, and so Jews came to be seen as corrupt, controlling, and greedy. These complex ideas relied on the older Christian ideas that Jews were inherently devilish and evil as a collective.[109]

Another prevalent idea in contemporary antisemitic ideologies that play on these base tropes is the blood libel trope, which emerged in its familiar form in the 12th century. The blood libel accusation rests on the idea that Jews engage in killing and sacrifice for sport and their own gain. The original goal of the blood libel trope was to explain a series of mysterious deaths of children throughout Europe. Relying on existing caricatures of Jews as evil and devilish, the blood libel portrayed Jews as ritual sacrificers who sacrificed Christian children in a manner similar to Jesus's crucifixion for the purposes of using the blood to make their unleavened bread, matzo, which is typically only eaten during the holiday of Passover. The accusation relied on two explanations to justify why Jews supposedly did this. The first is that by sacrificing Christian

---

[109] Ralph Keen, "Antisemitism in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods," in *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy (Oxford University Press, 2010), 81; Giacomo Todeschini, "Jewish Usurers, Blood Libel, and the Second-Hand Economy The Medieval Origins of a Stereotype (from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century)," in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (Routledge, 2018), 346–48; Steven Englund, "The Medieval (and Ancient) Roots of Antisemitism.," in *Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (Routledge, 2018), 25.

children, they repeatedly and purposely desecrated the Crucifixion, which ultimately reinforces the deicide charge. The second explanation is that by sacrificing children for their blood and using the blood in unleavened bread, Jews purposely desecrated the Eucharistic Host.[110] By relying on imagery of killing and death in general, the blood libel accusation has continued to reinforce the idea that Jews are dangerous and should not be trusted.

Anti-Jewish hatred underwent another transformation in 19th-century Germany following the unification of the German states by Otto von Bismarck in 1871. After this unification, opposition emerged among several German citizens over who could belong to and benefit from the new German state and identity. This movement, called Germanism, was vehemently opposed to the German state being overtaken by non-Germans. Being a notable, longtime minority in Europe, the Jews were assigned the role of Germanism's adversaries. In line with increasingly normative conceptualizations of humanity in racial terms, and with Jews mistakenly deemed to be Semites (members of the "Semitic" race because Hebrew is a Semitic language), pro-Germans naturally became antisemites. So, the term "antisemitism," which comes from *antisemitismus*, described a specific political movement in 19th century German national politics.[111] The coining of the term is usually credited to a man named Wilhelm Marr, who was a leading voice in the pro-German movement. Some literature disputes this, but at the very least, he is credited with popularizing the term and the movement. Eventually, the term became mutually beneficial for

---

[110] Magda Teter, *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (Harvard University Press, 2020), 4; Novikoff, "The Middle Ages," 74; Beller, *Antisemitism*, 13–14.
[111] Beller, *Antisemitism*, 57–60; Moshe Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Antisemitism* (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1987), 2–4, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ottawa/detail.action?docID=273399; David Feldman, "Toward a History of the Term 'Anti-Semitism,'" *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1140, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhy029; Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (Pantheon Books, 1991), 57–59; David Engel, "Away from a Definition of Antisemitism," in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, ed. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 41–43; Lipstadt, *Antisemitism*, 23–24.

Jews and non-Jews to describe anti-Jewish hatred throughout time.[112] The portrayals of and accusations about Jews that were prevalent throughout early Christianity and the Middle Ages found new justification morally and discursively, but underneath were still the same as those invoked previously in religiously-coded language.

2.2.2 Contemporary Antisemitism

Much of the literature on contemporary antisemitism examines what defines hate against Jews. Anti-Jewish hate is not necessarily a monolithic phenomenon that developed on a linear historical path. Whether antisemitism is a product of linear historical development depends on how it is defined.[113] Gavin Langmuir, for example, explores that question in his two-volume landmark work on the definition of antisemitism. Langmuir argues that to understand antisemitism historically, scholars must dissect the terms they use to describe it. These terms include words like 'religion'. If scholars impose their assumptions about such terms onto historical phenomena, they risk distorting historical antisemitism and religiously based hatred against Jews.[114] Langmuir adds that because the term has come to mean many things over time, it has become too ambiguous and thus all but meaningless. Anti-Jewish hostility, although like other forms of xenophobia, is distinct in that Jews have been disproportionately singled out and targeted over time, and that prejudice has a chimeric or fantastical quality.[115]

David Nirenberg has produced another major theoretical work on the nature of antisemitism. His thesis is that the Western world has constructed its identity around what it

---

[112] Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr*, 12.
[113] Philip A. Cunningham, "Jews and Christians from the Time of Christ to Constantine's Reign," in *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy (Oxford University Press, 2010), 47–62.
[114] Gavin I. Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, I (University of California Press, 1990).
[115] Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 27.

considers itself to be and not be. Because the West has for so long been centred around Christian identity and values, its identity was partly built on a perceived adversary of Christianity, the Jewish people. Nirenberg thus understands anti-Judaism as a disguise for Western identity that legitimizes ideas, concepts, and assumptions "in the history of thought." Anti-Judaism is built into and around the hegemonic Christian identity structure of the West and cannot be isolated from it.[116] Discerning what is and what is not anti-Judaism and antisemitism, thus, harkens back to key Western self-conceptualizations.

In addition to definitional debates, there are also debates about how to categorize current antisemitism, particularly regarding its motivations and manifestations. Most commonly, it is classified as traditional or new (see discussion below). But some scholars argue that that dichotomy obscures the complexities and trajectories of current antisemitism.[117] Some even go so far as to advocate doing away with the term *antisemitism* entirely because, by using it, we create the impression of a non-existent unity or historical continuity of anti-Jewish hate.[118] Underlying that argument is the idea that, recalling Langmuir, by using the term, historians impose modern conceptualizations on past events and phenomena that ultimately distort their meaning.[119]

Scholars have also characterized antisemitism using metaphors. A common metaphor is that antisemitism is a disease that permeates society at the deepest levels. Although that metaphor is used frequently in the literature, it may distort the nature of antisemitism because it

---

[116] David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, first edition (WW Norton & Co, 2013), 3–10; 464.
[117] Catherine Chatterley, "Western Culture, the Holocaust, and the Persistence of Antisemitism," in *The Yale Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective*, I, ed. Charles Asher Small, The ISGAP Papers (Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2015), 237–54.
[118] David Feldman, "Toward a History of the Term 'Anti-Semitism,'" *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1139–50.
[119] Engel, "Away from a Definition of Antisemitism," 30–53.

removes the human responsibility for it.[120] Recently, a new form of antisemitism has emerged in relation to the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and is being incorporated into descriptive accounts of antisemitism.[121] Regardless of the debates, what is clear is that antisemitism has no "monocausal explanation."[122]

Regardless of the nuances, there is a unanimous scholarly opinion that antisemitism is not a monolith. Nevertheless, some in the literature argue that defining the term is essential to fighting the phenomenon. For example, Baumgarten, Kenez, and Thompson suggest that scholars should consider the antisemitic person, their motivations, and what underlies their hate in creating a definition. They also claim we should consider those factors as being in interaction with state-sponsored antisemitism.[123]

Despite the debates about defining antisemitism or its historical trajectory and continuity, current antisemitism is a complex mix of old and new ideas, frequently appearing as tropes that take on new forms over time. Scholars debate what constitutes traditional antisemitism, but they tend to define it as religiously or racially motivated and call it *traditional* because it draws on long-standing, classically malicious ideas about Jews. Traditional antisemitism manifests as religious or secular tropes that are based on themes such as domination, exploitation, corruption, and money. Specifically, popular anti-Jewish ideas are frequently based on the idea that all Jews

---

[120] Shalem Coulibaly, "Equations in Contemporary Anti-Zionism: A Conceptual Analysis," in *Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity Volume I: Conceptual Approaches*, ed. Charles Asher Small (Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2013), 39–46.
[121] Anthony McElligott and Jeffrey Herf, "Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives," in *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, ed. Anthony McElligott and Jeffrey Herf (Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 10.
[122] Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day.* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 37.
[123] Murray Baumgarten et al., "Introduction," in *Varieties of Antisemitism: History, Ideology, Discourse*, ed. Murray Baumgarten et al. (University of Delaware Press, 2009), 15–26.

conspire to take over the world and collectively attempt to control the global economy. That trope unites traditional antisemitism with newer forms of antisemitism.[124]

Additionally, traditional antisemitism is most often seen on the political far right. However, the political left can appropriate it in language that appeals to left political orientations.[125] Antisemites have repurposed classical antisemitic texts, such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* in different contexts throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Some antisemites still use the *Protocols* to reinforce the stereotype of Jewish world domination, which demonizes Jews.[126]

While traditional anti-Jewish tropes find their way into current rhetoric and discourses, antisemitism in the contemporary world has taken on another form. Scholars refer to this form of anti-Jewish hate as "new antisemitism." This new type is more sophisticated and often more challenging to identify because it appears very similar to criticism of Israel or Zionism (in this case, generally referring to the movement of Jewish self-determination). New antisemitism introduces an additional dimension to traditional antisemitism as it denies the Jewish people the right to be a nation among nations or for Israel to exist as a state among states.[127]

Although all scholars agree that there is a new form of antisemitism, they diverge on whether anti-Zionism is antisemitic. Most would say that, in many contexts, it is a form of antisemitism or at least has that potential. Some argue that much anti-Israel criticism seeks to

---

[124] Manuel Prutschi, "Anti-Semitism in Canada," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, no. 3/4 (2004): 108.
[125] Stephen H. Norwood, "Convergent Anti-Zionisms: The American Far Left and Far Right," in *Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and Delegitimizing Israel*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (Lincoln: UNP - Nebraska, 2016), 129.
[126] Dina Porat, "The Protocols of The Elders of Zion: New Uses of an Old Myth," in *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), 322–34.
[127] Irwin Cotler, "Human Rights and the New Anti-Jewishness: Sounding the Alarm," *The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute*, 2003, 1–6.

delegitimize Israel but only becomes antisemitic when it is hostile towards Jews as well.[128] Others take a stronger view. They argue that anti-Zionism and anti-Israel criticism act as socially palatable covers for anti-Jewish hostility and are at the heart of the global resurgence of antisemitism.[129] A third group of scholars fall somewhere in between, arguing that anti-Zionism is not necessarily inherently antisemitic but can nevertheless lead to antisemitism by normalizing anger at Israel, which can in turn normalize hatred and hostility towards Jews. According to that position, anti-Zionism is more nuanced than some believe, and, theoretically, there might be several motivations for it.[130]

One especially controversial form of anti-Zionism is colloquially known as *Jewish self-hatred*. When used inside the Jewish community, the term implies that Jews who are anti-Zionist or are highly critical of the State of Israel are antisemitic against themselves. This, of course, is often contested by those who hold such views. Those who argue it is antisemitic claim that Jews who engage in Jewish self-hatred enable antisemitic rhetoric and reinforce anti-Jewish ideas and misconceptions about the State of Israel. In other words, Jewish anti-Zionist rhetoric risks reinforcing discourses that, in turn, demonize Jews. Those who say that Jewish self-hatred is not antisemitic argue that just insofar as Jewish people promote anti-Zionist views, such views are legitimate Jewish perspectives. If a Jewish person promotes a perspective about aspects of Jewishness, then how can they be against themselves? That view suggests that Jews cannot be prejudiced against themselves, and so anti-Zionist rhetoric coming from Jewish circles cannot be

---

[128] Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "Introduction," in *Deciphering the New Antisemitism*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Studies in Antisemitism Series (Indiana University Press, 2015), 1–4.
[129] David Matas, *Aftershock: Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism* (The Dundurn Group, 2005).
[130] David Hirsh, "Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan Reflections," in *The Yale Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective*, I, ed. Charles Asher Small, The ISGAP Papers (Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2015), 57–174.

antisemitic.[131] These are the general contours of the complex debate regarding criticism of Israel and Zionism within the Jewish community.

Ben M. Freeman argues that the term "Jewish self-hatred" is inadequate because it does not describe the cognitive underpinnings of why Jewish people use rhetoric about Israel and Zionism that might be harmful to their broader community. He instead suggests the term "internalized Jew-hate" or "internalized anti-Jewishness," which implies that some Jews, after enduring years of antisemitism and/or trauma, have internalized external antisemitic ideas and rhetoric and project these sentiments outward. Freeman bases that suggestion on internalized homophobia, to which he likens internalized anti-Jewishness.[132]

Whether from within or outside of the Jewish world, the main difficulty in the scholarly literature of determining which anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric is antisemitic is just the fact that there is no established, broadly accepted definition of antisemitism in the literature either. But there are some widely known definitions of antisemitism. They include the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition and the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA). Scholars debate both, with most scholars falling into camps that support one over the other. Typically, support for either comes in the form of petitions or declarations signed by scholars rather than argument in the scholarly literature.

Although there are some minute differences between the two definitions, the main fault line dividing scholars is whether and, if so, in what cases criticism of Israel is in itself

---

[131] Lipstadt, *Antisemitism*, 183; Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, 5th ed. (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999), 255.

[132] Ben M. Freeman, *Reclaiming Our Story: The Pursuit of Jewish Pride* (No Pasaran Media, 2022), 8–9. Eliezer Ben-Rafael supports this position and explains that *Jewish self-hatred* is akin to victims internalizing the hate that they experience over time (Ben-Rafael Eliezer, "Antisemitism: Sociological Perspectives," in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, ed. Armin Lange et al., Volume I (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 258).

antisemitic. While the IHRA Definition does not actually draw a line determining when such criticism is antisemitic, it offers examples, such as when Israel is likened to a Nazi state or a critic invokes Holocaust or other antisemitic rhetoric and imagery. The JDA is more specific and explicit in its characterization of antisemitism and emphasizes clarity in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: It is more open to rhetoric critical of Israel, including but not limited to challenging the Israeli state's right to exist, provided that that rhetoric stays within certain limits (e.g., not essentializing Jews as Jews). Although the JDA diverges from the IHRA definition in that regard, the divergence might be softened by the fact that scholars and policymakers tend to treat IHRA as a guideline rather than a prescriptive document.[133] Nevertheless, there being no unanimous verdict on where the line lies between non-antisemitic and antisemitic criticism of Israel, the scholarly debate over the two definitions remains heated and unresolved.

Another form of contemporary antisemitism is Holocaust denial and distortion. Denying Jewish memory is one motivation for denying the Holocaust. By doing so, deniers maintain anti-Jewish prejudices and delegitimize and demonize the Jewish people and their trauma. Deniers, through this process, also delegitimize the Jewish people's right to a safe future.[134] Holocaust denial appears in different forms that are not always obvious, and deniers use various tactics to confuse people and obfuscate history.[135] I note Deborah Lipstadt's categorization of Holocaust denial into hard-core and soft-core. Hard-core denial is the denial of the facts and historical realities of the Holocaust. Soft-core denial is less apparent and may appear as a distortion of facts

---

[133] For a summary of the lines of contention between the two definitions, please see *Redefining Antisemitism? IHRA and the JDA* (Antisemitism Policy Trust, 2021), 3–5, https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Redefining-antisemitism-Final.pdf.
[134] David Patterson, "Denial, Evasion, and Antihistorical Antisemitism: The Continuing Assault on Memory," in *Deciphering the New Antisemitism*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Studies in Antisemitism Series (Indiana University Press, 2015), 326–49.
[135] Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, Plume Printing (New York: Plume, 1994), 4-38.

or as their minimization, trivialization, or inversion.[136] Holocaust denial can be observed on the political left and in anti-Zionist rhetoric as well as in neo-Nazi circles or far-right groups.

Holocaust denial and distortion are often the principal factors that unite anti-Zionist rhetoric with traditional anti-Jewish ideas.[137] While Holocaust denial and new antisemitism are found in Western discourses, both are more common in the Arab and Muslim worlds and are more prominent and mainstream there than in the West. The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict exacerbates hostility and, hence, those behaviours and attitudes.[138] Current Islamic and Arab antisemitism came to the Arab and Muslim worlds via Europe and differs from the Judeophobia previously found there.[139] Specifically, European antisemitism intertwined with Islamic Judeophobic ideas to create a distinct and eventually lethal strain of anti-Jewish hate in those lands. It was during colonial times that what became the contemporary Arab-Islamic antisemitism arose as Europeans imported publications into those lands. European colonization of Arab and Muslim lands, therefore, played a significant role in shaping anti-Jewish discourses there.[140]

2.2.3 Combatting Antisemitism

Although there is plentiful literature describing current antisemitism, there is a significant gap in the literature on combatting it. There are general and vague discussions, but more in-depth and

---

[136] See Lipstadt, *Antisemitism: Here and Now*. Most Holocaust denial is categorized into smaller sub-categories, such as Holocaust minimization, trivialization, and inversion. These are all forms of Holocaust denial and distortion and seek to degrade the uniqueness, seriousness, and factuality of the Holocaust and Jewish history.
[137] Meir Litvack and Esther Webman, "Israel and Antisemitism," in *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy (Oxford University Press, 2010), 237–45.
[138] Litvack and Webman, "Israel and Antisemitism," 237–49.
[139] Bassam Tibi, "Religion, Prejudice and Annihilation. The Case of Traditional Islamic Judeophobia and Its Transformation into the Modern Islamist Antisemitism," in *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, ed. Anthony McElligott and Jeffrey Herf (Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 115–45.
[140] Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, 135.

detailed studies are lacking. Despite that lack, the antisemitism literature offers a few vague suggestions about combatting antisemitism. They are typically made in passing and are one-offs, so this sub-section is more descriptive and appears as a traditional literature review because each perspective stands alone.

To my knowledge, there exists only one source that contains anything close to an in-depth analysis of combatting antisemitism.[141] In it, Armin Lange et al. suggest that to fight antisemitism, we must adequately understand its nature. They theorize that although eradicating antisemitism will take a long time, it is possible, and so effective strategies should be long-term in scope. Strategies must also be holistic and multifaceted, and they suggest five steps for successfully fighting antisemitism. The first is to understand the nature of antisemitism and particularly that it potentially relates to racism, albeit not consistently. The second is that the conflict in the Middle East is not necessarily a cause but is correlated with the rise of antisemitism. Third, it is difficult to distinguish between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitic rhetoric. The fourth is that antisemitism comes not just from the radical right but also from the left. Lastly, to combat antisemitism, policies need to be adjusted with globalization and context in mind.[142]

I have elsewhere argued that although legal strategies play a role in combatting antisemitism, they have limitations that prevent them from effectively deterring and addressing it.[143] The existing literature agrees with that finding and such literature as there is on using the

---

[141] This edited volume is about combatting antisemitism but contains separate chapters based on conference papers; it does not present any in-depth studies.
[142] Armin Lange et al., "General Introduction 'An End to Antisemitism!'," in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, eds. Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, Volume I (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 5-6.
[143] Megan Hollinger, "Legal Responses to Antisemitism: Legal Discourse and Anti-Jewish Hate in Contemporary Canada" (Ottawa, Canada, University of Ottawa, 2020), 16.

law to combat antisemitism finds that although the law is protective and proactive, it can also have adverse effects. Thus, to fight antisemitism, we must foster collaboration between Jews and other "victimized groups." What may help that is to encourage residential mixing of Jews and non-Jews in neighbourhoods. More generally, contact between Jews and non-Jews could help reduce antisemitism, as I shall argue below.[144]

Regarding state responses, there is some discussion. The literature suggests that governments and NGOs should facilitate social interaction between Jews and non-Jews to maintain freedom of speech and reduce hate speech and to encourage positive discourse about diasporas and how they positively affect multicultural societies.[145] Canada, according to the literature, could stand to enforce more proactive measures (as opposed to just reactive ones), publicly emphasize the Canadian Jewish community's positive contributions to the country, and consider the context when we try to combat antisemitism.[146] In sum, positive discourse about Jewish Canadians may positively impact non-Jewish attitudes towards Jews.

Nevertheless, antisemitism is difficult to combat because it is diverse and complex (recall the difficulties in defining it). The literature highlights the urgent need for a definition of antisemitism, stating that to fight it effectively, we must know what it is, and so all levels of society everywhere should accept a standard definition.[147] Scott Reid and Mario Silvia argue that we should introduce a standard definition and implement effective, accessible reporting systems

---

[144] Morton Weinfeld, "Antisemitism in Canada: Past, Present and Future," in *Racism, Islamophobia, Antisemitism and the Future of Canadian Society: Proceedings of the Fifth S. D. Clark Symposium on the Future of Canadian Society*, ed. Robert Brym (Rock's Mills Press, 2020), 73.
[145] Weinfeld, "Antisemitism in Canada: Past, Present and Future."
[146] Derek J. Penslar, "Introduction," in *Contemporary Antisemitism: Canada and the World*, ed. Derek J. Penslar et al. (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 4–21.
[147] Mark Weitzman, "The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism," in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, Volume I, ed. Armin Lange et al. (De Gruyter, 2020), 463–74.

to track incidents and analyze them more accurately.[148] I note Deborah Lipstadt, who adds that because antisemitism is irrational, logic-based solutions (such as educational initiatives) are inadequate. Responses to new antisemitism specifically should rely on context because of the difficulty in determining when anti-Israel or anti-Zionist rhetoric crosses a line.[149]

Another difficulty in combatting antisemitism lies in the problem of the internet. Online hate is difficult to combat for several reasons; here, I outline some suggestions from the literature. To combat the transboundary character of the internet, states may want to ban foreign websites that violate their national laws. It is essential to treat hate speech that is posted on news sites as different from hate speech posted on non-news sites. Other contexts will affect how political and legal officials respond to online hate speech.[150] The literature also suggests that international cooperation around legal provisions is essential to reduce online hate and antisemitism.[151]

Lastly, consider campuses. Chapter 8 presents data about combatting antisemitism in the university context. The literature is once again vague and underdeveloped in its recommendations for combatting antisemitism on university campuses, though it offers some suggestions. Like suggestions about combatting antisemitism generally, suggestions for the university environment are singular, such as using penalties to regulate antisemitism on campuses. Community institutions can also play a role in implementing security programs. Additionally, education and media literacy are proactive and preventive, fostering

---

[148] Scott Reid and Mario Silva, "Part I: Introduction," in *Tackling Hate: Combating Antisemitism: The Ottawa Protocol*, ed. Scott Reid and Mario Silva (Mosaic Press, 2014), 1–49.
[149] Lipstadt, *Antisemitism*, 83-84/206.
[150] Talia Naamat and Elena Pesina, *Legislation Survey: Regulating Online Hate Speech in Europe.* (The Kator Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, Tel Aviv University, 2016).
[151] Reid and Silva, "Part I: Introduction," 232.

strong, diverse Canadian identities and encouraging interfaith dialogue. Federal governments can facilitate dialogue initiatives.[152] Kenneth L. Marcus adds that when legal solutions do not work, universities should try alternative strategies such as issuing strong statements, regulating non-verbal attacks, regulating speech related to the attacks, implementing additional provisions to respond to hate-motivated incidents, training, and promoting standards for ethical behaviour.[153]

2.2.4 The Early Beginnings of Antisemitism in Canada

Historically, we know that anti-Jewish hatred has existed in Canada since the mid-18th century, marked by the beginning of Jewish settlement here. It rose to alarming levels following the mass influx of Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia. That period of migration, known as the Great Migration, occurred around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Those Jews primarily spoke Yiddish, and many came from impoverished shtetl communities in the Pale of Settlement. Although some of those immigrants were well-versed in Jewish subjects, many lacked the level of secular education necessary to secure employment in the professions. In Europe, many Jews worked in garment manufacturing and other industries.[154]

What allowed for the mass influx of Jews into Canada was a desire, mainly of then-Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, to populate the country's western region and increase agricultural production. To accomplish this, Laurier advocated a larger labour force, so he launched a massive campaign to bring in Europeans of diverse origins. Valerie Knowles points out that although immigration was far more open in the first several years of the 20th century,

---

[152] Reid and Silva, "Part I: Introduction," 233-34.
[153] Kenneth L. Marcus, "Antisemitism, Higher Education, and the Law," in *The ISGAP Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Charles Asher Small, vol. II, The ISGAP Papers (New York: Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2016), 189.
[154] Pierre Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2021), 61–70.

immigration policies still promoted a hierarchy of preferred immigrants and restricted the influx of those of non-British, non-Western European origins.[155] But despite such restrictions, the largest number of Jewish immigrants in Canadian history was admitted to Canada during the years leading up to World War I, peaking in 1913.[156]

Gerald Tulchinsky explains that immigrants arrived in waves in Canada. To ignore the stories of immigrant groups, he argues, is to erase the nuances of Canada's history. Tulchinsky adds that various ideological, political, and economic movements from Eastern Europe and Russia influenced Jewish migrants. With the large influx of Jews into the 20th century came strong notions of Socialism, Bundism, and Zionism. Those movements helped create an identity for Jewish immigrants and bolstered their sense of peoplehood in their new Canadian home.[157]

Immigration also played a role in the rise of antisemitism at the turn of the century because it triggered discrimination and prejudice against Jewish people in Canada. In addition to anti-Jewish attitudes arriving in Canada with other groups, race-based, British-style antisemitism also found support here. The influx of anti-Jewish attitudes, along with the large influx of non-British European populations into the country, meant that antisemitism found fertile ground in Canada.[158]

Anti-Jewish sentiments in turn-of-the-century Canada related mainly to the settlement patterns of Jewish newcomers. Jewish immigrants settled predominantly in urban areas and did not fit the ideal profile of target immigrant groups at that time, which comprised people willing

---

[155] Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540–2007*, Rev. ed. (Dundurn, 2007), 19–141.
[156] Ira Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada*, with Project Muse, UPCC Book Collections on Project MUSE (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 35, https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781771121675/. I took some of this analysis from my directed reading study with Professor Pierre Anctil, Fall 2021.
[157] Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (University of Toronto Press, 2008), 5–6.
[158] Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada*, 35.

to settle in the West and become agriculturalists. Most Jewish immigrants were not farmers and typically did not settle on farmland. The settlement patterns of this increasingly large population increased distrust and hatred towards them, as they could not contribute to what Canada desired at the time. Those conditions reinforced that Jews were outsiders who could not adapt to Canadian culture or contribute positively to the greater Canadian good.[159] Subsequent decades only became harder for Jews in Canada.

2.2.5 The Troublesome Era: The 1930s and World War II

Although the beginning of the 20th century in Canada saw an increase in overall immigration, including Jewish immigration, the following decades were more restrictive. As Jews established themselves in different locations across the country and new generations were born, antisemitism and discrimination took a turn for the worse. Simon Belkin argues that the 1910s-1930s were the most formative decades for Canadian Jewry.[160] Various external pressures and trends exacerbated antisemitism during that time, such as the decade-long economic turmoil of the Great Depression and the threat of another world war.

Xenophobia and discriminatory attitudes towards immigrant groups in general were prominent in Canada during the 1930s. Discrimination against Jews was worse than that against other groups, and antisemitism at this time was overt. That antisemitism came from members of the public as well as from the upper echelons of government.[161] Immigration in the 1930s was noticeably limited, and Jewish immigration was no exception. Lower immigration quotas

---

[159] Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 67.
[160] Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigration Aid Work in Canada (1840–1940)* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Colonization Association, 1966), vii.
[161] Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, ed. Morton Weinfeld (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993/originally in 1939), xiv.

reflected the air of general xenophobia and prejudice, despite some Canadians disagreeing with the restrictive policies.[162]

Even though many Jewish immigrants came to Canada as garment workers, by the 1930s many, along with some of their children, had begun moving into other types of employment. While there was greater representation of other groups as labourers, farmers, and unskilled workers, Jews tended to be in the skilled or semi-skilled professions and white-collar jobs.[163] Jews were becoming over-represented in occupations such as sales, clerks, and store owners. That over-representation was primarily due to a desire among Jewish families to move upward socially and economically and to create a more prosperous future for their descendants.[164] It seems part of a survival strategy that worked quite well. Nevertheless, the social experience of Canadian Jewry continued to worsen as the century progressed. The increase in antisemitism during the interwar years was due to various factors, including WWI debt, railway debt, and reduced taxes.[165] Additionally, European political movements such as Nazism found increasing, albeit not mainstream, traction in Canada during this volatile, precarious period. Xenophobia increased in the general population as well, following the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the institutionalization of Communism there.[166]

What we know about global antisemitism during the interwar years, in particular the 1930s, is that long-standing Christianity-rooted anti-Jewish stereotypes and tropes had become the bedrock upon which, as David Nirenberg argues, Western civilization built its collective

---

[162] Rosenberg, 123–45.
[163] Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, 217.
[164] Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, 217.
[165] Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigration Aid Work in Canada (1840–1940)*, 101.
[166] Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada*, 86–94.

identity.[167] Along with the European origins of much of Canada's population at the time, there is a strong case to be made that without the centuries of anti-Jewish ideas that circulated, Hitler's radical antisemitism would not have found the traction that it did in Germany and globally.[168] As a result of the convergence of such political, economic, social, and emotional factors during the interwar period, antisemitism noticeably rose, and Canadian Jewry experienced more organized and professionalized economic, social, and institutional restrictions that severely limited their socioeconomic ability and opportunities to integrate more fully into Canadian society. Such exclusionary attitudes and policies normalized overt expressions of hatred against Jews at this time.[169]

In Quebec specifically, Pierre Anctil describes the 1930s as the decade during which a major French newspaper, *Le Devoir*, published the most material on Jewish people in response to the violent persecution they were experiencing in Germany at the time. While not all reports about Jewish issues were antisemitic or had antisemitic undertones, newspapers and the media may have, in part, helped shape perceptions about Jewish people among some French Canadians. Anctil argues that the lack of contact between Jews and French Canadians, Christian-based antisemitism, and general xenophobic attitudes may have exacerbated these tensions from 1934 onwards.[170]

Anti-Jewish attitudes extended into Jews' social lives, both within and outside of Quebec, and this resulted in them frequently being barred from various clubs, organizations, housing

---

[167] Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 3–5; 464.
[168] Doris L. Bergen et al., "Antisemitism in the Nazi Era," in *Antisemitism: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 198–200.
[169] Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada*, 59–88.
[170] Pierre Anctil, *A Reluctant Welcome for Jewish People: Voices in Le Devoir's Editorials.* (University of Ottawa Press, 2019), 25–61.

complexes, and recreational sites. Prominent educational institutions, such as McGill University, also placed strict quotas on Jewish applicants to various faculties, thereby decreasing the perceived risk that Jews would take over certain professions from non-Jews, including the medical and legal professions.[171]

The increasing antisemitism of 1930s Canada culminated in one infamous incident involving German-Jewish refugees and a ship called the MS St. Louis. The St. Louis was carrying almost 1,000 Jewish refugees from Europe. Its passengers, seeking haven across the ocean, were denied docking and the refugees were denied entrance into Cuba and the United States before approaching Canada to no avail.[172] The St. Louis incident has been portrayed as the sole result of Canadian governmental attitudes towards Jews, with then-Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King refusing to allow the refugees entry. The refugees had no choice but to return to Europe, where the Nazis murdered several during the Holocaust.

Although the incident has been portrayed as reflecting the general attitudes of the time, Pierre Anctil and Alexandre Comeau argue that many Canadians did not learn of the incident in time to lobby the government to welcome the ship. The government's response was, in fact, due to a lack of an answer, not necessarily a hard rejection. The debates surrounding the ship among certain Members of Parliament may have reflected concerns about admitting Jewish refugees. Still, the incident was more likely the result of inaction than of action.[173] Nonetheless, this incident highlights how anti-Jewish prejudice at this time found its way, to some degree, into

---

[171] Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, 360–61.
[172] Please refer to Irving M. Abella and Harold Martin Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (University of Toronto Press, 2012).
[173] Pierre Anctil and Alexandre Comeau, "The St. Louis Crisis in the Canadian Press: New Data on the June 1939 Incident," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 31 (2021): 15–30.

government matters and how aiding European Jews during this time was low on the government's priorities list.

2.2.6 Responses to the Holocaust within Canada's Jewish Community

Following WWII, the atrocities the Nazis committed against Jews and other groups were revealed. This section compares the work on Canadian responses to the Holocaust by Franklin Bialystok and Adara Goldberg. Their analyses highlight how Canadian Jews constructed their postwar identity within Canada's diversifying milieu. Canadian reactions, as well as the Canadian Jewish response to the Holocaust, varied depending on the period and context.

Franklin Bialystok describes three periods of responses to the Holocaust. The first period, from 1945 to 1960, was characterized by a lack of effort by Canada's Jewish community to memorialize the Holocaust. At the time, many of Canada's Jews did not have strong connections to Jews in Europe and felt far removed from the situation there. Although they advocated for an easing of immigration restrictions, Jews made no significant communal effort to memorialize the Holocaust, in part to avoid creating collective trauma. Holocaust survivors remained distant from Jews who had been in Canada for a while.[174]

All of that began to change during the second period, 1960 to 1973, during which Canadian Jews seemed to take a greater interest in the events of the Holocaust and wanted to create a stronger collective Jewish identity. Perhaps this was partly due to an interest in the State of Israel's security (particularly following the Six-Day War), the highly publicized trial of Nazi

---

[174] Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*, Canadian Electronic Library Books Collection. (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 6–8.

Adolf Eichmann, and even an increase in neo-Nazi activity across Canada. The Jewish people decided to reinforce their identity and foster a stronger sense of peoplehood in Canada.[175]

It was during the third period, from 1973 to 1985, however, that the Holocaust became a central part of Canadian Jewish identity. Survivors became involved in newly emerging Holocaust initiatives targeting not only Jews but non-Jewish populations as well. Interest in the Holocaust increased in large part because of increased media attention and more academic research on the atrocities.[176] For example, Irving Abella and Harold Troper published *None is Too Many*, bringing the horrors of prejudice and the state's role in responding to it into the Canadian conversation. Thus, the Holocaust became a defining narrative that reinforced a confident and strengthened Jewish self-image of survival and resilience.

Adara Goldberg argues that the Canadian Jewish community did as much as they could to respond to the influx of survivors despite the tight immigration restrictions, bureaucratic red tape, and challenges of helping immigrants who had experienced severe trauma.[177] No two survivor stories were the same, and Canada's Jewish community faced various challenges in settling the survivors, such as housing issues and such barriers to employment as language and skill incompatibilities. Various programs were established by Jewish organizations, such as Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS), to provide survivors with the tools, knowledge, and skills they needed to integrate into Canadian society. Holocaust survivors also set up clubs and meetings to provide spaces in which they could heal from trauma and bond over navigating a new society.[178]

---

[175] Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*, 8.
[176] Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*, 9–11.
[177] Adara Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947–1955*, Studies in Immigration and Culture Series 14 (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 13–14.
[178] Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 22–96.

Goldberg also highlights negative survivor experiences. Women who lost their partners in the genocide were not given enough attention by social workers. At the same time, newly single fathers had to learn to earn a living to support their children and to take on the domestic aspects of family life that their wives previously managed. Some male survivors had to re-navigate their roles as breadwinners because, after the Holocaust ended, they were unable to perform the same work they could previously. The wives of such men, if still alive, often had to take on the role of financial providers.[179] The decades following the war proved a challenge for Canada's Jews as survivors arrived with these various struggles. However, because many Jews had already established themselves in the communities survivors joined, the latter were able to navigate those challenges in ways that previously would not have been possible.

2.2.7 Postwar Transition and Transformation: The 1960s to Today

After experiencing decades of antisemitism and challenges with establishing themselves in a society that wanted Jews to remain separate, Canadian Jews seemed to be in a state of transition and limbo. This sub-section discusses the 1960s and why that decade was transformative for Canada's Jews in their search for a strong sense of community, identity, and success in a troublesome and sometimes hostile socio-cultural environment. Unlike Simon Belkin, who argues that the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s were the most transformative decades for Canada, Harold Troper argues that the 1960s were when Canadian Jews came into their own as an established and thriving group.[180] During the 1960s, Jews in Canada claimed their space in Canadian society. Before the Second World War, those who had immigrated to Canada were

---

[179] Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 277–325.
[180] Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 13.

growing older and starting families of their own. Their children grew up in a Canadian environment in which the barriers that previously restricted Jews in various ways came down. As society progressed, so did its greater acceptance of Jews as equals. Jews moved into the political, economic, and social spheres in ways and numbers not seen before and immediately following the Second World War. Antisemitism, although still prevalent, no longer took the virulent and overt form it had in the mid- and late 1940s. It also moved from the upper echelons of society to mainly the margins. The marginalization of antisemitism created the conditions for Jews to flourish in the public sphere.[181]

Despite the growing demarginalization of Canadian Jewry, the 1960s saw a rise in neo-Nazi and white supremacist antisemitism and racism. Still, Jews could mobilize to demand a stricter state response. Jews were not just victims anymore and, thanks to the prosperity of the 1960s, could fight harder than before. The federal government convened a committee to address "group defamation," highlighting how government was becoming less tolerant of hate and prioritizing minority safety more highly[182]—ironically spurred by antisemitism's contribution to creating a collective identity for Jews as a historically victimized group, as Morton Weinfeld suggests.[183]

Local transformations were also occurring in specific Jewish communities across Canada. In Montreal, Jews experienced the Quiet Revolution and had to reconceptualize their Jewish identity within a more secular Quebec society. Montreal's population also diversified following the mass migration of Sephardim into the city around that time. Prime Minister Pierre Elliot

---

[181] Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, 17–296.
[182] Allyson M. Lunny, *Debating Hate Crime: Language, Legislatures, and the Law in Canada*, Law and Society Series (Vancouver, B.C.) (Vancouver British Columbia ; Toronto Ontario: UBC Press, 2017), 21–31.
[183] Morton Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else but Different: The Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews*, second edition, Carleton Library Series (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 40.

Trudeau's policy of multiculturalism helped promote Jews' pride in their roots and their success in moving up in Canadian society, as they could be both Jewish and Canadian for the first time. The newfound sense of equality also helped remove antisemitism from the mainstream.[184]

As we have seen, antisemitism in Quebec is unique, and much of the literature about antisemitism in Canada focuses on the Quebec context. Pierre Anctil notes that we cannot overlook the place of Jews vis-à-vis the dominant French-Catholic identity of the province. While Anglo-Protestants and French Catholics vied with each other for space in Canada's political, social, and cultural spheres, they viewed Jews as problematic outsiders. Anctil adds that the precariousness of society during the interwar years exacerbated those tensions, contributing to the rise of antisemitism in Quebec and Canada more broadly.[185]

In present-day Quebec, rates of antisemitic attitudes tend to be twice as high as in other regions in Canada.[186] Various factors contribute to the distinctive attitude to Jews in Quebec. The Quebec Government has long promoted contentious attitudes towards and perceptions of immigrant groups and minority communities. Related to that is their promotion of laïcité, roughly translated as secularism, and of French culture and language in the public sphere. Another risk factor for antisemitic attitudes toward Quebec's Jews is that the community is diverse. Ira Robinson suggests that the sizeable Hasidic population in the province (predominantly in Montreal) allows for more Jewish identifiability, so that Jews more easily

---

[184] Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, 50–89.
[185] Pierre Anctil, "Interlude of Hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar Period, 1919–39," in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan T. Davies, Canadian Electronic Library. Books Collection (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 135–37.
[186] Robert Brym and Rhonda Lenton, "Antisemitism, Anti-Israelism and Canada in Context," in *Critical Perspectives on Jewish Identity, Israel–Diaspora Relations, and Antisemitism*, ed. Robert Kenedy et al. (Springer, 2021), 2.

become targets. Due to the insularity of the Jewish community and the factors mentioned above, Jews are very much still "othered" in Quebec.[187]

Concerning fighting antisemitism, the Jewish community tightened its response to antisemitism, both at home and abroad, thanks to the social progressivism of the 1960s. The Canadian Jewish Congress also evolved into a well-established voice for Canada's Jewish community. Community institutions and welfare organizations transformed into federations, serving as central supports for Jewish community members. The federation model remains the dominant model of Jewish community organization throughout North America.[188]

Due to their emergence as an economically mobile and prosperous community, Canada's Jews became able to support causes abroad as well, such as helping the security of the State of Israel. Zionism became a defining feature of the overall community and remains so to this day for most Jews.[189] It seemed that the more Jews integrated into mainstream Canadian society, the more they wanted to carve out for themselves a distinct identity. In other words, the more they fit in, the more they have tried to stand apart. That new Canadian Jewish identity is centred on resilience, survival, and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Lastly, I consider Morton Weinfeld's sociological work on Canada's Jewish community, which suggests why and how the community has thrived as a minority group. His thesis is that the diversity of Canada's Jewish community has played a significant role in its success as Jews have employed "contradictory, demographic and cultural strategies that adapt to changing circumstances." Weinfeld argues that community members' flexibility and diverse outlooks have

---

[187] Ira Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 181–91.
[188] Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, 188.
[189] Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, 39–42.

enabled Jews to maintain their identity and traditions even while adapting to Canadian society.[190] For example, Jews who marry other Jews maintain traditional religious and cultural practices and conventional notions of Jewishness that delineate the community. In contrast, Jews who marry outside the community solidify social relations with non-Jews and further Jewish integration and acculturation into broader Canadian society.[191] Weinfeld's theory is especially relevant to my research because it examines how Jews form relationships with non-Jews to build resilience against antisemitism, as well as how they maintain a strong community network.

Weinfeld's theory also explains how the Jewish community's mixture of distinct identity and adaptability has shaped its place in Canada's social landscape and how Jews see themselves vis-à-vis other groups. As we have seen, context is essential, and external factors have continuously shaped the trajectory of Canadian Jewry. Weinfeld describes how Jewish Canadians have continued to fit into the broader landscape despite antisemitism. My current findings, explored in the following chapters, align with Weinfeld's theory.

