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# The American Psychological Association and Antisemitism: Toward Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

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This article calls for the American Psychological Association (APA) to proactively include the elimination of antisemitism or prejudice against Jewish people in its current mission to disassemble all forms of racism from its organization as well as society. In this article, Jews (estimated as 2.4% of the population) are defined as a people with a common identity, ethnicity, and religion as they experience prejudice; their intersection in Jewish identity; the history and characteristics of antisemitism and its current manifestation in public life, academic institutions, and psychology. Despite Jews having made major contributions to the development of psychology as a profession, historically through the first half of the 20th century, Jews were systematically discriminated against within the discipline of psychology through quotas for acceptance into graduate training, discriminatory employment practices in university psychology departments, and most egregiously through the espousing of “scientific racism” including eugenics by prominent leaders in the APA. We describe how historically leaders in the APA engaged in overt and covert antisemitism while the APA continues to do little or nothing to combat it. We then offer suggestions for the mitigation and elimination of this form of bias, discrimination, and hate as it once again escalates in society. We recommend that the APA engages in research about antisemitism, its predictors, consequences, and power; evaluates the efficacy of intervention programs; encourages contact with various multicultural minoritized groups; and disseminates knowledge to educate about the psychological effects of antisemitism.

### **Public Significance Statement**

Antisemitism against Jews, a form of hate, bias, and prejudice leading to physical and psychological harm, is on the rise around the world. Organized psychology has not been active in either condemning all forms of antisemitism or that which occurred within its own history. This article exposes the many years of harmful antisemitism that leaders within the APA engaged in and the lack of understanding of Jewish people that continues within the organization. Antisemitism is defined, and suggestions are given for ways for psychology to move forward to include Jews in its current mission to eliminate all forms of racism both within the APA and in society.

**Keywords:** antisemitism, Jewish people, Association of Jewish Psychologists, prejudice, racism

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This article was originally drafted by the above cited members who were on the Council of Representatives in 2020 and worked together with American Psychological Association governance to address the issue of rising antisemitism. This group has now become part of the Association of Jewish Psychologists.

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*continued*



**Lenore E. A. Walker**

### **Purpose**

The American Psychological Association (APA) has developed a strategic plan to disassemble racism from all its activities by reviewing and apologizing for its past and embarking upon a systematic program to eliminate racism and promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (American Psychological Association [APA], 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2022a). However, there are racial and religious biases in the history of the APA that have not yet been addressed, specifically antisemitism against Jews, many of whom have been prominent in developing the profession despite the prejudice. In this article, we put forward a similar call to understand Jews and Jewishness and to integrate the goal of eliminating antisemitism into APA's strategic plan to disassemble all forms of racism. Consistent with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) framework in its strategic plan, the APA has sought to promote its leadership in psychological science and practice toward the necessary collaborative efforts to address how prejudice and discrimination have impacted important social institutions and, consequently, the health and well-being of individuals and communities (APA, 2021c, 2022b). These goals, which we share, and the racial equity plan adopted in 2022 by the APA Council of Representatives as policy are tacitly expected to be applied to all forms of discrimination and hate, including those against Jews.

In this article, we discuss race, ethnicity, and religion as they relate to prejudice; the intersection of race, ethnicity, and

religion in Jewish identity; and the history and characteristics of antisemitism, as well as its current manifestation in public life, academic institutions, and in the field of psychology. We also describe how some APA leaders have engaged in antisemitism, both overtly and by their silence, and offer suggestions as to how the APA can eliminate this form of systemic racism, thereby becoming a leader among scientific and professional organizations in acknowledging antisemitism and dismantling its systemic hate.