2.3 Conclusion

The following chapters discuss data that I collected during a period of upheaval for Canada's Jews and focus on thematic narratives that suggest why and how intergroup contact and social strategies have the potential for addressing antisemitism in deeper, longer-lasting ways than other strategies. Current dominant approaches, like law and education, do not seem to be reaching the emotional and cognitive mechanisms that this thesis argues underpin much antisemitism. This chapter, therefore, has laid the theoretical framework for interpreting my data and explains why intergroup contact may play a significant role in reducing antisemitism. That is

---

[190] Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else but Different*, 3–46.
[191] Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else but Different*, 41-42/339.

also why it was necessary to understand the psychological elements related to antisemitic ideas, such as conspiracy thinking, scapegoating, and stereotyping.

Intergroup contact addresses what may be the key mechanisms that need to be affected to reduce antisemitic bias in individuals. Although further empirical work must be done about the social and emotional nature of antisemitism, antisemitism's underlying mechanisms are still an interesting consideration to consider going forward. The social strategies participants discuss in the following chapters address empathy, fear, threat, and outgroup anxiety, and those discussions highlight how vital social and emotional factors are in creating lasting positive relations between people and groups.

This chapter has also reviewed the relevant literature on contemporary antisemitism and Canadian Jewish history, as it is crucial to examine contemporary antisemitism phenomenologically and the Canadian Jewish experience historically to understand how context shapes both experiences of and responses to antisemitism in Canada historically and currently. In addition, to understand experiences and responses to antisemitism, and the factors that continue to shape it today, it is essential to understand its historical roots. Based on the work discussed in the above literature review, the following chapter continues to construct the narrative of antisemitism in Canada and its present trajectory.

CHAPTER 3: THOSE WHO PLAY TOGETHER STAY TOGETHER (WELL, NOT ALWAYS BUT OFTEN): THE FOUNDATIONAL ROLE OF SOCIAL BONDS

"We are inoculating society, group by group, one by one, through all of our activities and events, through all of our tenancies, and then how those children who grew up in our communities go out and inoculate their friends against that kind of propaganda." This quote is from an interview with Suzanne, whom I met at a Starbucks patio in Ottawa on a sunny June afternoon. Referring to the social services organization she worked for, which prizes multifaith interaction and collaboration, Suzanne discussed an analogy for combatting prejudice through intergroup contact and exposure. Suzanne, like most participants in this study, described the power of relationships for combatting antisemitism. This chapter discusses social bonds, a theme representing the most prevalent group of codes in my entire data set. My participants discussed different types of relationships and noted that those relationships are key to fighting antisemitism. Subsequent chapters will discuss the various factors that fostered positive relating and relation-building. In contrast, this chapter focuses specifically on the main kinds of relationships my participants noted, and on how and why they are essential to fighting antisemitism in Canada.

Specifically, this chapter explores the roles of friendships and partnerships, allyships, community, and identity salience. That last term means the process, during actual bond formation, of shifting participants' focus from their competing identities (e.g., religious or ethnic identities) to shared identities. Building on shared identities was crucial for forming successful, lasting Jewish/non-Jewish relationships. This chapter also discusses how safe and trusting relationships allowed Jews and non-Jews to demystify one another and challenge stereotypes and bias. Lastly, this chapter examines how social bonds combat antisemitism before discussing the limitations and challenges of relation-building as a strategy.

3.1 Friendship and Personal Connections

I met Sarah (1), a non-Jewish participant, through an organization that bridges divides between Jews, Christians, and Muslims through experiential activities, solidarity work, and educational programming.[192] Sarah (1) and I met on Zoom, and she was one of the first participants. Her insight as someone engaging with Jews for the first time at a Shabbat dinner offered a valuable perspective on how friendships build bridges. She said: "So that's the first and only event I've participated in… I heard about the organization from my friend..." Friendship was a prominent code for this theme and was effective for bringing Jews and non-Jews together into a relational space where deeper bonds could flourish. We know that cross-group friendships have strong potential to reduce prejudice. Thomas Pettigrew explains that ingroup members are more likely to engage with outgroups if someone in their group engages positively with those outgroups. It is through the trust of your fellow group member or friend that you feel safer trusting the outgroups.[193] Unsurprisingly, then, several non-Jewish participants in this study noted that they became involved in bridge-building with Jews because their friends were engaging positively with Jews. Sarah (1) was one such participant.

For another participant, Sean, his friendship with a non-Jewish colleague at an organization that builds bridges between Jews and non-Jews served as his connection to the Jewish community. His encounters with the Jewish community initially, through his friendship, allowed him to build trust and familiarity with Jews and ultimately allowed him to challenge any preconceived notions he had about Jews and Israel. For participants, therefore, friendship served

---

[192] I quote two participants named Sarah in this thesis, and so I have labelled them (1) and (2) based on order of appearance.
[193] Pettigrew et al., "Direct and Indirect Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice: A Normative Interpretation," 412–22.

as a connector. Bridge-builder (B.B.), an important community leader in Ottawa known for his work building bridges with Jews, noted the importance of friendship in giving him a positive perception of Jews:

> *…my good friend was a fella named Marvin, and we would hang out together. I would go to his house. He was a little shy to come to our apartment because it was a little bit rougher and so forth, but we had a good relationship. Went to his bar mitzvah and many bar mitzvahs... So, that relationship was able to be fostered because I think of what I would call a... how would I say? A generous way of understanding interfaith.*

B.B. himself had been the victim of racism throughout his life, and yet in moments of solidarity and support, it was his friendship with a Jewish person that gave him a positive connection between himself and the Jewish community because, as the literature and the above quote suggest, that friendship relied on trust and familiarity. If one person trusts their friend's judgement and taste (not necessarily agreement, but trust), then that person may feel more comfortable engaging in activities centred on meeting new people and outgroups. Recall how cross-group friendships are impactful because they rest on the premise that one can trust outgroups when a member of their ingroup trusts those outgroups. The person's trust is vicarious with respect to their friend's relationship with an outgroup.[194] In my interviews, when a non-Jewish participant had a friend who was friends with a Jewish person, that participant was more likely to have a positive engagement with Jews. The trust and familiarity with Jews that non-Jewish participants experienced vicariously through their friends seemed to, as the literature suggests, enable their own deeper bonds with Jews and lead to opportunities to form such bonds.

Rabbi Lerner, a prominent emeritus rabbi from Montreal whom I encountered through my family's synagogue, met with me on Zoom to discuss his work building bridges with non-

---

[194] Pettigrew et al., "Direct and Indirect Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice: A Normative Interpretation," 412–22; Tropp, "From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias," 109–11; Vonofakou et al., "The Impact of Direct and Extended Cross-Group Friendships on Improving Intergroup Relations," 107.

Jews and the role friendships can play in fostering lasting, positive contact between Jews and non-Jews. He explained that positive relational foundations can increase the desire of non-Jews to support and care for Jews: "You care for friends in a different way than perhaps a business partner or professional relationship, where the personal touches are not as valued or present. It seems that the more personal and intimate bonds have a lasting and profound impact on how non-Jews want to care about Jews." I speculate, based on my theoretical framework, that contact and relationship-building foster a sense of care and community between Jews and non-Jews. You are more likely to care for and less likely to harm people in your ingroup.

Another reason friendships seem to foster feelings of trust and safety between Jews and non-Jews is that they rest on commonalities and familiarity. What was clear from my participants was that friendship can act as a catalyst for bridge-building: the relational foundation and trust are already there, and using that friendship to connect with others eases the anxiety around doing so, because you know and trust your friend, who is already doing so. Louis, raised in a French-Catholic environment but later converted to Judaism, was a leader in Montreal's Jewish-Christian dialogue efforts. I met him at his home on a cold winter day, after returning to Montreal from Ottawa and rushing to get to the interview on time after disembarking from my train. Louis elaborates on the role of friendship in combatting antisemitism, adding that friendships are also based on commonalities and shared experiences. Commonalities facilitate contact by helping people feel familiar with one another. As he notes: "…a friendship, it's based on a common base of seeing the world." Suzanne, whom we met at the beginning of this chapter, also demonstrated that it is in knowing and relating to someone Jewish that bonds of trust and care can form, and thus, prejudice ideally decreases. She explained:

> *…I grew up with a lot of Jewish friends. My kids have never had a single Jewish friend. Not one… No Jewish children in their school. Lots of Muslim kids in our school. We have*

> *lots of Muslim friends… Also, when they were younger, I traipsed them over to the Holocaust Museum in Washington and stuff like that… But they haven't been exposed. I would never have tolerated antisemitism because I had all my Jewish friends. And whenever someone would say anything antisemitic to me, I would say, You're talking about [friend's name], and I'm not okay with that.*

A friendship might already exist, but it can also be developed by bringing people together around their commonalities and allowing them to relate to each other on that basis, which reduces their suspicions and perceived social threats. Relating begets understanding, and understanding is a part of empathy, which I discuss in further detail in the next chapter. Several psychologists, including Walter Stephan and Cookie Stephan, propose that threat to ingroup identity is a primary motivating factor for outgroup prejudice.[195] Friendships, by their very nature, foster trust and reduce threat. The present study demonstrates that when members of competing outgroups discovered commonalities, they felt increasingly safe interacting with each other.

Dahlia adds to the above conversation about commonalities and shared identities: "I think the first step is commonalities or how we educate our kids. And then we can talk. If we become friends or closer, and if we are interested." The circumstances under which I interviewed Dahlia were interesting to say the least. Specifically, I met her in my office at the University of Victoria's Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, where I was doing a fellowship. It was October 10, 2023, just three days after the events of October 7. We were returning to our daily routine after the long Thanksgiving weekend and that horrible day. Despite personal loss in the extremely recent events, Dahlia, an Israeli expat, still chose to speak with me about her work sponsoring Syrian refugees with her synagogue. She contended that Jewish/non-Jewish contact largely relies on deeper, more personal relationships because such relationships, if nurtured, lead to stronger bonds and greater care as participants come to see each other as more similar and less

---

[195] Stephan et al., "Intergroup Threat Theory," 255–72.

threatening, even in times of crisis. Group collaboration, as the next section will explore, relies on the exact social foundations that this study argues enable healthy, resilient relationships characterized by trust and safety.

3.2 Allyships and the Importance of Community

Besides friendships, another key type of relationship that my participants discussed was allyships. Rabbi Scheier, a leader of a prominent Montreal synagogue, spoke in a serious yet warm tone when I sat down with him in one of the synagogue's formal offices. What struck me was the weight of the duty he felt to protect his congregants and community even while understanding that Jews cannot fight antisemitism alone. He therefore touched on something several participants noted: the significance of allyships in fighting antisemitism. He said: "…I don't think Jews can fight antisemitism alone. Nor should they. So it's a question of survival. We need the help of others; we need other people's voices. And the indignity is often having to beg for those voices and having to ask people to stand up on our behalf. But it's necessary." Like Rabbi Scheier, Petula said:

> *So that's why we really form this allyship, just to show them [Jews] that they do have partners in peace who are willing to come out and to stand with them when they're going through these really trying times, when it feels like the world is against them, just to show that there's people out there who care and who do want to resolve things like this and make the world better.*

I met Petula at an interfaith Shabbat dinner that a personal contact of mine had invited me to. As a non-Jew, Petula has dedicated much of her life to bridging gaps between Christians and Jews. Allyships, for Petula, were key to fighting antisemitism because of their supportive, loyal, and trusting nature. According to my participants, allyships functioned much like friendships in terms of intentional relating, but allyships did not necessarily involve intimate personal connections. Nevertheless, as with friendships, my participants described allyships as supportive relationships

in which groups or individuals valued accountability to one another. Loyalty, trust, and consistency were also named as key characteristics of allyships, and although allyships were not necessarily intimate personal relationships, they went deeper than symbolic relationships that often stop at making solidarity statements.

In a similar vein to friendships, shared identities were an important component of allyship formation and implied trust. One participant, Aaron, described the role of trust in the formation of resilient allyship. I met with Aaron on a cold December morning at a local café in Victoria near the end of my fieldwork there. Aaron discussed many things, including the significance of building trust through fostering common identities. Aaron said:

> *If you know somebody and you have a relationship with them that you build up over a period of time on other issues… So we have a level of trust, based on working together... They see how I operate; they know I'm a person of integrity. I have respect for them. I know who they are. And so when we sit down to talk about something that's difficult, and on a new topic, they're more open and more willing to hear and believe and trust that what I'm saying…*

The shared experience of working together creates commonalities to bond over, helping reduce feelings of threat towards the other person because they seem more like you and creating a baseline from which further trust can develop.

While Ottawa and Victoria participants frequently discussed the significance of allyship, Montreal participants spoke less about it, which seemed to stem from the apparent lack of substantial allies in the city, historically and at present. Jean, a Montreal non-Jewish ally whom we will learn more about later as I discuss in further detail the Quebec context, noted that where allyship was high, so was general non-Jewish support of Montreal's Jewish community, "So when we saw this tragedy of October 7, our group, like several other groups of Christian-Jewish dialogue, released a short statement, expressing our support to the Jewish community in front of the tragedy of October 7, and our hope that the people in this area could find a way to try to live

together in peaceful relations and so forth." As Jean explained, if Jews are cared for and included by non-Jews, that might shape non-Jewish responses to antisemitism.

Related to allyship was the concept of community. A sense of community was a key component of social bonds for participants. I interviewed several participants who were involved with a non-profit organization in Ottawa that focuses on bringing together religious leaders to support a public housing complex. Although adherence to a religious tradition or membership in a religious community is not required to become a tenant (the organization houses its tenants based on the public housing registry), the housing complex involves communal spaces and programming, which prospective tenants must accept when they accept an offer for a unit. The organization offers an opportunity for religious leaders to work together for a common goal while encouraging contact and relationship-building for diverse tenants. Specifically, the organization has a mandate to encourage positive diversity amongst its religiously and ethnically diverse tenants by promoting experiential programming centred around religious and cultural activities open to all.[196] I met one person involved in the organization, a woman named Fran, via Zoom. Fran's was one of the first interviews, and she was regarded as a powerhouse in her community for devoting her time to an organization that provides housing to individuals and families in need. Inclusivity was a notable code in the dataset that underpinned the notion of community. About community and inclusivity at her organization specifically, Fran said: "So, there's a community development focus. So that it's not just about bricks and mortar. It's not just about getting people off the streets. It's about building communities that are inclusive communities. Yup, it's fostered through the design. So, [housing complex] was designed to foster

[196] For more information on social housing organizations as a model of integrating social action with intergroup contact, please see Sahada Alolo and Fran Klodawsky, "Faith, Housing and Inclusive Cities," in *La Ville Inclusive: Dans Les Pas de Caroline Andrew*, Politique et Politiques Publiques (University of Ottawa Press, 2022).

community." Community, according to Fran, is a collective of people who share common values and a space where they gather. Thus, contact and community go hand in hand. Community is also a space of inclusion where every member can feel part of it and worthy of being part of it. Community, she implied, can encourage dignity among members. Fran continued:

> *Well, it's about people feeling like this is their community. A community that supports them in their sort of goals for establishing a good life. So, wanting a place where they feel safe for themselves and their kids. Where they feel safe and secure and have that base that allows them to dream about further education, dream about a better job, dream about their kids being able to go to school. All those sorts of mundane, everyday things.*

Gay, whom I met at a café on a late June afternoon and who has devoted her time to a similar mission to Fran suggested about community I that context:

> *Well, because the whole goal was to build a community. They have this community room, and they have events that everybody's invited to, and their families as well. And so, this is an opportunity for families to get together. So, there's barbecues and the kids were running around and there's a playground for kids and, you know, you're not saying well, you don't belong. Everybody belongs. So, it's the fact that this community was built to be a community. And then there are volunteer gardeners who are different, volunteer people who are doing all kinds of stuff. There are classes to learn… So it brings people together with a physical activity. That means that you actually get to know people.*

Communities, according to Fran and Gay, are centred around shared spaces that encourage people to work together and find commonalities on which to build their shared space into something safe for everyone involved. Like Gay, Mary understood community as connoting a sense of togetherness: "But for the most part, it's been very intentional in how we build community through those efforts as well, so when you sign to live here, to be part of this community, whether as a volunteer, whether as a tenant, you're signing onto that philosophy that everyone belongs regardless of faith or no faith." Mary was in a similar line of work to Fran's and Gay's and was a quiet and dignified woman who met with me on Zoom early one July morning. She valued community engagement and building bridges with Jews and other groups of people through experiential activities centred on inclusion and perspective-taking.

As we have seen, for several participants, the idea of community implies a sense of belonging and inclusion. The data demonstrate that when people felt included and that they belonged, they engaged more positively with those around them. Practical examples, such as the housing organization I discussed above, suggest that individuals from competing outgroups can create a sense of belonging and community by engaging in relation-building activities and by being in proximity to others in healthy social environments. According to Sahada Alolo and Fran Klodawsky, intergroup contact works well because it fosters a sense of community and inclusion by bringing people together for a common purpose, but with the explicit acknowledgement that they will be engaging with diverse individuals.[197] When people belong to a community, they share a common identity and purpose, forming an ingroup, even though they also belong to competing religious or ethnic outgroups. In a shared social space, people's competing identities may not seem as problematic because everyone belongs to the same group. As a result, trust can be built, reducing animosities and, presumably, the perceived threat posed by competing identities.[198]

On the other hand, not all participants viewed community as essential for imparting empathy for Jews from non-Jews. Tim, whose empathy for Jews came in part from his experiences of prejudice and bias as a Sikh man, explains: "But I think with other communities, and it's not even based on the idea of community, I would say (inaudible) that more Canadians need to know about this, and more Canadians need to hear about [the Holocaust], and understand

---

[197] Sahada Alolo and Fran Klodawsky, "Faith, Housing and Inclusive Cities," in *La Ville Inclusive: Dans Les Pas de Caroline Andrew*, Politique et Politiques Publiques (University of Ottawa Press, 2022), 161-96.
[198] Dovidio et al., "From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias," 94–96; Gaertner et al., "A Common Ingroup Identity: Categorization, Identity, and Intergroup Relations," 434; Pettigrew and Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*, 73–119; Paolini et al., "Negative Intergroup Contact Makes Group Memberships Salient: Explaining Why Intergroup Conflict Endures," 1723–34.

it." Considering Holocaust education as a tool to combat antisemitism, Tim did not think that the concept of community (as used by participants above) itself was key. Instead, he argued that, based largely on his experiences visiting Holocaust sites such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, it is in fostering a common identity among members of different groups that brings people together in contact and supportive relating and that, in the context of antisemitism, this can be accomplished through tangible experiences of and interactions with the Jewish world. But Tim's argument notwithstanding, I found that allyships, a sense of community, and inclusion all seem to decrease tension between members of competing outgroups or identity-groups, which the next section discusses in further detail.

3.3 "You're all just wearing a jersey": Identity Salience and Recategorization

The quote in the above heading is from Ignatius, a participant we will meet later in this section. He spoke about the role that identities play in intergroup contact outcomes. As the previous section mentions, identity can play a significant role in facilitating positive relationships between Jews and non-Jews. More specifically, identity salience and recategorization together constitute some of the primary mechanisms that helped the Jewish/non-Jewish intergroup contact to be effective at reducing antisemitism. Sarah (2), who worked for a Jewish organization dedicated to providing social services to Jews and non-Jews, had much to say about identity, contact, and prejudice reduction. Interaction and contact decrease prejudice because, as she described in the following quotation, they provide people opportunities to come together and get to know each other: "…we really believe that it's getting to know people [through] one-on-one conversations. We share so many things that are similar, and very few things that are so far apart."

In the case of Sarah's organization, its staff are religiously and ethnically diverse, serving Ottawa's diverse population. I met Sarah in her office at her organization, and its calming, earthy

decorations brought a sense of warmth and groundedness to her space. Sarah's office resembled her down-to-earth, open-minded nature, which was reflected in the work she led at her organization. Its work engages several vulnerable populations, and it creates opportunities for those populations to interact with a Jewish organization in a positive context. As a result, the populations can develop a positive emotional resonance and association with Jews. Note again Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp, who suggest that reduced outgroup anxiety is one of the primary determinants of effective intergroup contact work; the professional standards that Sarah's organization operates under allow for non-Jews to have continuous, positive interactions with Jews in a controlled environment, thus increasing their sense of safety with and trust in Jews.[199]

Regarding identity as a tool for promoting positive relationships, participants described how common goals can bring competing groups together. Having common goals can help reduce competition between outgroups. Recall John Dovidio et al. and the concept of recategorization, which describes the process by which people downplay salient identities and reassociate each other's identities primarily around a common element or feature.[200] For an illustration, consider Avishai. I met Avishai at his work on a gloomy, winter afternoon. His was the first Montreal interview, and he spoke at length about the power of identity salience and recategorization. He referenced his soccer team and explained how playing alongside diverse Jewish and non-Jewish teammates helped him and his teammates see each other more empathetically. That seemed to occur not only because being part of the same team refocused the players' identities from

[199] Pettigrew and Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*, 73–119.
[200] Dovidio et al., "From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias," 94–96.

competing and tense identities to a shared identity but also because the players were enjoying similar interests and thus felt ultimately safer with each other:

> *…let's say soccer. I had roughly the same group of people on a soccer team… And they're okay with like a certain background. I don't know. Like half the team, or almost half the team, at various points, was actually Jewish. And that very much played out even in simple ways, like, Oh, it's Shabbat, I can't come to a game. Or, Oh, we were going to go out or something. Well, I can't necessarily eat the food, it was non-kosher. Things like that. Last year, we had a soccer game, I don't know, during Ramadan, and there was a Muslim person on the team and at the game, I was like, Have you been fasting the whole day, and you just came for this game? And he said, Yeah, I've just been drinking water... and I said, Oh… He was fully fasting, and he had only broken his fast right before the game because the fast ended an hour before the game. And I was like… Did you have dates? Because of like traditionally [they] break the Ramadan fast, the Iftar. And he said, Yeah, I still have the dates with me… So things like that. Right? Like it comes up.*

Another participant who discussed the importance of shared activities was Ignatius, who also discussed space and environment as mediating factors of contact. I vividly remember meeting with Ignatius. We met one warm afternoon at a café in Ottawa's Little Italy neighbourhood and I recall that Ignatius's religious identity strongly influenced his motivation to engage with Jews and to dispel preconceived notions and build bridges. His strict Roman Catholic religious background gave him an interest in the theological roots of his tradition and, in turn, in understanding Jewish people and Judaism with compassion and curiosity. He frequently sought out spaces and opportunities for engagement with Jews to learn more about Judaism in particular. Like Avishai, Ignatius also described in a compelling way how everyday activities, strangely also soccer, can foster positive contact because they encourage identity formation over which people bond:

> *Ignatius*
> *We play against other churches. And if a synagogue wanted to hop in, we'd say, Yeah, come play soccer with us… Why not?... And then everyone's a soccer player. Everyone's on that field and they're all playing soccer; they're all wearing a jersey.*
>
> *Megan*

What exactly about that kind of interaction would bridge divides, build positive relations to you?

Ignatius
You're all just wearing a jersey. That's it.

Ignatius described how activities that foster equality remove barriers and competition (except in a soccer game, where everyone is an equal-opportunity participant) and allow people to get to know one another in a neutral environment (i.e., a space not pertinent to either party's identity; a place of worship would not be neutral ground). Neutral spaces fostered positive contact and relations by making points of tension less salient. Crucially, pre-existing identities are not erased in such settings; they are reconstituted as just one element of a person, allowing other elements to take centre stage in the relationship—a clear example of recategorization.

Returning to Suzanne, whose work was similar to Fran's, Gay's, and Mary's, she adds that: "Instead, you say, well, look, here's a bunch of pieces of wood, build a ladder. And then they start working together to build the ladder. And by the time they're done building the ladder, they're actually really good friends, and they can start talking about those theological differences in a more respectful tone." When I met with Suzanne, we spoke at length about her academic work on genocide and her practical work bringing diverse groups together to build bridges. She had a passion for engaging people of all religious and ethnic backgrounds and a history of positive encounters with Jews, which informed her empathetic and intentional approach to engaging with them. Her illustration above eloquently shows how common projects and goals can help competing groups form shared identities and bonds, even while openly acknowledging their competing identities (such as religion and ethnicity).

Penny, a bright and peppy participant I met at her home one crisp fall morning in Victoria, described the impact of contact work and coming together to do something good for the Victoria community, both its Jewish and non-Jewish members:

> *…I often have said to myself when I was on the Faith in Action group and, you know, dealing with the Catholics and the United Church, and… Unitarians. Anyway, I've often thought, we are more alike on the ground than maybe people within my own synagogue… We're not talking about our religious beliefs. We're not talking about our ideologies. We're talking about helping people, and we became good friends.*

Penny clearly explained how her initial contact with other groups over common goals and projects helped her learn about others and develop friendships. She continued the theme of how bond formation and contact foster trust, relating, and belonging, and reduce outgroup anxieties, animosities, and social hesitancies (e.g., about connecting with other groups). Lori Beaman's work on deep equality also examines the role of shared identities in fostering living well together in diverse societies, and I want to note Beaman's explanation of *contaminated diversity*, a concept adapted from anthropologist Anna Tsing. Beaman uses "contaminated diversity" to describe how, contrary to popular and simplistic conceptions of how people navigate identity differences, the multifacetedness of identities means that everyone navigates their daily interactions with outgroup members in various and distinctive ways not determined by a single simple identity. Navigation of difference, Beaman explains, can be aided by creating opportunities for individuals living in shared social spaces to focus on similarities, because if differences become the primary focus of social interactions, people's identities become essentialized and fixed. "Contaminated diversity" points to the messy, nuanced facets of people's identities and how the common ground on which people come together marries the competing facets. Common goals are the social binding agent, so to speak. In contrast, identity rigidity reinforces social tensions because people become less comfortable with flexible shifts in identity.

Highlighting similarities in shared social spaces makes it easier for individuals to bridge divides.[201]

Related to social interaction based on similarities are the ideas of community and togetherness, which Penny also discussed, saying that "Everybody wanted to support us. We are very much a part of our community in that respect." Numerous participants in Ottawa also mentioned this. Community in this dataset conveyed a sense of belonging, a common identity, and a sense of purpose, which seemed to affect how Jews and non-Jews thought about each other, as well as how Jews understood themselves vis-à-vis other groups. By forming communities, people positively shift social relations and reduce prejudice.

Another example highlighting how working together toward a common goal diminishes (though does not eliminate) the relevance of competing identity factors in relationships is below. Sarah (2) explained:

> *I think one of the things about helping people is that you see a family... There was a large family, one of the children had some pretty significant disabilities, and their sponsorship group was a Jewish group, and the Jewish group and [Sarah's organization] found wheelchairs, got them into some specialized rehabilitation programs... And the family, I think, at that point, we were no longer a Syrian Muslim family and a Jewish organization. We were coming together as a community to help support their child… So, I think it's in the actions. It's in working together for a common good. In this instance, helping a child get the services that they needed. And I think that's what changes it. It's those interactions that move [us] out of whether I'm this religion or that religion.*

According to Sarah, common goals lead to bonding because they allow people to learn about each other in a new, shared context in which, despite their differences, they can work together safely and effectively and thereby recategorize their identities around similarities. Mary adds, in an example about Christian-Muslim relations, that common goals also increase people's buy-in

---

[201] Lori G. Beaman, *Deep Equality in an Era of Religious Diversity* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 58–85.

to a shared cause. So competing groups build a sense of unity, mutual responsibility, and togetherness:

> *The exposure piece is quite remarkable, actually. So, for instance, we had a Christmas event here a few years ago, just before COVID, and they decided to put up a play of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Nativity story. And in that play… the children of our community acting it out. And we had Muslim kids in hijab, in a Christian play. And that visual, you know, it was just so telling. And, even to have a Muslim family allow their children to even participate in that, in a Christian play to tell a Christian story, was telling. When we've had the Jewish Passover at the [housing complex], we have Muslims, Jews, Christians sitting at a huge table and participating in the activities and hearing their stories and listening to it and actually being hands-on and doing that… The idea of Jewish events being held and you have at the table, people in hijab, people who are Christian and people who are non-Jewish, participating and being hands-on and listening and asking questions, to actually even learn more and saying, Oh, we do that, but we do that differently.*

When people unite in a common cause, they create a sense of teamwork and become allies. The Nativity play story illustrated the potential of a shared project to break down barriers and foster a sense of unity and community. The second part, evidently a Passover seder, demonstrated how a shared goal or project can counter anti-Jewish prejudice. Not only contact and exposure provide experiences that demystify prejudices; people pursuing a goal together as equal participants find meaning in shared experiences and achievements.

Below is an anecdote from the housing organization discussed above. The story below took place at their AGM, and an attendee began raising political issues that were not relevant to the event, causing disruption. Gay explained:

> *We were meeting with a rabbi and there were several of us and somebody brought up something that had to do with the Israeli situation that was not suitable. I guess the bottom line is, people could easily have pro-Palestinian views. But the bottom line is this is not something that we're concerned… with at all… And it's not part of our conversation, as part of the affordable housing work that we're doing… I've actually never had a conversation like this, just briefly once, but with any of my Jewish friends related to Palestine. It's because I don't know where everybody stands. And I absolutely don't want to damage the relationship that I've got.*

Even in a situation in which a political topic was brought up, and despite people's views of the topic, the housing organization's supporters stood up for the Jewish attendee who felt victimized by the rhetoric because the community cared about and learned to connect with Jews, in large part through their work bonding over a common goal.

The notion of identity inclusivity itself is powerful and played a key role in the contact work participants described. Participants noted that for recategorization to work effectively, we should not erase intergroup differences. Instead, outgroups should shift their understanding of those differences by building trust through their shared identities. In fact, scholarship demonstrates that inclusivity is achieved by supporting the coexistence of competing identities in shared social environments, rather than reframing everyone as the same, which reinforces inclusivity and, in turn, equality and open-mindedness.[202] Similarities can be the focus in shared interactions, but differences should also be explicitly included in the shared social space and framed in a safe and respectful manner.

Participants also repeatedly noted that intergroup contact in a positive setting can lead to different groups developing positive mental and emotional associations and perceptions of each other (e.g., non-Jews forming positive associations with Jews, which in turn lessens the former's animosities and prejudices towards the latter). One participant, Harvey, noted that common goals and interests can help build positive relations between Jews and non-Jews. I met Harvey at the Jewish Community Centre in Ottawa. He had been involved over the years in various Jewish community organizations that engaged directly with both Jewish and non-Jewish people. He said:

---

[202] Jennifer A. Selby et al., *Beyond Accommodation: Everyday Narratives of Muslim Canadians* (UBC Press, 2018), 89–120, https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks3/upress/2018-09-16/1/9780774838306#page=16.

> *So they [a social services organization] have a number of Arabic speaking, Muslim social workers working for them. They have Chinese. They work with a Chinese seniors community. They work with all sorts of African communities. I suspect your research will show one of the most effective ways of making bridges with other ethnic communities and the Jewish community is to build them based on common interests and concerns that don't involve the conflict in the Middle East…*

Harvey mentioned that when contact seemed to work, it did not involve mention of the Middle East. That was a trend in the data: tense topics should be avoided when building relationships. Challenging issues are best brought up when relationships are stronger, and a foundation of trust and rapport has been built (more on that later). By considering others' perspectives as a non-negotiable aspect of interpersonal interaction, Harvey refers to an idea known as agonistic respect. William Connolly characterizes it as a cooperative and considerate way of negotiating social interactions in a diverse environment in which people embody different identities.[203] Harvey and other participants noted that the point was not that such topics should be avoided forever or under any circumstances, but rather that when relationships are in a delicate phase in their development, it is important to respect others' perspectives by considering how they might feel if a particularly tense topic is discussed. In other words, the key is to practice consideration and values-driven interactions as relationships develop between Jews and non-Jews, which the next chapter will discuss in more detail.

What also helped foster positive contact and recategorization was the environment in which the contact took place. Low-stakes or uncompetitive environments have the potential, as Shimon suggested in his interview, to foster relationships and develop a sense of care and belonging among competing groups, such as Jewish and non-Jewish groups:

> *And maybe their [i.e., non-Jews'] grassroots would be aware that there was intervention by Jews, but it still doesn't bring them into contact with Jews. So, my block party idea is*

---

[203] Mark Wenman, *Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalisation* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 110.

> *to be able to provide funds across the country, in any community that wants to undertake it. Not specifically just about Jews, but to organize block parties where everybody on a particular street or neighbourhood comes together, whether it's in a park or on an actual street. It's not by invitation. It's inviting everybody.*

Lessening the stakes for situations of equality and inclusion may also decrease antisemitism because in low-stakes settings, Jews can be seen as less threatening and hence in more positive lights and as fellow members of society. In her interview, Dahlia described her interaction with the Syrian refugee family she helped when she shared that she was Israeli and Jewish:

> *I worked as an ESL teacher and had a Syrian refugee family come in… We did, you know, colours and animals, and at that stage, I had already decided I was coming out of the Jewish/Israeli closet with the first family. My family. My newcomers. This family, I did it simultaneously. I said, Guys, I need to tell you that I'm from Israel. Israel, he says to me, beaming. Dahlia, he says, we eat the same tomatoes... So that's why I think it's through common projects. It's not through sermonizing, just reading, taking a class. These are all very important, but I think it's through working together.*

At the very least, knowing someone can make you feel safer around them and less suspicious or apprehensive. Thus, working together and doing things in person can help competing people or groups demystify one another and learn how to get along.

3.4 Another Outcome: Demystification

In addition to recategorization, one of the primary outcomes of Jewish/non-Jewish intergroup contact was that the contact and exposure challenged anti-Jewish perceptions and provided opportunities for non-Jews to demystify Jews. We know from the psychological literature that increasing outgroup knowledge is on of the primary mechanisms that predicts successful intergroup contact.[204] Sarah (1), the non-Jewish participant we met who attended a Shabbat dinner for the first time, described the impact her interactions with Jews had on her perceptions of them:

---

[204] Pettigrew and Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*, 73–119.

> *I think, having this one experience and being able to meet people that identify as Jewish that would make me think whether the content I'm engaging with and whether the views that I resonate with, whether they're actually true, because now I've met Jewish people and I have something to compare with and I can empathize with and I don't just have a broad generalization to go off or a stereotype, but I [met Jewish] people…*

Fran adds: "So I think it absolutely reduces prejudice because without contact, your ideas about the other can be quite distorted." I acknowledge that people can still maintain anti-Jewish biases and ideas, even with Jewish friends (e.g., when people say "I'm not antisemitic because I have Jewish friends"). However, the contact in this kind of situation allows for demystification because it is intentionally structured to help people get to know Jews in a positive light. It is this intentionality that I argue enables demystification, as people intend to learn and unlearn specific ideas through their contact efforts. Sarah (2) describes how challenging anti-Jewish perceptions requires learning about and interacting with Jews in a positive context:

> *One of our settlement workers goes out into the community and says, I work with [a Jewish organization]. So those conversations kind of happen, and there are times people say, Oh, no, I don't want anything to do with the Jews. And they [staff] say, Well, then you can't have this. You can't come to my program because this program is a program of [Sarah's organization]… I think that our reputation is that we will help other communities…*

Again, interacting with Jews in positive contexts helped foster positive perceptions of and associations with Jews, allowing non-Jews to build trust in them.

Even though it is evidently helpful to refocus identities around shared, familiar elements, it is the demystification outcome that underscores the importance of not completely erasing all aspects of people's identities. Suppose people do not actively acknowledge the Jewish identities of their Jewish contacts in casual, unstructured settings (e.g., casual, superficial interactions). In that case, they are not really learning to feel safe in other ways (such as through recategorization) with Jewishness. Identity, therefore, is an essential feature of the contact experience, even if bonding occurs through alternative aspects of identity.

According to the data from this project, contact encounters with Jews can dispel misinformation because they provide alternative experiences of Jews that counter preconceived and often misinformed notions. One participant, Sean, while describing a conversation he had with a Jewish person at a Shabbat dinner, noted the demystifying effect his contact with Jews had on challenging some of his pop culture-informed perceptions about Jews: "The dinner experiences, they're good. A great example was the TV show called [Un]orthodox that came out on Netflix. Those dinners allowed me to figure out certain things that weren't right about that show." For Sean, it was not just the firsthand exposure that provided him with new information about who Jews are and can be. The contact also allowed him to engage more personally with the Jewish community. It was the intimate setting of the dinner, held in someone's personal home, that enabled him to have more positive and robust encounters with the Jewish community and greater emotional resonance, because the intimate environment offered a positive context in which he could engage with Jews safely and at his own pace.

Recalling the significance of intimate relationships and intentional settings, smaller-scale events, such as Shabbat dinners, offered more personal connections and exposure, creating opportunities for Jews and non-Jews to build mutual familiarity and learn about one another. Returning to the literature on reducing prejudice, an intergroup contact setting that facilitates connections should also reduce outgroup anxiety, thereby enabling even more conversations and demystification.[205] Participants made it clear that their anxiety was reduced because they became more comfortable asking questions and opening themselves to new ideas and experiences. As Shimon, a Jewish community leader whose work has always been about advocacy and relation-building between Jews, political groups, and non-Jewish communities, said: "Some of it is just

---

[205] Pettigrew and Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*, 73–119.

silly, but all of it is about lowering barriers and demystifying others." Lowering barriers helps people feel comfortable getting to know one another, thereby increasing the likelihood of reducing outgroup anxiety and learning about one another more openly and authentically.

Demystification may also combat ignorance-bred antisemitism. Recall Louis, a leader in Jewish-Christian (and Francophone) dialogue I met in Montreal. On the topic of demystification, he said:

> *The main aim of the old things is really, to get… French-Canadian, Catholic [people], mostly, just to know a little bit more about the Jewish faith. But mostly to show that Jewish people are like everybody else… Yeah, [the program] tried to change the view of them, of what they have of Jewish people. Often, they had never met a Jewish person... No, I think it's very important that they are learning in it. It's not just social. It has to be more than that because to have a deeper contact, you have to know a little bit about the other side.*

Louis added that dialogue initiatives provide context and dispel myths about Jewish life and people, thereby giving social events meaning.[206] Initially, I assumed that dialogue events, the standard format of intergroup contact events in Montreal, were less sophisticated than the programming I encountered in Ottawa and Victoria, where it frequently involved well-planned, sophisticated activities. However, after interviewing participants in Montreal, I realized that dialogue events serve an essential function in a place where interactions between Jews and French-Catholics have historically been limited and even hostile.[207] Several Montreal participants suggested that dialogue events offer an opportunity to learn about one another in a low-stakes setting that works for everyone and creates a common starting point. The outcomes were the same as in the more intricate intergroup events in Ottawa and Victoria; people

---

[206] See Chapter 6 for more information about emotionally resonant events versus events that simply promote learning as an isolated means and end.
[207] Anctil, *History of the Jews in Quebec*, 161–95; Anctil, "A Community in Transition: The Jews of Montréal," 229.

discovered that, despite their differences, they shared commonalities, which reduced their apprehensions about one another. Clearly, intergroup contact facilitated demystification in these cases as well.

Although not all people engage in intergroup contact from a place of ignorance or apprehension, as some people can be willing and eager to engage, fear or outgroup anxiety is one of the key mechanisms, according to participants and the social psychological literature, that maintains hate because it implies social danger. It can be a barrier to contact and demystification, and so I will touch on it briefly.[208] Recall Rick's discussion of fear and antisemitism in Chapter 1. Perhaps part of what maintains antisemitism is not necessarily ignorance on its own, but a fear of Jews. This fits well within the Integrated Threat Theory model explored in the literature review, which posits that fear of and perceived threat of outgroups contribute to much prejudice.[209] Emotional mechanisms, like fear, may therefore play a key role in the maintenance and spread of antisemitism through time and place.

Harvey added to Rick's idea, noting how firsthand experience and forming positive associations and perceptions are helpful for combatting stigma and fear:

> *... I haven't studied this extensively, but I know when I was at [my former job], I did some work on mental health and stigma. And the research on destigmatizing people with mental health conditions shows that one of the most effective ways is being exposed to people with lived experience. I'd suggest you look at that research because I think what it shows is that as in most intolerance, a lot of it is because people don't know people that have schizophrenia. So, they build images in their mind of what it's like. Same can be for a Jew or Muslim. But having an experience and, you know, can be done in different ways. When you meet somebody that is in that group, and you find out about them can reduce stigma for sure.*

---

[208] Pettigrew and Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*, 200; Pettigrew et al., "Direct and Indirect Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice: A Normative Interpretation," 412–22; Tropp, "From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias," 109–11; Vonofakou et al., "The Impact of Direct and Extended Cross-Group Friendships on Improving Intergroup Relations," 107; Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 28–42.
[209] Stephan et al., "Intergroup Threat Theory," 255–72.

Harvey's powerful analogy about mental health stigma illustrates how lived experience can shape prejudice: it challenges perceptions and provides people with firsthand exposure to and experience with a stigmatized group. Although Harvey explained this in the context of mental health, he offered it as an analogy for using contact and exposure to combat antisemitism.

Jean was another leader in the realm of Jewish-Christian dialogue in Montreal. I met him at his office on a sunny March afternoon for what turned out to be an insightful, in-depth conversation about the power of intergroup interaction for both Jews and, like himself, Catholics and other Christians. As a French-Catholic, Jean described the Quebec-specific context. In Quebec, mainly due to the residual influence of the Catholic Church, several anti-Jewish perceptions still persist in people's hearts and minds, and by giving Quebecois lived experience with Jews through increased exposure to Jews, they start to challenge long-held assumptions about Jews that harken back to foundational Catholic and even broader Christian theology.[210] Jean said:

> *And I would say most members of the Dialogue, for the Christians at least, probably most of them share this kind of concern, or this kind of interest for meeting real people, to understand Judaism, not only from their readings, or whatever they have been taught, but to get to be able to discuss that with real people, and to work together to try to improve the relationship with the larger Quebec society. … Now, this [inaudible] is trying to find how work can be done to improve the relationship between religious groups and the larger Quebec society with this kind of secularistic view of the Quebec society…*

As Jean and others also noted, general anti-religious sentiment in Quebec is also a factor in Quebec antisemitism. So, bringing Christians together with a minority group, like Jews, may also challenge general apprehensions and stigma towards religion. Relatedly, Rabbi Lerner, a longtime religious and community leader in Montreal, discussed the limitations of Muslim-

---

[210] Anctil, "Finding a Balance in a Dual Society: The Jews of Quebec," 72–77.

Jewish dialogue in Montreal, namely that it is almost nonexistent in any known, organized sense. Whether this issue was because of anti-religious sentiment in Quebec, tensions between Jews and Muslims, or both, it is unclear. No matter, Rabbi Lerner explained how bridges were built in a context underscored by intergroup tensions:

> *One of the agreements we had was that we would talk about understanding each other's religious life, but we would not talk about the Middle East. That was the only way. It was really clear what the stances would be in regard to Israel and in the Muslim countries. So, we just said, Well, let's just try to understand what each other's faith is about. And that's what we did. And that was illuminating because a lot of what the Muslims do is very Jewish, and really borrowed from the Jews.*

For Rabbi Lerner, what seemed effective was learning about each other's religious traditions and finding common ground. According to participants, contact not only demystifies, but it also sensitizes and provides a new experience about who Jews are to those who may never have encountered a Jewish person before. What was key, therefore, for challenging anti-Jewish perceptions was, in several of the interviews, having a firsthand experience with Jews versus hearing about them through word of mouth. This is the power of contact for demystifying Jews and thus removing the cognitive distortions that contribute to antisemitism. The next section discusses the mechanisms of intergroup contact in more detail.

3.5 The "How" of Social Bonds

This chapter has highlighted some of the cognitive mechanisms that underpin the potential efficacy of intergroup contact in combatting antisemitism. This section further discusses how these mechanisms operated and, based on the data, identifies key mediating factors that facilitated positive Jewish/non-Jewish contact in the cases I examine. First, intergroup contact and interactions motivate people to contribute to the common good when they form an ingroup around a common goal or value. These connections motivate others to belong and feel inspired to

contribute and engage. Shimon, for example, described how one interaction or connection can lead to another until more people are inspired to participate in shared bonding and work. Perhaps the social aspect of intergroup contact is a motivating factor for people to engage with Jews. Relationship-building itself was key to intergroup bonding and empathy-building. As this chapter noted, relationships often start at the individual level and broaden to other connections, ultimately bringing together larger groups. People's positive personal relationships normalize intergroup contact more broadly and may also normalize social values regarding positive relations and differences. The moral of the story: contact begets understanding.

Social bonds between Jews and non-Jews help them withstand tough times by fostering stronger connections and a deeper understanding of one another. In other words, social bonds build resilience against anti-Jewish ideas because the underlying trust provides a strong relational foundation upon which Jews and non-Jews can settle. Matt was one such participant who described social resilience and strong relational foundations as being necessary for successful intergroup contact. I met Matt in his office in Victoria, and he was a fervent believer in relation-building with Jews. It was clear that he supported intergroup contact as a key component of building resilient relationships between groups, but our conversation focused on his work on antisemitism in this context. As Matt explained: "…I think that the attraction of the social resilience metaphor in the context of antisemitism is just incredibly important right now… Can we take this moment as an opportunity to build friendships and bridges and become stronger through the act of being forced to deal with the most awful?" It was clear in the data that simply knowing about a person who is Jewish or being near them in relative geographic proximity (e.g., neighbours) does not necessarily mean you will not be antisemitic or carry prejudiced ideas about Jews. Instead, intimate bonds that allow Jews and non-Jews to get to know each other on a

deeper level can lead to more comfort and resonance between them that may reduce anti-Jewish notions or ideas because the non-Jews can learn firsthand, in an intentional environment, that Jews can be safe and are humans as well. Exposure and positive firsthand experiences can challenge people's negative anti-Jewish preconceived notions because the learned and lived experience is real and different from the mental assumptions. Below, Sarah (1), describes how a Shabbat dinner that intentionally fostered deeper conversations and bridge-building had the potential to challenge people's broader preconceived notions about Jews:

> *…I think it's effective because I believe there are a lot of myths out there and conspiracy theories. A person can hold very extreme views about Jewish people without ever even encountering one. And I think opportunities like this, like the Shabbat dinner that I attended with [my organization], that is an opportunity to meet Jews and to have conversations… It's hard to hate a person once you've had dinner with them, and that makes it challenging.*

Rick also suggested that an antidote to antisemitism is contact with Jews. In other words, giving antisemites experiences that will serve as counter-information to their preconceived notions:

> *And I've told this group, the Shoah Project people, especially when some of the people, who were the same people who didn't like me talking about hate, when they express that they're afraid of antisemitism, that they're afraid of hatred, my response has been, tell me where the antisemites are? Let's find them. Let's find them and let's try to figure out a way to sit down and have a cup of coffee together.*

It is clear at this point that contact is one key for combatting antisemitism. But how does contact happen effectively? Participants described intimate spaces as one factor that encouraged relationship-building. By "intimate spaces," participants referred to social environments with a small number of participants in informal settings that were usually personal, where people could get to know one another more directly and under less performative pressure. In other words, these settings encouraged deeper conversations and personal bonding. Ignatius, when discussing Pope Jon Paul II's attitudes towards Jews, said: "And so, for him, growing up in Poland [Pope John Paul II], he witnessed a lot of that. Had had a really close, intimate relation [with Jews]…"

Again, I argue that intimate relations (not romantic per se, but close relations, such as friendships and personal connections) foster stronger connections and the relational aspects discussed in the next chapter. These relational aspects (e.g., empathy, love, and compassion) create bonds that are more resilient against toxic ideas because people in those bonds are less inclined to hurt those they care about.

As with intimate environments, intentionality was another key factor in mediating contact. Intentional spaces and activities can foster positive contact by creating conditions for positive relationship-building among competing groups. Rabbi Dolin explained:

> *But as Jews, I think for them [non-Jews] to see the diversity in the Jewish community, that we can be supportive, that there are left-leaning Israel supporters, you know, for the Muslim community to see that not everyone thinks one way about Jewish identity or about Israel was really important for us... For a little bit there was a program for the Muslim and Christian community, Food to the Streets, I think it was called, where we'd make food at one of the churches… Pass out the food to, you know, homeless people on the streets, and our synagogue and the other liberal synagogue in town helped out with that.*

Part of that intentionality of space is to reduce barriers that enable competition, which Rabbi Dolin implied through his discussion of sharing a space to produce food for those in Montreal in need. Creating spaces to reduce competitive pressures, largely through collaborative initiatives in which people work toward a common goal, also fosters more positive interactions, ideally reducing prejudice. Intentional intergroup contact events also enabled participants to get to know groups they might not otherwise have encountered.

In summary, I stress that relationships are not, in and of themselves, the answer to combatting antisemitism, but the factors that underpin them that make them essential might be part of the answer. I will expand on this in the next chapter, but factors such as trust, reliability, and accountability are also key. These factors, amongst others, make relationships valuable and

substantial, and thus more likely to affect positive change, because by their nature they are healthy and encourage positive interaction between Jews and non-Jews.

3.6 Relationships Gone Awry: Challenges and Limitations

Despite the promising outlook that intergroup contact evidently offers for combatting antisemitism, some limitations arose in the data. Below is a quote from Rabbi Kowalski, whom I met in Montreal. I met Rabbi Kowalski in her synagogue office in the dead of winter. Despite it being a typical winter day in Montreal, she gave an honest and raw account of being Jewish post-October 7, 2023, and the challenges of fighting antisemitism in this new period, which were anything but typical. However, Rabbi Kowalski also had a cautious optimism for the power of relation-building, and it is this last feature that really illustrated the boundaries and contours of intergroup contact in difficult circumstances. The following quote from Rabbi Kowalski provides an example of a standard limitation that arose in several post-October 7 interviews:

> *…the point and purpose that I see about interfaith relationships is that you build these foundations, through the programs, through the dialogue, through the relational aspects of these pieces, so that when something happens, because, unfortunately, it's not if something happens, it's when something happens… When something happens, that foundation is solid enough that even when things get rocky, you still have those relationships to fall back on... But that doesn't work if you don't have the foundation already. It comes at a time of crisis, right? But in a time of crisis, if you haven't already put in the emotional capital to building that foundation, you've got nothing to build on.*

Several participants, especially those in Victoria and Montreal post-October 7, noted how some of their seemingly strong relationships with non-Jews fell apart following this event. The data suggest that what may be significant when the contact does not materialize in tough times is that relationships and the foundations upon which they rest were not deep or strong enough for people to maintain their caring for one another, even in those tough times. Below is a discussion of the main limitations that impede intergroup contact work.

3.6.1 Ignorance and Lack of Exposure to Jews

A key challenge to building stronger Jewish/non-Jewish relationships that participants frequently noted was a lack of exposure to and ignorance about Jews. For example, Harvey said that "When you meet somebody that is in [another] group, and you find out about them, [it] can reduce stigma for sure." Like Harvey, Suzanne also highlighted the lack of exposure to Jews as a barrier to fighting antisemitism: "I worry about generations of people growing up and not being exposed to or ever knowing a single Jewish person into their adult life." Another participant, Sheila, also discussed the impacts of a lack of exposure to and contact with Jews. She described both as problematic because people who do not know each other cannot form deeper bonds. I met Sheila several times while in Victoria. Her primary focus at the time of our interactions was to raise awareness of, and facilitate engagement with, competing outgroups in Victoria through workshops and experiential activities. These programs were centred on intergroup contact. We formally met for an interview on a rainy December afternoon at a local Starbucks. She spoke not only of her own interactions with Jews but also of her interactions with various community leaders and religious figures in Victoria and how everyone's preconceived notions had been positively influenced by their lived experiences with one another.

Like Sheila, Michelle, a non-Jewish participant, discussed the powerful impact of direct contact with Jews for challenging her preconceived notions. She shared her story about her initial lack of exposure to Jews, and goes on to explain that it was her friendship/academic partnership with a Jewish person that encouraged her to attend a Shabbat dinner for the first time: "I had no idea what to expect… I've never met someone who's told me that they're Jewish." Michelle, who described her childhood as being noticeably isolated from non-Christians, found attending the Shabbat dinner helpful because she gained lived experience with Jews in a positive context.

Aaron was another participant who discussed ignorance and explained how, in Victoria, it contributes to problematic, extremely biased and generalized discourses about Jews. Aaron discussed October 7 and how it demonstrated the superficiality of some Jewish/non-Jewish relationships in the city:

> *And I think Victoria, because it has such a small Jewish community, that the general public is quite oblivious to Jewish concerns and unable to see how Israelis could be anything other than the fallible aggressors, and they see Jews and this is [inaudible] blatant antisemitism a thumbs up… They see Jews as rich, powerful people who control industry and media and all this other stuff. And so why should we worry about anything happening to you, you can take care of yourselves… So, the more people know about the political situation, about the Jews, the better. And the more contact we have, across our differences, the better. So, we know from all sorts of research that it's much easier to hate people that you don't know.*

As Aaron says, and as we have seen in previous sections, the more you know a person, the more relational factors will develop in your relationship, creating relational resilience to withstand times of tension. This was especially true post-October 7, and what became clear was that political polarization and ignorance interacted to enable the social conditions for antisemitism to flourish. Although more research into the deeper nature of antisemitism is needed, it is possible that factual ignorance is not the only exacerbating factor of antisemitism. Perhaps, as the significance of social bonds suggests, social and emotional ignorance (i.e., lack of exposure, empathy) also contribute to the persistence of antisemitism. Participants frequently cited contact and exposure as solutions to combat antisemitism because non-Jews could develop a lived experience with Jews to challenge their perceptions. Jean explained, for example, the power of how a lack of contact and exposure to Jews contributes to ignorance and prejudice against them. His theory implies that contact and exposure are antidotes to this issue. He said:

> *…the fact that we are in the presence of a real person makes a difference. And just tell you a short story… I had a neighbour who, when he knew that I was involved in Christian-Jewish relations, he told me, What are you doing with these Jews? And then started to repeat all the prejudices that you could imagine. And I asked him, Did you ever*

> *meet with a Jewish person? He told me no, I don't want to see them, and I have nothing to do with them. So you could imagine this kind of constructed image of the Jewish person.*

It is assumed that political polarization normalizes extreme opinions, less fluid opinions, and open-minded attitudes.[211] When mental and emotional rigidity are reinforced, people may not open themselves to outgroup differences and engage with others who hold values and perspectives different from their own. Sarah (2), who again works for a Jewish organization whose mandate is to help Jews and non-Jews with social services, said the following about how polarization can destroy collaboration: "Probably if we get too political. You know, like even something around trans rights, making sure that people know that not everybody has to have the same idea of it." She noted how polarization is a divisive force that exacerbates tensions between Jews and non-Jews. She and several other participants suggested fostering spaces of inclusion and respect as antidotes for this. Rabbi Dolin supported that being too political too soon before relationships have solid foundations is unhelpful to contact work: "…I think that the very fact that these were not meant to be political discussions, like this was a friendly conversation over food at a holiday celebration. So, we started with the very fact that we did share something in common, that we were coming together, and we could have those conversations."

Like Rabbi Dolin, several other participants repeatedly shared stories about how politically-charged conversations reinforced ignorant anti-Jewish perceptions in non-Jews because they relied on emotionally-informed, belief-based positions and opinions. Rabbi Lynn, whom we met earlier, offered a powerful quote to illustrate how ignorance plays into discussions, specifically about Israel:

---

[211] Megan Hollinger, "New Challenges, Old Hatred: The Role of Super-Diversity, Immigration, and Political Polarization in the Rise of Antisemitism in Canada.," *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary e-Journal* 20, no. 1 (2024): 1–11.

> *She [the MP] actually says, No I don't really know… This is a woman who's voting in the House of Commons. Do you know how big Israel is? And she said, Oh well, you know... And she made some gesture really, like Iraq big. And so, my friend showed [her] around the map, she said, Can you find Israel? And she barely could. She finally showed her. It's this little sliver? She said, Do you know how big Vancouver Island is? My friend said, Israel is smaller. And the MP couldn't believe it. So, [my friend] had the actual square mileage of Israel vis-à-vis Vancouver Island. And she [the MP] was in a state of shock. This is an MP with the right to vote. Right?*

Regarding Israel and Jews, the goal is not about making everybody agree on legitimate, concrete concerns in Israeli politics or society. Instead, the goal is to challenge the lack of empathy and ignorance that work together to fuel rhetoric that frequently reinforces uncritical and misinformed tropes and accusations. This discourse is often unfair, generalized, and accusatory in harmful ways towards Jews. Ideally, contact and exposure challenge the relational cracks that fuel antisemitic thinking, or at least, anti-Jewish prejudices, and thus create social spaces in which Jews and non-Jews develop relational skills and bonds that challenge ignorance.

3.6.2 Logistical Constraints

Ignorance is a particular kind of fuel for antisemitism, but several participants noted logistical or resource constraints as barriers to creating more Jewish/non-Jewish contact and exposure. Some of these challenges were logistical, specifically the lack of time or ability for people to engage with each other. Other challenges included a lack of leadership to coordinate contact events or activities, while some challenges were about scope and reach. Rabbi Scheier explained whether intergroup contact is indirect and possibly not impactful enough to make a significant impact:

> *And yet, antisemitism conferences are hosted by the Jewish community and by the Jewish community only. And there is an isolating feeling to that. And so, the question is, what are we doing to combat antisemitism? Well, look. We're just as confounded about antisemitism and why it exists as the next good person in the world. And we will do our best to live good lives and be productive members of society and peaceful members of the world in which we choose to live, and that's what we do to combat antisemitism, and it's never worked. So, we can certainly talk about bridge-building and what we do to be part*

> *of the society around us. That's certainly important. Those are all kinds of indirect strategies. We do not engage in direct strategies so that people will hate us less.*

Rabbi Scheier discussed the impact and stated that current efforts to combat antisemitism are underdeveloped, and strategies are often inadequate at making a larger impact for Jews. Related to the issue of a lack of resources are consistency and frequency. Participants frequently noted both in their interviews as key to encouraging positive results from intergroup contact. The bottom line is that on-off events were not enough to foster the deep bonds and relational foundations necessary for resilient social relationships and prejudice reduction. Rabbi Dolin offered a helpful quote to illustrate the importance of consistency and frequency, but also highlighted the lack of resources as a barrier to enabling these conditions:

> *So, you know, you can't build authentic community just seeing each other for Easter and Hanukkah. I mean, you really have to have something more on a regular basis. And I think that maybe was the failure of what we're doing… Especially with the communities in need. But when my community needs support and their own community to be strengthened, once a month, I mean, from a just practical standpoint, is that realistic? I'm not sure.*

Accountability and reliability were also essential for Penny, emphasizing accountability and reliability as being also integral to creating positive contact, trust, and prejudice reduction amongst competing outgroups:

> *Megan*
> *So how do you guys build good relationships then? Whether it's GVAT or Avodah...*
>
> *Penny*
> *By showing up.*
>
> *Megan*
> *Showing up?*
>
> *Penny*
> *Showing up big time.*

Penny stressed that accountability and reliability build healthy intergroup relations and create the foundation on which trust grows. This returns us to the idea that antisemitism is reduced because non-Jews come to learn familiarity with Jews.

In sum, various logistical barriers exist to broadening intergroup contact as a proactive strategy for combatting antisemitism. Still, some factors can be encouraged to help. They include those I discussed above, such as consistency, accountability, and, although implicit, the normalization of different social priorities and the encouragement of Jewish-non/Jewish contact. The next section describes yet another challenge that arose in the data, but this challenge involves faultlines within the Jewish community.

3.6.3 Insularity within Canada's Jewish Community

Another challenge that arose in the data, although not as frequently as the previous two, was the insularity of the Jewish community and their internal hesitations to engage with non-Jews. This section explores intra-community insularity in greater detail. Why is intra-community insularity a challenge for fighting antisemitism? One participant, Rabbi Harry, gave a possible explanation. I spoke with Rabbi Harry in his synagogue office one late November morning. My time in Victoria was coming to an end, so I knew I could not miss the interview, as it was key to the dataset. Rabbi Harry had devoted multiple decades of his life and career as a rabbi to fostering relationships with non-Jewish communities and had become a leading figure in Victoria. In fact, relationship-building with outgroups was his primary strategy for combatting antisemitism. In fact, it was the only strategy he had true confidence in. Rabbi Harry believed that insularity is the Jewish community's response to experiencing long-term trauma and hate. He also noted, however, that in the long run, insularity may only reinforce divisions internally and externally because it reduces trust between Jews and non-Jews, but, I argue, creates weak spots in the

Jewish community that make the community vulnerable to internalizing external trauma.[212] He advocated for simultaneously maintaining Jewish identity and opening up to non-Jews: "I've been trying not to be stuck in my silo. I have been trying to model that you can have strength, but you don't need to insulate." Rabbi Grushcow added to that, saying:

> *But I do think it's a real question for us as a Jewish community that's trying to build these bonds, that cares about dialogue… So, when it doesn't work the way we want it to work, what does that mean? Does it mean that we become disenamoured and disenchanted and we give up on it entirely and we walk away and we lick our wounds, which on the kind of emotional, psycho-social, spiritual level is very tempting to do. Right? Like I've been disappointed and I've been hurt and I just want to lick my wounds and stay with my people who understand me. I think you can do that for a certain length of time. But I don't think it can be the answer ultimately. I really don't. It's just taking more effort now, I think, to get ourselves to the table and try to find other people at the table… And it's also a way to try to have an influence on that part of the Quebec society, which still lives either in ignorance or in prejudices about the Jews and Judaism in general.*

Additionally, Rabbi Ellis who was the contact I spoke to about the Sephardic community of Montreal, said "You know, will being open change things? I don't know, but you know, being closed hasn't protected us." According to these participants, Jews must harness existing social networks to start engaging with non-Jews and learn to live well together. Although there are some communal survival benefits to insularity, such as preserving traditions and a distinct identity, according to Morton Weinfeld, this research suggests that insularity may also disable the social conditions under which resilient and deeper relationships and coexistence between Jews and non-Jews happen.[213]

The challenge remains that relationships do not guarantee a reduction in antisemitism or a reliable social foundation to lean on in tough times, as Aaron, for example, explained: "No, and you know, sometimes you lose people in tough times." Instead, the idea is that when the going

---

[212] See Ben M. Freeman, *Jewish Pride: Rebuilding a People* (No Pasaran Media, 2021), xi–xi.
[213] Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else but Different*, 41--42/339.

gets tough, contact and relationship-building can keep the doors open, if not lead to direct allyship and solidarity. Rabbi Kowalski offered a helpful explanation about the potential of social bonds to materialize in tough times, even if, as Aaron and several others pointed out, this is not always possible:

> *October 7 happened to be Canadian Thanksgiving. Our religious school, our Torah School wasn't in session, which means on Saturday mornings when we have services… the kids weren't here. And it was a holiday weekend and there was no B'nei Mitzvah, there was no Bar or Bat Mitzvah, and so the services were small. Smaller, I would say. But we heard about it, and we had to address it. And so, we said something about it in services that morning, and then we sent out an email the next day and things started to unfold. And then the next weekend here, we had over 100 people in services, both our community members, our community associates, our interfaith partners. You know, pastors that have spoken here. We often have guests that we share our bimah with and so we have great interfaith relationships with say some of the pastors around here. So, some of them came to show their support. Members from the Muslim community came to show their support… But that doesn't work if you don't have the foundation already. It comes at a time of crisis, right? But in a time of crisis, if you haven't already put in the emotional capital to build that foundation, you've got nothing to build on.*

Relational foundations provide a solid social space for people to trust each other and rely on what they have learned about each other, which comes into play in times of heightened fear, distrust, and tension. Rabbi Grushcow also explained that deeper, more personal relationships are more dependable in bad situations because you know each other intimately. That heightens people's level of care and sensitivity towards each other:

> *But I think the relationships that have really lasted have two factors. One is ideally there's a personal factor where you really know and care about each other. Right? [my Muslim friend] and I have broken bread together. We've been to each other's homes and sacred spaces… Our families know each other. So, there's that personal piece, which is huge… The other piece is that there is this real commitment to an understanding that this is important, even when it's hard… Right? I've been disappointed and I've been hurt and I just want to lick my wounds and stay with my people who understand me. I think you can do that for a certain length of time. But I don't think it can be the answer ultimately. Like I really, I don't. It's just taking more effort now, I think, to get ourselves to the table and try to find other people at the table. I think we're raw right now. It hurts.*

Despite the challenges in post-October 7 Montreal, Rabbi Grushcow still saw the potential in intergroup contact work and social bonds to create allies and combat antisemitism, because that is who you can lean on through thick and thin. When relationships run deep and their foundations are sturdy, antisemitism does not seem to find as much fuel.

To further illustrate the above challenges, Aaron offered a medical analogy to help explain the underlying mechanisms of intergroup contact and the fragility of intergroup contact:

> *So, in terms of looking at the future, what the future looks like depends on how soon we try and pick it up, and how much time has passed to allow that injury to heal. So, if this war ends, and it's a while before we find ourselves in another very heightened conflict situation, we'll be okay because that wound will have healed over. But if that very heightened conflict comes again very soon, that wound will still be open. It won't be healed. And to aggravate it will be very painful… And of course, even if it is healed, usually the healing leaves a scar and a scar has a different level of sensitivity to the next time it gets aggravated, right? So, you know, it's not exactly the way it was before. Some scars heal very nicely and some not so well… And, you know, in some ways, scar tissue is less sensitive than what's around it, and in some ways, it's more sensitive. So again, you want to look at, okay, what are we going to talk about the next time? What's the next conflict going to be about?… And there's another conflict, but it's a different conflict. Okay, so we're not poking that scar. We're poking at something that is, you know, healthy tissue. Or it's the same conflict, then we're poking at that scar. You're gonna get a different response.*

This helpful analogy explains the delicate nature of relationships. Relationships need nurturing, attention, and, if broken, healing. Aaron argues that treating relationships with care and being mindful of their limits and needs can help them become stronger in the long run because we become attentive and sensitive to how to strengthen them. Healing before bridge-building may also lessen painful feelings, so getting to know other groups and people would be less risky because resilience has been built and internal sensitivity has decreased. Social bonds, therefore, have a profound impact on combatting antisemitism in a deeper, longer-lasting way, even if they are not effective 100% of the time.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter covered much ground and examined the role of social relationships for combatting antisemitism at a deeper level. This chapter explored how trust, safety, and familiarity were the primary mechanisms that relationships could affect, and how those mechanisms formed underpinnings for deeper, longer-lasting, and more resilient relationships. These relationships frequently took the form of friendships, and personal connections increased safety, trust, and familiarity because of the personal investment in these relationships and the agency involved in being in friendships and personal relationships. This chapter also explored the significance of cross-group friendships, whereby participants described how they vicariously learned to trust members of an outgroup through the trust they had in their friend's social judgment. Allyships and community-building, building inclusive social spaces, and normalizing bonding over similarities create environments of safety and trust that build deeper more resilient relationships.

Identity played a role as well in the success of intergroup contact. Specifically, recategorization, whereby Jews and non-Jews refocused their identities over shared elements, like common activities such as charitable initiatives, meals, or holiday celebrations, allowed them to bond and learn about their differences in safer ways. Their differences were not ignored, but rather reframed in a positive context, which also allowed participants to build trust and a sense of safety and familiarity. Related to this was the effect of demystification, and knowing Jews and being in contact with them allowed people to develop lived experiences that may have challenged their preconceived notions about Jews in positive ways because they had healthy, safe, and trusting lived experiences from the intergroup contact work they had engaged in with each other.

Despite the benefits of intergroup contact, it had limits, and this chapter discussed them in greater detail. Some of these limits inhibited contact, but also the mechanisms that made the relationships more resilient. Some of these limitations included ignorance about and a lack of exposure to Jews. Other challenges include a lack of resources or logistical constraints to making contact activities possible on a wider scale. The potential of intergroup contact to combat antisemitism still appears greater than its limitations and warrants further research. While this chapter laid the foundation for combatting antisemitism's social roots, the next chapter discusses how empathy and other relational factors, such as love, respect, and compassion, contributed to the success of social relationships to more effectively combat antisemitism.

CHAPTER 4: THE "EMOTIONAL CAPITAL": THE NON-NEGOTIABLE ROLES OF EMPATHY AND OTHER RELATIONAL FACTORS

"And I think that is a major mistake that our society in general is doing with religion, is throwing the baby out with the bathwater, because we need the wisdom of all of these traditions…" This quote comes from my interview with Sheila, a participant from Victoria whom I met through a multifaith advocacy organization. I will present a longer version of this quote later in the next chapter. However, I present it here because Sheila likened what people often do in diverse settings, which is discarding empathetic responses to open religious diversity, to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Her message was that when members of a diverse society close themselves off to difference, they risk negative social repercussions, such as prejudice and division. It is a powerful quote to use here because it illustrates the primary theme of this chapter: empathy and other essential relational factors that help relationships withstand prejudice and antisemitism.

The previous chapter demonstrated that social bonds are foundational to long-lasting, resilient relationships between Jews and non-Jews and ultimately to fighting antisemitic prejudices in non-Jewish individuals. Various Jewish participants noted that, especially post-October 7, several of their seemingly significant relationships fell apart as people chose sides in the ensuing conflict between Israel and Hamas. Although this thesis cannot diagnose individual circumstances, this chapter explores the relational values and skills that it argues are key underpinnings for successfully building lasting social relationships between Jews and non-Jews. While these relational factors do not guarantee successful relationships, they were key and non-negotiable in relationships between Jews and non-Jews where antisemitism was low or non-existent, as participants declared. These values included empathy, love, respect, kindness, and support. This thesis demonstrates clearly that these skills and values featured prominently in

those relationships, and, I argue, were necessary to ensure that the bonds were resilient enough to withstand tough times such as the post-October 7 landscape.

First, this chapter demonstrates that when Jews and non-Jews showed empathy for one another and prioritized kindness, respect, and compassion in their relationships, they were more likely to maintain those relationships and less inclined to act in hurtful ways during tough times. It was in the caring for each other that resulted in empathy and prioritizing relational skills and values that built resilience against anti-Jewish ideas and prejudice. What also helped participants foster deeper, more caring and supportive relationships was creating supportive environments and harnessing people's sense of curiosity. While the following chapters will further explore the idea of resilience and other mediating factors that enhanced the efficacy of intergroup contact and exposure for participants, this chapter focuses on basic relational skills.

4.1 Unlocking Key Social Dynamics: Empathy, Relating, and Perspective-taking

I argue that empathy was among the most important relational skills and values in the data that underlie strong, lasting social bonds between Jews and non-Jews. Chapter 2 discussed the relationships between prejudice in more detail. For example, Vonofakou et al. explained that empathy and perspective-taking are among the key cognitive outcomes of positive intergroup, perhaps even the most significant outcomes.[214] The data in this project reinforced the social psychological literature. Sarah (1), a non-Jew who's quote inspired the above heading, summed it up well, describing the importance of empathy in her relationships with Jewish people:

> *I think empathy is, even if you don't understand why someone holds a certain position… even if you don't understand why someone is the way that they are, having [an] understanding for them, having kindness for them, and not writing them off or cancelling them or breaking ties with them.... Because I think a big reason why antisemitism and any*

[214] Vonofakou et al., "The Impact of Direct and Extended Cross-Group Friendships on Improving Intergroup Relations," 107.

> *type of religious discrimination exists is because people hold certain perceptions that are rooted in not understanding the other person and thinking that other religions, other peoples are foreign and have nothing in common with one another.*

Sarah explicitly mentioned empathy and kindness, and for her, both played a role in fostering her soft, compassionate view of Jews. Empathy fostered a desire in Sarah to be kind to Jews because it involved her caring about their perspectives and feelings. Sarah also mentioned kindness, but it seemed secondary to empathy, or more like a by-product of it. However, I argue that they go hand in hand in creating relationships in which Jews can feel accepted and safe with non-Jews, and in which tensions are more likely to be ameliorated because of the care and compassion entwined with empathy.

Sheila also noted the importance of empathy and relating when it came to intergroup contact:

> *It's like knowing them from the inside instead of looking from the outside. It's really easy to get caught up in nitpicking and criticism, and you can look at anything and look at it negatively or decide, Oh, this is wrong and then throw the baby out with the bathwater. And I think that is a major mistake that our society in general is doing with religion, is throwing the baby out with the bathwater, because we need the wisdom of all of these traditions… They all have flaws. Human beings have flaws. Faiths all have flaws. But we're not going to throw out the human race either… And instead of trying to get rid of everything and creating a blank sheet, which the human race was never meant to have a blank sheet.*

Sheila hinted at curiosity and at how empathy develops in conjunction with curiosity about and interest in the *other*. If you care about Jews as equal humans, then you may be more inclined to want to treat them well or protect them when they are experiencing antisemitism. For participants, empathy was a form of understanding. Or, at the very least, empathy was crucial for fostering understanding.

Like Sheila, Matt, from Victoria, explained how empathy helps people develop and sustain deeper social relationships: “I guess I can speak at an individual level. I think that one

kind of outcome of becoming better networked can, in emotional terms, be a kind of more visceral or embodied kind of feel for or understanding of someone else's vulnerability?" Empathy is about understanding another's perspective, and, as Matt and others suggested, acts as a glue for deeper relationships. Suzanne added that: "…I wanted my kids to have Jewish friends that I could say, Now imagine your friend experiencing this, as we're going through it. I want you to put mentally your friend into the shoes, that pile of shoes we see there. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about people." As Suzanne explained, deeper relationships and social bonds are conduits for developing empathy and can also inspire relationship-building by promoting care and interest in others. The data in this project revealed that empathy begets care and love. Therefore, healthy relational ecosystems centred on empathy might increase the likelihood that positive relationships can form and even flourish.

Building on the idea of empathy and relationship-building, Dahlia described the time she came out as an Israeli to the Syrian refugee family she was sponsoring: "The shared heritage, right? He also mentioned the Golan Heights. He called them Julan, but I didn't know what he meant. So, he said, Julan Heights. Go- Go- Golan!" Dahlia and a member of the refugee family could relate over a shared element, in this case, a familiar geographic place of origin. Below is once again the compelling example from Rabbi Kowalski that I examined in the previous chapter. In it, Rabbi Kowalski discussed the role of empathy, highlighting interfaith support for her Montreal synagogue community immediately following the October 7 attacks on Israel:

> *October 7 happened to be Canadian Thanksgiving… so the services were small… But we heard about it, and we had to address it. And so, we said something about it in services that morning, and then we sent out an email the next day, and, you know, things started to unfold. And then the next weekend here, we had over 100 people in services, both our community members, our community associates, our interfaith partners… And to see that sanctuary packed in that way. And since then, we've shared this space with posters of the hostages that have yet to be released or that we don't have information about at this time. That was really heartwarming in a really difficult time to see our Christian and Muslim*

> *colleagues and associates coming to say, We support you and we're here for you… But that doesn't work if you don't have the foundation already. It comes at a time of crisis, right? But in a time of crisis, if you haven't already put in the emotional capital to building that foundation, you've got nothing to build on…*

As Rabbi Kowalski highlighted, empathy challenged anti-Jewish perceptions in shared spaces and encouraged non-Jewish support for Jews because the non-Jews in these spaces came to care about Jews through their positive engagements. When Jews experience certain hateful rhetoric, non-Jews who empathize with Jews can better understand that the rhetoric as hurtful because they are invested in their Jewish friends' feelings.

For another participant, Tim, whom we met in the previous chapter, relating to Jews helped him care about their experiences and treat them with kindness and validation. Tim was Sikh, and his connection to the Jewish community was through learning about the Holocaust from the vantage point of being a member of a different minority group in Canada. He described why he cared about Holocaust memorialization and education as a non-Jew, and it was in large part because he found ways to relate to Jews over a common factor (being Canadians). He explained relating by saying: "And talking to people from the community who already feel very strongly about this, I think it helped that to know that people outside of the Jewish community also had that decision, that this is not just a Jewish issue. This is a Canadian issue. And you know, there was no Sikh angle to it, but as a Canadian, I want that..." For Tim, conversations with Jews and the lessons he learned from Jewish communities deepened his understanding about them. He continued: "I think of my speech at that [antisemitism] forum, and other conversations I've had since then, were really about how we need antisemitism to be discussed. Kind of like with more communities, for there to be more education, with other communities also connecting and learning about what happened then." Tim's personal understanding of the Jewish experience led him to develop a stronger desire to fight antisemitism.

Another function of empathy, according to the data, is that empathy helps non-Jews relate to Jews in an intimate and resonant way. Recalling Sarah (1) who attended the Shabbat dinner for the first time, she said:

> *…when we're given spaces that promote empathy, we can learn about Jewish peoples and that will lead us to have more understanding and hopefully… we can probably relate to even if it's not on the same scale, but even at a like very minute level, we'll be able to have some sort of understanding and be like, Oh, yeah, something similar happened in my family's history or whatever, even if it's on a small scale. And then things like that help combat antisemitism.*

Empathy, relating, and perspective-taking were frequent codes in the dataset. Relating was linked to familiarity and created a sense of safety between Jews and non-Jews, creating space for successful relationship-building. If you can relate to or understand a Jewish perspective, perhaps Jews will not seem as scary or dangerous. Thus, you challenge your perceptions about Jews and create space for positive mental associations and even relationships with them because you can understand their perspectives.

In contrast to others, Suzanne did not see as prominent a role for empathy as other participants. She described how emotional resonance is vital in Jewish/non-Jewish encounters to encourage support and compassion for Jews:

> *Megan*
> *Do you see an empathy component to that, then, I guess? Like, empathy development?*
>
> *Suzanne*
> *Maybe. I don't know about empathy. Maybe. But honestly, here is something that is your culture, your religion, and I'm enjoying it, and you're welcoming me to enjoy it, and I feel welcome to enjoy it with you.*

As discussed above, inclusivity and a sense of belonging are crucial to improving relations between Jews and non-Jews. A sense of belonging can be fostered by encouraging recategorization of identities to centre on commonalities, while acknowledging differences as

being peripheral.[215] Part of finding commonalities over which to refocus identities in intergroup contact scenarios necessarily involves relating and perspective-taking. Participant B.B., the community leader from Ottawa notable for his bridge-building work with Jews, noted that relationships between Christians and Jews breed commonality and familiarity, which we have seen underpin the success of intergroup contact for combatting anti-Jewish fears, anxieties, and even prejudice:

> *So, by that I mean that we could see a sort of a nexus of similarity. So, for instance, as a Christian community, we do talk about Jesus, but Jesus was Jewish, and so his Jewishness was something that was an important as part of that identity. And so, when he would quote Torah, that is something that we could connect with also, with Jewish friends there.*

Participants described perspective-taking as listening with the intent to gain trust and soften tensions around difference. Perspective-taking involves understanding and listening, and making others feel safe and heard. These emotive components help people feel safer first and more comfortable learning new facts about others second. Another participant, Anne, also touched on this, adding that listening is a responsibility Jews and non-Jews have to each other. I encountered Anne at an interfaith Shabbat dinner in Victoria, and this was her first formal engagement with the Jewish community. For her, listening was open-mindedness enacted. She explained during our interview:

> *I think it's important because regardless of what is happening in politics about any big conflict, the people in the community all don't necessarily have the views of what you see on TV or on social media, and it's important to really get a personal opinion from somebody who's involved in one side of the conflict to really understand where they're coming from and their perspective.*

Listening was a relational skill that arose frequently in the interviews. Listening is a skill, but it can also be a value, and both, I argue, are crucial in healthy relationships. Listening involves two

---

[215] For a deeper discussion of recategorization, please see Chapter 3.

parties hearing each other's perspectives, thus setting the standard that everyone in the relationship matters and their perspectives are valuable. If non-Jews demonstrate that Jewish perspectives matter and should be heard, they create safer environments for Jews in which Jews can be open about their identity, in turn enabling further contact, exposure, and relationship-building.

Like listening, humility was another relational value and skill that many participants linked to empathy. I conceptualize humility as connected to vulnerability, including with one's flaws, fears, and weaknesses. In moments of humility, a person lets go of their ego and exposes their insecurities and weak spots to others. In these moments, people may be more open to having their perspectives challenged. In other words, when humility is encouraged, non-Jews, in this case, may be open to being incorrect, having their perceptions about Jews challenged, and can learn new things and feel unfamiliar emotions. This is because their ego is not affecting their ability to feel open or take social risks. Non-Jews can open up to the possibility of being hurt or wronged. If we accept that Intergroup Threat Theory accurately describes at least some of the motivations for prejudice, then it takes deep humility to risk identity and ego threats in a social setting by putting oneself out there.[216] Cognitive and emotional factors, therefore, may play a role in maintaining divisions between Jews and non-Jews.

In the previous chapters, I discussed that to be effective at combatting prejudice, intergroup contact ideally targets the psychological (cognitive and emotional) mechanisms that contribute to prejudice in the first place.[217] Relating and perspective-taking remove social and cognitive barriers to better Jewish/non-Jewish relationships because they help competing groups

---

[216] Stephan et al., "Intergroup Threat Theory," 255–72; Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 27–46.
[217] Pettigrew, "In Pursuit of Three Theories: Authoritarianism, Relative Deprivation, and Intergroup Contact," 4–34.

view each other as less threatening. The previous chapter suggested that if competing groups share common goals and values, they may be more inclined to see one another as similar or relatable, and thus less threatening. This is where relating and perspective-taking come in. What I am suggesting is that outgroup differences take on a positive meaning when experienced in a positive context.

Participants did not only discuss perspective-taking and empathy in positive contexts. They also raised how trauma experiences can be points of bonding over which participants come to relate to and even feel sympathy for each other. As Sarah (2), when discussing her Jewish social services organization, illustrated: "We have people here whose families were in the Holocaust. I think there's a common understanding here that we all have trauma. And we're here to try to help other people have less places of trauma in their lives, whether it be through counselling or social work, or kosher meals on wheels or whatever… We come back to our purpose pretty quickly."

Although trauma can lead to heightened distrust of others, in a positive context in which empathy, love and respect are normative, like in the case Sarah mentioned above, discussing trauma can act as a relational tool of support and compassion. Victoria from Montreal, who, like Sarah (2), worked for a Jewish social services organization but was not Jewish, also discussed how hearing about Jewish people's stories of antisemitism through her work helped her develop sympathy more broadly: "…nothing that was really forefront for me in terms of prejudice, but being a part of the fabric of the Centre and knowing about the lived experiences of my colleagues where antisemitism is concerned, it surprises me." I suggest that it is the active experience of knowing or witnessing someone's trauma that alters perceptions when the witness has emotional resonance with Jews or something from the Jewish world. The witness has

emotional “buy-in” and thus may care more about Jewish experiences of suffering. Empathy and its relatives — relating and perspective-taking — were clearly key for several Jewish and non-Jewish participants in forming their relationships and in beginning to care for each other more deeply. The following section discusses other relational values that not only encouraged but resulted from empathy.

4.2 The “Other” as Human: Love, Compassion, Kindness, and Respect

Like empathy and its conceptual relatives, love and respect appeared frequently in the dataset, and because they pertain to how people relate to and treat one another, I include them in this chapter as relational factors. As Sarah (1) explains: “I mean, just wanting to love other people and show respect for other people and realizing that antisemitism has resulted in terrible things in the past and like that quote says, you won't be able to stop history if you don't learn about it.” Love and respect were frequently mentioned together and served as antidotes to hate and mistreatment. It was unclear how they challenged antisemitism directly, other than that if someone had love and respect for Jews, then they may not want to hurt Jews. What was evident was that in relationships where antisemitism was low or non-existent, these relational factors, like empathy, were non-negotiable.