### **Who Are Jews?**

In the United States in 2020, Jewish people comprised 2.4% of the population (Pew Research Center, 2021) but were victims in over 50% of reported discriminatory acts (Uniform Crime Report, 2019). Further, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) found that three quarters (75%) of Americans believe in at least one antisemitic trope, and one fifth (20%) believe in six or more (Anti-Defamation League [ADL], 2023). We address such antisemitic tropes later in this article. Unfortunately, a long and well-documented history of antisemitism against Jewish people continues to exist around the world (Kaufman et al., 2020; Lipstadt, 2019; Trilesnik et al., 2022). Jewish people remain the target of deadly violence today in their homes, synagogues, academic institutions, and in the community (Ariel, 2022). There is also evidence that, in the past, some APA leaders and therefore, the APA as an organization with its silence in not condemning them, have participated in harm from antisemitic behaviors, including "scholarly" antisemitic publications (e.g., promoting nonscientific psychological concepts and theories such as scientific racism and eugenics). More recently, by failing to address antisemitic statements made by groups sponsored or affiliated with the APA, the APA leaders and its members continue to support intended or unintended antisemitism.

Confusion often exists about whether Jewish people are a religious, ethnic, or racial group. The Jewish community sees itself as a diverse group bound together by elements of religion, culture, race, and ethnicity. Jewish identity as "a people" is based on a continuity of history. The religious dimension of Judaism is a core element of Jewish culture but is not the only reflection of Jewish identity as a people. Research has provided numerous descriptors of Jews in the United States, supporting the designation as a multiracial, religious, and ethnic group (Pew Research Center, 2021); any of which can lead to targeting by antisemites.

In this article, we use the term "race" as a socially determined category rather than a biological or genetic group. Some have suggested Judaism does not really constitute a

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**Ester Cole**

race because based on genetic factors one cannot convert to a different race than the one you are born into (see Green, 2016). On the other hand, Jews have historically been racialized by others such as the German Nazis. A Jewish person may be born into a religiously observant family but as an adult may not follow the same religious standards. As a category, being Jewish does not fit neatly into 21st-century ways of thinking about race, ethnicity, or religion (Nathanson, 2018). Some younger Jews, often born into marriages with only one Jewish parent, now identify as non-White, which fits into the more traditional definition of being a race. The 2020 Pew Research Center poll among a random sample of 4,718 Jewish Americans found 92% of American Jews overall identify as White, while 4% claim Hispanic heritage, 1% self-describe as Black, and 3% identify with another race or ethnicity entirely. However, younger Jews are far more likely to say they are not White. In all, 15% of Jewish adults in the United States under 30 years old identify as Hispanic, Black, Asian, another non-White race, or multiracial, along with 12% of Jews ages 30–39. That compares with just 4% of Jews ages 50–64 who identify as non-White and 3% of those 65 and older (Pew Research Center, 2021).

A higher percentage of Jews in other countries, such as Ethiopia and India, and Jews who originated from the Iberian Peninsula (Sephardi Jews) have darker skin color, which might classify them as a race. However, not all Sephardi Jews are darker skinned. Notably, the proposed census category, Middle Eastern and North African may alter the aforementioned Pew findings as many American Jews with roots in the region would fit in this non-European ethnic group. Thus, we believe Judaism qualifies as a major world religion as well as a racial and ethnic descriptor, all of which have resulted in discrimination.

### **Prejudice Against Race, Religion, and Ethnicity**

Race is considered a social construct, not a scientific one tied to biology but this was not always the case in the past, and some may still hold the old view promoting “scientific racism” as described below. Psychology has adopted a definition of race as a human-invented classification scheme seeming to be based on differences in human appearance (e.g., differences in skin color or other phenotypic variables such as hair texture, facial features), often attributing various behavioral or ability traits to members of given groups (see APA Task Force on Race and Ethnicity Guidelines in Psychology, APA, 2019, for further discussion). People cannot choose their genetic heritage in the same way they can choose to change their religious beliefs and practices, but both race and religion have served over time as ways in which human society has designated some people for social inclusion and others as outcasts—subjected to social exclusion, discrimination, enslavement, or genocide. Judaism provides a confounding example that can involve attributions associated with religious practices, ethnic heritage, and/or racial background.