To begin exploring these relational values, the following quote from B.B. regarding respect is helpful: “And it's an opportunity to come together to really recognize each other, acknowledge each other, respect each other, and to see how we can continue to work and forge alliances to push back against hate and racism and antisemitism and so forth.” Respect seemed to foster amongst non-Jews positive perceptions of Jews as equal and worthy. When people viewed Jews this way, according to participants, they seemed to care more for Jews and not want to hurt

them. Ruthi added: “You know, the other is a human being, and wherever you come from, even if you don’t believe in the Godspark… they’re a human being.”

Compassion was one such relational factor that was prominent in the data. Compassion, especially when outgroups share it towards a particular cause, can act as a unifier. As Fran said:

> *…there's a lot of hatred directed at a lot of different groups. So I think that the idea of people working together across differences to both learn from one another and work together on common causes for the betterment of all is necessary and that it's not to minimize antisemitism, but it's to recognize that both the distinctiveness of antisemitism within this broader context of too much hatred and too much polarization.*

Compassion for broader causes may motivate people to bring together those from different backgrounds, enabling competing groups to collaborate and learn to see each other as safe and trustworthy, all because they share a common goal.

The following quote by Rabbi Harry illustrates the role of compassion in combatting antisemitism: “Really hoping that through relationships, we have a sense of creating a kind of greater community that has a level of compassion and understanding, I think has been kind of the way that I've been doing things.” Rabbi Harry advocates that compassion between Victoria’s communities has led to stronger, more positive relationships. He continued explaining how compassion brings people together by fostering a desire to help and care for others. He also described how compassion can often act as an outward-facing trait: “You know, a really close friend of mine, his daughter has been involved as an activist... She has had two deaths from both sides of the equation. Right? She has a friend who died at the music festival and a friend that she'd done work with in Gaza who was also recently killed… I've been teaching about you can hold compassion for both.” Relatedly, the following quote from Rabbi Grushcow demonstrates how mutual compassion and a strong relational foundation sustain bonds between people in tough times:

> *But I think the relationships that have really lasted have two factors... ideally, there's a personal factor where you really know and care about each other. Right? Amal and I have broken bread together. We've been to each other's homes and sacred spaces… Our families know each other. So, there's that personal piece, which is huge. And the other piece is that there is this real commitment to an understanding that this is important, even when it's hard.*

In addition to compassion, Rabbi Grushcow noted that love is interconnected with compassion and that both are powerful in relationships that withstand times of tension. In the interviews, love was understood as kindness and motivated positive behaviour between Jews and non-Jews. Perhaps the takeaway is that environments or relationships in which Jews are seen as equal humans and worthy of respect are environments in which love thrives, and thus, anti-Jewish prejudice does not. What these quotes demonstrate is the essential role of compassion, or heart and care, in Jewish/non-Jewish relationships that withstand tough, divisive social environments.

With love specifically, participants described it not only as a feeling or emotion but also as an action. Love requires doing, with the intent to demonstrate to the other person or group that you care, that you are safe, and that you show up and will walk the walk, so to speak. On love, Rabbi Grushcow also added that, for her, it was the act of demonstrating caring and consideration for each other:

> *What's that saying that justice is love in public? Is it love? It's certainly care… It's certainly care and it certainly commitment. And a certain amount of openness, I think. But yeah, why not love? Love is a good word!... But certainly, for us as diaspora Jews who have always been and will always be a minority, we need governments that will protect us, and we need neighbours that will care about us. And to give up on those things, again, it feels morally wrong and strategically stupid. Not to be too harsh (laughs).*

Ignatius added: "You know, love is an action, it's not a thought, or a feeling or emotion, or whatever." Both Ignatius and Rabbi Grushcow, among others, noted that loving and compassionate commitment to another person ultimately requires action and "walking the walk," so to speak. The takeaway for action is to ensure that engagement situations foster positive

interactions. I argue that these normative values and practices create conditions in which non-Jews can learn, through lived experience, to trust and feel safe around Jews, thus possibly fostering more positive perceptions of Jews.

Gay, whom we met in the previous chapter as an eager member of a multifaith social service organization in Ottawa, demonstrated that a personal relationship relies on empathy, love, and care. Relational factors both foster and result from healthy and deep social bonds: "…you're not looking at them, that this person is this religion or whatever. You're looking at them as a personal relation. You know, when you've got a personal relationship with somebody, then ideally, you'd say, Oh, there's no problems here at all; this person is just like me."

We have seen thus far that relational values are key. What is unclear is whether particular values, such as empathy, love, and care, gain traction in a specific socio-cultural context and become normative within it. Thus, if these and similar values become normative, will more people incorporate them into their lives? The following example describes how these values underpin relationships of support and allyship. Although marriage is a specific type of relationship, Ruthi's discussion of her son and his partner nevertheless illustrates the potential that deeper, more personal or intimate relationships have for fostering love, respect, and compassion for Jews:

> *In my speech, I told him the bar mitzvah story and how [my son] had felt he was rejoining the [Jewish] circle. And then I gave very big batches of gratitude to [his wife] because she considers herself an atheist. But I doubt she'll become Jewish. But she's happy with [my granddaughter] being Jewish, and that's what I said in my speech that later this year, probably in November, depending (giggles), she will go to Mikvah, and that will be her official joining of the tribe.*

While relational values may not always be effective in creating deeper social bonds and allyship, what was clear in the interviews was that when these relational factors were present and perceived as strong (undefined), antisemitism seemed very low or non-existent. It was like these

factors diffused antisemitic attitudes and ideas. These ideas, therefore, found no life in spaces in which healthy and caring relationships thrived. The following quote from Sheila about normalizing kindness and compassion so that prejudice becomes lower illustrates this concept: "…if we had more of those kinds of [intergroup] projects happening at school where kids are learning about the commonality and the values of compassion and kindness that go throughout all of our religious traditions, they wouldn't be looking at people of other cultural groups and thinking of them as lesser." Sheila suggested that healthy and positive relational values become more powerful when they are social norms, in large part because of their increased discursive power in those contexts.

Recall Foucault's sense of discursive power, which posits that the force of power activates what is normative in society at any given time.[218] Foucault's conceptualization of discursive power is helpful here, I argue, because it offers insight into how social ideas, attitudes, and values become socially normative at any given time, including attitudes toward outgroup interactions and relational values. Rabbi Scheier states, "I think it helps in a micro way. Certainly. I think we do make a difference in people's lives just by opening up to them and showing humanity to them and caring about them and asking them to care about us." Perhaps love, respect, and compassion will not have an immediate broader social impact, but enable the social conditions under which antisemitism finds less fuel. Still, by normalizing these values in micro-spaces, perhaps they will become normative on a broader level over time, hopefully shifting how non-Jews understand Jews at a grassroots level. This theory remains unproven at this time and, if realized, would likely take considerable time to validate. Further research on this

[218] Winter, "The Power Thing," 832–35.

theory, however, would be fruitful, as the data demonstrated the power of normative positive relational values in combatting antisemitism in everyday interactions.

Regardless of any current temporal or discursive limitations, learning to navigate differences compassionately is essential for relating. I return to the idea explored in the previous chapter that negotiating identity differences in positive contexts involves focusing predominantly on shared identities, and commonalities help individuals approach those differences with less apprehension. Rabbi Dolin repeated what several other participants said: erasing difference is not ideal, because we are, at our core, unique individuals who can learn to live well together despite inevitable differences:

> *So, what I realized through interfaith gatherings and interfaith work is not about saying, deep down, we're really all the same. It's about saying let's really honour what makes us different, which is a lot, but let's be able to hold our differences and still find something in common. And that's much better than saying, We all believe in one God, which is not really honest.*

As Rabbi Dolin highlighted, learning to relate to one another with curiosity and compassion can create relationships of trust and safety, helping us navigate tensions and differences with greater ease and respect.

Although love, respect, compassion, and similar relational values were key in social spaces where antisemitism was low or non-existent, they could not exist without non-Jews first seeing Jews as worthy of being treated with these values. One participant, Matt, discussed a popular approach that people and organizations currently employ to fight antisemitism: denounce it and move on. He said:

> *What I found disturbing about the restorative or reconciliatory responses was how many of them seemed to be from institutions or community groups that were reacting to the fact that a crime or act of hate had occurred in their midst. And they were basically horrified by the public relations disaster, what that taint would mean for them. And so, they would convene some kind of community forum or some kind of little campaign, like Not in Our Name, or you know… "no hate here," "no hate space…" I'm thinking of mayors, I'm*

> *thinking of university administrators, that when these things happen in their midst, they will launch some kind of program that is kind of restorative or reconciliatory that looks to promote understanding and healing. But it's also, it seemed to me, significantly, in many cases, to be about ensuring that the community or university brand was not tainted by the fact that an act of antisemitism or homophobia or xenophobia or whatever had happened in their space. And so, there's this huge outcry, often in the form of slogans, "this is not who we are…" So the university leader or the mayor or the police chief will bring some community forum, denounce the act of hate, and then proclaim this is not who we are, which is just absolute nonsense. The hater comes from your community; they were raised here; they consumed the same media and food as all the rest of us. There's no point in saying that the hater is not one of us. They are one of us, and maybe take the opportunity to reflect on what it was about us that made them that way in terms of bad education systems, in terms of the histories of hate and prejudice that the community has benefited from in the past and not sufficiently confronted...*

Matt also mentioned the possibility that these collective statements and efforts may not be entirely well-intentioned towards the victimized group; instead, they may serve an ego-soothing purpose, ultimately reinforcing the victimized group as perpetual victims and as unworthy of genuine respect, care, and love. All of this is why we must better understand antisemitism's nature so that we can design strategies that more effectively target its underpinnings and fuels, and this includes the role of positive relational values.

4.3 The Intentional Quilt of Diversity: Fostering Curiosity

Like love, compassion, respect, and kindness, curiosity was a relational factor that featured prominently in the data. Typically, participants referenced curiosity when they expressed either a natural inclination to interact with Jews (or Jews with non-Jews) or, through their connections or experiences, developed a desire to learn more about Jews. Curiosity was a prominent mediating factor in the Jewish/non-Jewish engagement I examined. Although it is difficult to foster curiosity, participants offered some insights that might help motivate non-Jews to engage with Jews (and vice versa) and see them as worthy of empathy and love. Sarah (1), the non-Jewish woman I encountered at a Shabbat dinner, discussed how her curiosity about Judaism and Jewish

people developed: “Yeah, as soon as I was presented with the opportunity to attend something like this, I really wanted to come because I've always wanted to see a Shabbat dinner. I'm really interested in Jewish culture… and as a kid, when I first learned about the Holocaust, I was very interested in it.” Sarah’s curiosity to get to know Jews was sparked by the impactful nature of the Holocaust material to which she was exposed. Louis, the leader of Christian-Jewish dialogue in Montreal, also remarked about curiosity:

> *One day, you have a meeting, and just once a year, not even, it's just one talk... This could be more difficult. But if it's on a regular basis, you actually build something, a kind of conscience, a respect between people, and so they hear about different subjects, different things, and they know. I mean, people, those who are interested, they want to know. And sometimes knowing is not what you expected. But it's interesting.*

Impactful encounters with Jewish life naturally sparked curiosity in individuals. Discussing the her interfaith housing organization, Fran also noted curiosity as a motive for Jewish/non-Jewish engagement: “And we continue to work on this relationship-building idea, but my strong sense is that one of the motivations for someone being a patron is to meet people from different backgrounds, to meet leaders from different backgrounds. And this is something that these patrons seem to appreciate.” Fran discussed what seemed like a natural curiosity (or suspected natural curiosity) among her organization’s supporters and tenants to engage with each other and get involved in bridge-building work. Avishai, Montreal student leader, added: “But I'm also very open to talking with anyone, to being friendly with anyone. I'm not exclusive in terms of who I'm friends with or anything like that. And I'm always interested to learn about other cultures and other backgrounds. So, it would have been with decent people.” Avishai’s example shows that curiosity to engage can also be found among Jews. Curiosity and a willingness to engage, as I explored in the previous chapter on social bonds, work both ways, and all parties involved in the intergroup contact work should demonstrate a desire to form meaningful and resilient

relationships. In other words, there is an intentionality behind the efficacy of intergroup contact work, as described by participants.

Although a prevalent code, it was unclear how to encourage people's curiosity to engage socially and build bridges if they did not already naturally possess it. However, curiosity may coexist with the value and practice of open-mindedness. Ulrich Beck coined the term "risk society" to describe many contemporary social realities in which, around the globe, people are increasingly exposed to demographic diversity and thus to greater risks and dangers, due in large part to the rapid globalization that characterizes the modern world. Outgroup threat may increase in a risk society, as Beck describes. Beck continues to say that "Fear determines the attitude towards life."[219] Recall Stephan et al. and Stephan and Stephan, who found that outgroup threat may underpin much prejudice.[220] Open-mindedness, when the ideal social conditions are present, may normalize a sense of safety around social risks, such as outgroup engagement. And so, perhaps, encouraging people to build safe relationships will naturally enhance their willingness to engage as their walls come down.

The power of the relational values and skills that participants possessed helped them challenge antisemitism overall. Again, I argue that Jews and non-Jews should create social spaces in which values of empathy, love, compassion, and similar values are normative and thus, people are more exposed to them. People may, therefore, prize these values more. This research emphasizes the importance of normalizing relational values within a broader social context, rather than demanding that people adopt them immediately. That way, people develop their own buy-in for identifying with these relational values. These values and skills must mean something,

---

[219] Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk*, English ed.. (Polity, 2009), 8–9.
[220] Stephan et al., "Intergroup Threat Theory," 255–72; Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 27–46.

or people will not care. The key, based on the data, is to create buy-in for prioritizing these relational values in diverse social spaces. This buy-in includes curiosity to engage.

Possibly, some people have a natural curiosity to know Jews but do not know how to begin engaging, or are not given the opportunities or resources to feel safe doing so. Again, we ideally want to address the mechanisms that underpin prejudice, and the emotional and cognitive factors that I argue underpin antisemitism specifically. One of the primary underlying factors of general prejudice, as mentioned in the second chapter, is outgroup anxiety. This, along with empathy, is the main factor that intergroup contact addresses.[221] And so, making people feel comfortable engaging with it if they are already curious is an essential next step.

One participant from Ottawa, Harvey, suggested that what motivates people to engage in intergroup contact work is that they are already interested in social history and the happenings of other communities. In these cases, there appears to be an innate curiosity to engage with outgroups, like Jews, socially. Harvey explained: "These groups, the people, the volunteers you're working with, are self-selected. So, they come from diverse communities, but they are obviously people who are involved in social histories." What reappears in Harvey's quote is that people who engage in intergroup contact seem to have a natural curiosity to interact with marginalized or minority groups, like Jews.

Also, motivating curiosity seemed to be inclusivity. Inclusivity was another vital aspect of relationships that participants discussed. It arose frequently as a code and in some cases was part and parcel with making people feel safe engaging with outgroups, like non-Jews with Jews and vice versa. The following quote from Suzanne discusses how curiosity motivates people to

---

[221] Pettigrew, "In Pursuit of Three Theories: Authoritarianism, Relative Deprivation, and Intergroup Contact," 4–34.

learn about differences, which can lead to positive outcomes in terms of social relations and reducing hate, as well as helping competing groups care about and understand each other:

> *I think our world has gotten a little weird about inclusivity, and that we try to pretend there are no differences; those differences don't exist. And somehow recognizing the differences as threatening or insulting... But my idea of inclusivity is intentional in that we recognize the differences, we value the differences, we approach those differences with interest and curiosity, and then we want to add them to our environment. So, you get this quilt of things that make us a lot more beautiful because of the fact that we have so much diversity [inaudible].*

Suzanne directly mentions fear as a barrier to engagement and developing curiosity toward the other. If engaging with Jews positively was socially normative, perhaps more people would place value in that and be less prone to prejudiced thinking about Jews. If contact is positive, we increase the frequency of successful lived encounters with Jews and non-Jews. If contact was safe and positive, then perhaps more people would feel safe engaging in those interactions, thus increasing their resilience against problematic ideas about Jews (and non-Jews for Jews). In another example, Anne discussed why she, as a non-Jew, became curious to attend a Shabbat dinner and engage in a Jewish event: "Just general interest [motivated me]. I'd never been [to a Shabbat dinner], so I wanted to know what it was like, and Michelle and I get along really well, so I trusted her opinion that it was good [to] just do something different as well." Anne clearly had an inclination to attend a Jewish event, but it was her trust in her friend's opinions and interests that encouraged her to act on her curiosity and attend. Again, we see the power of cross-group friendships for facilitating trust and comfort engaging with outgroups.[222]

As we saw in Chapter 3, friendship and trust also motivated or encouraged people to engage with Jews was friendship and trust. The previous chapter held a deeper discussion of the

---

[222] Pettigrew et al., "Direct and Indirect Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice: A Normative Interpretation," 412–22; Dovidio et al., "From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias," 109–11; Vonofakou et al., "The Impact of Direct and Extended Cross-Group Friendships on Improving Intergroup Relations," 107.

former; for the latter, reliability and trust were foundational to the healthy and safe intergroup encounters I examined. I infer that the trust inherent in her friendship enabled Anne to feel secure and open to attending a Jewish event. Thus, friendship not only helped make contact with Jews feel safe and trustworthy, but also motivated people's curiosity about Jews.

In reference to the earlier discussions about highlighting commonalities, Rabbi Lerner from Montreal added that relating over similarities can lead to understanding through comparison in a curious and constructive setting, which seems to help in the case of Muslim-Jewish dialogue, of which there is currently less of: "If we can compare Jewish kashrut to halal. You know what's going on here? You could compare our marriage customs with their marriage customs, and divorce customs with divorce customs. You could talk about what constitutes a service for us and what constitutes a service for them." Rabbi Lerner noted that similarities can open the way for Jews and Muslims to feel more comfortable engaging with each other. Still, Rabbi Grushcow pointed out in her interview that Muslim-Jewish relations are not the same as Christian-Jewish relations due to the unique politics and histories surrounding these relationships. Encouraging curiosity in Muslims and Jews to engage might have unique challenges that are not present, or are present in different ways, in Christian-Jewish relationships. These challenges are also not-well known at this time.

On the issue of barriers to curiosity, one such barrier to encourage people to engage was when contact efforts came off as coercive. In other words, when programming was structured in a way that made participants feel their perspectives were being invalidated or diminished, they were less inclined to engage. As Mary eloquently explained about the programming for her interfaith housing organization: "Sometimes, when we are intentional about how we're doing things, it could come off as trying to get people to maybe convert into a particular religion." She

noted that, for example, in religious contexts, efforts to engage can appear as attempts to convert participants. If people are not careful, this can imply a lack of respect or acceptance for the other person's background and identity, which, as we have seen, should be included and validated, even if defocused. Michelle, a non-Jew I met at an interfaith Shabbat dinner in Victoria, also discussed pushiness as an obstacle to engagement: "I'm sure that there are more, but like if they started off saying, Look at what happened in Concordia, that can happen out here if we don't make a change… I'm going to say to trauma dumping again, [but] I don't think that would have been effective." Michelle noted that if programs and encounters are coercive and disrespectful, people's perspectives and positions are not honoured, and the efficacy of these strategies will decline. People's positions, identities, and values must be respected and included to build the foundational pieces of safety and trust, which, in turn, contribute to the development of positive relational values and, overall, more resilient relationships between Jews and non-Jews as we have thus far seen.

4.4 Partners in Peace: Supportive Communities and Relationships

Thus far, we have explored the roles of major relational values such as empathy and love amongst others. We have also explored the value and role of curiosity in motivating Jews and non-Jews to engage with each other in the first place. However, there was one more relational value and skill that featured prominently in the data that enhanced the depth and efficacy of Jewish and non-Jewish relationships where antisemitism was low or non-existent. I titled this skill and value "support," and for participants, support took numerous forms but generally involved a combination of showing empathy to one another, being mindful of and giving space to one another's perspectives, and offering solidarity when an ally or friend was harmed. Support even took the form of concrete action, like providing community and social services regardless

of religious, cultural, or ethnic background. Participants used supportive action to communicate their appreciation, love, and shared identity, in turn fostering inclusion, community, belonging, and compassion in their shared social spaces. In fact, this research strongly suggests that supportive attitudes and practices may reduce individualistic thinking, resentment, anger, and feelings of threat and danger, thus restricting the factors that I have argued contribute to antisemitism and enable exclusionary thinking. Fran, for example, explained the vital role of supportive communities in fostering deeper, more resilient relationships between outgroups:

> *Well, it's about people feeling like this is their community. A community that supports them in their sort of goals for establishing a good life. So, wanting a place where they feel safe for themselves and their kids. Where they, you know, feel safe and secure and have that base that allows them to dream about further education, dream about a better job, dream about their kids being able to go to school—all those sorts of mundane, everyday things.*

Supportive relationships may encourage positive relational values and skills that counter negative anti-Jewish ideas. Sarah (2), discussing her Ottawa Jewish social services organization, also discussed support in greater detail:

> *…our senior funding is about a million dollars to support seniors, and we used to just support Jewish seniors… We thought we could use this model and share it with other communities so that their communities can also benefit in the way that the Jewish community is benefiting. I feel like because we're a Jewish organization, everything we do, we're trying to help decrease antisemitism. It's just every single act we do, we're trying to help someone understand a little bit more about who we are, our values, and helping people understand that most people who are really antisemitic don't really know very many Jews.*

We know from the previous chapter how important a sense of community is to disabling the social conditions that may contribute to antisemitism. Sarah and Fran illustrated nicely how community and inclusion are part and parcel with support, and all are key to demonstrating that Jews can be safe to engage with. Highlighting the lived experience aspect, Harvey added: “I would hope that it (contact) helps to dispel myths and conspiracy theories that all Jews are rich.

[Jewish social services organization] will show you that not all Jews are rich! That these organizations are successful because they work hard to be successful… The money just doesn't appear from nowhere." Harvey explained that those who receive support from a Jewish community organization may have their perceptions challenged as they gain valuable lived experience with Jews in a positive context. Support and inclusion went hand in hand to help non-Jews feel safer in the presence of Jews, and vice versa. Through lived experience, Jews and non-Jews can reform their preconceived notions of one another and engage in deeper contact.

Examining the reverse, it also seemed that when non-Jews supported Jews (whatever this meant in a particular relationship), they made Jews feel safer and more trusting of non-Jews, thus increasing the likelihood that the Jews would feel safe engaging with non-Jews. On the topic of non-Jewish support for Jews, Petula explained:

> *Oftentimes, you don't really see the mainstream media give a fair representation of things that are happening, and it often seems that Jews are always the scapegoats for everything, that they're blamed for it, or they're not really holding the responsible parties accountable when such acts of hatred occur. So that's why we think really forming this allyship [is]; just to show them that they do have partners in peace, who are willing to come out and to stand with them when they're going through these really trying times when it feels like the world is against them. Just to show that there's people out there who care and who do want to resolve things like this and make the world better.*

Petula's discussion harkens back to the previous chapter, which discussed how Jews and non-Jews mutually navigate relationships. Relating cannot reach its fullest potential if one side in the encounter is hesitant to be there, which may heighten group protectiveness or hesitancy. Normalizing supportive relational behaviours does, in fact, encourage positive outgroup attitudes because, as a result of these behaviours, people feel cared for and less separate, and thus less threatened or self-protective.

Ultimately, none of the above relational values and skills can be realized if Jews and non-Jews are not at least exposed to each other. Exposure in and of itself created a desire in non-Jews

to support Jews and vice versa. Here we see curiosity and support working together to enhance the efficacy of social exposure. Exposure led to increased awareness and sensitivity towards each other, which contributed to eventual support and even allyships, as there was a level of knowledge and care about each other. Shimon, the Jewish community leader from Ottawa, explained this well:

> *You know, if you look at people like Brian Mulroney and Lucien Bouchard, two very different guys... In their formative years, they had direct exposure to Jews. And so, they had an almost inbred sensitivity to Jews, and that explains their support and emotional attachment to the Jewish community… So, if they [non-Jews] don't know Jews, if they don't engage with Jews, how can they be expected to really appreciate the positive dimensions as opposed to some of the stuff that just goes along?*

According to Shimon, if non-Jews care about Jews, they are more likely to support Jews. I am not suggesting that support implies agreeing with everything or every opinion in the Jewish world, but rather it involves respect and conscientiousness towards how they treat Jews. Again, support goes both ways, and, as Shimon described, it was with the value of support that allowed other minority communities to reach out and collaborate with Jews. Dahlia agreed with this point about mutual efforts of support: “What else is there to do but open arms and receive others who, because of their unfortunate circumstances, were thrust out of their natural milieu? They could come here. I'm not suggesting that coming here is the best thing anyone could do. But they had no choice, so I'm ready, willing, and able.” Recall Dahlia’s powerful quote from the previous chapter, in which she described the time she successfully and peacefully revealed her Jewish and Israeli identities to the Syrian refugee family she was helping. Both quotes illustrate how support can build bridges and how kindness and compassion can soften tensions, assisting people to see each other in less threatening ways.

Support, in addition to being a demonstration or expression of love and care, also served as a conduit through which Jews and non-Jews learned to coexist harmoniously and form

positive perceptions and relationships. B.B., a religious leader in Ottawa and a member of a visible minority group, offered another example of a young man who committed antisemitic and anti-Black hate crimes. B.B.'s church worked with the individual and provided him support in a restorative approach to justice. B.B.'s testimony below demonstrates that offering support to a vulnerable person can potentially alter their prejudiced perceptions. The church's efforts helped the young man feel supported and loved, and ultimately, offered him an alternative experience with, in this case, Ottawa's Black community. B.B. recounted:

> *…we spent three years with this young man having touchpoints. I met with him once, but other than that, it was through an intermediary. And basically, over that time of three years, as our congregation supported him, helped him with a job resume, helped him with material to get a job because he needed construction shoes. He needed different things. So, over the years, he was going through that process of what I would call decriminalizing and so forth of his perspective to Black people, to Jewish people, and so forth… maybe he was connected to a Nazi group. You know, the 1488. I don't know if you're familiar with those… 14 is the number of words that are said to become a Nazi or so forth. And 88 stands for "hh", heil Hitler. So, it was very much part of him… but over that time, he came to the point of renouncing that background.*

B.B. also described another fascinating and unique initiative, centred on Jews and non-Jews coming together to support a broader community initiative: an interfaith blood drive. He described:

> *…but it was the initiative of the blood drive. So, you heard about the story about the blood then, that we went and we mobilized our communities to go and give blood and then we came out with a statement talking about the fact [that] when you get blood, you don't categorize it by religion or race and so forth. It's by blood type. It's A, B, O+ and that sort of thing, and so we said that we have the capacity to support each other's lives, and we are intimately connected to each other as fundamental human beings, and fundamentally, the thing that helps us to be alive is blood.*

This is a compelling example of how mutual support can bridge divides and bring people together in constructive ways, once again, through common goals. In the above case, the blood drive served as a symbolic gesture to demonstrate that people are equal, worthy human beings deserving of life and support, while also providing a tangible way to support the Ottawa

community. By building a shared sense of purpose and meaning, relations were strengthened, while normalizing the idea that participants were equal and played an essential role in their social ecosystem. The blood drive was a community-minded initiative that normalized supporting and caring for others, rather than just thinking of oneself.[223]

The work I'm describing has been called "world-repairing work" in the literature. Lori Beaman has, in relation to her work on deep quality, examined world repairing work and how tasks or activities that bring people together create a context in which people learn to work together towards a similar goal and can focus on their similarities and shared facets of their identity as opposed to their differences. These environments are often sites of deep quality in which people learned to navigate interactions with love, agonistic respect, and compassion for each other because, by nature of the environment, they are encouraged to focus on their similarities. Beaman's idea describes agonistic respect in action: humans work together on tangible initiatives and projects that allow them to recategorize their identities, so that similarities become the focus and differences are navigated more compassionately. Identities are negotiable and malleable, and world-repairing work highlights how they are reconstituted in everyday scenarios, providing hints about how to do this at a broader level.[224]

Rabbi Scheier also touched on the pertinence of seeing Jews as worthy equals in society, implying that, socially, there is a lack of this view amongst people: "…we need to be seen as worthy and equal." While supportive social spaces and the mere value of communally-minded support were prominent in the data, the data also suggested that support may be limited if

---

[223] Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in Th Age of Entitlement* (Atria Paperback, 2009), 38–39; Megan Hollinger, "The Empath-Narcissist Dynamic and the Psycho-Social Mechanisms of Antisemitism," in *Contemporary Antisemitism London 2025*, ed. David Hirsh and Anna Zawadzka (Routledge, Forthcoming).
[224] Wenman, *Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalisation*, 110.

participants centre their engagements around tough topics or identities too soon. Harvey explained this well:

> *What I was saying before [is] that they're building relationships based on common causes or issues that all the communities identify with… They don't talk about conflicts between one religion and another. [Jewish social services organization], I'm sure people talk about religion. But that's not what their focus is. Their focus is on serving their communities and seeing how they can help each other.*

Participants suggested that relational factors should be built up over common identities or points of relating first, and only after these are strengthened can tense topics and competing identities take a more central role in the relationships. This is like what most participants said, that identities should not be erased in contact spaces, but refocused or decentered from religion and ethnicity at first. Harvey went a bit further, leaving certain things, like religion, out of the conversation in the beginning stages of a relationship. Perhaps Harvey said this because if trust or empathy are not established first, then tricky discussions cannot take place in safer, more trusting contexts. If people genuinely care about each other, they are more likely to listen and engage in difficult conversations without damaging relationships, as trust and rapport are already established. This returns us to the idea of strong relational foundations explored previously.

Penny, the community activist I spoke with in Victoria, also explained how, when Jews and non-Jews collaborate on initiatives of shared community support, they come to see each other as safe and trustworthy, and as equal groups in Victoria's broader community:

> *…but [the brochure] says... (reads from sheet)… "In May 2003, Rabbi Harry Brechner called for a group to put our beliefs, Ve'ahavta, le'reyakha, kamokha (love your neighbour as yourself), tikkun olam (repair of the world), and gemalut hasidim (acts of loving kindness) into action. In the fall of 2003," which is 20 years ago, "Avodah became Congregation Emanu-El's social action group of vital force in our synagogue and the community at large.*

Like Penny, Leah also described the power of shared community support initiatives to bring together Jews and non-Jews through healthy, constructive programming. Leah ran a Jewish

social services organization in Victoria similar to Sarah's (2) Ottawa organization. The organization supported not only Jews but also non-Jews. Leah described how the organization's programs, like their green market, brought communities together, enabling non-Jews to see Jews supporting others, and have a healthy, happy experience learning about Jews, which again, in this case, seemed to enhance relations:

> *… somebody that was volunteering the other day, he came and whispered to me and said, You know, this is really good to help with antisemitism… because then people learn about the Jewish culture and they learn about the food and then they come and they get good prices for food and they know it's a charity that's open to the whole community, and you don't have to be Jewish to buy produce… in a secondary way, it's bringing the communities together.*

I also wish to return to Rabbi Lynn to elaborate on shared efforts of support. She said: "…I did have one couple come here again, I can't remember, the middle of October, we'll call it… It was a little after the fact [of October 7]. And they came bearing this gift basket wrapped in cellophane. And it was for me. Larry came and got me, and I went, Okay (laughs). And they just wanted to show some love and support." Although Rabbi Lynn goes on to talk about how this kind of love and support was not ultimately helping the plight of the Jews, PR-wise, it was often direct acts of love and support for the Jewish community that were key factors in social situations in which antisemitism was low and allyship was high. Again, the support and other relational factors enhanced the resilience of the social bonds.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the vital role that relational values play in combatting antisemitism in a deeper way that targets its potential social, emotional, and cognitive roots. It also explored how relational values, such as empathy, love, compassion, respect, kindness, and support, are necessary precursors to relationships between Jews and non-Jews in which antisemitism was low

or non-existent. Relational values and skills may not work to reduce antisemitism in everybody, but in spaces where Jews and non-Jews formed healthy relationships and antisemitism did not thrive, empathy and other relational factors were not negotiable, and so it is imperative to devote more effort and resources to designing and increasing access to social spaces where these values are central.

The main takeaway is that for resilient relationships to form, empathy, love, compassion, respect, kindness, and support must be present, and ideally values might encourage non-Jews and Jews to feel safer engaging with each other. At the same time, exposure to and contact between groups, such as through mutually supportive, communally minded activities, encourage participants to develop relational skills that are foundational to resilient social bonds. There is, therefore, a constant negotiation of external and internal relational factors that interact with contact and exposure to create meaningful, shared encounters that target the psychological factors that I argue often underlie antisemitism.

Inclusivity is also vital here, because if Jews are not openly included in people's social spaces, or if Jews feel unsafe and hesitant to engage with non-Jews, neither party can develop bonds and relational skills. Thus, bonds and relational skills are imperative for creating the social conditions that defuel antisemitism. Ultimately, participants demonstrated that empathy and relational skills rely on and also reinforce relationships of trust, safety, and familiarity that the previous chapter argued as essential for strong, resilient relational foundations to combatting antisemitism. Fostering curiosity is key to bringing Jews and non-Jews together in engagement, but can be tricky, and so more research is needed into encouraging curiosity if it is not naturally there in individuals. Lastly, creating spaces of support and normalizing supportive attitudes in Jews and non-Jews is key to enabling healthy and resilient Jewish/non-Jewish relationships.

Chapter 6 builds on the relational values discussed in this chapter and examines the concept of resilience in more depth, by exploring the significance of self-esteem, dignity, social empowerment, and the overarching theme of social confidence for both Jewish communities and non-Jewish communities. It will also explore the role of local differences in shaping how Jews and non-Jews experience their self-perceptions in relation to each another, to highlight how healthy senses of communal identities empower individuals to engage in bridge-building work and develop resilient, healthier relationships.

CHAPTER 5: FIGHTING FIRE WITH WATER: COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM, DIGNITY, AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

> *Those people did not show up to services on October 13, that Friday night, right? Those people did not show up to that service that night because of the fact of the war, because of the fact of what happened; they showed up because they saw people were hurting. And they showed up because they saw a need. And they showed up because they had feelings about what happened and needed a place to express that either in some kind of grief or in some kind of solidarity.*

The above quote is from Montreal community leader, Rabbi Kowalski. My conversation with Rabbi Kowalski took place in winter 2024, just months after the attacks on October 7, 2023. She had been trying to make sense of her community's fear and distress, all while considering how to maintain relationships with non-Jewish allies. The quote expresses her interpretation of why several non-Jews came to support her congregation at Shabbat Friday night services immediately after October 7, and how people were empowered to see their Jewish neighbours as fellow Montrealers and support them through a difficult time. These supporters appeared to prioritize, in their actions, not only empathy and love, but dignity and respect for people they saw as hurting. It was their relational values that empowered them to act and not stand by.

Thus far, I have explored the primary social and relational factors that this project suggests can fight antisemitism at a deeper level. I examined the role of different types of social bonds between Jews and non-Jews, and the relational factors that helped shape and solidify these bonds during times of peace and strife. These relational factors included empathy, love, respect, kindness, and compassion, as well as support and curiosity. However, a few other aspects emerged as key to creating relationships and environments in which antisemitism was low or absent.

This chapter explores resilience, communal and individual confidence, and empowerment as part of a broader social strategy to combat antisemitism. These aspects emerged from a set of

interesting codes in the data, which highlighted the significance of self-love, self-respect, empowerment, confidence, and self-esteem in social spaces where antisemitism was low or absent. Participants discussed these ideas as key factors at both the individual and community levels as underpinnings of healthy relating and relationships. This chapter thus explores the role of collective self-esteem, dignity, and empowerment, and the roles they played in each of the project's various field sites to create the social conditions under which people felt comfortable engaging with each other and improving their relational skills and values, which, as we have seen, have the potential to defuse antisemitism in social spaces.

5.1 A Shared Humanity: Understanding the Impacts of Self-Esteem and Dignity

When I sorted the codes from the interviews, I noticed that several of them fit into a similar category centred around individual and communal esteem and well-being. Curiously, I examined the codes more closely and realized that, at a communal level, well-being played a significant role in shaping how Jews and non-Jews engaged with each other and the extent to which they were willing to engage in intergroup contact. Communal or collective well-being seemed to contribute, to some degree at least, to resilient relationships and relational foundations. A key component for instilling resilience and creating the conditions for healthy relating involved fostering a sense of dignity in people so they can become less competitive, more open, and less protective. We know that contact challenges fear-like conditions may contribute to prejudice in the form of negative stereotypes, as Walter Stephan and Cookie Stephan outline in their Intergroup Threat Theory.[225] Dignity was one of the mechanisms of esteem and well-being that participants noted as acting like an antidote to fear and threat.

---

[225] Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 30.

Overall, participants reported that dignity played a key role in combatting antisemitism. Matt, from Victoria, described the importance of fostering dignity-like qualities in competing groups to help them build resilience to prejudice and negative biases: “I think that the attraction of the social resilience metaphor in the context of antisemitism is just incredibly important right now. Can we do this? Right? Can we take this moment as an opportunity to build friendships and bridges and become stronger through the act of being forced to deal with the most awful?” To Matt’s point, Fran added how dignity distracts people from hate and empowers them to do better: “I mean, if you have a purposeful life, then you don't tend to have as much time for hatred and your anger. It's not a kind of productive outlet as opposed to the fomenting of hatred, of using hot-button issues to make people angry and want to seek some kind of revenge or whatever.” Suzanne touched on dignity as well, and its overall power for reducing prejudice:

> *And I think it's how we make room for each other's differences, because it's not a matter of you or me, it's that we're both together. We can both exist in the same space. And you being there, celebrating Hanukkah, doesn't mean I can't be there celebrating Christmas. You know?... We [don’t] need to pretend that this is a holiday tree and that's a holiday candelabra. Because that's not what those things are. And what you're doing is you're realizing the threat that people feel. Right? You're saying, Actually, what you're feeling threatened by is legitimate, because we're going to take away those things that are important to you, those sacred objects, ritual objects, or even symbolic objects. And that's not what we want to do. What we want to do is make space for everybody to exist together.*

The above quotes illustrate how imbuing people with dignity may reduce hate by acknowledging and including differences in social interactions and simultaneously normalizing them in positive ways. Returning to Intergroup Threat Theory and the mechanisms that may underlie hate and antisemitism, it seemed to be more effective, for participants, when in their shared social spaces they acknowledged outgroup differences and gave dignity to each other through inclusion and respect rather than reinforcing the idea that their differences must be removed or ignored. In other words, participants thought combatting prejudice and antisemitism was most effective

when they could openly learn about their differences in a positive, respectful manner rather than reinforcing their fear towards those differences by forcing those differences out of their shared social spaces. As Suzanne explained, removal reinforces the idea that differences are unwelcome and to be avoided. Dignity and respect equated to safety, trust, and openness, while removal of differences equated to avoidance and a perception of danger.

Reconstituting discourses of difference in positive ways, or reframing difference positively, may normalize positive attitudes towards it. Participants like Suzanne described how positive framing of differences increases feelings of pride and comfort in competing identities. Does this help encourage healthier relating at a deeper level? Although an affirmative answer is unclear, Dahlia, when discussing her motivation for helping non-Jewish refugee families, offered some insight in terms of a "shared humanity": "I learned this expression: it's our shared humanity… I was asked, Is it part of your faith group?... No faith, I have no faith at all in anything at all. I have faith in the space here, in the middle. This hermeneutic circle. Shared humanity is what's important." Ruthi, whom I met one morning in Victoria, was another participant who also touched on dignity and humanity: "You know, the other is a human being and, you know, wherever you come from, even if you don't believe in the Godspark… They're a human being." Ruthi had been involved in interfaith community work in Victoria and understood both Jewish and non-Jewish perspectives on bridge-building, having chosen to be Jewish in adulthood. She saw human dignity as intrinsically connected to prejudice reduction because prioritizing dignity allows people to see each other as fellow humans with inherent worth.

Victoria, as a city, was host to several interfaith charitable efforts. I had the opportunity to learn about some of these, and one Jewish organization I encountered placed dignity and self-esteem at the centre of its mandate in providing social assistance to Jews and non-Jews. Leah,

whom I interviewed on Zoom one fall day and whom I had the pleasure to encounter at a green market hosted by this organization, described the centrality of dignity and self-esteem for fighting forces such as hate and antisemitism: “So, for instance, we sell soup. We could give it away, we're being donated the soup, but we charge $2 and [they] have [a] nice bowl of soup and a roll. So, nobody's a charity case… I think it's caught on and it's really a far better way to help people than to just flat out give them things... And also, they value it.” For Leah, broader dignity and inclusion for the entire Victoria community are essential for creating social spaces of respect and love. The previous chapter explored the roles of respect and love in creating resilient, deeper relationships between Jews and non-Jews. A potential connection between reduced antisemitism and social spaces built on respect and love is that people within those spaces might naturally think in a more communal way, and thus, competitive and defensive attitudes may not find as much fuel there. On this, Sheila, whom we met earlier and is a member of the Baha’i community, added:

> *All religions are accepted. You know, all religions come from the same God. All humanity is one. And the religions are like chapters in the same book… I mean, we are all interconnected. Oh, it was in the Circle Processes book. She [the author] was saying [that] we are still living in a world where we see things in terms of Newtonian physics, where things are discrete and material and separable and divisible and logical. But we belong to a world of quantum physics, where everything is interconnected, where things are so subjective, where everything is subject to perception, where bonds and relationships are everything.*

Participants connected dignity and self-esteem, implying that people should have pride and confidence in who they are, and that these lead to a sense of contentment, reducing feelings of competitiveness and being closed off. Mary, whom we met previously, demonstrates in her quote below how self-esteem, pride, and contentment positively affected social relations among the tenants at her housing organization in Ottawa. She said:

> *Mary*

So, every event that we organize is by the tenant for the tenants. Right? They are involved in the planning, they choose the events, and they choose how it's going to go. And they get [to be] part of it, and I just provide the supervision, and then they hold the event. So that kind of involvement, you are building the tenants' self-esteem as well. Especially people who come from very difficult backgrounds, they didn't know that they had it in them to give, but you have created an opportunity where they can participate and give their time and skills as well.

Megan
Wonderful! I don't want to assume what you're trying to say, but if I'm understanding correctly, creating self-esteem and maybe a sense of teamwork or belonging… Is that what you're getting at?

Mary
Yes… So, from the tenants' perspective, the self-esteem, teamwork, pride in where they live and pride in who they are. And just belonging to a community as well.

Mary implied that when people felt empowered and confident in their identities, they were more likely to act positively and engage in interfaith events, as empowerment and pride fostered a broader sense of acceptance, inclusion, and validation of who they were. Again, we see positive relational values shaping spaces with lower levels of antisemitism and more willing Jewish/non-Jewish engagement.

In a similar vein to general communal pride is intra-communal self-esteem. Shimon, the Jewish community leader from Ottawa that we met previously, illustrated Jewish communal self-esteem and pride by offering an anecdote about his trip to the United Arab Emirates and what he witnessed about the Emiratis' pride in their identity:

But when you encounter the Emiratis themselves, those million people who are from one of the five or seven clans, it's like an absolutely uniform presentation that you get. These people have a sense of pride in who they are and a sense of confidence in what they are. They don't care where they happen to be in the world, and they send young people out a lot to get educated, to make contacts, to establish networks, to whatever. So, it's not like they live in some tiny little bubble. They go out into the world. But they're unapologetic. They are proud of what they are. No compromise whatsoever. I'm Emirati, I am what I am. And there's this quiet certainty and confidence that made me jealous. Because when I think of our community and our experience, more often than not, we have worked hard to assimilate into whatever society we're in, which meant compromising who we were and what we were. It meant becoming less observant. It meant becoming less traditional. It

> *meant cutting ties with things that had defined who we were and what we were for centuries. And it diluted our sense of identity. So, getting back to your question, one of the challenges of antisemitism isn't the outside, it's the inside.*

Using this story, Shimon illustrated that Jews can and should also carry themselves with an unapologetic pride because doing so might help them maintain a strong group identity that becomes less vulnerable to and more resilient against hatred. Participants like Shimon illustrated that communal confidence and self-esteem positively impact the fight against antisemitism because they enable Jews to have a strong foundation in their identity, and this resilience can help them maintain resilience through periods of strife. This foundation, according to Shimon, is key to helping Jews handle antisemitism constructively and healthily, which allows them to maintain self-esteem and dignity.

Another example of intra-community self-esteem came from Rabbi Kowalski, who, in the context of her work as a rabbi and teacher of children, eloquently explained how self-esteem and pride empower Jews to stand up for themselves in the face of antisemitism:

> *Some kids are more equipped and better equipped and feel more well-versed in sticking up for themselves, and others are not. But [post-October 7] was a really difficult time. We had, gosh, half a dozen [incidents] in the span of a couple of months. It was really tough… I'm not going to share, but, you know, for one of the situations where I remember where the kid… definitely stuck up for themselves. I gave that kid a lot of props that they were able to do that. And where that comes from is from a sense of positive Jewish identity and positive self-awareness in those kinds of situations…*

Once again, we see that preserving, protecting, and empowering Jewish identity is a response to antisemitism. This response is more reactive than proactive, and certainly, this thesis has argued for more proactive responses that target antisemitism's emotional and social roots. However, the data suggests that Jewish communities should not ignore the internal tensions and insecurities that may make them vulnerable to the negative impacts of antisemitism.

Carrying on this theme of Jewish pride and empowerment in the face of antisemitism, the following quote by Harvey references Jewish pride and how Jews should make room in their identities for the positive elements of their story: "What we forget is living as Jews, celebrating being Jewish… I mean, our history is our history, but our history isn't just that bad things happened to us… a lot of good things happened to us." This quote hearkens back to what others have said, that if Jews prioritize positive communal self-esteem, or Jewish pride, they may withstand antisemitism in healthier and more resilient ways. I argue that communal self-esteem may help reduce internal community tensions, thus disabling hurtful words from finding as much meaning and, in turn, harm within the community. Participants did not conceptualize Jewish identity as monolithic; instead, they argued that Jews should unite around their shared Jewishness while allowing for nuance. Ben M. Freeman describes this well, explaining that despite the diversity of Jewish identities, Jews can unify around their shared history and feel resilient and empowered by it.[226]

Returning to the broader applications of dignity, pride, and self-esteem, it appears that when people have a certain level of self-esteem or security, they are less susceptible to engaging in conflict and hurtful behaviour. Dahlia explained through a story about an interaction she had with a non-Jewish refugee family from Eritrea where they were watching a TV program that she thought was not very good, how feeling secure in communal values and understandings builds resilience towards social tensions or misunderstandings:

> *Dahlia*
> *Because the respect is there all the time. It's not like I didn't respect them, but I thought it was a Hollywood show. I really did. And so, I didn't poopoo it. I just said… Can we turn it [the TV program] off?*
>
> *Megan*

[226] Freeman, *Jewish Pride: Rebuilding a People*, x–xi.

I liked that they had that attitude, though…

Dahlia
They had lived in Israel. They know.

Megan
And you said because there's a respect...

Dahlia
In the sense that they realized I didn't mean any harm. I wasn't unkind, I just didn't understand what was going on, and so they explained it to me, and then I knew.

While watching a religious program on TV, the family forgave Dahlia's discomfort with the program because they trusted and felt secure in their cultural identity and thus, did not take offense to Dahlia's misunderstanding. So, when their identities were tested, their defensiveness did not increase much. Perhaps it is the protectiveness and threat factors that are challenged by high self-esteem, pride, and confidence, and maybe this is why self-esteem and dignity were crucial in social spaces where people did not feel threatened and thus remained open-minded, non-defensive, and inclusive.

5.2 Empowerment

Thus far, I have explored the roles that self-esteem and dignity play in reducing antisemitism and increasing resilience in shared social spaces. Another factor for combatting antisemitism through resilience-building is empowerment. I am defining empowerment based on how participants discussed it: empowerment involves developing confidence, self-esteem, and healthy relational skills by being part of a larger group that offers support, love, and inclusion. By being part of these types of communities, group members become capable, proud, and secure in their choices and actions.

Key to feeling empowered was a sense of community and support. In Chapter 3, I explored the idea of community as an important type of relational space for disempowering hate

and empowering positive social relations. Here, I return to this idea in the context of empowerment. Mary explained the significance of community in diverse social settings in the context of her interfaith housing organization in Ottawa:

> *…usually through a survey, people will answer what kind of events and programming they would like to see in your community and why. When you analyze the data, usually what comes 99% of the time, because we want to be part of the community, because we want to build community, because we want our homes to be seen, because we want our homes to be peaceful, because we want to be respectful, because we want to be tolerant of each other. And so those kinds of sentiments come through these types of surveys, and then we hold community conversations as well.*

Community, according to Mary, implies broader inclusion and a sense of belonging. This research revealed that building a sense of community among people leads to empowerment, inclusion, and improved relational dynamics because of the sense of belonging it entails. Ruthi, expanded on the idea of inclusion, suggesting that its crucial underpinnigs are belonging and acceptance: "And that's what [the rabbi] said to them, you know, the only way we survive this is letting people know who we [Jews] are and what we do and, you know, gaining a respective place in the community, which is what we have generally." As Ruthi explained, excluding Jews from social spaces reinforces that Jews are separate and irreconcilably different. According to Ted Cantle, one of the key concerns people have about fostering multicultural spaces that encourage openly diverse identities is that differences will become reified, and as a result, so too will social segregation of outgroups.[227] Whether multiculturalism does this is not a discussion for here. Still, the concern is replicable in the case of antisemitism in that if non-Jews exclude Jews from their spaces, or if Jews remove themselves out of fear, negative perceptions of Jewish difference may be reinforced. Perhaps having communal confidence and pride, as the previous

---

[227] Ted Cantle, "The Case for Interculturalism, Plural Identities and Cohesion," in *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Debating the Dividing Lines*, ed. Nasar Meer et al. (University Press, 2016), 133–53.

section discussed, helps Jews feel comfortable and secure to be vulnerable and engage with non-Jews, which in turn exposes non-Jews to Jews and allows for lived encounters and experiences to shift anti-Jewish perceptions and encourage bonding. Clearly, empowerment and social engagement are closely linked in building relationships and fostering trust between Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Vulnerability was another mechanism that underpinned empowerment and was related to trust, which the previous chapters showed to be crucial to resilient and lasting Jewish/non-Jewish relationships. When people felt empowered to "expose" their authentic selves, they relied on trust and social safety. Thus, vulnerability played a vital role in helping Jews feel comfortable engaging with non-Jews and vice versa. Positive self-framings of Jewish identity empowered Jews to "expose" themselves. Rabbi Kowalski noted how a safe environment helped Jews feel safe being vulnerable within that environment to non-Jews:

> *…especially when a kid's having a tough day, and maybe they're acting out a little bit. You know what that tells me about that kid? That kid feels safe here [in the Torah school and synagogue]. That kid feels safe with me, that kid feels safe with their teacher, and that kid feels safe in this building… Because if they don't feel safe, they'll build that wall of hurt, and the temper tantrum will come out at home with their parents, because that's their safe spot. And that's their safe people. But if they're here, and they're doing that, too, that tells me we're their safe people too… So, if they're comfortable with me, and they're comfortable in this space, then they can be comfortable with their Judaism.*

Although referring to a child's misbehaviour, Rabbi Kowalski nevertheless illustrated that when a Jewish person feels safe in their surroundings and identity, they feel safe being vulnerable and opening to others socially and emotionally.

On the contrary, Matt noted how the current lack of resources for intergroup contact programming renders it unsustainable, which may negatively impact group engagement, communal empowerment, and, thus, antisemitism reduction:

> *I, reflecting on it, [realize] this is not a model that's sustainable. Let's bring a whole bunch of Gentiles into the synagogue and get them to know us all individually and work on a project with us, like it's utterly unsustainable. And it would be incredibly burdensome. And it's a larger problem and the work of anti-racism and antisemitism and fighting hatred generally that the burden of education falls on the community that's already dealing with the immediate fallout from the real and the symbolic violence they're experiencing. So, it shouldn't be for [the] communities to do this work.*

Matt noted how, if the affected communities mainly undertake the fight against hate and antisemitism, doing so is burdensome and thus, affected communities are disempowered to work together to fight these issues. When communities lack the resources to promote their anti-hate initiatives, they are unable to reach and impact more people. Anti-hate work can therefore be limited in its efficacy due to existing constraints. Empowering broader communities may instill the motivation needed to engage in restorative intergroup contact work. However, communities also have varying resources and social and political histories and thus emowering groups to reduce antisemitism may look different from community to community, as the following section explores.

5.3 Again, Time and Place Matter

In Chapter 1, I discussed regional and temporal differences across field sites and time periods that have allowed Jews and non-Jews to engage in different ways throughout history. Regional and temporal differences also affected communal self-esteem and empowerment among Jews and non-Jews, and ultimately, their efforts to work together to build resilient inter-community bridges. The following quote was from Sarah (2), speaking about her Jewish social services organization. While speaking about communal empowerment in Ottawa, she said:

> *But that also is our opportunity to help people feel connected. Many of our [program] clients feel like they got pushed aside from the Jewish community, whether it be here or anywhere else. With their mental health, maybe they had a separation. Maybe they're gay. Like, all kinds of reasons that people do not feel included in [the] Jewish world. So, our help is also helping them feel like they have a Jewish home...*

This was one of the few quotes about empowerment in Ottawa that was specific to its Jewish community. In Ottawa, the Jewish community did not place as much priority on developing communal self-esteem and pride as in other locations. Ottawa, however, had an excellent array of intergroup programming between Jewish and non-Jewish groups. Montreal, in contrast, demonstrated the inverse: despite intra-community tensions, there was a strong communal priority among Jews to maintain a strong sense of identity and pride. Victoria was in the middle, prioritizing both. Recall that, at least before October 7, 2023, Victoria historically experienced the least amount of overt antisemitism out of the three field sites in this study.[228] This raises the question of a dual strategy that combines strong Jewish community empowerment with robust external engagement. Could this dual strategy I observed in Victoria, even post-October 7, have played a role in the historically lower rates of antisemitism in Victoria? Although this is yet another unknown at this point in time, hopefully with further research, the answer to this and other questions becomes clearer.

What is clear is that external relation-building can result in deeper, more impactful relationships and allies. Evidently, in a post-October 7 climate this was not always the case, as several participants noted; I discuss these limitations and challenges throughout the thesis. What I hope to convey is that Jewish communities that are empowered in their heritage may build resilience for coping with and fighting back against antisemitism when it happens. Also, tensions may be weak spots for antisemitic rhetoric to harm the community. As I discussed earlier, confidence and pride may enable Jews to feel safer engaging with non-Jews, thereby increasing

---

[228] Nordlinger McDonnell, "In the Company of Gentiles: Exploring the History of Integrated Jews in British Columbia, 1858-1971," 15–81; *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2023*, 23; *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024*, 21.

opportunities for exposure and intergroup contact, social bond formation, and the development of relational skills all of which, we have seen, can result in a reduction of antisemitism.

Returning to the dual strategy of internal self-esteem and external engagement, Montreal's Jewish community, in contrast to Ottawa' outward-focused Jewish community, seemed to prioritize empowering its own community first. It was evident that, although the community experiences prominent intra-community tensions, Jews generally had a strong sense of self regarding their respective Jewish identities. Many community members were willing to stand up for and defend those identities in the face of antisemitism. Regarding Montreal's insular approach to empowerment and self-esteem amongst its Jewish community, one of its leaders, Rabbi Scheier, explained it well:

> *...I'm not an expert in antisemitism. But I think one thing [is that] we shouldn't lower our expectations to be full members of society. We shouldn't continually think of ourselves as a minority that somehow has to justify its place in a society… And we should never feel like we're guests in a society, or need to justify our place in a society, or need special protection because of our issues. Like this is who we are. We're a people that love our community, we love Israel. And it's our identity. And we will never, God forbid, we will never pose a threat to any other community around us, to any minority group… We're [in the media and in programming] represented as Jews, but not as people.*

Rabbi Scheier implied that combatting antisemitism involves helping others to see Jews as worthy of being considered equal members of Montreal's society. Part of empowering Jews, according to Rabbi Scheier, is to normalize the view that Jews are humans. Jews may, in turn, come to see themselves as included in the broader Canadian social landscape. Rabbi Grushcow also discussed this:

> *We need the institutions, that are not just Jewish institutions, to say [that] we need better ways of talking about all forms of hatred, and we need to recognize that it doesn't kind of just play out into power and privilege and persecution, that it's possible to have privilege in some ways and not in others and that antisemitism is a hatred that we need to actually know about in all of its specificity just like we should about racism and homophobia and other stuff. It can't just be an add-on, and it can't be minimized. And we need better leadership on that.*

Rabbi Grushcow noted that Jews and antisemitism are not widely or deeply understood as worthy or equal to other people and types of hate, and these misunderstandings impede the fight against antisemitism. The above conversations suggest that combatting antisemitism can be helped, in part, by normalizing it as a serious problem that deserves equal legitimacy as other forms of hate. Jewish experiences of antisemitism should be given the dignity afforded to other hatreds.

In addition to creating awareness beyond the Jewish community that Jews can be victims, empowering Jews to come together as a community in a unified approach was another challenge for combatting antisemitism in Quebec. Identifying intra-group programming and events in Montreal was difficult. Although helpful for community self-esteem and empowerment, it was clear that communal fault lines also impacted the Montreal Jewish community's ability to form a more unified approach to combatting antisemitism in Quebec. Rabbi Dolin highlighted a key issue in Montreal: tensions within the Jewish community create gaps in unity and internal conflict, only adding fuel to the fire. Returning to Ben M. Freeman's thesis about enahcing Jewish pride as an internal response to antisemitism, Rabbi Dolin argued for a shift in how Jews view and accept internal diversity: "And you know, the other thing is, and this is a big part of it, in the Jewish community, if we can start by modelling the understanding in the Jewish community that we can accept diversity in the Jewish community too… So, if we start with the Jewish community, it'll be easier to communicate with people who aren't Jewish." Rabbi Dolin suggested that normalizing internal pride, unity, and confidence, extending to non-Jews, makes it less frightening to engage with non-Jews.

Whereas Ottawa's Jewish community seemed to prize engaging with non-Jews, even at the expense of prioritizing a more prominent communal identity, and whereas Montreal's Jewish

community prioritized communal pride over intergroup contact, Victoria's Jewish community took a different approach, as I noted earlier. Again, Victoria's Jews had a strong communal sense of pride and identity but were also comfortable engaging with non-Jews. Rabbi Harry's quote below perfectly demonstrated this dual approach in Victoria:

> *It was interesting because, you know, when we built the building that you're in now, the new building in 2003, we put a Star of David on the new building, and I remember having older congregants, primarily [Holocaust] survivors. Right? And, you know, the per capita of survivors in Canada is very different than the per capita of survivors in the US, and most Jewish communities come to me and say, You know, rabbi, is this safe? Then I say, You know, I don't think that hiding is safe. I think that knowing others and being known is where safety comes from… I've been trying not to get stuck in my silo. I have been trying to model that you can have strength, but you don't need to insulate. I think that there's a place for insulating and being with other Jews in terms of safety and comfort, and even some spiritual rebar. But I also think that it makes sense to reach out to other communities to talk about how we can, together, find a way for us to collaborate on things that are going to be generative and moving towards shalom [peace].*

Rabbi Harry's discussion raised the point that if Jews have more self-esteem and confidence in their Jewish identities, then not only does this seem to help them feel safer exposing themselves to non-Jews, but it may also translate to demanding respect from non-Jews by example. If so, Jewish communal self-esteem and pride in Jewishness may help Jews understand their shared values and thus develop clearer, stronger boundaries and resilience around these values and, ultimately, their identities.

Early psychological work on self-esteem dates back to the 1970s, and these early studies demonstrated a link between an individual's level of self-esteem and their interaction with various social issues that included things like violence, drug abuse, and even unemployment. Studies now examine at self-esteem from a variety of perspectives, including the cultural component of self-esteem and the link between collective self-esteem and prejudice. It is in societies where there is a clear majority group and competing minority groups that the data suggests that members of stigmatized groups tend to report lower levels of self-esteem than those

of non-stigmatized groups. One possible reason for this is because the stigmatized groups may internalize the negative perceptions imposed upon them by other groups.[229] Returning to antisemitism and collective Jewish self-esteem, more empirical research is needed to demonstrate any links between the level of empowerment Jews may possess in their identities and their ability to cope with and build resilience against antisemitism. The basic hypothesis is that when a community's sense of self is healthy, its relationships have a more solid foundation upon which to grow and expand without being shaken.

Rick, who played a pivotal role in promoting Holocaust education to several non-Jews in Victoria, echoed Rabbi Harry's pride in the Victoria Jewish community's dual approach: "I think Rabbi Nachman's advice is even more important for the Jewish community to realize, yes, the world is a narrow bridge. And yes, we cannot be afraid to walk on that bridge." Recall Dahlia, who described how her pride and security in her Jewish and Israeli identities helped her be more open to reaching out and engaging with other communities:

> *For me to say I am from Israel, and I'm Jewish… I knew I was getting involved with a Syrian family. I wanted to get involved with a Syrian family. I regret every bullet that was ever shot in any direction. My Israeli government may be at fault, your Syrian government may or may not be at fault, but I'm just a person. I'm a woman who thinks that we're here, let's do it.*

As I mentioned in earlier chapters, participants discussed Jews becoming more open to engaging with non-Jews as a response to antisemitism. Participants consistently described engagement as a two-way street and indeed demonstrated the power of open-mindedness. For Jewish participants specifically, it was their security in being Jewish and what that meant to them (their strong Jewish foundation) that helped them feel more trusting, safe, and willing to engage with non-

---

[229] Virgil Zeigler-Hill, "The Importance of Self-Esteem," in *Self-Esteem*, ed. Virgil Zeigler-Hill (Psychology Press, 2013), 1–4.

Jews. As a result, Jews and non-Jews may encounter each other more often and in healthier ways. Positive engagement thus creates spaces of positive relating.

All of this can be summed up as *social resilience*, a concept I researched within Victoria's Jewish community to combat antisemitism. Matt, a Co-Investigator on the University of Victoria's *Defying Hatred project*, explained it as follows:

> *…the idea behind the social resilience concept is to respect and reflect upon the fact that resilience is an important kind of social and human value… I think the origins of the resilience term lie primarily in geography and disaster management. So, resilience is originally like a physical concept about buildings that are resilient… that can withstand earthquakes and shocks and stuff like that. And then I think that psychologists redeployed the term as a metaphor for the ability of human beings to kind of withstand troublesome shocks.*

Jordan, another Co-Investigator on the project, explained it by adding that:

> *I think the idea as I understood it was that if acts of hate can tend to be isolating in their effects upon a community and encourage a certain kind of defensive insularity and response that the synagogue seemed to be practicing instead… there was some research or at least theoretical support for the notion that, and maybe on a kind of social level, similar to the kind of contact theories that emanate your work, there was some support for the notion that that was kind of resilience building or strengthening.*

The concept of *social resilience* primarily describes the work that the historical synagogue, Congregation Emanu-El, had been doing in Victoria to build relationships with diverse non-Jewish groups to foster social and communal resilience against antisemitism. The premise rests on social bonds, and these can build resilience against antisemitism by fostering reliable and trustworthy social foundations that lead to deeper bonds and empathy. As participants repeatedly noted throughout their interviews, it is harder to hate or hurt someone you know. Recall from the social psychological literature that one of the primary outcomes of successful intergroup contact work is to come to know outgroups in more accurate ways.[230] Knowing people also demystifies

[230] Pettigrew and Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*, 73–119.

and creates a sense of empathy or caring (or at least it can), and these factors might make it harder to be taken by hateful or misrepresentative ideas about Jews if you care for a Jew and develop these ideas from firsthand experience.

I discussed the main premise of the Defying Hatred Project's concept of *social resilience* in the previous two chapters on bonds and relational factors, and framed it as the idea of building social relationships and strong relational foundations that withstand tough times, such as a post-October 7 world. However, I argue that the concept fits well within this chapter because the research suggests that resilience lies in creating inclusive environments where people feel safe being themselves. These environments ideally create the conditions for deeper, healthier relationships and ultimately encourage them by empowering Jews and non-Jews to feel confident and proud of who they are, and thus safer to engage with each other.

There were limitations, however, and what appeared to be healthy relationships did not always last, as evidenced by several participants who I spoke to after October 7. Encouraging Jewish pride and self-esteem, and, likewise, confidence and comfort to engage with non-Jews as self-respecting Jews, has become increasingly complex. As Rabbi Lynn explained: "I have people saying, Should I take my Mezuzah down? I have somebody who was incredibly involved in Jewish organizational work… and he said, I'm not sure I can put this up on my window." The insecurity Rabbi Lynn described in a post-October 7 world hints at the fear that Rick described earlier, which is that many Jews are scared to be openly Jewish in the presence of non-Jews. Rabbi Lynn, like others I quoted earlier, implied that Jews should be able to live in a world in which they have dignity and can openly be themselves with confidence and without discrimination. Although not exclusively a post-October 7 challenge, what is lacking is that

society appears to discourage Jews from being confident in their Jewishness and thus openly Jewish. This is happening at the micro level, but not yet at the macro level in Canada.

Talking about Montreal, Rabbi Kowalski also discussed social resilience, along with emotional resilience, as key skills for withstanding antisemitism when it occurs. The difference was that she specified that these were imperative for the Jewish community. In contrast, in Victoria, social resilience was implied as key for Jews and non-Jews together. Rabbi Kowalski explained:

> *The other word that's going to come back here about combatting antisemitism is the word resilience… And it's a word that came up a lot more, especially in social-emotional learning contexts around the pandemic. And it's something that's coming up more about October 7. That's another word for what happens when that foundation that you've built starts to get shaken, right? When it gets shaken, how long [does] it take for it to settle back into the normative [inaudible]... That's resilience, right? The ability to shift back into the normative is how you build up your resilience, right? When things get rocky, how do you reestablish and resettle?*

Rabbi Kowalski implied that Jews should be prepared not to let themselves internalize and be affected by antisemitic rhetoric because it will continuously exist, even if it is reduced. This is akin to empowering children and youth to learn to love themselves in an effort to withstand bullying; you cannot always control the bullying, but you can help young people build resilience and a foundation upon which they can settle in and rely upon so that they can maintain a healthy sense of self and cope in healthy, more constructive ways when faced with a bully.

Participants have demonstrated that, in addition to Jewish/non-Jewish engagement, empowering Jewish communities to feel proud of who they are and confident in engaging with non-Jews is an important but previously under-recognized aspect of combatting antisemitism. Leah summed up the impact of this dual approach on bridging communities in a shared space to combat antisemitism by discussing her organization's green market:

> *And then people that we have on our client list that we know are struggling more, they get an additional 25% discount. So, they're buying 25% below wholesale, but they still have a lot more pride in that than handouts. Plus, when they come, they can choose what they want. It's not being handed to them. And then one of my objectives was to start liaising with the larger community in this project because it's not only for the Jewish community, and we don't only serve Jewish clients, although the majority are. So, I wanted to expand to the larger community.*

Leah described how her organization helped not only the Jewish community but also non-Jews, and explained the significance of this: Jews and non-Jews can be brought together in a positive context to engage in mutually beneficial and empowering ways that enhance their dignity and self-esteem. Additionally, Leah emphasized the importance of pride and treating every client, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, with dignity and respect. Evidently, when you treat humans with dignity, they feel heard, respected, and included. When people felt positive toward one another and were included and respected, they tended to treat one another better and feel safer and less hostile.

5.4 Conclusion

In the data, both individual and communal resilience and confidence were significant in combatting antisemitism. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, in social spaces where antisemitism was low or non-existent, participants had a sense of dignity, self-esteem, and pride in themselves and valued treating others with dignity. When people also felt empowered by self-respect or self-love, they felt safer being vulnerable and opening up authentically to one another, which fostered social bonding and the development of relational skills that we previously saw were non-negotiable in relationships where antisemitism played little to no role.

This chapter also explored the importance of location. Montreal's Jewish community expressed a strong outward Jewish identity and was self-sufficient in its internal infrastructure and services, but seemed underdeveloped in its engagement with non-Jews. Ottawa's Jewish

community, on the other hand, seemed adept at engaging with non-Jews but did not prioritize a cohesive, Jewish communal identity. In contrast to the opposite approaches of Montreal and Ottawa, Victoria's Jewish community, which historically has had lower rates of antisemitism than Ontario and Quebec, seemed to take a dual approach, prioritizing a strong outward sense of Jewish identity while also being very open to and confident in being vulnerable to engage with non-Jewish communities in the city. I am curious if this dual approach had a role to play in the lower rates of antisemitism, comparatively speaking, in the West. When communal self-esteem and outgroup contact were prioritized together, they seem to create healthier social conditions under which long-lasting, deeper relationships can form.

The following chapter will build on what we have examined in the previous chapters, but will discuss in more depth the cognitive, social, and emotional mechanisms that might be at play in maintaining antisemitism in individuals and making antisemitic ideas attractive. It will explore a key feature found in almost every program, activity, and event I examined in which Jews and non-Jews came together to interact, build relationships, and strengthen their relational values and empathy for each other. This programming had a creative and/or experiential component, and so the following chapter will explore these aspects of the programming which enhanced the development of social bonds, empathy, and other relational factors, as well as dignity and self-esteem in Jews and non-Jews because of the particular psychological mechanisms that the creative and experiential programming targeted in participants.

CHAPTER 6: A RIGHT-BRAIN FORM OF HATE: UNDERSTANDING THE NON-LOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF ANTISEMITISM AND COMBATTING IT

I begin this chapter with a reminder that there is a significant gap in the academic literature about strategies and approaches for combatting antisemitism. What is also missing are further studies that examine its deeper nature and the mechanisms that maintain it in different forms throughout time and space. One of the stated goals if this project was to learn more about fighting antisemitism's root causes so that we can address it more proactively and preventively. Without sufficient knowledge about the nature of antisemitism, uncovering and designing strategies that work effectively to combat it is difficult. However, an interesting finding emerged from this research: several participants described how almost every program and activity they engaged in to build relationships and develop relational skills all had some creative or experiential component. These programs seemed to have had a significant impact in creating spaces where participants deemed antisemitism as low or nonexistent.

In each location, I attended various programs centred on intergroup contact. As I noted earlier, the programs I examined included interfaith programming, Shabbat dinners, holiday celebrations, charitable initiatives, and artistic events. Most events and activities intentionally centred on a topic of common interest, but they sometimes looked like casual encounters, such as coffee and dessert sessions at these programs. Religious and cultural programming, like Shabbat dinners and holiday celebrations, was commonly attended, and, as this chapter will demonstrate, acted as motivating factors for bringing diverse Jewish and non-Jewish groups together. No matter the format, the common feature of these events was that they all involved something you could experience and develop an emotional response to. It was the emotional responses elicited by the programming that enticed participants to engage and emotionally invest in the activity or event, and thus develop a lived experience and resonance with the people involved.

Findings about the nature of the programming that brought Jews and non-Jews together demonstrated that if these strategies rest on positively affecting non-Jews' emotional and cognitive mechanisms when in contact with Jews, antisemitism may have emotional and values-based motives and underpinnings. This chapter, therefore, explores the role of these types of programs in combatting antisemitism and how they may be more effective at tackling antisemitism in a deeper and longer-lasting way because they target the emotional and cognitive mechanisms that evidently underlie this form of hate. Participants repeatedly described how when they had positive feelings about Jews, their fears and biases decreased, which suggests that, when it comes to combatting antisemitism, we must affect hearts before minds. Creative and experiential programming allowed non-Jews to learn about Jews (and vice versa, which we have seen is important for enabling openness to contact) and motivated them to engage with Jews, increasing opportunities for positive relationship-building and relating, and, ultimately, more successful outcomes. The section below explores the connection between emotional and social mechanisms and traditional learning outcomes.

6.1 Creativity and Learning

Social psychological studies have consistently demonstrated increased outgroup knowledge as one of the three most important outcomes of successful intergroup contact.[231] The previous chapters demonstrated that one of the primary mechanisms of intergroup contact for reducing antisemitism is indeed increasing individuals' outgroup knowledge about Jews, which in turn reduces outgroup anxiety and unfamiliarity and increases empathy towards them. Several non-Jewish participants confirmed this, frequently noting how intergroup contact helped them learn

[231] Pettigrew, "In Pursuit of Three Theories: Authoritarianism, Relative Deprivation, and Intergroup Contact," 4–34.

about Jews and feel more comfortable around them, and vice versa for Jewish participants. Returning to Chapter 3, which discussed the outcome of demystification, participants stated that participating in intergroup contact work demystified their preconceived notions about each other and that it was their participation in experiential activities and programming that made the difference. Specifically, participants experienced an emotional shift from participating in the intergroup contact programming, and it was this emotional shift that allowed them to feel safer learning about each other's identities. Participants described that feeling safe and positive about their encounters with each other was necessary for them to gain any meaningful knowledge from the encounters.

This section discusses how participants connected learning to lived and creative experiences between Jews and non-Jews. Sarah (1), a non-Jew from Ottawa, for example, described how the experiential components of the Shabbat dinner she attended, including the singing and rituals, helped her understand Judaism and Jews: "I think the prayer, like hearing how it is, it wasn't in English, so getting to hear that, getting to hear it sung, the explanations of the traditions, and then just the informal conversations with the people at my table, learning what they do for work. Some of their background, and explanations of different aspects of their culture." It seemed that the intergroup activities in this study were not only engaging but also led to benefits such as increased outgroup knowledge and demystification. In the case above, Sarah had a positive firsthand experience with Jews and Judaism because the experience was engaging, fun, and memorable. Her experience left an impression, and thus she was invested in learning more about Judaism and Jews. Based on the data, I suggest that anti-Jewish tropes and ideas are belief-based and of an emotional nature; they are not factual or based on logic or reason.

Deborah Lipstadt implies this in her work, stating that antisemitism is an irrational hatred.[232] What experiential activities do, I argue, is target the emotional and belief-based mechanisms that seem to underpin antisemitism. Experience alters perspectives, which can, in turn, alter perceptions and beliefs. In this research, creative and experiential activities countered the social, emotional, and cognitive conditions that appeared to fuel antisemitism.

Creative-style activities tended to elicit positive relational feelings, as Sarah described above. Her feelings about and impressions of Judaism and Jews were positive because her lived experience fostered positive emotions toward both. I am not suggesting that this type of programming will single-handedly combat all antisemitism. Instead, these creative activities may directly affect the cognitive underpinnings that seem to maintain antisemitic ideas and make them attractive. These activities, therefore, have the potential to defuel antisemitism or at least create more cognitive resilience against it. Take Sean, for example. Sean also attended the Shabbat dinner that Sarah attended, and it was the interactive component of the dinner he attended that allowed him to engage with Jews, form positive emotions about them, and then retain information that challenged his preconceived notions. In recounting his experience, he said:

> *I think it's because I feel more connected. Not connected, but I think the climate is more free. We're more free to ask more questions and follow-up questions, I believe. And I have no problem with going somewhere and just receiving information, but I think the fact that we can ask questions in return and follow-up questions, I think that's the main difference that made me appreciate those more.*

---

[232] Deborah Lipstadt suggests that because antisemitism is by nature an irrational hatred, and that solutions for combatting it should not be rational or logical in nature (Lipstadt, *Antisemitism*, 83-83/206.).

It was the active experience of attending a dinner and being able to interact with Jews that made the difference for Sean, and allowed him to learn by doing and not just through hearsay or from second hand information.

Like Sean, Tim also discussed the relationship between learning and creative experience further: "At no time can anything relate to the Holocaust directly, but I think there was a connection where people could… try to understand it. And so, I just felt that here in Canada, we should have better ways for us to be able to connect." Tim, who, as we saw earlier, is Sikh, had been instrumental in the construction of the National Holocaust Monument in Ottawa. He mostly discussed Holocaust education, but for him, learning was best achieved when people could relate to and engage with the subject matter. Like other participants, the emotion that resulted from the experience enabled the learning. Tim's experience left an imprint on his heart, and thus his logical mind resonated with it more deeply. Experiences informed impressions, and relating helped participants connect to Jews in a conscientious way. Perhaps experiential activities encourage emotional resonance with a people or subject, such as Jews, the Holocaust, or antisemitism. If people care, then they may be more inclined to listen and include Jews in their spaces. If they care, Holocaust-related material will be absorbed more effectively because people, through their emotional resonance, will develop a personal investment in it. The bottom line: Creative/experiential activities → emotional resonance → retaining content/learning.

When it came to the style of events, participants overwhelmingly held favourable views of events that prioritized an activity or experience. Suzanne, for example, illustrated the difference she saw between traditional learning events and experiential events where learning was instead a by-product of the activity:

> *Yeah, [the educational event] would be boring. It wouldn't be memorable. If you can have the activity… you remember that. A lot more people will retain that kind of thing and also*

> *give them that positive feeling. So, they now relate, I went to Passover, I had a really good time, I met really good people, and I had fun. And so now they are relating a positive experience, a positive feeling, to a religious event.*

Suzanne's description explains this chapter's thesis clearly: impactful and meaningful events between Jews and non-Jews may be the most powerful in challenging anti-Jewish perceptions because learning occurs through their affective properties.

Holiday celebrations were another common activity that brought participants together and were among the ones they cited most frequently. According to participants, a holiday event, such as a Hanukkah party or, most commonly, a Passover Seder, offered a low-barrier entry point into the Jewish community. Following her description above, Suzanne continued by discussing the role of holiday programming to bring together diverse tenants at her housing organization in Ottawa:

> *...we won't be having a Christmas event in the hall for Christians. We're having a Christmas event in the hall for everybody: the Muslims, the Jews, the Baha'i, the Unitarians, and the atheists. Everyone gets to come and celebrate together with their Christian neighbours. So, it doesn't become, Oh, this is your holiday. Oh, it's Passover, it's your holiday. It's, Oh, we're going to a Passover celebration. Oh, we're celebrating Eid. And we're gonna go celebrate Eid with our Muslim neighbours.*

Through engaging holiday activities, non-Jews can have meaningful experiences that help them learn firsthand about Jews and Judaism. Jews can also become more comfortable interacting with and learning about non-Jews because the familiarity of holiday events enhances the safety and trust we saw in earlier chapters as being pivotal underpinnings of resilient, lasting relationships in which antisemitism is low or non-existent. The "fun" or positive emotive aspects of open holiday celebrations may also dispel any mutual fear and animosity by counteracting negative emotions. It seemed that events like holiday celebrations directly impacted participants'

understanding and empathy.[233] For example, Mary discussed the power of experiential events for challenging preconceived notions among tenants at the housing organization she worked at:

> *If you are a practicing Jew, and I'm a Muslim, and we fear each other's religion, by nature of us coming together in social events and becoming friendly and our children becoming friendly and playing together, we've already broken those barriers. Right? And so that kind of community building helps to bring down the dislike, hate, and stereotypes against each other.*

Sheila added that experiential events do not have to be vehicles of learning in and of themselves. Sometimes, they are simply just for the experience, and, as I noted earlier, learning is a by-product of the encounter because of the investment people have in the experience. Sheila explained: "So we visited the Chabad, which was a really nice experience… Yeah, that was a special one because that was a physical introduction and also, people who are speaking about their faith. So, it wasn't just speaking. This is a show and tell as well." These events can be opportunities to increase exposure to Jews and, incidentally, lead to further learning and engagement.

Participants also described artistic-style events or programs as impactful for learning. Rabbi Harry, the community leader from Victoria, explained how the arts can be a vehicle for connection: "Some people connect through the arts, right? There's a lot of art all around the synagogue… I've been doing for the last, I don't know 15-18 years, a callout to artists where we study together and then people produce art, and we have a beautiful gala. So not everyone there

---

[233] There were other recreational events of that were secular in nature, such as knitting, that also provided space for diverse groups to engage, but in more neutral settings. Both religious and secular programming encouraged understanding and bonding. Although the differences between religious and secular programming for the purposes of fostering intergroup contact were minimal, and given the multi-faceted nature of Jewish identity, the difference worth noting is that because of the nature of, in this case, anti-Jewish stereotypes, religious programming allowed non-Jews to dispel some of their preconceived notion about the religious aspects of Jewish identity. It is possible, as the data suggested, that different kinds of events work well in specific scenarios or when the desired outcomes are different. For more on Jewish identity, see Lynn Davidman, "The New Voluntarism and the Case of Unsynagogued Jews," 55–56; Wettstein, "Introduction," 2–14.

is Jewish." Artistic endeavours foster feelings, emotions, and expression, which I argue target the root causes of antisemitism, cognitively and emotionally speaking. Creative activities can include anything that fosters relational values and positive emotional associations amongst participants. Sheila described the impact that an arts devotional event she helped organize in Victoria. This devotional brought together people of various religious backgrounds to perform an artistic piece of music or dance for diverse audiences. She said:

> *And we will make the music, the physical surroundings, everything to make people feel welcome and comfortable. And we'll just be friendly. And I think that's part of the role of the board members that we haven't even ever talked about. We've just done that instinctively as well, which is just to go out and be friendly with everybody and get to know people.*

Artistic elements, as Sheila described, make people feel comfortable because they are pleasant, which helps lower people's guard and encourages positive feelings.

Also, music is a cross-cultural and cross-religious form of expression, and even if musical styles differ from context to context, it contributes to a sense of familiarity and safety because it is something to which diverse outgroups can relate. When people of competing groups listen to music of some form, they come to see each other's commonalities and, thus, less threatening to ingroup values and practices. Again, creative events potentially challenge the fear that psychologists argue underlies much prejudice.[234] Sheila continued:

> *The arts devotional. That's one of the most popular ones, because it involves having devotions that are done in the form of the arts. Singing, chanting, poetry, dance, and people who've done all of the above. Victoria is a very artsy community… But it really works here, and people have really appreciated it; they just absolutely loved it. There's something about learning... I guess it's related to actually going to a physical space and learning because you're learning experientially, not just intellectual learning… Maybe we just learn or respond well to things that are conveyed in song, poetry, or dance. We respond in a different way than we do intellectually. And they kind of tend to be a little bit more participatory, too.*

---

[234] Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 28–42.

Learning through creative events can be intellectual and experiential, engaging both the logical and emotional parts of our brains. What I argue in this chapter about the nature of antisemitism is that it is largely a right-brain form of hatred. What I mean by this is that its fuels tend to be feelings, emotions, and values. Several of the intergroup events and activities I examined lead to positive emotional resonance as a primary outcome. If these types of programs were the most effective at challenging anti-Jewish prejudice, fear, and hostility for participants, then the inference is that antisemitism's main mechanisms must have to do with emotions and feelings. If antisemitism's attraction is largely based on feelings and emotions, then perhaps this is why participants described creative events as central to mediating and creating contact, exposure, and even empathy between Jews and non-Jews. It was in these social spaces that antisemitic ideas and values could not find fuel and were, as participants consistently held, minimal or non-existent.

Creative programming also provided opportunities to instill values in young people and shift their perspectives by harnessing their feelings and values. Jean, a leader in Christian-Jewish dialogue in Montreal whom we met earlier, explained this exact outcome while discussing an interfaith art contest he helped organize for young people in the city: "And the first form of this contest was in the school system, and we were asking a group of students to try to figure out how diversity is enriching our society, and to write either an essay, a poem, a report, an interview with a few people… Or to make drawings or clips, video clips…" Artistic activities can be collaborative, and participants can take collective ownership of shared projects and environments. Artistic activities that are collaborative behave in similar ways to world-repairing work and both types of activities impact people's feelings about each other.

In the same vein as creative and artistic programming are media such as television programs. Gordon Allport highlights various educational initiatives in his seminal work, *The Nature of Prejudice*, for combatting hate. One type of initiative is "vicarious experiences approaches," which involve learning by experiencing another's perspective. One method by which to learn about another's perspective, Allport notes, is through engaging people's imaginations through plays, books, or other media shows.[235] The underlying mechanism of these strategies, as I have been arguing in this chapter, is that they affect people's hearts. People participating in perspective-taking activities may feel safer about opening themselves to outgroup differences because they have vicariously experienced them through their imaginative efforts. Rabbi Scheier implied that creative or experiential programs help build people's positive perceptions of Jews and that he has seen firsthand these programs have a positive impact in the non-Jewish world. Interestingly, he also discussed that the challenge is that there is a lack of programming and media available to the public that feature Jewish characters, and so people cannot easily access Jewish perspectives to understand or expose themselves to Jews without in-person contact opportunities. He said:

> *…we could talk about how we invest our time in media and normalizing Judaism, like how many major characters in novels or movies or TV shows demonstrate religious affinities in Christianity or Islam or whatever it is. Or Mormonism, whatever it is. And how many are recognizably Jewish? I think mainstreaming of Christian music has had an amazing impact on just the perception of the religious Christian in North America. And there has been no similar mainstreaming of Jewish music, and whether that's a comment on quality, appeal, or effort, it's really worth thinking about. … I don't know of any major protagonist in a movie or a book who happens to be Jewish; who is not Jewish because they're Jewish, but just Jewish because whatever.*

---

[235] Gordon W. Allport, "The Nature of Prejuedice Featuring Material From: Allport, Gordon W. THe Nature of Prejudice," Addison-Wesley Publiching Company, 1979, 484–85.

Media programs help people form attachments to characters and plotlines and invest emotionally in them. The potential outcome is that if people can invest in and develop empathy for a Jewish character, they can translate that empathy off-screen, saying, Hey, I know about Jews, or That character is Jewish and I love them. The screen softens the in-person attitudes. In other words, there is implied bonding and the development of empathy toward the fictional character(s), and, ideally, if the media portrays Jews positively, people can develop positive associations with Jews in real life because of this programming.

In sum, creative and experiential programs are vehicles for learning and empathy-building toward Jews because of their impact on people's hearts. Rabbi Kowalski's compelling quote below demonstrates why emotional experiences are key for challenging faulty perceptions about Jews, and even for Jews about non-Jews: "We don't learn by osmosis. We don't learn from nothing. We learn by example, and we learn by experience. Experience is a really tough teacher because it gives the exam first, and then it teaches the lesson." She summarized how learning through creative, experiential activities elicits impactful responses in people and, ideally, positive emotional responses to the situation and the people involved, thereby enabling positive outcomes in Jewish/non-Jewish intergroup contact.

6.2 Motivation, Impact, and Exposure

One of the core challenges that arose during the research was motivating Jews and non-Jews to engage with each other. Without contact and exposure, it may be difficult for outgroups to develop empathy, love, or compassion for one another. Chapter 4 discussed curiosity and how to motivate people to feel curious about learning about and engaging with one another. This chapter offers another form of motivation, which is the creative and experiential nature of the intergroup contact programs themselves. The creative, experiential, and emotive nature of the events and

activities I examined seemed to motivate participants to engage with one another, as the programming was enticing and made engagement seem attractive.

Creative events or endeavours can also lead to positive outcomes and entice people to continue their engagement with one another because when people belong to something bigger than themselves, such as community-oriented programming, they feel responsible for or invested in the outcome. In other words, they become stakeholders in the event. Returning to a concept from Chapter 4, creative and experiential programming relies on agonistic respect, which is a demonstration of diverse groups mutually navigating interactions in healthy ways. This is the world-repairing work I examined in the previous chapters that sees intergroup contact as a by-product of world-repairing or social action initiatives. It is during these activities that participants enter social spaces in which they learn to navigate differences respectfully by negotiating similarities, such as relating through shared goals.[236] So, events that engage people help them emotionally invest in creating outcomes that satisfy everyone. These types of events, therefore, bring people together and create the conditions under which people not only engage with each other, but are willing to continue engaging with each other.

Fran highlighted another motivational feature of creative and experiential programming: it offers people an excuse to engage. As she explained about holiday celebrations at her interfaith housing organization in Ottawa:

> *But for several years, an event was held about Passover… So this Passover event was held at least three times… [The rabbi] made matzah… Another year, we brought songs to sing. We bought food, traditional foods… I'm a human geographer, so space is a pretty essential part of how I see the world. Again, if you are able to foster casual contact, for example, in a playground… if the playground is a safe place, if there are lots of eyes on the playground, if there are opportunities for casual contact in the playground, all those things can foster inclusion.*

---

[236] Wenman, *Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalisation*, 110.

Shared spaces and experiential activities that felt good to attend provided people the opportunities to interact and want to be part of the programming. Likewise, Rabbi Grushcow explained how creative or fun activities provide a much-needed avenue for contact in Montreal:

> *There's just this whole gamut of educational and community-building activities that take place. We take part in the interfaith Iftar. All kinds of things like that. That's just been part of what the tradition is, part of what we've tried to carry on in some ways. [It's] more difficult in the current situation that we find ourselves in. I don't know if we're gonna go there or not, but it certainly is part of both our history and our mission and our self-understanding, right? The basic orientation is that we... [pauses to think] That it's both morally and strategically a good thing to build bridges with other communities.*

Fran and Rabbi Grushcow illustrated how fun and experiential programming served as starting points for intergroup contact, thereby increasing non-Jewish exposure to Jews and vice versa. Ultimately, the goal is that positive, continuous intergroup contact can increase the opportunities for Jews and non-Jews to form healthy relationships, build relational foundations, develop empathy for each other, and build resilience against antisemitism and prejudice.

Ignatius added to the concept of inclusion that Fran described, describing how one of his chosen activities, soccer, brought together Jews and non-Jews:

> *Ignatius*
> *I mean, I think I'm obviously stating more comradic things like soccer and a beer. It's quite comradic. But, for example, my church, we have a soccer team… We play against other churches. And if a synagogue wanted to hop in, we'd say, Yeah, come play soccer with us. Like, yeah, let's do it. Why not?... And then everyone's a soccer player. Everyone's on the field, and they're all playing soccer; they're all wearing a jersey.*
>
> *Megan*
> *…What exactly about that kind of interaction would bridge divides and build positive relations with you?*
>
> *Ignatius*
> *You're all just wearing a jersey. That's it.*

I drew on this quote earlier in the thesis, but I show it again here because in it, Ignatius discussed how everybody participating was doing so on an equal level. A sports game, an experiential

activity that elicits emotional responses in participants, is inclusive; creative activities often involve everybody, and so these types of activities may also help people break down barriers and animosities because everybody is a contributing member, and so again we see that teasing out commonalities is a mediating factor to successful contact. Creative activities, therefore, can put people in social situations that facilitate understanding, empathy, and, ideally, bond formation, as people work together and develop a shared identity. The outcome is that participants no longer seem so unfamiliar. Even though their differences persist, they refocus their identities on shared elements. This refocusing is, again, recategorization at work.

In terms of facilitating contact and exposure between Jews and non-Jews, creative and fun events consistently piqued participants' curiosity and helped them explore shared identities. I return to the interfaith blood drive in Ottawa that participant B.B. helped organize. He explained:

> *So, you heard about the story about the blood [drive] then, that we went and mobilized our communities to go and give blood. And then we came out with a statement talking about the fact that when you get blood, you don't categorize it by religion or race and so forth. It's by blood type. It's A, B, O+ and that sort of thing. And so we said that we have the capacity to support each other's lives, and we are intimately connected to each other as fundamental human beings…*

The interfaith blood drive in Ottawa was not only symbolically significant, but also a tangible event that allowed people to come together to work as equals for a common cause. The blood drive was world-repairing work that enabled bond formation based on shared interests, even though identities were not erased. The data repeatedly demonstrated that creative events build community because they typically take place in inclusive spaces that encourage people to come together around a common interest while still maintaining unique identities. As we saw earlier, differences are simply recontextualized in emotionally safe, positive scenarios, so people learn that identity differences can be safe to engage with.

Ruthi, who chose to be Jewish and is actively involved in her Victoria synagogue's non-Jewish outreach, described the power of creative activities for encouraging relationship-building and bonding: "And during that, Lisa also organized some walks of Lekwungen Victoria with this guy... And I went on one of those. And again, that is something that is really moving, really powerful because he takes you down through the sort of downtown area, and the Inner Harbour. And he tells you what happened." Although Ruthi was discussing an initiative aimed at Indigenous/non-Indigenous reconciliation, she described the power of a creative activity, such as the walk, to deepen participants' sense of community in Victoria. For Ruthi, she found that immersing herself in a particular environment evoked an empathetic, and thus emotive/cognitive, response. It was the emotional response that she found captivating, and because she was emotionally invested, she could learn about Indigenous issues more easily and care about what impacted Indigenous communities such as the Lekwungen.

Visiting synagogues and places of worship was another "creative" event that encouraged contact, exposure, and positive emotional experiences with Jews and Judaism. Jean, from Montreal, noted how perceptions of Jews shifted when he would arrange opportunities for non-Jews to engage in a meaningful way with Jews: "…sometimes a few years later, when you meet someone, this has made a difference in their perception. So, it started something. But you would not always see the outcome of that." Social activities offered Jews and non-Jews a place to meet and thus, an opportunity to shift their pre-conceived notions in positive ways. As highly as participants spoke about experiential activities for reducing antisemitism, there was some hesitancy, albeit minimal. Specifically, from Jean, he later noted that experiential events do not always make a positive difference, but why this happens is unclear, and more research on the emotional resonance aspect of combatting antisemitism is urgently needed. Although the why is

unclear, Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp remind us that there are instances where intergroup contact has adverse effects and can worsen prejudice, particularly, recalling Stephan and Stephan, when the threat piece is not addressed.[237] If we can uncover more about antisemitism's nature, we can design strategies, like experiential ones, that target its roots more effectively in light of its potential limitations.

6.3 What Right and Wrong Get You: Emotional Resonance and Inclusion

The heading above refers to a quote by participant Rabbi Kowalski, which I will discuss in conclusion section of this chapter. In it, she was referring to the role of feelings and emotions in building resilient relationships that withstand antisemitism. The previous sections discussed how creative and experiential programs were effective when they elicited a positive emotional resonance among participants. Several participants described how these activities and programs left lasting positive impressions, fostering relationship-building, empathy, and perspective-shifting. In the following quote, Ignatius describes how partaking in creative events with Jews shifted his perspective because he was immersed and engaged in a positive experience with them. He explained: "He was telling me about Jewish mysticism, and then just the chanting, or the hymns… Songs, if you will, where that was very unique. That was cool. That was a neat experience." Singing hymns not only helped Ignatius learn something about Judaism but also allowed him to experience it firsthand. Again, it was his emotional and cognitive mechanisms of the experience that were affected in such a way that he could "feel" differently about Jews and ultimately be open to getting to know them.

---

[237] Pettigrew and Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*, 200.

It was also evident that creative or fun activities fostered inclusion and communally-minded thinking and people could relate to each other more easily. I discussed previously that creative activities provided a neutral ground upon which people could interact without focusing on their competing identities. Jean from Montreal explained how collaborative activities provide a tangible thing for people to focus on in the interaction that shifts the focus away from their competing identities: "Well, I think for one thing, what I could say from my own experience is that one thing that makes it easier is when you get people involved, and when they have something to do." Like Jean, Sarah (2) illustrated this mechanism as part of a program for the social services organization that she worked for in Ottawa:

> *…our [street outreach] team is made up of one employee, many volunteers with lived experience, and a number of Jewish volunteers, mostly wealthy Jewish volunteers who are deeply connected to the program. They go once a week. We have one woman… She's so committed to walking with the team. She carries a wagon. She pulls a wagon in the winter with hot chocolate, in the summer with lemonade or whatever. And they're connecting. And primarily, it's not Jews right now that they're serving, but they serve the whole team. And it's a way of connecting. And the program's tag cards also say [our Jewish organization's name]. So, when they're giving out their cards on the street, saying, If you need help, or giving out socks and water in the summer, or other things people need, reminding them that the Jewish community cares.*

Non-Jewish clients of this Jewish outreach program are given opportunities to have positive encounters with Jews. Although this does not guarantee that their perspectives about Jews will shift, they now have a positive emotional and lived experience with the Jewish community. Their lived experience becomes evidence. The non-Jewish clientele may soften their perspectives of Jews or at least think about Jews differently than they did before. Referencing social action projects in her own Montreal community, participant Monika said:

> *We had people who said, I came from Russia and we had nothing. And I am here to help because we were recipients of the box. You know? So, I mean, it's just the ultimate feel-good of doing something that is important, that is needed, but then also to experience the appreciation at the time of the recipients… You know, I belong to a temple in Montreal. And I'm just in awe of the people who cook meals, who help others and give donations. I*

> *mean, there is just a hub of activity that all turns into something that we are proud of, because it directly connects to another human being.*

Creative activities help people from diverse backgrounds connect and bond over something positive. In other words, these projects connect people and promote positive shared values. Creative-type events enable Jews and non-Jews to meet engagingly and be in each other's presence firsthand. When successful, collaborative and interactive events left imprints on people's hearts and minds, challenging former, sometimes negative impressions. Challenging perceptions was an outcome of intergroup contact that participants frequently described. As Sean said about attending an interfaith Shabbat dinner, "And it was with the Jewish community. So those kinds of things just allowed us to get to know each other and just have fun together. So, I think that contributed to that." Petula, after attending the same dinner as a leader in her interfaith outreach organization, offered another example:

> *...one of their main initiatives is that they actually do a trip to Israel... And that was a trip that I was fortunate to go on last year… that was a very eye-opening experience because you actually get to go to the place, talk to the local people there, the local Jews, and really learn from their experience what it's like living there on a day-to-day basis and some of the challenges that they're presented with on security levels or social issues. So, being able to have that on the ground experience really helps to shed light on any areas where there's misinformation or on areas where we find the media is not really giving an accurate picture of what's happening on the ground.*

Experiences such as trips to Israel, as Petula described, are impactful on a cognitive and emotional level. For Petula, it was her lived experience in the country that she says really made a difference in her understanding of a complex and volatile geopolitical situation. Penny, the social action leader from Victoria, described a similar experience where partaking in collaborative and interactive intergroup initiatives leads to valuable exposure experiences for Jews and non-Jews alike: "I think the answer to that question is because we're a Jewish community and we're seen as a Jewish community, and this is where your whole interest in preventing antisemitism comes in,

the fact that we are a Jewish organization… It's us who are making sure that we're the link or the bridge between." Again, projects that unite Jews and non-Jews in their shared sense of community heightened people's senses of belonging by fostering shared values and ethics.

Participants also described creative and experiential activities as attention-grabbing. These types of programs may have a greater impact on people than non-interactive ones because they push people out of their comfort zones. Action is central to these programs and not engaging is more difficult than actively participating. In reference to his work on promoting Holocaust memory and education as a non-Jew, Tim said: "Yeah, on the [Holocaust] monument itself, I think it was important to have a tangible monument because when you go there, and at the time, I didn't know how impactful it would be, right?" For Tim, what made caring about the Holocaust resonate with him was having a tangible experience related to it, which in large part motivated him to advocate for the creation of Canada's National Holocaust Monument.

Another reason why that creative and experiential intergroup programs creates successful exposure and contact between Jews and non-Jews was because of their inclusive nature. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed inclusivity as a key factor in facilitating intergroup contact and reducing antisemitic attitudes and here, I discuss the role of inclusivity as it relates to activities that foster it. Suzanne described the impact that interactive interfaith events had for tenants at her Ottawa housing organization: "So it's the ritual, the food, and the third element is the inclusivity, that everyone is invited, that we intentionally invite all the neighbours who are not of our religion. It is Eid, it is Christmas, it is Passover; we would like you to come and celebrate with us on this day, so that it doesn't become exclusive. It's inclusive." Suzanne described the creative components of her organization's community events. According to her, their inclusive nature is vital for successful bridge-building. Again, inclusive activities involve

everyone on an equal level and reduce competitiveness, defensiveness, and ego threats, factors we have seen arguably enable hate.[238] Recall in the psychological literature that threats to ingroup ego impede positive intergroup contact because ingroup protectiveness, defensiveness and perceived social threat increase.[239] Because the data strongly favours approaches that encourage relating and emotional resonance, we can assume that antisemitism is largely emotional and cognitive in nature. The goal of this programming, therefore, is to encourage Jews and non-Jews to collaborate in spaces where they relate and feel positively towards one another. Bringing together the previous chapters, inclusive activities that foster bonding through relating over shared goals and identities help promote this outcome.

Creative and experiential programs also work because they neutralize the power of people's competing identities. When discussing her community work with refugee families, Dahlia explained: "We're not talking about our religious beliefs. We're not talking about our ideologies. We're talking about helping people, and we became good friends..." As Dahlia described, experiential initiatives allow people to refocus their identities and de-emphasize their competing identities (i.e., Jewish vs. non-Jewish). These initiatives do not negate people's competing identities but shift which are salient in the moment, so the identities become shared and focused on a common goal, increasing trust, safety, and belonging. People then have less need to compete or feel threatened. These initiatives remove the hierarchies and power structures that reinforce negative social and emotional fuel the perpetuates antisemitism and hate.

---

[238] Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 28–42.
[239] Garcia and Crocker, "Upward and Downward Spirals Intergroup Interactions: Compassionate Goals and Transcending the Ego," 66–81.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the critical role of creativity and lived experience in intergroup activities that encourage inclusion and identity recategorization. These programs challenge the emotional, cognitive, and social foundations upon which much antisemitism appears to rest. Participants described the emotional impact of their intergroup contact programs as the most significant factor shaping their perceptions and attitudes, implying that what may be maintaining anti-Jewish attitudes and perceptions is indeed emotional in nature. The quote below is taken from the previous chapter, but I use it here to summarize the main argument of this chapter. In it, Rabbi Kowalski offers an eloquent description of how emotions, a key component that creative and experiential activities target, are a powerful antidote to hate:

> *You're an adult, right? And feelings are not facts… You might be hurt by something. But especially as a researcher, you're thinking about this from a factual perspective. What is right, what is wrong, what is true, what is false. Right? But what right and wrong and true and false don't get you is that relational foundation that allows you to lean on and support other people and be supported by other people… The other word that's going to come back here about combatting antisemitism is the word resilience… And it's a word that came up a lot more, especially in social-emotional learning contexts around the pandemic. And it's something that's coming up more about October 7. That's another word for what happens when that foundation that you've built starts to get shaken, right? When it gets shaken, how long it takes for it to settle... That's resilience…*

The emotional and social components of the strategies I observed helped Jews build resilience in the face of antisemitism. They helped non-Jews and Jews feel comfortable connecting and recategorizing their identities so they could feel safe and more positive about each other. I argue that these activities play an essential role in combatting antisemitism because these events involve interactive, collaborative activities that allow people to form bonds over shared identities. Whether through art programs, holiday celebrations, or world-repairing work, participants were able to challenge their perceptions of one another in positive ways when they could relate in an inclusive space that prioritized positive feelings and resonance. They

frequently noted how they could learn about each other when they first felt safe, trusting, and positive about the interactions. The following chapter will build on these ideas by exploring a specific type of experiential activity that almost every single participant mentioned: meals or food-related events such as Shabbat dinners and cooking classes. It will explore how food specifically played an important role in facilitating trust and safety between Jews and non-Jews in successful intergroup contact scenarios.

CHAPTER 7: B'TAYAVON, BUON APPETITO, BAIN SULT AS AN MBÉILE: FOOD, INTERGROUP CONTACT, AND ANTISEMITISM

Thus far, the data has demonstrated that social strategies, such as intergroup contact, can effectively fight antisemitism over the long term because, again, they address the social and cognitive underpinnings of antisemitism (e.g., outgroup anxiety and fear). Not only was social bonding imperative in spaces where antisemitism was low or non-existent, but the relational values that supported those bonds, such as empathy, love, and respect, were essential for creating deeper, more resilient relationships between Jews and non-Jews. Intergroup contact programming was most effective when it affected people's emotions and feelings towards one another, and artistic events, holiday celebrations, and charitable initiatives or "world-repairing" work were the most common activities through which Jews and non-Jews formed positive, resilient relationships.

Interestingly, one factor for successful intergroup contact that arose in nearly every interview across various locations was food. In fact, I encountered several participants at interfaith events, such as Shabbat dinners, where willing non-Jews attended these events, often with no prior exposure to Jews. It was obvious that the meals and food-oriented activities had a positive impact on non-Jewish participants, motivating them to continue their social engagement with Jews. Recall that one of the ongoing challenges throughout this thesis has been about enticing non-Jews to engage with Jews. Based on the data, food serves was another key mediating factor for creating lasting, resilient relationships between Jews and non-Jews.

Why was food different than the artistic programming or holiday celebrations? First, almost everybody mentioned it. Food itself seemed to be something people could relate to because, generally speaking, it is a universal experience. This chapter explores the role of food as a motivator and enabler of contact. It also discusses how food may, in fact, heighten people's

positive emotional resonance with outgroups, like Jews. Food helped Jews and non-Jews engage safely and comfortably with each other because of its familiarity. Food is something people tend to enjoy across cultures and has various properties that help mediate positive contact between outgroups. This chapter also examines food as an experiential element that helps participants develop positive associations with one another. Additionally, it examines food as a tool for learning about Jews, a primary mechanism, according to Linda Tropp and Thomas Pettigrew, for reducing prejudice.[240] First, however, this chapter examines food as a motivating factor for bringing Jews and non-Jews together in positive, relationship-building scenarios.

7.1 Something Easy to Start With: Food as a Motivator

The heading above references a quote by Rabbi Dolin, a Montreal participant we will see later in this chapter. In the quote, he discussed what was indeed so enticing about food-related intergroup contact events, such as joint meals. According to the data, one of food's primary functions is to create an excuse for exposure to and contact with Jews. It is, therefore, a mediating factor for intergroup contact and relating. According to the data, food-related events allow for engagement with outgroups. Sarah (1), a non-Jewish participant from Ottawa, for example, described her experiences at a Shabbat dinner for the first time: "Yeah, as soon as I was presented with the opportunity to attend something like this, I really wanted to come because I've always wanted to see a Shabbat dinner. I'm really interested in Jewish culture…" She continued describing how the meal worked in terms of bringing Jews and non-Jews together: "Yeah, it's hard to hate a person once you've had dinner with them... Of course… over a couple of hours of conversation, you're going to be able to relate." Sarah explained that food-related events provided her with an excuse

---

[240] Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact* (Psychology Press, 2011), 73–119.

over which to bond with Jews because food is something that makes everybody feel like equal participants. Food-related events allow Jews and non-Jews to do something together that is less socially charged than talking about identities or religion and politics. Food, therefore, is an equalizer, allowing people to feel safer with each other and forming deeper connections.

Humans generally like food, and food is fun and interactive; perhaps these elements make food an attractive mediating factor that can spark curiosity and entice people to get involved with Jews. Several participants noted this idea and described how food-centred activities are fun and that food, a basic human need, can also serve as an incentive. For example, Fran said while discussing the role of food in bringing together diverse tenants at her housing organization in Ottawa: “But for several years, an event was held about Passover… Another year, we brought songs to sing and bought traditional foods. It was a nice event.” Again, food events provide fun, engaging, and interactive opportunities for people to learn about Jews and Judaism in a positive context, where they can have a fun and positive lived experience with Jews.

When talking about tenants coordinating interfaith events at this housing organization, Suzanne noted one of the criteria the organization requires at such events: “The second element is food. And that food piece is a gift that I've carried with me from Rabbi Bulka when I was doing a Jewish theology course with him… By the way, my background is Christian. I was doing a Jewish theology course with him, and he said to me, “If you want people to come, give them food!” Evidently, food is enticing. Food is a mediating factor that encourages people to take part in contact events because people tend to gravitate towards it. Also, food is typically enjoyable and helps people engage in positive ways, where everybody is equal and enjoying the same bonding activity.

In addition to this data, there are other examples and ideas about the social implications of food. Political science researcher Caroline Andrews tells a story about a collective kitchen in Lowertown in Ottawa, where the food brought together a Francophone man and a Lebanese woman because it allowed them to bond over each other's cultural dishes. The woman found that the food helped her feel integrated into Canadian culture, while the man said that her food broadened his horizons and helped him open up to and engage with a new culture.[241] Although a thorough review of the social scientific literature on food is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is nonetheless essential to note its power for encouraging healthy bonding and relating. Like Andrews, Rachel Brown notes the power of food in the identity formation of demographic groups, but also for delineating boundaries of belonging and not belonging to these groups. However, she adds that more research is needed on how food serves as a mediator of contact and relationship-building among minority groups, as well as between the demographic majority and minority groups. She notes that food-related events and activities, such a meals or cooking events, have promise for fostering intergroup contact and shared identity formation.[242]

Returning to this study, food can foster healthy relational foundations between competing outgroups because giving and sharing food can be a gesture of goodwill. Rabbi Scheier from Montreal offered an explanation of this very idea:

> *It's a good thing… Food is awesome. Purim is coming up, so we'll send them [the police] gift baskets. We'll do that kind of thing. But really just so we can know each other and they're here to serve the community, and we're part of the community, and it's good for everybody. Like it's not an imposition… We [the congregation], for about a year and a half during the pandemic, when they absolutely needed it, were providing weekly meals to two homeless shelters in our neighbourhood.*

---

[241] Caroline Andrew, "City States and Cityscapes in Canada: The Politics and Culture of Canadian Urban Diversity," in *Managing Diversity: Practices of Citizenship*, ed. Nicholas Brown and Linda Cardinal (University of Ottawa Press, 2007), 122.
[242] Rachel Brown, "Food and Religious Minorities," in *Religious Minorities Online*, ed. Erica Baffelli et al. (De Gruyter, 2024).

In Rabbi Scheier's discussion, sharing food built bridges. Louis, when discussing his dialogue initiatives at a Montreal synagogue, also discussed the role that food plays in building bridges: "And the dialogue is very restricted… You drink coffee and eat cookies together. But for other kinds of dialogue, it always... I think it has to be doing things together." Rabbi Lerner, a rabbi who long served in Montreal and facilitated dialogue work, echoed the same sentiments: "But we also had lunch together. You know, usually we would bring something and have lunch or coffee or whatever, and just have the conversation..." Rabbi Dolin added that food-related events can bring people together over a commonly appreciated topic or experience:

> *Well, food brings people together, as we all know, and I think there's something about [it] that breaks open the experience... Like, it allows us to share something in common that we are all enjoying eating, and we all get to have something enjoyable as part of that experience. The most common thing we've done has been during Ramadan, breaking the fast… for a few years, we've had a program where we have an Easter/Passover/Ramadan break-the-fast to celebrate the spring holidays. That's nice. You know, just something easy that we can start with.*

Victoria, a non-Jewish woman from Montreal who worked for a Jewish social service agency, also discussed food's mediating potential: "But for the more festive, celebratory events, they look much the same… And yeah, some music, some food, and just a chance to be together in one room." Penny from Victoria, who organized several community initiates, such as in from the cold nights for youth with her synagogue and other churches, summed up the mediating role of food well: "Maybe that's why we did the bagel thing… But yeah, it's nurturing, it's feeding, it's connection…" If a food-related activity fosters connection and nurturing, it may potentially encourage people to develop healthy relational skills. For example, sharing food with another person involves caring about them, showing them kindness, and considering their needs. Perhaps food-related activities foster community-minded mindsets among people and encourage relational values that build on people's caring and empathy for each other's needs. In yet another

quote about the power of food for bringing diverse grousp together, Sheila shared: “I think food… makes people more open-hearted and open-minded. Again, I think we're just programmed that way. If you're gonna share food with somebody, you're going to be more apt to, I think, share goodwill and to share good conversation, and to not be antagonistic. It's really hard to share food with somebody and be antagonistic.” For participants, sharing food seemed to be a gesture of goodwill, compassion, and openness, and sharing normalizes positive relations and relational foundations.

To illustrate further, Montreal participant Monika shared a story about her Jewish women’s group sharing a meal with a Muslim women’s group and the impact that the meal had encouraging them to come together: “And really, the same was the case with us talking about how we have suffered under antisemitism, and they had come to a Hanukkah party that we had done. We were invited to go to the home, I think it was during Ramadan, for a break-fast dinner. So, I mean, there had been such a good connection all around…” What was clear from the interviews was that food sparked curiosity in non-Jews about Jews and Jewish culture (and vice versa for Jews about non-Jews) in a familiar and relatable way, making intergroup contact less frightening and more enticing. The next section builds on food’s ability to make outgroup engagement more palatable and further describes the mechanisms of why food works.

7.2 Food as Fun and Experiential

In addition to its motivational properties, food is experiential and, returning to the significance of experiential events discussed in the previous chapter, is emotional and socially impactful. I argue that it is through something familiar and enjoyable, like food, that non-Jews can shift their perspectives about Jews. This section further explores this idea. As the previous chapter argued, people form emotional attachments to their experiences, and when they have healthy and safe

experiences with Jews, they are more likely to form positive emotional, even mental, associations with Jews and Judaism; Suzanne discussed food's experiential properties:

> *Suzanne*
> *I think they become comfortable with Christians and Jews themselves. And then they see things about it. It starts with fun. I want to enjoy that with them… going to someone's house for dinner. You don't think you own their house, you don't think you suddenly are part of that family and belong there, but you feel really welcome there to go and sit at their table and enjoy their food.*
>
> *Megan*
> *I want to follow up on food. It's something that has come up frequently in other interviews I've done. What do you think it is about food?...*
>
> *Suzanne*
> *It's experiential.*

Participants frequently described food as visceral and experiential. Penny from Victoria said, "…it's easier to get people to do food than almost anything else because it's so visceral." Participants also emphasized the intimate and hospitable nature of interfaith dinners. I interviewed several non-Jewish people involved with a Christian organization in Ottawa whose goal is to build bridges with other groups, such as Jews and Muslims. I met them at an interfaith Shabbat dinner and one such participant, Ignatius, said: "It [the Shabbat dinner] was very welcoming… The hospitality was wonderful. Very hospitable. So yeah, just getting a taste of the culture." He described the dinner as a welcoming event where people were hospitable and he felt included and thus happy to be there. Ignatius had a positive experience in a Jewish setting and now has a positive, intimate lived experience and memory of Jews and Judaism.

Food-related events also conveyed hospitality, and Michelle spoke to me about the welcoming atmosphere she experienced at an interfaith Shabbat dinner in Victoria, which helped her feel included and happy in her interactions with Jews: "It was cool though, because getting to know people from different heritages. I did learn about, you know, the food… But it was really

nice to see how welcoming everyone was when I told people I was not Jewish, and they were like, Oh, my God, that's so awesome. Like, thank you for being here. So, it was really welcoming." As the previous participants, like Michelle, described, food-related events such as Shabbat dinners offered both a reason to interact with Jews and positive exposure to them. Michelle stressed the warm, welcoming nature of her dinner, as did Ignatius. When environments were safe and open, participants felt more comfortable being vulnerable and engaging.

On vulnerability, eating can be an act of vulnerability and survival, and so humans are in one of their most natural states when they consume food. We already know the vital roles that trust and safety play in creating positive relationships between Jews and non-Jews, and perhaps sharing a meal or a food experience in a positive, constructive way to increase trust, safety, and comfort with being vulnerable and exposed to one another. The implication is that by partaking in an activity as primal as eating, people become vulnerable in that space, and, if comfortable, they become more open to perceived social threats, such as outgroup differences.[243] Hence, food potentially reduces outgroup anxiety and mediates effective relationship-building and relating.

Food is also intimate. People's food preferences and habits are personal, and so when people break bread together, they allow each other into their individual spaces. Participants described how breaking bread allowed them to challenge their fears, which we know may underlie much prejudice.[244] They were then able to build trust and safety with one another and create comfortable contact scenarios in which they could bond and form deeper, more supportive relationships with food being the common factor. Thus, food is an entry point that helps people feel more comfortable around Jews because of its relatability. Referencing her organization's

---

[243] Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 28–42.
[244] Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 27–46.

green market in Victoria, Leah explained: “Yeah, because then people learn about the Jewish culture, and they learn about the food, and then they come, and they get good prices for food, and they know it's a charity that's open to the whole community, and you don't have to be Jewish to buy produce. So, I think that in a secondary way, it's bringing the communities together...”

Relatedly, food can be relaxing. Sean, who was not Jewish, recounted an interfaith event he once attended: “I remember it was a 10-hour dinner/cocktail event. It was an event with multiple speakers. So, the environment was really relaxing.” When participants felt relaxed in their intergroup encounters, they let their guard down. Arguably, when people are vulnerable or exposed, they are in a trusting situation in which their guard, ego protection, and defensiveness come down, thereby increasing the chances of open coexistence and ideally reducing hate and animosity.

A key mechanism of food-related experiences is their reliance on inclusion. Even if participants were unfamiliar with a Jewish setting, the food aspect helped them focus on something familiar (i.e., eating). When people feel familiar, included, and welcome, they may feel more trusting and thus more willing to engage with outgroups like Jews. Chapter 3 introduced the concepts of trust and safety as vital underpinnings to successful intergroup contact and antisemitism reduction. Inclusive environments also foster trust and safety. Food-related events brought people together and over a common interest. Food was something people could chat about, and talking can lead to deeper conversations as people’s walls come down and a sense of safety and trust grows. I recall Rabbi Dolin’s quote from the previous section because in it, he highlighted how food can build trust between people from competing outgroups:

> *And I think the simple gatherings that are not political, bringing a right-wing Zionist to a holiday dinner where you're sharing food together, I've seen the magic happen. You're sitting across from someone whom you've never met, a Muslim or an Arab, and even just simply talking about Israel can break through. It sounds totally cheesy, but it really*

breaks down walls that have been there for generations because you have to confront your views and have a conversation with someone about it.

What Rabbi Dolin described is that food is somewhat like a distraction from competing identities being the focus of an encounter. When interactions become tense, people want to focus on something comfortable, like food. Louis from Montreal described how at his interfaith dialogue sessions, food consistently shifted people's focus onto something familiar and comfortable:

Megan
Desserts. Why? Is it necessary to be there to help in that situation?

Louis
It helped.

Megan
How? Or in what way?

Louis
Because people have just time to sit…. So, it was easier to mingle with Jewish people.

Food offered participants a familiar distraction to break the tension of new social encounters with Jews. Anne, a non-Jewish woman I spoke to about her first time attending a Shabbat dinner added: "And I had never really tried any traditional Jewish food. So, I was interested in that too. And then, maybe talking to some new people." People enjoy food, and it helps them feel comfortable engaging with each other, because it's usually enjoyable and provides a tangible focus before bonding and discussing complex topics, and learning outcome of food will be discussed in the next section.

7.3 Food as an Educational Tool

In addition to being a motivator for contact and having experiential impact, food was, for participants, an entry point for learning more about Jews. Food is part of Jewish culture, so when non-Jews engage with Jews at a food-related event, they become curious, ask questions, and

have conversations. The interactive experience food provided ultimately led non-Jewish participants to deeper learning about Jews and the different cultural aspects of the Jewish world. Using examples of staff conversations from her Jewish social services organization, Sarah (2) described how food can be a point of conversation and learning: “A settlement unit is made up of people from many different Arabic countries, Muslim countries… we are in real life trying to manage all of these things. So, most of the time, it's fine. You know, I think I might have told you there was like, a heated debate one day about who owns the falafel...” The conversation about the falafel is an example of how food can provide healthy debate topics and serve as a point of similarity and connection between Jews and, in the above case, Muslims and Arabs. If competing groups come to know and relate to one another, they increase their potential for trust.

Below are a series of quotes that illustrate how food opens the door to social learning. Suzanne said:

> *Suzanne*
> *It comes into that experiential piece. Music, food, that’s how we experience and learn about other cultures.*
>
> *Megan*
> *Do you see an empathy component to that, then? Like, empathy development?*
>
> *Suzanne*
> *Maybe. I don't know about empathy. Maybe. But honestly, I see it as, here is something that is your culture, your religion, and I'm enjoying it, and you're welcoming me to enjoy it, and I feel welcome to enjoy it with you.*

Penny adds: “But food, you're right. Food is special. And one of the things our synagogue did… we had a fantastic meal that the Syrians produced for that fundraiser. It was the most delicious, fantastic food... And I've got pictures of that too. Yeah, that was one of the best evenings ever. We had a fabulous, fancy Syrian meal." Likewise, Leah added:

> *But I think that the outreach for people who aren't Jewish, like for Passover last year, I had a whole family of Asians say, Oh, we also serve chicken soup with matzah balls*

> *(giggles). And so that's part of our little haymishe, come join us, come sit and listen to music. And we've created a whole atmosphere. And so, they said, What are matzah balls? And I said, Well, you like the soup? They go, Yeah. Is it hard to make? And I go, No. And so, they buy packages. They're not Jewish, but they want to know how to make the matzah balls.*

Clearly, food served as a point of connection in the above examples. In Leah's example, her event also had a warm, inviting atmosphere, which helped non-Jews feel safer in a Jewish space, interacting with and learning about Jewish food and culture. Victoria, the non-Jewish woman we met earlier, discussed how her social service organization in Montreal uses food as an effective educational tool to demystify Jews and foster deeper relationships between them and non-Jews. I spoke to Victoria via Zoom one winter day in March, and she discussed her organization's upcoming event for the Jewish holiday of Purim:

> *…this is very light-hearted, and I don't say this to kind of minimize, but seeing the rich traditions around food. So again, to come back to the annual challah… or we have a staff breakfast this week, and the question is, do we send everybody home with a bag of hamantaschen or do we just serve them at the party? So, there's this spirit of community that I think exists, from my perspective, within Jewish life, where we kind of use that, I would say, as the means to welcome people in. It's like, this is a space where people are welcome to join us.*

On the theme of holiday foods, Samantha, a university participant from Montreal, explained how, growing up, her and her mother would use Jewish foods to teach her non-Jewish classmates about Judaism:

> *So, we'd have a Hanukkah booth. And growing up, my mom and I would go to my elementary school for Chanukah, Purim, and Passover, and we'd teach all my classmates about the holidays, and we'd bring snacks. So, from a very young age, I had this duty, in a sense, knowing I was the only Jewish person, that it was my job to make people think that's cool and to learn about the holidays and the culture.*

Samantha raised a point about food that relates to the ideas of dignity and empowerment discussed in Chapter 5. Food is central to the Jewish experience, and so it can also be an excuse to bring Jews together and provide them comfort and familiarity in a setting, like a school

setting, where they may feel marginalized and unsafe. No matter the setting, food was consistently a fun and engaging tool that participants used to learn about Jews. Food-related events and activities created lasting, relatable impressions of Jews that ultimately helped non-Jews feel more familiar with and more trusting of Jews.

7.4 Conclusion

Almost every participant in this study discussed food to some extent. This chapter's discussion follows the previous chapter on creative, emotion-based, and experiential programming as a mediator of intergroup contact, social bonding, and relating. Food is an emotion-based and experiential category that participants explicitly discussed. Several discussed programming centred around food, such as Shabbat dinners or holiday celebrations, which in contrast, others referenced it in passing as an element of an event they attended, but it was important enough to note.

This chapter explored the role of food as both a mediator of intergroup contact and an enabler of relational skills development. It also examined food as something that targets the emotional cognitive underpinnings of prejudice and, I argue, antisemitism because it is typically a pleasant activity that offers people a safe entry point into intergroup engagement. Specifically, this chapter examined food as a motivator, a fun, experiential element, and an educational tool for dispelling misunderstandings about Jews. Food-related activities served as neutral experiences over which groups, like Jews and non-Jewish communities, could bond in a safe environment. All groups could relate to food because food is cross-cultural and a basic human need. Participants felt that food was a social safety blanket they could hold on to when they felt apprehensive or fearful during social encounters. Food, therefore, was not only an excuse or a means of bringing people together but also a tool for bonding over something relatable and safe,

through which they could understand and learn about each other's differences. They could relate to and feel similar over food-related activities, which helped reduce tension around certain aspects of identity, allowing them to refocus their identities on commonalities without erasing differences. Food was the universal, relatable aspect of the encounter, while the type of food (e.g., Jewish food) was the exposure to difference. Participants could learn about outgroup differences in a safer, more trusting environment and therefore come to see Jews as relatable rather than dangerous. When groups felt secure with each other, they bonded and developed relational skills, such as empathy, love, and compassion.

Food not only played a key role for most participants but specifically for the participants who I interviewed from universities. Food was particularly important in the university environment for facilitating interactions between Jews and non-Jews, and the following chapter will explore the different factors that both facilitated and inhibited intergroup contact between Jews and non-Jews in the university environment.

CHAPTER 8: THE CAMPUS DIFFERENCE

As discussed in previous chapters, temporal and geographic factors made a significant difference in this project's data. However, another aspect arose in the analysis regarding the setting: the university campus. Most of the participants in this study are not from university campuses. However, I spoke to several who were either students, faculty, or campus employees at different institutions across field sites. Although a few campus participants were non-Jewish allies, most identified as Jewish and their stories of being Jewish on their respective campuses echoed a tale long told for Jews in Canadian post-secondary institutions: their Jewish identities made them feel like open targets. The stories I heard from them reminded me of my grandfather, Harvey Hollinger, who aspired to attend medical school and become a physician. However, he had two obstacles: limited financial means that restricted his ability to attend medical school outside of Montreal and his Jewish identity. My father would recount that, for his father, medical school was almost an impossible feat because back during the 1950s, according to my grandfather, Jews had to be twice as good as non-Jews to gain admittance into McGill University's Faculty of Medicine. He succeeded in the end, gained admittance, and eventually became a specialist. However, his dream almost did not happen because, for several decades in the 20th century, McGill, like other major Canadian universities, placed quotas on the number of Jewish students it would admit into the medical school.[245] Thus, because McGill was the only school he could afford, he would never have become a physician and helped the many people he helped in the decades that followed.

My grandfather's history is one of several that offer a glimpse into the longstanding struggles of Jews to find welcome homes in Canadian institutions of higher learning. Participants

---

[245] Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada*, 70–74.

echoed his struggles and described how it was their Jewish identities specifically that they perceived as the sources of feeling isolated, targeted, and excluded from broader campus spaces and experiences. The university campus has and continues to be, evidently, a place of contention for Jews and a space in which Jews consistently describe overt hostility to their Jewishness.

The participants I interviewed shed light on this environment and how it differs significantly from non-university settings in the challenges it poses to fostering positive intergroup contact and outcomes and ultimately combatting antisemitism. Campuses have a notorious reputation as volatile environments for Jews, and participants repeatedly described anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric as the primary source of contemporary campus antisemitism, entwining with the left-leaning and social justice perspectives that tend to dominate campus discourses. These perspectives act as fuel for anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric that often leads to antisemitism.[246] The campus environment radically changed after October 7, 2023, following Hamas' attacks on Israel, as evidenced in interviews with campus participants. The hostility was felt even more strongly in Montreal due to ongoing political tensions in Quebec that had left Jewish members of campuses feeling perpetually isolated for being a minority group in the province. One-third to one-half of Montreal participants were from universities, and I conducted their interviews after October 7. It was evident that urgent attention is needed on how to combat antisemitism in this environment.

Regarding combatting antisemitism on campuses, the data demonstrated that, compared to non-campus spaces, similar strategies could be effective at building allyships on campus and

---

[246] See the Chapter 2 for a deeper discussion about this issue. Here, I am drawing the line with criticism and rhetoric that is one-sided and intentionally ignores pro-Israel or Zionist perspectives, is notably harsh, targets Jews explicitly or implicates Jews on campus, and/or clearly draws on historic and known anti-Jewish tropes and accusations uncritically.

creating environments of respect and empathy for Jews. These strategies, such as intergroup contact programming, are unfortunately lacking. The post-October 7 campus space only exacerbated common campus complaints. Still, this chapter primarily discusses main campus challenges because, again, they pre-existed October 7, 2023, and only became more apparent afterwards. This chapter, therefore, will not repeat the thematic analysis from previous chapters, except to highlight what was particularly prominent in the campus environment. There were a few differences in the campus environment that affected Jewish students and their efforts to fight antisemitism. These differences include: a pervasive ignorance and lack of knowledge about Jews; the gap in EDI policies and approaches that ignore antisemitism; faulty administrative systems; and shortcomings in allyships and partnerships. As discussed earlier, food was one of the main elements that strengthened campus allyships, and this chapter concludes with a discussion of food. It begins, however, by discussing the most significant challenges in the university campus context.

8.1 The Role of Ignorance

Participants noted several challenges for combatting antisemitism on university campuses but frequently noted ignorance as a barrier to building Jewish/non-Jewish relationships. Specifically, while they mentioned ignorance about antisemitism as being prevalent, participants discussed there being general ignorance about Jews. Still, ignorance about the former was evident based on our discussions about how the campus environment has continuously normalized antisemitic discourse. Ignorance contributed not only to a lack of understanding of Jewish identities and traditions but also to how Jews experience hate and why certain rhetoric is offensive.

Austin was the project's first interview, and we met on a spring day at a Sandy Hill café in Ottawa. He was a non-Jewish ally who worked for a Jewish campus organization and felt

deeply for the Jewish campus community. He described ignorance and anti-Jewish prejudice as reflective of a deeper problem: a lack of education. He explained: "…lots of the prejudice and ignorance does come from lack of education, especially." N., a Jewish student from Victoria who held a leadership position with a Jewish campus organization, added:

> *But if I were to think about and plan what I would want to do, I think that it would be most effective to talk to the people who are not necessarily Jewish, who are not necessarily right there because then most times what we see is most incidents are because people don't really know and/or use sources that are not very reliable and then they make assumptions that are not always true. So, it's mostly ignorance.*

Tal, the head of the same campus organization that N. supported, reinforced that ignorance on campuses was a main driving factor for antisemitism there:

> *…we work really closely with partner organizations like Stand With Us. They have Emerson Fellows, who are students who work for the organization. They do a one-year fellowship, and they specifically do Israel education and fighting antisemitism. So, they run programming on campus to educate people, kind of getting rid of some of the ignorance around Jews, which creates a lot of antisemitism.*

The timing of Tal's and N.'s interviews was peculiar because I spoke to them just days before the October 7 attacks. They described the reality for Jews on their campus as sometimes harsh, sometimes peaceful, but they said that anti-Jewish ideas underlay the discourses in that environment. What none of us knew at the time of our conversations was that university campuses were about to pivot to become what participants described as more overt antisemitic environments, and in Victoria, post-October 7 participants described their alarm at this fallout.

Ignorance was not only a student issue. Avishai, the employee at a Jewish campus organization in Montreal whom we met earlier, described how, at McGill University, ignorance about Jews and Israeli society bled into the faculty, threatening academic freedom and mobility for voices that were from Israel or supported Israel in any way:

> *Somehow, they found out that two of the professors being interviewed as potential candidates for the position were connected to Hebrew University. SPHR [Students for*

> *Palestinian Human Rights] opened this big thing. Let's show up, let's tell them to boycott Hebrew University. We can't have any professor or any connection. I studied at the Hebrew University for a semester last year. I can tell you, it is one of the places I've seen the greatest Jewish-Palestinian integration in Israel. I'm sure they're doing some stuff for the Israeli government, you can say, fine. Legitimately, you can disagree with that. But to just say that you have some connections to the university, which, I can tell you, there are so many people at Hebrew University that are extremely critical of Israel, of Zionism, actually. And they're [SPHR] saying no, let's boycott this.*

Avishai described a situation that several participants also discussed, which is that being supportive of Israel on campus was met with hostility and rejection. Julia, who worked with Avishai, added during our meeting at her office on a wintery day, offering a story about another way in which ignorance underlay much of the rhetoric on campus. This ignorance, as she described, took the form of over-generalization of Jews and Israel, portraying any actions by Israel that protesters did not like as being the responsibility of the global Jewish community, which we have seen is a hallmark feature of contemporary anti-Zionist rhetoric that can make it difficult to distinguish from antisemitism. She stated:

> *I've been seeing a little bit of it. Not a lot of it. It's happened maybe twice. Mostly because of the IDF [Israel Defence Forces] thing… Of a Magen David. I think the IDF is a little bit more of like this tricky spot right now because a lot of the protests and the anger from the SPHR protests and the other, the IJV [Independent Jewish Voices] protests and whoever else is protesting on campus, a lot of what they're protesting is directed towards the army and the military and what they're doing in Gaza. And they try to make a distinction between Jewish versus IDF, which I don't think they're doing a very good job at...*

Julia's example is illustrative of a common concern participants had that rhetoric about the Israel-Gaza war increasingly blended Jews with highly critical rhetoric about Israel. A lack of knowledge about the diversity of Jewish identity and Zionism only exacerbated the rhetoric and ideas that appeared to normalize hostile environments for Jews the university campuses.

Likewise, McGill University's Faculty of Medicine was apparently becoming an explicitly critical place for Jews, and specifically, there seemed to be numerous shortcomings

regarding ignorance about Jews and the complexities of Israeli and Zionist identities. James, a medical student at McGill, explained:

> *Okay, so notable incidents on the research side. So, for example, a postdoctoral fellow at one of the cancer research institutes at McGill posted over the course of two weeks after October 7, a huge litany of antisemitic and racist posts towards Jews, towards Israelis on Twitter, on his public Twitter… This got found out, and it went all the way up to the Dean. I met with the Dean… she basically said, Social media is very inflammatory by its nature, and we don't really see a problem with that. People have their free speech, and sorry that this upset you, but it's important to recognize that these sorts of things are inflammatory, so we just have to let it slide. And I said, Are you sure about that? Because when you let antisemitism slide, it generally doesn't go away, it just gets bigger and worse. She was like, Well, I don't know about that. So that was a little disconcerting.*

I encountered James at a synagogue event one evening in Montreal. His story of struggling with his Jewish identity at McGill's Faculty of Medicine reminded me of my grandfather's story, and I was interested to learn more about being Jewish in this faculty and whether his story reflected the historical realities of being Jewish at McGill. James had much to tell, and several quotes in this chapter are from his interview. Beyond enabling certain kinds of rhetoric to flourish unchecked, it is unclear exactly what role ignorance played in antisemitism broadly. However, the consequences of such ignorance could be manifest in various ways, and, as James and the others illustrated, can leave Jewish students feeling unsafe and vulnerable in diverse campus environments.

More research is needed into the link between ignorance and general antisemitism and whether it is primarily an exacerbating factor for antisemitism, or a main cause, is not well known currently. The data suggested that an overall lack of knowledge about Jews that exacerbated campus antisemitism. Addressing ignorance is challenging when its exact function is not well known, but, again, on campuses, programs that were effective in non-campus spaces were also effective there, according to participants. The previous chapters demonstrated that intergroup contact programs affected people's emotions, implying that logic and facts are not

necessarily what inspire or maintain antisemitic attitudes. Although more research is clearly needed about the psycho-social nature of antisemitism, ignorance was an issue on campuses, and so it clearly plays a role in maintaining antisemitism there.

When campus participants spoke about their intergroup encounters, they, too, described better relationships and social resiliency following safe encounters with one another. Intergroup contact and exposure was incredibly helpful both on and off campuses because they affect people's experiences, resonant emotions, and feelings of safety with Jews and Israel. The mechanisms are the same, so the strategies for creating lasting, resilient relationships between Jews and non-Jews should also be similar.

8.2 The Literal Triple Threat: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Campus participants described ignorance as a source of antisemitism on university campuses and, as a result, described feeling vulnerable and unprotected. They also frequently stated that equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) programs, employed by many institutions to create safer spaces for minority groups on campuses, should be resolving ignorance and antisemitism. However, they also frequently noted how many EDI programs were failing to address these issues. According to participants, at the time of data collection at least, EDI trainings and frameworks were excluding Jews and antisemitism. By excluding Jews from EDI programs, the fear was that institutions would normalize the idea that Jews cannot be victims of hate, nor that they are a legitimate, vulnerable minority on campuses. The concern was that when EDI programs ignore the ongoing rise of antisemitism and Jewish victimization in Canada, they normalize that antisemitism is not a valid form of hate and thus, expressing it is acceptable.[247]

---

[247] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024*, 9.

One participant, who chose to be identified as "Hillel Worker" (H.W.), when speaking about the University of Ottawa, discussed how the shortcomings in their EDI program were a significant barrier for non-Jews to understand antisemitism and feel empathy for Jews.[248] When discussing a meeting they had with the administration to address the lack of Jewish representation in the then-EDI programming, they felt frustrated by the ongoing lack of effort to address the issues their students were facing. They explained:

> *... So, in a meeting with the President, with the previous Head of Human Rights, with Jewish members of faculty, Jewish students, and Hillel as representative, they sat us down and they said, These are all the initiatives that the university has done in the EDI space and to help minority communities. And not one of them involved the Jewish population. ...I said, kind of bluntly, these are all really wonderful things that you have done. But you are sitting here in a room of Jewish people, and you cannot tell us one thing that you specifically have done for our community. So, we're now saying it's our time. You need to invest in us with this... And not too much has been done because the human rights [department] is being tied down by human rights law. And the other issue is the student government aspects, which the administration has said we have no control over. Unless we completely disband student government again, there's nothing we can do... So, by default, most people there are already not necessarily on our side. And they don't really want us there, nor do they think we have or deserve a place there. So, it's very intimidating for, especially a Jewish student, to enter an EDI space.*

H.W. expressed concern that by excluding Jews from the EDI program, the university would normalize that Jews cannot be helped as victims and thus, would continue to be put in danger. James, from McGill, added further concerns about EDI, Jews, and antisemitism:

> *...McGill spends about one minute during their three-day orientation on a slide disclosing that they had Jewish quotas. This is a three-day-long orientation for the med students at the beginning, where they… walk you through what med school will be like. They also have a one-hour presentation on things that the Faculty did badly back in the day, and they shouldn't do anymore, mostly focused on anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. And then they got one slide for one minute on anti-Jewish racism, and you never hear about it again for the rest of your degree, even though they have many interspersed modules about anti-Indigenous racism and anti-Black racism.*

---

[248] Like other institutions, I discuss EDI programs as they existed at the time of data collection. In the time since then, alterations and revisions to these programs may have occurred, but the broader concerns are what should be noted here.

James noted how the EDI program at McGill's Faculty of Medicine (FoM) focused on other forms of hate but minimized its focus on Jews, and when it discussed antisemitism. He illustrated the broader concern of Jewish campus participants that if antisemitism is excluded or minimized in educational programs to combat hate, others will not take it seriously and thus normalize its acceptability.

James also argued that the leadership of the FoM also lacks Jewish doctors and thus, Jewish voices in key decision-making roles that impact institutional attitudes towards antisemitism. In other words, there is a lack of counter-discourse to the harmful attitudes about Jews that he described in the FoM. What is unclear is whether this is intentional. He continued:

> *James*
> *I think that on the one hand, there's definitely no focus on Jewish racism and antisemitism at all in the curriculum. There are no lectures on it. There's no interest in it. No one will talk about it.*
>
> *Megan*
> *Why?*
>
> *James*
> *In my opinion, why? The leadership of the Faculty of Medicine is no longer Jewish… There's now a very strong push to hire at the department chair level and the dean level, BIPOC. You know, BIPOC hires, women hires, people who are somehow diverse in another way, but those people generally do not focus on anti-Jewish racism, and sometimes they have themselves views about Jews that are not so nice… So, if you won't define antisemitism, then who's making the determination? Is it some lawyer in your legal unit that may not be Jewish that's trying to look up antisemitism in the dictionary and then decide whether the thing that I said was antisemitic or not? Because it's Jews who decide what's antisemitism. And they said, No, we don't have any definition for any forms of racism or harassment. We don't have a definition for anti-Black racism either. But that's usually more clear-cut than antisemitism. If someone has a picture of a noose, that's anti-Black racism. No one will argue that it's not, but people will argue that certain things are or aren't antisemitism much more than they will about anything else. It's not set up, and I think there's also a lot of apathy at the institutional level in leadership to deal with anything related to antisemitism… definitely a lack of inclusion, for starters, of Jewish people in the EDI umbrella, which I'm sure you're finding a lot of people saying...*

For participants like James, part of the issue was that EDI tends to focus heavily on BIPOC groups that are considered to fit dominant narratives of who can be oppressed, but by excluding Jews and antisemitism, EDI programs risk reinforcing the idea that Jews are unworthy of being a legitimate victimized minority group. Participants were concerned that EDI programs, as they stand now, may be reinforcing antisemitic narratives and tropes of Jewish power and supremacy.

We know from sociological research on diversity, particularly Steven Vertovec's work on super-diversity, that in multifaceted, diverse environments, prejudice operates across various relational dynamics. Using Great Britain as a case study, Vertovec describes the evolving dynamics of prejudice in super-diverse societies. He refers to this as "New patterns of inequality and prejudice," and explains that in super-diverse societies, the majority group can express prejudice towards minorities, but minorities can also express prejudice towards the majority. Prejudice also exists between minority groups in the same host society.[249] We know sociologically that the binary model of oppressor and oppressed inadequately describes the complex social environments in which competing groups coexist. Returning to the previous section on ignorance, clearly, a lack of understanding about Jews and Jewish identity, as well as a lack of understanding about what counts as antisemitism, creates deeper problems for the safety and well-being of Jews on campuses.

Anti-Zionist rhetoric, which participants noted as being the most common form of harmful rhetoric in the current campus environment, is particularly tricky to isolate as problematic because criticizing a state or state apparatus can be fair in democratic societies like Canada that prioritize the free flow of information. Participants considered criticism of Israeli

---

[249] Steven Vertovec, "Super-Diversity and Its Implications," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 6 (2007): 1045, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870701599465.

policies and military actions against Israel to be fair and unproblematic in and of themselves. However, they also noted that university campus discourses often extended beyond political criticism and drew on age-old anti-Jewish tropes, stereotypes, and accusations in their critiques. If institutions were to begin incorporating Jews and antisemitism into their EDI programs, they would have to account for these nuances but may not be equipped or prepared to facilitate volatile conversations on campuses. I argue that it is dangerous to exclude Jews from EDI frameworks because, to do so, as the data suggests, risks normalizing the idea that Jews are not victims and that anti-Jewish rhetoric is not offensive. The goal is not eliminate all rhetoric or determine a hard line. Rather, the data suggests that the goal should be to understand the ways that Jews feel unsafe in campus spaces and consider how to include those perspectives into EDI trainings so that the rhetoric does not become so normative that more explicit statements become acceptable.

8.3 Red Tape and a Lack of Infrastructure for Combatting Antisemitism

Another challenge that arose in the interviews was the presence of administrative red tape and a lack of infrastructure to enable administrators to adequately address antisemitism on university campuses. By lack of administrative infrastructure, I am referring to the fact that campuses had inadequate or vague policies and insufficient knowledge about what to do when an incident occurred, as declared by several participants.[250] Participants also described a lack of empowered administrators who could and would thoroughly respond to antisemitic incidents. At specific institutions, such as Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, and McGill University, the

[250] Both administrators and students, participants stated, shared this lack of knowledge about how to respond to antisemitic incidents when they happened.

problem was that if students did not report the incident correctly or to the right office, the university would not record it, would not have it on file, and thus would not follow up or respond. It was clear from participants that campuses should implement more robust reporting structures, clearer reporting guidelines, and more thorough training for administrative staff on addressing antisemitism so that, at the very least, Jewish members of campus can feel supported.

In the university system, participants described a lack of resources and infrastructure to combat antisemitism, Fiona explained during her discussion about the lack of resources at the University of Victoria to fight antisemitism. I spoke to Fiona on Zoom in the afternoon, and her strong spirit to advocate for the well-being of Jewish students was apparent during our conversation. She said:

> *There is no coordinator; there was a paid position by the university, and that person left, and it hasn't been filled yet. So, there's no admin, and there's nobody at the building that is actually a staff member, so there's nobody coordinating anything except for the person who's the Spiritual Care Coordinator, and he sends out messages to us. Right? But he is working, of course, inside a system where he has no power… a cohesive social media and communication strategy, there is none.*

Avishai, discussing campuses in Montreal, expressed similar frustrations:

> *McGill has something called the Office of Mediation and Reporting. Concordia has something similar. Both of them have ombuds people; you can go to mediate. So, it's just super important that the students… take their issue to the relevant people at their university or at their CEGEP. Because what happens is, we have all this data of stuff that's happened. But then we go to universities, and we say we have 25 incidents, this happened, that happened, and they're like, What do you mean? We have nothing about it. No one ever told us this had happened. So, without the reporting, there's a disconnect, and you can't actually expect any action to be taken.*

Catherine added to Fiona and Avishai's point about infrastructural limitations, noting a broader issue with a deprioritization of managing diversity in constructive ways, in this case, at McGill: "I think the limitation is that we just don't have the time to do justice to all the diversity [inaudible] internally." I met Catherine ne March morning at her office on McGill's campus. It

was a quiet and contemplative environment, which matched her energy. Catherine's job was to facilitate multifaith programming for students of diverse backgrounds to partake in together. Her work resembled the creative and experiential intergroup contact programming explored in earlier chapters and she described this work as being effective for diffusing tensions between competing outgroups on campus. She continued her conversation about managing campus diversity by stating that there are spaces on campus, such as her department and the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, that actively challenge these approaches and create environments in which diverse students can engage in an inclusive and welcoming way. It was implied in the conversations with campus participants that spaces like Catherine's were not well known, and so they may need more publicity and resources to broaden their reach to have a greater impact on Jewish/non-Jewish campus relationships.

Julia, a Jewish student leader from Montreal whom I met in her office one afternoon, also highlighted the lack of campus infrastructure for adequately addressing antisemitism, but noted how the infrastructure for addressing broader hate on campuses was lacking as well:

> *...I think there's something lacking—100%. I think there are statements that are lacking. I think that the university's support is lacking. I don't think that they have done enough to support their Jewish students and putting more regulations in place to make sure that this isn't happening on campus. They see the incident reports coming in, and I'm not just talking about antisemitism. I'm talking about Islamophobia, too. They're seeing everything happen on campus. They have not put in any proper regulations on campus for any of this to stop, and we made suggestions on all fronts for them to be helpful, and the only thing they'll say on campus and in their emails is, We acknowledge this, and we are here to support our students. ... I think that the school needs to do a better job at supporting and protecting their students, all their students, not just the Jewish students, all their students. I think they need to do a better job at putting out statements that actually have actionable items, not just words. Big words that mean nothing.*

Nora, who worked for the same campus organization as Julia and Avishai, added to these concerns by bringing up how her Jewish campus organization also had, in addition to the lack of university resources, a lack of its own resources to carry on its fight against antisemitism:

> *So the administrators, while they generally are partners, while we generally have good relationships with them, they're only willing to do so much because they say their hands are tied… I have a Campus Manager at Concordia, a Campus Manager at McGill, and last semester, I had a CEGEP Campus Manager doing four CEGEPS, and she gave her notice; she's not here. McGill, on its own, should have a minimum of three or four people. We're so understaffed.*

Julia and Nora highlighted a broader issue: universities are not addressing the root causes of campus hate, and Jews are left with very few tools to carry the weight of the fight on their own. Nora explained that the paradigm has always been that Jewish students, faculty, and their organizations are left alone to fight antisemitism.

Numerous participants also remarked that as Jews, they felt ostracized and vilified, especially after October 7, when there was a considerable spike in the anti-Israel and anti-Zionist discourses that already permeated campuses. Participants implied that these discourses consistently crossed the line into antisemitism. However, simplifying or removing barriers to reporting and representation may not address the root problems that underpin the rhetoric that made participants feel unsafe and the lack of due diligence by administrations to better understand these complicated forms of rhetoric only reinforced its power. Hillel Worker (H.W.) said:

> *And so, a lot of how I've grown my relationship with the university administration is… because there was this huge outcry from the Jewish community about the huge amount of antisemitism exploding on campus, especially with the last war... And during Covid, and it all moved online, the community was panicked. They really didn't know what to do and finally got up high enough to administration. And the administration said, Well, this doesn't make any sense because if we look at our records, there's been one incident of antisemitism reported over the last five years. And we said, Okay, everybody, hang on a second. So, this is a lot of the work that I've been doing in the last three years behind the scenes. But okay, where are you reporting? Where are we reporting? Where is this disconnect happening? So, educating the administration on the fact that, first of all, students aren't reporting because they don't know where to go. We found out they're supposed to go to the Human Rights Office. Once you bring a complaint to the Human Rights Office, you either need to make it an official complaint, you need to open an investigation, and you need to sign your name to it. And if you're not willing to do that, the Human Rights Office is not willing to help you.*

H.W. recounted a common frustration among participants that because of the unclear, confusing, or outright lacking support services for Jews on campuses, Jews in turn felt unrepresented, unsafe, and, ultimately, alone in their experiences.

Red tape was not only an issue administratively. With regard to social strategies, there were challenges in implementing intergroup programming on campus, and logistical difficulties were among the most frequently noted by participants. While describing coordinating collaborative events with other campus groups, Tal addressed the logistical challenges that go along with organizing these types of events:

> *... whether that was with exams, or they just weren't interested, or they had personal stuff going on, I don't know. But we've tried to run a number of events like that. That was just a good example of why we don't run as many as I would like, because you can talk to them a month, a month and a half in advance, and it's still not enough notice for them. And then things fall through, and they had other plans...*

Organizing events on campus could be difficult because of the various parties' scheduling conflicts or competing priorities, and resource limitations implied social red tape.

Despite the obvious barriers to remedying campus antisemitism, what worked in social spaces where it was low or did not exist were the same preventive and proactive strategies, like intergroup contact, that I discussed in previous chapters. Again, these strategies include bond formation and encouraging positive relational values and skills towards Jews, such as empathy, love, respect, and compassion. With social strategies, the same theory applies on campus as off campus, so I will not repeat previous discussions in detail here; though, they are worth mentioning because answers might lie in those ideas. Ideally, in conjunction with proactive social strategies, campus administrations may consider normalizing a sense of responsibility and accountability among Jewish campus members by improving access to existing infrastructure and strengthening existing tools. The data suggest that more proactive strategies encouraging

greater inclusion and empathy toward Jews on campus, in conjunction with stronger reactive strategies that respect the free flow of speech and ideas in the academic environment, are the winning formula. The following two sections further discuss the proactive strategies that the data showed to be particularly effective in the campus context.

8.4 Allyships and Partnerships: The Missing Pieces

Earlier, I discussed how social bonds were key to combatting antisemitism on campuses, and the specific types of relationships that were essential in this context were allyships and partnerships. In this section, I discuss the main challenges to relationship formation in the university environment. Although they were identified as essential for the same reasons discussed in previous chapters, several barriers prevalent on campus often prevented their formation. Referring to the Jewish campus organization he worked for, Austin explained the significance of campus allyships and partnerships for combatting antisemitism: “So, when they do have something that pops up, possibly like in a student general assembly, and they might, for example, pass or want to pass BDS, it's so much harder for us to rally people when we don't have those connections anymore like we used to.” Like Austin, Samantha spoke to me about allyship formation through her organization that brings together different Jewish and non-Jewish groups to make challah bread, after which they donate the proceeds raised to Montreal charities of neutral community interest:

> *But again, it's hard to get enough people to show up to those events and to market these events to people who may not be interested in bridging that gap. Once people are there, I 100% see people are just happy and comfortable in the environment, and they grab their challah at the end, they're like, Oh my God, I did this. Look at how beautiful it turned out. But it's getting people there. That's the main issue.*

Samantha noted the logistical challenge of arranging intergroup events on campus, specifically enticing people to attend. However, once people attended, they had a wonderful time and gained

a positive lived experience in a Jewish context. Because the activity involved braiding challah and there was no direct discussion of Israel or tense subject matter, students could learn constructively about Jewish culture, and, as I discussed in earlier chapters, develop feelings of safety and trust. About his campus organization in Montreal, Avishai added: “So, I feel like our partnerships and our allyships at this point are quite limited. I actually wish it were more. And I think it's something that is really more important than ever now. It's also something that we both probably didn't dedicate as many resources to over the past few years as we should have...”

Austin, Samantha, and Avishai all noted that, at the time of data collection, their organizations lacked non-Jewish allyship and were struggling to entice non-Jews to engage with Jews on campus. However, participants noted another, more ideological challenge to holding intergroup events. The following is again a quote from Austin, in which he spoke to me about Israel and Zionism as a main source of tension and how these ideologies and frameworks are salient in the campus environment and tend to fuel antisemitism, ultimately affecting allyship formation:

> *I mean, again, a lot of the time, campuses are more like a space where more left-wing ideologies are kind of projected, and a lot of that comes with being anti-Zionist, but sometimes they'll make it completely clear, Oh, we're against Israel and Zionism but not Judaism, which is very interesting to me. Because for me, you can't be anti-Italian without hating Italians.*

There is an issue on campuses concerning Israel, and participants described a broader issue where many non-Jewish people and organizations struggled with treating Israel-centred and/or Jewish events as worthy of respect and inclusion. Fiona from Victoria explained this struggle on her campus:

> *I send something, and I'll say, "Please share this event that's going on at the Jewish Community Centre.” I didn't read it well enough, and there was one line in it that said, Israel will prevail, and therefore it could not be sent out because it might offend somebody else. So, my message, which could not go out, fine, I get that, I understand it*

> *from a political perspective, but right now tonight, in the Multifaith Centre, without permission, because we don't know how it's happening, there is a shawarma event fundraiser for Palestinians.*

Because Fiona's event, which was not explicitly a pro-Israel event, could be construed by some as political, it could not be held in the Multifaith Centre. However, a similar type of event that was in support of Palestinians was held, and so her concern was anti-Jewish or anti-Israel bias led to a double standard for Jews and not other groups. After October 7, Jewish campus clubs described feeling abandoned by non-Jewish groups and campus administrations. Even though these clubs tend to explicitly support Israel, I was frequently told that it was also Jewish events not explicitly centred around Israeli programming, like holiday celebrations and meals, that were difficult to get non-Jews to engage in.

There is another consideration relevant to bridging divides in university spaces. Because this thesis examined antisemitism reduction in the context of Jewish and non-Jewish relationship-building, it did not pay as much attention to understanding misconceptions amongst Jews about non-Jews. One question that emerged from this study was: How do we encourage interaction between Jews and non-Jews with the goal of developing resilient relationships? This question was particularly relevant in the university space, where, according to several participants, tensions have become a regular feature of the Jewish experience. We know food was a key motivator that enticed Jews and non-Jews to connect because it piqued curiosity and gave participants a relatable experience to engage with each other. As in off-campus social spaces, experiential and creative events accomplished the goal. Still, two relevant questions that emerge from this study are whether Jewish students also face barriers to engaging with non-Jewish students and, if so, how we can encourage Jews to engage with and build trust with non-Jews in the campus environment and challenge preconceived notions.

The aforementioned question about how to encourage Jews to open up to non-Jews is an important issue to consider in future research on campus antisemitism, as there could be Jews who carry their own prejudices and reservations about non-Jewish communities that inhibit them from engaging in bridge-building work with non-Jews. A lack of contact between Jews and non-Jews, as we have seen throughout this thesis, erodes trust-building and exposure that are crucial to building relationships that withstand times of tension. While these concerns also matter in off-campus social spaces, this chapter has shown that university campuses present ever-present challenges that require separate consideration.[251]

The perceived lack of response to anti-Zionist rhetoric on campuses that participants frequently noted relates to this broader question of creating empathy between Jews and non-Jews on campuses, and James from McGill offered a story about the Dean of Medicine's perceived lack of action on anti-Jewish rhetoric that made Jewish students in the Faculty of Medicine feel isolated and threatened. He said: "She [was] completely flabbergasted because their worldview is not capable of dealing with this kind of very politicized, very aggressive behaviour." Campus

---

[251] How do we encourage Jews to feel safe opening up their social spaces to non-Jews to understand them better as well? Although this has not been qualitatively explored in greater depth in Canada, there are examples we can consider as starting points. One such example is Randal Schnoor's group, "Bridging the Gap" at York University. Started in 2019 by a group of York University students and restarted in 2023 by Schnoor, this group seeks to create a safe space for respectful dialogue between students wanting to work through the Israel-Hamas conflict. Seeing as Schnoor's group is a more prominent example of this kind of bridge-building work, more research is evidently needed to understand how to bridge divides between Jews and specific non-Jewish groups in tense spaces such as university campuses. One concern arising from the present study that is relevant here is that many participants on and off-campus noted that talking about tense subjects in the early stages of bridge-building work was counterproductive to relationship-building. The intriguing part about Schnoor's group is that it may highlight how context-specific programming can be effective because it creates "buy-in" from all parties by catering to their interests, which, in the case of "Bridging the Gap," include dialoguing and working through political points of tension. As we saw earlier with the dialogue programs in Montreal, the type of program that works in a particular setting may work precisely because it is tailored to the participants, making it more attractive to their interests. For more information on Schnoor's group, please see Anna Sirizzotti, "'Bridging the Gap' in a World Growing Further Apart," *Excalibur*, March 13, 2026, https://www.excal.on.ca/news/2026/03/13/bridging-the-gap-in-a-world-growing-further-apart/.

participants repeatedly noted a hostile anti-Jewish environment both before and especially after October 7, 2023. The campus climate after October 7 created the social conditions that made forming allyships and partnerships difficult, which leaves the question of whether it was possible that the relational foundations and values, such as love, empathy, and compassion between Jews and non-Jews were not strongly developed before October 7. More data are needed in this area to fully explore the limitations of intergroup contact both within and outside of campuses so that social relationships can be more likely to withstand volatile political moments.

8.5 But Wait! There's Food (and Fun)

The previous sections discussed the different barriers to creating stronger allyships and partnerships between Jews and non-Jews on university campuses across Canada, which the data suggest are essential for reducing anti-Jewish rhetoric and actions in this type of social space. However, what enticed non-Jews on campus to engage with Jews was similar to what worked off campus: food and ultimately, experiential events. I note food first because it was particulary powerful in this environment and I argue that the exact mechanisms by which food-related or experiential programming affects people's emotional and cognitive mechanisms were positively impacted in campus spaces. Food and creative and experiential programs are neutral activities that refocus participants' attention when they're in a shared space, thereby reducing their dependence on competing identities and the tensions surrounding them, such as religion and ethnicity.

Food and experiential events also had other properties that profoundly and positively impacted Jewish/non-Jewish relationships on campus, particularly for students. As some participants suggested, free food, free swag, and free anything drew young people to participate. Students were frequently drawn to free options, especially because they needed expensive

resources, such as food, but did not have much cash to spend. Low barriers to participation, such as access to free resources or availability of activity materials, was necessary in campus scenarios in which Jews and non-Jews willingly engaged with each other. Additionally, tactile, experiential components were key factors for facilitating successful bridge-building because they recategorize people's identities in shared social spaces.[252] The underlying mechanism in these cases was that food, experiences, and accessible resources (e.g., free swag), elicited positive emotional resonance about Jews among non-Jews.

How else did campus participants increase positive emotional resonance with Jews? First, participants applied a discrete advocacy or soft advocacy approach in their outreach to non-Jews, and this approach involved public tabling (such as having a table our during a clubs fair) or programming related to something about Israel or Jews. With discreet or soft advocacy, the outreach was less direct and more about allowing people to engage on their own terms. When a person engaged, they were given something tangible that helped them have a positive experience related to Israel and/or Jews. For example, some Ottawa and Victoria participants described offering Israeli snacks to non-Jews, which not only motivated non-Jews to engage with Jewish campus organizations (because of the free food) but also helped them develop a positive experience with Jews and/or Israel.

When it came to hosting conversations about Israel, participants noted that softer, less forceful or aggressive approaches were indeed more effective for encouraging the campus public to engage respectfully and considerately on the matter. Through food (such as an Israeli snack item) and other tangible items, participants fostered positive emotional resonance, helping people feel safer participating in conversations about Israel. According to participants, the free food or

---

[252] Please see the previous two chapters about creative and experiential programming and food.

tangible item would often start conversations. Again, we see food and experience working as motivators for engagement, and as builders of trust and familiarity. H.W. provided an example from her campus organization in Ottawa: “So that kind of level stuff, just to open the door… and sometimes the snacks we hand out, like Israeli snacks, so maybe this person's now had a positive interaction with Israel, that they see those snacks in the store and say, Oh cool!” N., from Victoria, discussed a similar strategy that her Victoria Jewish campus organization regularly did to entice non-Jews to have positive encounters with them:

> *So, what I'm getting is when you do these softer approaches to educating about Israel, it's not necessarily that you put an Israeli flag out, and you're like, This is the geography of Israel, this is Israel, blah, blah, blah. Is it more like you use something that's from Israel, like the gratitude days or that concept, and people come, and they learn... I guess you invite them in through other things like food or this or that, and they learn that this is a really cool concept, and it actually comes from Israel. So, it's almost like exposure to Israeli culture.*

Soft and indirect approaches do not rest on preaching or converting people's opinions, which I noted in previous chapters, can discourage people from feeling safe engaging with outgroups; instead, these approaches engage non-Jews to partake in healthy conversations and learn different perspectives about Jews, Israel, and Zionism. Free food and creative activities helped facilitate these efforts, created understanding, and challenged perceptions.

Every participant noted that if you gave somebody a positive emotional experience in the Jewish or Israeli context, they felt more comfortable letting their guard down and being open-minded to alternative perspectives. When people felt positive, they were more willing to learn and challenge their preconceived notions. The primary mechanism, therefore, was people's emotions. The process of healthier engagement first affected people’s hearts, then their logical minds, when they felt safe, trusting, and comfortable during the encounter. I argue that, like in off-campus social spaces, if people feel safe, comfortable, and trusting of Jews, they feel ready to

become socially vulnerable and open themselves up to difference and uncomfortable conversations. The significance of food and creative/experiential programming in the campus environment can be explained by their emotional and social properties. As N. continued: “So once they have that connection, and they see that on a personal level, they enjoy our food, they enjoy our company, and that creates a better image because when they see on social media any kind of crazy [thing], it raises a question, right?” David, a chaplain I met through outreach to the University of Victoria’s Multifaith Centre, added: “But you know, you change hearts one person at a time... So even if one person goes, Oh [inaudible], I went to this Jewish celebration, and this is what I learned, and that was great, etc.…” When I completed the campus interviews, I realized that there were more challenges to combatting antisemitism than positives in the campus environment. But, like David and several others said, that slowly, over time, and through positive encounters with Jews, non-Jews may develop healthier perceptions or feelings about Jews in campus environments.

8.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I explored combatting antisemitism in university campus environments and demonstrated that the primary difference between campus and non-campus spaces is the challenges that Jewish students, faculty, and administration experience. These challenges included issues such as pervasive ignorance about Jews, Zionism, and Israel, as well as limitations with EDI programs that more often than not excluded Jews and antisemitism from their materials. The resulting risk was that these exclusions may normalize the idea that Jews cannot be victims of hate, and thus diminish the significance of antisemitism on campuses as a real problem that needs addressing. Lastly, participants noted that administrative red tape and a

general lack of resources for fighting antisemitism and prejudice on campuses were significant barriers to improving safety for Jews on campuses.

Despite the challenges prevalent on campuses, social strategies worked well for improving Jews/non-Jews relationships and relational skills, just as they were off campuses. Specifically, campus participants described allyships and partnerships as key to making Jewish campus members feel safer. They also noted food as a significant factor for reducing hostility towards Jews in campus spaces because it mediated contact by incentivizing student engagement with Jews, because campuses are social environments in which people often struggle to meet basic needs (such as accessing proper food). The main lesson from the campus data is that social and experiential approaches work well in the campus environment because they address the root social and emotional mechanisms of fractured relationships so that Jews and non-Jews can learn to feel safe with each other and different perspectives so that academic freedom, integrity, and outgroup safety can remain key pillars of the academic environment.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined intergroup contact theory as a strategy for combatting antisemitism and improving Jewish/non-Jewish relations in Canada. Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT) posits that continuous, positive, and structured contact between competing outgroups has great potential to lessen prejudice. Why did I choose to examine this approach, though? As I noted previously, my master's research on combatting antisemitism in Canada suggests that legal strategies may be an inadequate solution because of the various systemic and interpretive limitations built into its method that cannot adequately address the myriad ways that Jews experience hate.[253]

The rise of antisemitism in Canada over the last decade, and notably the concerning spike since October 7, 2023, demonstrates the ongoing necessity of this research more than ever.[254] Turning to the literature on antisemitism for guidance, one finds a disappointingly large absence of extensive empirical studies that evaluate different strategies for combatting it. Legal strategies often act as reactive solutions that only sometimes punish individuals for expressing antisemitic attitudes. Educational strategies predominantly target facts and logic. However, we see most antisemitic incidents and hate crimes arising primarily from the social sphere in the everyday interactions and attitudes amongst individuals. Thus, searching for and exploring social strategies, such as intergroup contact, is fruitful because these strategies tend to address social and relational mechanisms. The goal of this study was to see if social strategies targeted antisemitism's presumed deeper social roots, which, because of the social context in which we see antisemitism arising, I suspect influence the persistence of antisemitism. I searched the

---

[253] Hollinger, "Legal Responses to Antisemitism: Legal Discourse and Anti-Jewish Hate in Contemporary Canada," 16.
[254] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024*, 18; see also B'nai Brith Canada's *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents* 2017-2024.

literature on combatting prejudice for leads and found one in social psychology, which suggested that ICT had the highest potential for combatting prejudice generally. However, few of these studies had been conducted about Jews and antisemitism, and so the question of whether intergroup programming, such as interfaith events and activities, would work to fight it. This thesis addressed a significant gap in the literature on antisemitism and contributed to the growing body of work on ICT by offering a deeper examination of an under-researched form of hate.

To better understand how ICT could be applied to antisemitism in Canada, I conducted qualitative interviews in Ottawa, ON, Victoria, BC, and Montreal, QC. These geographical selections affected the results insofar as different social dynamics in each location shaped how Jews related to non-Jews, both historically and in the present. Each location has unique histories, politics, and socio-cultural factors that have continuously influenced Jewish and non-Jewish interactions and perceptions of each other. Again, the questions that guided the study were as follows:

1. What are effective social strategies and approaches to combat antisemitism across Canada that are outside the scope of law?
2. What about these strategies works, and what does not?
3. What is being done at the ground level to promote inclusion, navigate diversity, and foster positive interactions between Jews and non-Jews in Canada?

The data demonstrated that social strategies such as intergroup contact programming have the potential to mitigate antisemitism in Canada over the long term because of how they target and affect anti-Jewish ideas, assumptions, and actions. These types of strategies affect the emotional and beliefs-based areas of the mind, social relationships and perceptions, and resemble the root cognitive and emotional mechanisms that, this thesis has also suggested, underpin many antisemitic prejudices in individuals and groups. Various themes emerged from a broader analysis of the data and suggested why and how intergroup contact can be effective for

combatting antisemitism in a deeper and longer-term way. The following section summarizes these findings.

Summary of Findings

Social bonds and relationships emerged as the most prevalent theme in the data. Participants discussed different types of relationships in the interviews, but personal connections and friendships seemed to have particular significance. Relationships served as a basis for developing trust, safety, and familiarity between Jews and non-Jews. As the parties involved in the intergroup contact programming (e.g., art events or holiday celebrations and meals) deepened their relationships, prejudice seemed to lessen, aligning with ICT. The trust, safety, and familiarity underlying the relationships provided more resilience against antisemitism or difficult moments, such as the post-October 7 climate. However, relationships in and of themselves were not sufficient to fight antisemitism. Rather, they were a key component. Relationships had more potential and resilience when underpinned by certain relational factors and values.

One such relational value that was integral to relationships in which participants declared antisemitism to be low or non-existent was empathy. As we saw, ICT suggests that one of the most significant outcomes of intergroup contact is empathy development between competing outgroups. The data in his study clearly demonstrated that empathy development, perspective-taking, and relating were vital components of successful relationships between Jews and non-Jews that withstood tough times. Other factors, such as love, respect, kindness, and support, were also key and enhanced empathy formation in participants. When participants prioritized empathy and other relational factors and values, they helped create social environments in which they could learn to trust each other more deeply and feel safe engaging with people they might otherwise perceive as different and even socially threatening.

Social psychologists discuss various reasons why prejudice exists, but one of the primary theories is Intergroup Threat Theory, which suggests that ingroups, defined by a particular characteristic such as religion or ethnicity, perceive outgroups whose identities do not match their own as potential threats.[255] This is an instinctual pattern related to social categorization, but through relationship-building based on relational values such as empathy, love, and agonistic respect, competing groups, such as Jews and non-Jews, can learn to trust each other and feel safer engaging with outgroup differences. The idea is that when the social conditions are present for relational trust to form through relationship-building and empathy development, relationships can be longer-lasting and deeper because they are built on healthy social foundations. Safety and familiarity are key because they enable outgroups to trust that intergroup similarities exist and, thus, that engaging with the outgroup will not adversely affect their own identities. And so, what the intergroup contact activities and events did for participants was target deeper social, emotional, and cognitive mechanisms, suggesting also that these might be fueling antisemitism.

As with relationships and relational values, the data also suggested that dignity, group empowerment, and collective self-esteem helped Jews and non-Jews feel more comfortable engaging with one another. Vulnerability and comfort opening to potential social threats underpinned this concept and prioritizing dignity as a primary social value in intergroup interactions facilitated this. Group empowerment and collective self-esteem manifested differently across locations. In Ottawa, participants spoke about collective empowerment and self-esteem when discussing non-Jewish groups and the broader Ottawa community, a pattern that correlated with the prevalence of Jewish/non-Jewish bridge-building work in the city. In Montreal, this theme appeared in the opposite way, in that its Jewish community, an already

---

[255] Stephan and Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," 28–42.

incredibly insular community, understood collective empowerment and self-esteem as being about Jewish identity and being proud to be Jewish. Unlike in Ottawa, most of Montreal's Jews, despite hailing from different Jewish movements and cultural backgrounds, prioritized a strong sense of Jewishness over intergroup contact. Finding intergroup contact initiatives in Montreal was incredibly difficult and outward engagement was not as high a priority there, reflecting community identity and priorities.

We know that, at least according to records, for several years, Ontario and Quebec have tended to experience the highest levels of antisemitism in Canada.[256] This begs the question of whether strong outward engagement, but a lack of a cohesive collective identity, such as in Ottawa, was a contributing factor to more antisemitism because intra-community resilience may be lower. Likewise, could the other end of the spectrum, such as in Montreal, where you had a strong collective Jewish identity but a lack of outward engagement, be another contributing factor because of the lack of exposure between Jews and non-Jews? Because these questions require further research beyond the scope of this thesis, the project could not fully address them. However, Victoria's Jewish community provided some possible insight that could be the subject of fascinating future research.

For Victoria's Jewish community, collective Jewish identity and self-esteem within that identity coexisted with noticeable comfort in engaging with non-Jews. This "dual approach" was interesting because it highlighted how Victorian Jews felt comfortable engaging with non-Jews, but were also proud of their Jewish identities without compromising on either component. In a region where Jewish integration has been relatively easy compared to communities in Ontario and Quebec, and when self-esteem in Jewishness is more open and worn with pride, antisemitism

---

[256] See B'nai Brith Canada's *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents* 2017-2024.

may lack the social conditions under which it can flourish because certain mechanisms do not exist in this setting. In other words, when Victoria's Jewish community had a collective sense of self-esteem about who they were, they seemed more resilient to negativity towards their identity and thus felt safer putting themselves out there and engaging with non-Jews. Of course, one cannot exclude the other conditions unique to Victoria and the West that may have contributed to the Jewish community's smooth integration and greater sense of safety when engaging with non-Jews, but these factors may have enabled Jews to develop collective self-esteem and a sense of safety in vulnerability and exposure.[257] All of this suggests that collective self-esteem and comfort in outward engagement with non-Jews may play a key role in building trust and safety with other groups, in turn increasing the likelihood of intergroup contact and of relationships built on healthy foundations.

In addition to the social findings, and considering the social, emotional, and cognitive components of intergroup contact already discussed, it is important to link them to a broader finding about the nature of antisemitism that arose from this research. Broader knowledge about the mechanisms of antisemitism is severely lacking in antisemitism studies, and I argue that without this knowledge, fighting antisemitism effectively is difficult, if not impossible. This study demonstrated that, across all field locations, the programming, activities, and events that Jews and non-Jews engaged in had one thing in common, even the education and dialogue initiatives, and that was that they all involved some sort of interactive, experiential, or creative component that elicited emotional responses in participants. Across almost all 54 interviews in this study, participants described the feelings they experienced through their participation in

[257] For more discussion of the factors that may have contributed to less overt antisemitism in Victoria and British Columbia, please see Chapter 1.

these programs. In fact, when they cited learning about each other through intergroup contact, the learning outcomes were always preceded by positive emotional experiences. This suggests that emotions play a stronger role in attracting people into antisemitic ideologies than we previously assumed, and the strategies that affect people's feelings and emotions around social experiences with Jews might be the key to why these events were so effective when they were successful in building lasting, resilient relationships.

In many cases, participants talked about attending interfaith dinners, such as interfaith Shabbat dinners, or cultural programming featuring ethnic or cultural dishes that brought together guests from various religious and ethnic backgrounds. There were also arts programs, such as an arts devotional, an art contest, several holiday celebrations, and all sorts of events in which Jews and non-Jews collaborated on projects that made them feel positive. Nearly all 54 participants discussed food-related events, such as meals, collaborative cooking activities, or food production for charitable initiatives. This world-repairing work brought Jews and non-Jews together in ways that enabled them to relate through shared activities and community goals, such as supporting a charitable initiative or sharing a meal. Because food is universally accessible, it seemed that participants were able to hold something familiar to help mediate contact that might otherwise have been uncomfortable. The experiential and food-related activities facilitated agonistic respect as participants mutually navigated their differences in compassionate and empathetic ways. Food-related events and creative or experiential events more broadly were mediators of successful intergroup contact.

All the components above work together to support healthier social spaces in which Jews and non-Jews can build relationships built on positive, healthy relational values, and thus more resilience against antisemitism. As this study strongly suggests, it is challenging to create social

spaces in which antisemitism is low or non-existent without creating opportunities for positive coexistence between Jews and non-Jews, and without healthy social spaces that encourage deeper, healthier relationships. Going forward, I recommend that a mandatory goal of intergroup contact initiatives should be to encourage Jews and non-Jews to develop positive emotional resonances with each other. Ideally, Jews and non-Jews should increase engagement in mutually safe spaces where they can build positive emotional connections and where non-Jews can form positive associations with Jewish people through lived experience. Still, it is difficult to determine the broader efficacy in certain terms at this point in time. Nevertheless, up until this moment, scholars have not given adequate attention to social strategies for combatting antisemitism. I argue that these programs must be broadened beyond micro-community-led initiatives, and that social strategies like intergroup contact work should be woven into a broader national strategy by advocacy organizations, with resources accessible through policymakers who can work with these organizations to fulfill mandates to create a safer environment for Jews in Canada. Participants made it clear, though, that not all intergroup contact initiatives were successful, and social strategies have limitations. The following section discusses important parameters to consider when broadening these initiatives.

Limitations

Another factor that affected this study's findings was the timing of the data collection. I had yet to complete most interviews when Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023. Relationships between Jews and non-Jews not only became strained, but many fell apart. In addition to anecdotal evidence, I was told by several participants about the loss of relationships. Whether this was because of pre-existing tensions that might have been dormant or unnoticed until this time, or because of other factors, Jewish participants post-October 7 frequently described how,

for voicing support for Israel, they had lost key people in their lives. These social challenges made the data analysis more difficult because suddenly, it became obvious that intergroup contact had limitations for how it could combat antisemitism, and those limitations were largely unclear and remain so. It is not that participants were opposed to engaging with people who had nuanced perspectives on war, nor that they could not feel sympathy and empathy for all parties involved. Rather, the primary struggle that Jewish participants described was that seemingly close friends completely abandoned them based on any pro-Israel support. Jewish participants frequently described feeling abandoned, blindsided, and alone. What this suggested to me, based on what seemed to work when intergroup contact effectively built stronger, more resilient relationships, was that when these relationships fell apart, it may have been because they were not as strong or resilient as participants thought. Could relationships have fallen apart because relationships were not as deep in empathy, love, care, and respect as people thought? Were there other factors that prevented intergroup contact work from being even more effective at combatting antisemitism that are unknown? I discuss some insights below, but more research is needed on the parameters of intergroup contact as an approach to combatting antisemitism more broadly. Based on the data, intergroup contact can be effective for the reasons discussed throughout this thesis. There could be, however, elements unique to antisemitism that need to be understood, addressed, and tailored to achieve intergroup contact's potential.

One of the weaknesses of intergroup contact that participants noted explicitly was inconsistent or infrequent programming. It is possible that intergroup contact was not deep enough prior to October 7, 2023, and thus, resilient relationships built on deeper empathy, love, and agonistic respect were not adequately formed. Participants noted that events and activities that bring Jews and non-Jews together should occur frequently to ensure people have ongoing

opportunities for exposure and to develop positive lived experiences with each other. When a positive experience is reinforced, comfort builds. This is akin to Exposure Response Prevention Therapy, which psychologists commonly employ to treat certain mental health disorders, such as obsessive-compulsive disorder.[258] In sum, the more frequent the engagement opportunities, the more emotional connection and investment can increase, as engagement becomes familiar, safer, and more trustworthy.

Even though the parameters of intergroup contact work to combat antisemitism need more critical evaluation, one setting I examined demonstrated notable limitations. University campuses as social settings posed several challenges for combatting antisemitism. There are several administrative barriers that prevent deeper action from taking place on campus, at least from an enforcement perspective, and certain systems, like the equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) models many universities are adopting, also create barriers. The specific risk with EDI programs, as participants described, was that they often ignore antisemitism, normalizing that antisemitism is not a form of hate worth including, and that Jews cannot be victims of hate. Ignorance was also a frequently cited challenge on university campuses, and it went together with a lack of exposure to Jews. I, therefore, recommend creating more cohesive social spaces on university campuses that encourage the principles of intergroup contact explored in this thesis, while strengthening the administrative barriers that exist in the university environment.

Toward a Brighter Future…

Considering the strengths and limitations of intergroup contact theory for combatting antisemitism, I recommend the following steps to broaden this approach. First, I encourage

---

[258] "OCD Treatment Guide: Best Evidence-Based Therapies, Medications, and New Advances," International OCD Foundation, 2026, https://iocdf.org/ocd-treatment-guide/.

scholars of antisemitism to devote more attention to not only intergroup contact, but alternative strategies for combatting the deeper social and emotional mechanisms that maintain antisemitism. Relatedly, I strongly recommend further research into those mechanisms and how and why they work. This thesis is merely a preliminary attempt to fill that gap in our knowledge as very little research has been done to critically evaluate strategies for combatting antisemitism. Again, this study strongly suggests that intergroup contact can reduce antisemitism more broadly, despite its limitations. However, we need more research into the mechanisms of Jewish/non-Jewish relations to further understand the limitations of intergroup contact and whether these can be strengthened, to help us shape these responses more effectively in the future.

I recommend that policymakers consider allocating resources to community and grassroots organizations to further develop intergroup programming, and encourage community leaders to motivate their respective communities to engage in regular, frequent contact with one another to create shared bonds around common facets of identity. These social spaces and programs ideally would be environments in which similarities become the focus, but differences are welcome. The world-repairing work in the thesis offers a compelling example of how communities can come together around shared values and develop lived experiences with one another in safer, more positive contexts. If intergroup contact becomes more frequent and consistent between communities, it might have a real impact because people will learn how to relate and build relationships, even when aspects of their identity produce tension, such as religion or ethnicity.

The food-based and artistic programming that comprised most of the events and activities I examined strongly suggests that a shift in strategy can be effective, as people's feelings and

hearts can shift in a positive direction. How people perceive and think of Jews, but also how Jews perceive and think of non-Jews, can shift because all parties can learn firsthand how to navigate differences with agonistic respect and empathy, and become more trusting of each other and willing to engage in contact. This is not to say the onus should be on victims of antisemitism to perform the repair work, but that they must be open-minded to welcoming non-Jews into their spaces so that contact can happen. Empowering Jewish communities to take pride in who they are and to have greater confidence in representing themselves as Jews, while also empowering non-Jews to feel comfortable with themselves, allows people to be vulnerable and thus feel safer engaging with one another.

Also, regarding next steps and how to mobilize the data in this project for actionable change across Canada, a few things are worth considering. Groundbreaking research in this early, exploratory stage reveals more questions than answers. This thesis explored an under-researched area in the literature on contemporary antisemitism: how to combat it. Recalling Lori Beaman's work on deep equality, an important step to broadening the approaches discussed in this thesis is to make them known at a broader level.[259] Beaman stresses the importance of shifting our attention from negative stories to positive narratives of navigating diversity in everyday lives to better understand how these can create positive social change.[260] This thesis considers several positive narratives of Jewish/non-Jewish bridge-building both before and after October 7, 2023. The positive encounters participants discussed considered social and political tensions but still revealed how relationships can endure. By incorporating more positive accounts

[259] Rebecca Moore also explores the concept of deep equality in the context of Jewish-Christian relations in her book, *A Blessing to Each Other*.
[260] Beaman, *Deep Equality in an Era of Religious Diversity*, 3–23.

of navigating complex attitudes, perceptions, and identities, we can normalize these relationships and outcomes in everyday discourse.

This project also began untangling the many questions that community members, policymakers, advocates, and other stakeholders have posed time and time again. Some of the questions that would be fruitful to explore in further research include understanding how different Jewish sects in Canada experience antisemitism, as well as what motivates, but also what, if anything, prevents them from further engagement with non-Jews. Because this thesis wrestled primarily with questions of reducing antisemitism and encouraging non-Jews to challenge their perceptions about Jews, it could not thoroughly address how to challenge perceptions about non-Jews amongst Jews. However, the Jewish world is not a monolith, and some Jews may be more willing to engage with non-Jews than others. Some questions that consider the potential role of Jewish identity include whether it is more difficult for Orthodox communities than Reform communities, as the former tends to be more insular. Also important is how Sephardic Jews experience antisemitism differently from Ashkenazi Jews, if at all, and what they would find helpful to increase their interactions with non-Jews. Again, I stress the importance of ensuring that the strategies discussed in this thesis can be applied effectively in specific contexts where social, cultural, political, historical, and even religious realities complicate matters within those communities.

A research team could investigate these pertinent and necessary questions to better understand the relationship between different non-Jewish communities and their relation to the Jewish communities, which is also significant. For example, recall how Rabbi Grushcow pointed out that how Jews relate to the Muslim community will be different than how they relate to

French Catholics or other communities. Strategies can, therefore, be tailored to better incorporate the unique features that define those particular inter-community relationships.

We also need to understand more about the curiosity component and create incentives to motivate non-Jews and Jews to interact with each other and come together to build resilient relationships. Although some preliminary ideas arose in the data, more research about motivation to engage is needed. One difficulty in community engagement is encouraging "buy-in" among potential stakeholders, which is why this aspect needs further critical research. The fact that this research is ongoing and in its infancy does not negate the possibility of applying these strategies and bringing these programs to Canadians. A deeper investigation is needed into the extent to which these programs already exist on the ground in Canada between Jews and non-Jews, and further engagement and qualitative analysis with the organizations and individuals who create these opportunities are necessary to better understand how the programs can effectively build resilient intergroup relationships.

To translate the data into practical steps for change, consultations with different types of organizations that engage individuals, communities, and even state actors to invest in their missions would help clarify how to encourage individuals to invest in a cause. These organizations can support any cause, but the idea is to understand how their engagement strategies can be replicated in bridge-building work to bring more Jewish and non-Jewish Canadians into contact. Although this work is complicated and context clearly matters, it's not impossible and better understanding the practical implementation piece, as well as the research piece, will lead to more robustly developed strategies that can be effective across different scenarios and with different groups, to start mobilizing these strategies at a broader level and introduce them to more Jewish and non-Jewish Canadians.

I am optimistic about the potential of intergroup contact, but there are other causes of antisemitism that are not necessarily about unhealthy relationships between Jews and non-Jews. There are many expressions of antisemitism, and I argue that we need a toolkit of strategies to address the various root causes of antisemitism. This toolkit should prioritize social work, such as intergroup contact programming, but also include strengthened legal and educational responses. Again, further research about those methods is also needed. Ultimately, though, we must shift our focus to responses that hit the deeper mechanisms and relational issues from which antisemitic expressions and attitudes arise. This is likely multigenerational, long-term work. The fruits of social strategies may not be visible in our lifetimes, but if we start planting the seeds, there is a possibility of real change. In the worst-case scenario, intergroup contact does not work, and nothing changes. Without more resources to encourage this kind of programming and without shifting the conversation to normalize intergroup contact in positive ways, there is no way to know the outcome. Even though the work this study suggests is new territory in the fight against antisemitism, it is important to end on an optimistic note. Even if it is unclear at this time whether social strategies like intergroup contact are effective more broadly for combatting antisemitism, through more research and trial, it will likely help build bridges between Jews and non-Jews to an extent we have yet to witness, and so it is worth the effort to invest in these kinds of strategies to work towards deeper, longer lasting change for Jews in Canada.

APPENDIX

The complete list of interview questions is as follows:

1. Tell me about yourself (e.g., background, career, education, place of origin, religious identification, etc.).
2. Are you aware of initiatives in your community to combat antisemitism (by combat, I mean challenge anti-Jewish assumptions and prejudices, affect attitudes of non-Jewish people, etc.)?
    1. Can you tell me more about those initiatives?
        1. Who started them? Who participates? What was your role? What did you do?
    2. Follow-up: Where have these initiatives/strategies taken place (e.g., synagogue, school, community centre, neighbourhood, between individuals, etc.)?
3. Who is the target demographic for these initiatives?
4. How would you assess the effectiveness of these initiatives/programs?
    1. Why were they or why were they not effective?
    2. What do you think could be effective?
    3. Are there elements that you think could be effective?
    4. Follow-up: How would you define effective?
5. Which conditions do you feel are necessary to help make these efforts effective? Were these present in the initiatives you engaged in?
6. How important would you say engaging diverse non-Jewish communities is for effectively combatting/reducing/reversing/challenging antisemitism in your community/Canada?

REFERENCES

Abella, Irving M., and Harold Martin Troper. *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*. University of Toronto Press, 2012.

Allport, Gordon W. *The Nature of Prejudice*. 25th Anniversary Edition. Addison-Wesley, 1979.

Allport, Gordon W. "The Nature of Prejuedice Featuring Material From: Allport, Gordon W. THe Nature of Prejudice." Addison-Wesley Publiching Company, 1979.

Alolo, Sahada, and Fran Klodawsky. "Faith, Housing and Inclusive Cities." In *La Ville Inclusive: Dans Les Pas de Caroline Andrew*. Politique et Politiques Publiques. University of Ottawa Press, 2022.

Anctil, Pierre. "A Community in Transition: The Jews of Montréal." *Contemporary Jewry* 31, no. 3 (2011): 225–45.

Anctil, Pierre. *A Reluctant Welcome for Jewish People: Voices in Le Devoir's Editorials.* University of Ottawa Press, 2019.

Anctil, Pierre. "Finding a Balance in a Dual Society: The Jews of Quebec." In *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege*, edited by Ezra Mendelsohn. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Anctil, Pierre. *History of the Jews in Quebec*. University of Ottawa Press, 2021.

Anctil, Pierre. "Interlude of Hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar Period, 1919-39." In *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, edited by Alan T. Davies. Canadian Electronic Library. Books Collection. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992. https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ottawa/detail.action?docID=3246219.

Anctil, Pierre, and Alexandre Comeau. "The St. Louis Crisis in the Canadian Press: New Data on the June 1939 Incident." *Canadian Jewish Studies* 31 (2021): 13–40.

Andrew, Caroline. "City States and Cityscapes in Canada: The Politics and Culture of Canadian Urban Diversity." In *Managing Diversity: Practices of Citizenship*, edited by Nicholas Brown and Linda Cardinal. University of Ottawa Press, 2007.

Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2017. Audit No. 36. B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2018.

Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2019. Audit No. 38. B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2020.

Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2020. Audit No. 39. B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2021.

Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2023. Audit No. 42. B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2024.

Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024. Audit No. 43. B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, 2025.

Baumgarten, Murray, Peter Kenez, and Bruce A. Thompson. "Introduction." In *Varieties of Antisemitism: History, Ideology, Discourse*, edited by Murray Baumgarten, Peter Kenez, and Bruce Allen Thompson. University of Delaware Press, 2009.

Beaman, Lori G. *Deep Equality in an Era of Religious Diversity*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

Beaman, Lori G. *Defining Harm: Religious Freedom and the Limits of the Law*. With Canadian Electronic Library. Law and Society Series (Vancouver, B.C.). UBC Press, 2008. https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=http://deslibris.ca/ID/422107.

Beck, Ulrich. *World at Risk*. English ed.. Polity, 2009.

Belkin, Simon. *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigration Aid Work in Canada (1840–1940)*. Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Colonization Association, 1966.

Beller, Steven. *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction*. Second Edition. Very Short Introductions. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Bergen, Doris L., Albert S. Lindemann, and Richard S. Levy. "Antisemitism in the Nazi Era." In *Antisemitism: A History*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Berger, David. "From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions: Some New Approaches to Medieval Anti-Semitism." In *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish Christian Relations*. Academic Studies Press, 2010.

Bialystok, Franklin. *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*. Canadian Electronic Library. Books Collection. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Biddlestone, Mikey, Aleksandra Cichocka, Iris Žeželj, and Michał Bilewicz. "Conspiracy Theories and Intergroup Relations." In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, edited by Michael Butter and Peter Knight. Routledge, 2020.

Bill 21: An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State (2019).

Bilsky, Anna. *A Common Thread: A History of the Jews of Ottawa*. General Store Publishing House, 2009.

Brewer, Marilynn B. “Deprovincialization: Social Identity Complexity and Outgroup Acceptance.” In *Improving Intergroup Relations- Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, edited by Ulrich Wagner, Linda R. Tropp, Gillian Finchilescu, and Colin Tredoux. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Brown, Rachel. “Food and Religious Minorities.” In *Religious Minorities Online*, edited by Erica Baffelli, Alexander van der Haven, and Michael Stausberg. De Gruyter, 2024.

Brym, Robert. “Canada’s Jewish Population, 2023: Focus on Minorities and Attitudes Toward Israel’s New Government.” In *American Jewish Year Book 2023: The Annual Record of the North American Jewish Communities SInce 1899*, vol. 123, edited by Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin. Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024.

Brym, Robert. “Chapter 2: Attitudes toward Jews.” *Canadian Jewish Studies Special Edition: Jews and Israel 2024: A Survey of Canadian Attitudes and Jewish Perceptions* 37 (2024): 26–42.

Brym, Robert. “Chapter 3: Attitudes toward Israel.” *Canadian Jewish Studies Special Edition: Jews and Israel 2024: A Survey of Canadian Attitudes and Jewish Perceptions* 37 (2024): 43–55.

Brym, Robert. “Chapter 4: How Strongly Are the Two Sets of Attitudes Correlated?” *Canadian Jewish Studies Special Edition: Jews and Israel 2024: A Survey of Canadian Attitudes and Jewish Perceptions* 37 (2024): 56–60.

Brym, Robert, and Rhonda Lenton. “Antisemitism, Anti-Israelism and Canada in Context.” In *Critical Perspectives on Jewish Identity, Israel-Diaspora Relations, and Antisemitism*, edited by Robert Kenedy, Uzi Rehbun, and Carl Stephan Erlich. Springer, 2021.

Cantle, Ted. “The Case for Interculturalism, Plural Identities and Cohesion.” In *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Debating the Dividing Lines*, edited by Nasar Meer, Tariq Modood, and Ricard Zapata-Barrero. University Press, 2016.

Carabine, Jean. “Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis.” In *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. SAGE Publications, 2001.

Chatterley, Catherine. “Western Culture, the Holocaust, and the Persistence of Antisemitism.” In *The Yale Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective*, I, edited by Charles Asher Small. The ISGAP Papers. Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2015.

Cohen, Jeremy. *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*. Cornell University Press, 1982.

Cotler, Irwin. “Human Rights and the New Anti-Jewishness: Sounding the Alarm.” *The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute*, 2003, 1–6.

Coulibaly, Shalem. “Equations in Contemporary Anti-Zionism: A Conceptual Analysis.” In *Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity Volume I: Conceptual Approaches*, edited by Charles Asher Small. Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2013.

Cunningham, Philip A. “Jews and Christians from the Time of Christ to Constantine’s Reign.” In *Antisemitism: A History*, edited by Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Davidman, Lynn. “The New Voluntarism and the Case of Unsynagogued Jews.” In *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, edited by Nancy T. Ammerman. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger*. Routledge Classics, 1966.

Dovidio, John F., Samuel L. Gaertner, Tamar Saguy, and Samer Halabi. “From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias.” In *Improving Intergroup Relations- Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, edited by Ulrich Wagner, Linda R. Tropp, Gillian Finchilescu, and Colin Tredoux. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Eliezer, Ben-Rafael. “Antisemitism: Sociological Perspectives.” In *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, Volume I, edited by Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat, and Lawrence H. Schiffman. De Gruyter, 2020.

Engel, David. “Away from a Definition of Antisemitism.” In *Rethinking European Jewish History*, edited by Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman. Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009.

Englund, Steven. “The Medieval (and Ancient) Roots of Antisemitism.” In *Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, edited by Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß. Routledge, 2018.

Feldman, David. “Toward a History of the Term ‘Anti-Semitism.’” *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1139–50. https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhy029.

Freeman, Ben M. *Jewish Pride: Rebuilding a People*. No Pasaran Media, 2021.

Freeman, Ben M. *Reclaiming Our Story: The Pursuit of Jewish Pride*. No Pasaran Media, 2022.

Gaertner, Samuel L., John F. Dovidio, Rita Guerra, Eric Hehman, and Tamar Saguy. “A Common Ingroup Identity: Categorization, Identity, and Intergroup Relations.” In *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, Second edition, edited by Todd D. Nelson. Psychology Press, 2016.

Garcia, Julie A., and Jennifer Crocker. “Upward and Downward Spirals Intergroup Interactions: Compassionate Goals and Transcending the Ego.” In *Handbook of Prejudice,*

Stereotyping, and Discrimination, Second edition, edited by Todd D. Nelson. Psychology Press, 2016.

Glick, Peter. "Sacrificial Lambs Dressed in Wolves' Clothing: Envious Prejudice, Ideology, and the Scapegoating of Jews." In *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust*, edited by Leonard S. Newman and Ralph Erber. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Goldberg, Adara. *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947-1955*. Studies in Immigration and Culture Series 14. University of Manitoba Press, 2015.

Halpern, Monda. *Alice in Shandehland: Scandal and Scorn in the Edelson/Horowitz Murder Case*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015.

Hammer, Elliot D. "Scapegoat Theory." In *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, edited by Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs. SAGE Publications, Inc., 2002.

Harvey, Graham. "Field Research: Participant Observation." In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler. Routledge, 2011.

Hirsh, David. "Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan Reflections." In *The Yale Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective*, I, edited by Charles Asher Small. The ISGAP Papers. Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2015.

Hollinger, Megan. "Legal Responses to Antisemitism: Legal Discourse and Anti-Jewish Hate in Contemporary Canada." University of Ottawa, 2020. https://ruor.uottawa.ca/simple-search?query=Megan+hollinger&location=.

Hollinger, Megan. "New Challenges, Old Hatred: The Role of Super-Diversity, Immigration, and Political Polarization in the Rise of Antisemitism in Canada." *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary e-Journal* 20, no. 1 (2024): 1–15.

Hollinger, Megan. "The Empath-Narcissist Dynamic and the Psycho-Social Mechanisms of Antisemitism." In *Contemporary Antisemitism London 2025*, edited by David Hirsh and Anna Zawadzka. Routledge, Forthcoming.

International OCD Foundation. "OCD Treatment Guide: Best Evidence-Based Therapies, Medications, and New Advances." 2026. https://iocdf.org/ocd-treatment-guide/.

Jackson, Lynne M. *The Psychology of Prejudice: From Attitudes to Social Action*. Second edition. American Psycchological Association, 2020.

Keen, Ralph. "Antisemitism in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods." In *Antisemitism: A History*, edited by Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Klein, Olivier, and Kenzo Nera. “Social Psychology of Conspiracy Theories.” In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, edited by Michael Butter and Peter Knight. Routledge, 2020.

Knowles, Valerie. *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540 - 2007*. Rev. ed. Dundurn, 2007.

Krekó, Péter. “Countering Conspiracy Theories and Misinformation.” In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, edited by Michael Butter and Peter Knight. Routledge, 2020.

Lange, Armin, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, eds. *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*. Volume I. De Gruyter, 2020.

Langmuir, Gavin I. *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*. I. University of California Press, 1990.

Langmuir, Gavin I. *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*. II. University of California Press, 1990. https://ocul-uo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991003156389705161&context=L&vid=01OCUL_UO:UO_DEFAULT&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,Toward%20a%20Definition%20of%20Antisemitism&offset=0.

Lantian, Anthony, Mike Wood, and Biljana Gjoneska. “Personality Traits, Cognitive Styles and Worldviews Associated with Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories.” In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, edited by Michael Butter and Peter Knight. Routledge, 2020.

Laqueur, Walter. *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day.* Oxford University Press, 2006.

Levy, Sheri R., Ashley Lytle, Jiyun Elizabeth Shin, and Julie Milligan Hughes. “Understanding and Reducing Racial and Ethnic Prejudice Among Children and Adolescents.” In *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, Second edition, edited by Todd D. Nelson. Psychology Press, 2016.

Lewis, Bernard. *Semites and Anti-Semites*. 5th ed. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999.

Lipstadt, Deborah E. *Antisemitism: Here and Now*. First edition. Schocken, 2019.

Lipstadt, Deborah E. *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*. Plume Printing. Plume, 1994.

Litvack, Meir, and Esther Webman. “Israel and Antisemitism.” In *Antisemitism: A History*, edited by Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Lunny, Allyson M. *Debating Hate Crime: Language, Legislatures, and the Law in Canada*. Law and Society Series (Vancouver, B.C.). UBC Press, 2017. https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=http://books.scholarsportal.info/viewdoc.html?id=/ebooks/ebooks3/upress/2017-07-24/1/9780774829618.

Mackie, Diane M., Angela T. Maitner, and Eliot R. Smith. "Intergroup Emotions Theory." In *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, Second edition, edited by Todd D. Nelson. Psychology Press, 2016.

Marcus, Kenneth L. "Antisemitism, Higher Education, and the Law." In *The ISGAP Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective*, II, edited by Charles Asher Small. The ISGAP Papers. Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2016.

Matas, David. *Aftershock: Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism*. The Dundurn Group, 2005.

McElligott, Anthony, and Jeffrey Herf. "Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives." In *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, edited by Anthony McElligott and Jeffrey Herf. Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.

Monteith, Margo J., Laura R. Parker, and Mason D. Burns. "The Self-Regulation of Prejudice." In *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, Second edition, edited by Todd D. Nelson. Psychology Press, 2016.

Moscovici, Serge. "The Conspiracy Mentality." In *Changing Conceptions of Conspiracy*, edited by Carl F. Graumann and Serge Moscovici. Springer-Verlag New York Inc., 1987.

Naamat, Talia, and Elena Pesina. *Legislation Survey: Regulating Online Hate Speech in Europe.* The Kator Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, Tel Aviv University, 2016.

Nefes, Türkay Salim, and Alejandro Romero-Reche. "Sociology, Social Theory and Conspiracy Theory." In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, edited by Michael Butter and Peter Knight. Routledge, 2020.

Nirenberg, David. *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*. 1st edition. WW Norton & Co, 2013.

Nordlinger McDonnell, Lillooet. "In the Company of Gentiles: Exploring the History of Integrated Jews in British Columbia, 1858-1971." University of Ottawa, 2011.

Norwood, Stephen H. "Convergent Anti-Zionisms: The American Far Left and Far Right." In *Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and Delegitimizing Israel*, edited by Robert S. Wistrich. UNP - Nebraska, 2016. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1gr7dr0.

Novikoff, Alex. "The Middle Ages." In *Antisemitism: A History*, edited by Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Paolini, Stefania, Jake Harwood, and Mark Rubin. “Negative Intergroup Contact Makes Group Memberships Salient: Explaining Why Intergroup Conflict Endures.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36, no. 12 (2010): 1723–38.

Patterson, David. “Denial, Evasion, and Antihistorical Antisemitism: The Continuing Assault Memory.” In *Deciphering the New Antisemitism*, edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld. Studies in Antisemitism Series. Indiana University Press, 2015.

Penslar, Derek J. “Introduction.” In *Contemporary Antisemitism: Canada and the World*, edited by Derek J. Penslar, Marrus Michael, and Janice Gross Stein. University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Pettigrew, Thomas F. “In Pursuit of Three Theories: Authoritarianism, Relative Deprivation, and Intergroup Contact.” *Annual Review of Psychology* 67, no. 1 (2016): 1–21.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., Oliver Christ, Ulrich Wagner, and Josh Stellmacher. “Direct and Indirect Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice: A Normative Interpretation.” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 31 (2007): 411–25.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Linda R. Tropp. *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*. Psychology Press, 2011.

Porat, Dina. “The Protocols of Th Elders of Zion: New Uses of and Old Myth.” In *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, edited by Robert S. Wistrich. Routledge, 1999.

Prooijen, Jan-Willem van, Olivier Klein, and Jasna Milošević Đorđević. “Social-Cognitive Proceses Underlying Belief in Conspiracy Theories.” In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, edited by Michael Butter and Peter Knight. Routledge, 2020.

Prutschi, Manuel. “Anti-Semitism in Canada.” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, no. 3/4 (2004): 105–17.

Redefining Antisemitism? IHRA and the JDA. Antisemitism Policy Trust, 2021. https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Redefining-antisemitism-Final.pdf.

Reid, Scott, and Mario Silva. “Part I: Introduction.” In *Tackling Hate: Combating Antisemitism: The Ottawa Protocol*, edited by Scott Reid and Mario Silva. Mosaic Press, 2014.

Roach, Kent. *Criminal Law*. Sixth. Irwin Law Inc., 2015.

Robinson, Ira. *A History of Antisemitism in Canada*. With Project Muse. UPCC Book Collections on Project MUSE. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015. https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781771121675/.

Rosenberg, Louis. *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*. Edited by Morton Weinfeld. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993.

Rosenfeld, Alvin H. "Introduction." In *Deciphering the New Antisemitism*, edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld. Studies in Antisemitism Series. Indiana University Press, 2015.

Schneider, David J. *The Psychology of Stereotyping*. Guilford, 2004.

Selby, Jennifer A., Amélie Barras, and Lori G. Beaman. *Beyond Accommodation: Everyday Narratives of Muslim Canadians*. UBC Press, 2018. https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks3/upress/2018-09-16/1/9780774838306#page=16.

Shahar, Charles. "Canadian Jewish Population, 2018." In *American Jewish Year Book 2018: The Annual Record of the North American Jewish Communities Since 1899*, vol. 118, edited by Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin. Springer Nature Switzerland, 2019.

Simonsen, Kjetil Braut. "Antisemitism and Conspiracism." In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, edited by Michael Butter and Peter Knight. Routledge, 2020.

Sirizzotti, Anna. "'Bridging the Gap' in a World Growing Further Apart." *Excalibur*, March 13, 2026. https://www.excal.on.ca/news/2026/03/13/bridging-the-gap-in-a-world-growing-further-apart/.

Smith, Eliot R. "Rediscovering the Emotional Aspect of Prejudice and Intergroup Behavior." In *Improving Intergroup Relations- Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, edited by Ulrich Wagner, Linda R. Tropp, Gillian Finchilescu, and Colin Tredoux. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Statistics Canada. "Number of Police-Reported Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion, Canada, 2018 to 2021." March 22, 2023. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230322/cg-a004-eng.htm.

Statistics Canada. "Number of Police-Reported Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion, Canada, 2019 to 2022." March 13, 2024. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240313/cg-b005-eng.htm.

Statistics Canada. "Number of Police-Reported Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion, Canada, 2019 to 2023." March 25, 2025. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250325/cg-a004-eng.htm.

Stephan, Walter G., and Cookie White Stephan. "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice." In *Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination*, edited by Stuart Oskamp. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000.

Stephan, Walter G., Oscar Ybarra, and Kimberly Rios. “Intergroup Threat Theory.” In *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, Second edition, edited by Todd D. Nelson. Psychology Press, 2016.

Stowe, Kenneth R. *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe*. Harvard University Press, 1992.

Teter, Magda. *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth*. Harvard University Press, 2020.

The History of Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom. Temple Emanu-El-beth Sholom, n.d.

Tibi, Bassam. “Religion, Prejudice and Annihilation. The Case of Traditional Islamic Judeophobia and Its Transformation into the Modern Islamist Antisemitism.” In *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, edited by Anthony McElligott and Jeffrey Herf. Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.

Todeschini, Giacomo. “Jewish Usurers, Blood Libel, and the Second-Hand Economy The Medieval Origins of a Stereotype (from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century).” In *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, edited by Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß. Routledge, 2018.

TOI Staff. *Report: New IDF Assessment Shows Some 6,000 Gazans Invaded Israel on Oct. 7*. August 31, 2024. https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-new-idf-assessment-shows-some-6000-gazans-invaded-israel-on-oct-7/.

Troper, Harold. *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*. University of Toronto Press, 2010.

Tropp, Linda R. “From When to Why: Understanding How Contact Reduces Bias.” In *Improving Intergroup Relations- Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, edited by Ulrich Wagner, Linda R. Tropp, Gillian Finchilescu, and Colin Tredoux. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Tulchinsky, Gerald. *Canada’s Jews: A People’s Journey*. University of Toronto Press, 2008.

Twenge, Jean M., and W. Keith Campbell. *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in Th Age of Entitlement*. Atria Paperback, 2009.

Vertovec, Steven. “Super-Diversity and Its Implications.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 6 (2007): 1024–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870701599465.

Vonofakou, Christiana, Miles Hewstone, Alberto Voci, et al. “The Impact of Direct and Extended Cross-Group Friendships on Improving Intergroup Relations.” In *Improving Intergroup Relations- Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, edited by Ulrich Wagner, Linda R. Tropp, Gillian Finchilescu, and Colin Tredoux. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Wagner, Ulrich, Linda R. Tropp, Gillian Finchilescu, and Colin Tredoux. “Editors’ Introduction.” In *Improving Intergroup Relations- Building on the Legacy of Thomas F. Pettigrew*, edited by Ulrich Wagner, Linda R. Tropp, Gillian Finchilescu, and Colin Tredoux. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008.

Weinfeld, Morton. “Antisemitism in Canada: Past, Present and Future.” In *Racism, Islamophobia, Antisemitism and the Future of Canadian Society, Proceedings of the Fifth S. D. Clark Symposium on the Future of Canadian Society*, edited by Robert Brym. Rock’s Mills Press, 2020.

Weinfeld, Morton. *Like Everyone Else But Different: The Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews*. Second edition. With Randal F. Schnoor and Michelle Shames. Carleton Library Series ; 245. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018. https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=http://books.scholarsportal.info/viewdoc.html?id=/ebooks/ebooks3/upress/2018-05-21/1/9780773553088.

Weitzman, Mark. “The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism.” In *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, Volume I, edited by Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat, and Lawrence H. Schiffman. De Gruyter, 2020.

Wenman, Mark. *Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalisation*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Wettstein, Howard. “Introduction.” In *Diasporas and Exiles Varieties of Jewish Identity*, edited by Howard Wettstein. University of California Press, 2002.

Wikipedia. “Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom.” May 18, 2025. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_Emanu-El-Beth_Sholom.

Winter, Steven L. “The Power Thing.” *Virginia Law Review* 82, no. 5 (1996): 721–836.

Wistrich, Robert S. *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*. Pantheon Books, 1991.

Zeigler-Hill, Virgil. “The Importance of Self-Esteem.” In *Self-Esteem*, edited by Virgil Zeigler-Hill. Psychology Press, 2013.

Zimmermann, Moshe. *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Antisemitism*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1987. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ottawa/detail.action?docID=273399.