Determinants of social bias are all around us, shaping how we see, think, and act in many if not all situations. Prejudice, or bias based on faulty assumptions, is often unconscious and difficult to recognize, especially since it can begin when people are very young and are exposed to others who hold similar prejudices. Discrimination against one person who may have some characteristics like others in a particular group often occurs, sometimes unwittingly but other times, deliberately (Fiske, 1998). How antisemitism specifically develops in young children is still an important area for psychology to explore, and the authors have consulted with the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine to encourage such research.

Recently, in addition to historical examples, methods of uncovering one’s own hidden prejudices have been written about in popular books (see Bryant, 2022; Eberhardt, 2020; Wilkerson, 2020). Dr. Thema Bryant, the 2023 president of the APA, has advanced in inclusive multiculturalism including Jews in her presidential initiatives. Wilkerson gives an absorbing if horrifying history of how the Nazis planned the isolation of the Jews by passing the Nuremberg Laws to claim the purity of their Aryan Nations. She claims one of their models was a widely known American Eugenicist Lothrop Stoddard who wrote *The Menace of the Under-Man* in 1922, which translated into *Untermenschen* in the German edition (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 80).

Historically, the APA was an organization of mostly White men in its early days, and it did not contest its leaders’ concept of racial hierarchy and eugenics. Although scientific racism mostly dealt with prejudice against African Americans, Jews were also limited or excluded based on undesirable characteristics that



**Sarah L. Friedman**

were thought to be race-based. Wilkerson's description of the United States in 1934 at the time Hitler was rising to power portrays it as practicing systemic racism that discriminated against both Blacks and Jews. Many Americans, as cited in this article, still hold similar antisemitic views and attitudes today, some intertwined with violent anti-Black behavior, raising concerns for Jews that are similar to those expressed during the pre-Holocaust period in the 1930s.

Following the Holocaust, where 6 million Jews were murdered while the world, including the United States, turned its back (Burns et al., 2022), Jewish psychologists became more involved in psychological theory development and they began to introduce Jewish values, such as the respect for humanism and "tikun olam" (making the world a better place) and a long-standing Jewish commitment to social justice (see Marrow, 1951, 1969). Jews have consistently supported campaigns against all forms of racial discrimination such as those who marched together with the late Reverend Martin Luther King in the 1960s. More recently, some have supported sanctions against the state of Israel causing great harm to other Jews, especially students, as described below.

### **Jews, Race, and Privilege**

In recent history, U.S. law classified Jews as White persons under the *Naturalization Act of 1790*, where they were considered among the "free White persons" eligible to become citizens. When U.S. laws later limited the number of immigrants from specific countries, Jews were subject to quotas, even though considered Caucasian; as such, unlike some Asian and African immigrants, Jews could become full citizens (Green, 2016). However, they remained culturally

distinct and thus not really White. Goldstein (2006) described antisemitism as part of the price that Jews have paid for their determination to be considered White. Many Jews could be identified by their communities, language (e.g., Yiddish or Hebrew), newspapers, and holidays observed (Green, 2016). For some American Jews, race became less of a concept; rather they tended to think in terms of "Jewish or non-Jewish." Today, many assimilated Jews do not think much about race as applying to them but most understand that antisemitism affects all Jews. A large number of Jews are fearful of the current rising antisemitism and have considered how to protect themselves from violence, such as moving from specific areas heavily populated by Jewish people (Milbank, 2022).

Despite, or perhaps because of the education, hard work, high leadership positions, and economic successes of many Jews, antisemitic tropes attributing privilege to them, described below, are used against them, without understanding that historically this so-called privilege may not last. Increased antisemitism can cause everything Jews have worked for to be taken away such as observed during the 1930s in Europe, in earlier pogroms, and similar expulsions around the world throughout history. Raising similar fears is the increased threat of annihilation of Israel, the country many Jews identify as an ancient and spiritual homeland, and a barrier against another Holocaust that wiped out those 6 million Jews just 75 years ago when other countries including the United States refused them protective entry. Research indicates 53% of American Jews feel less safe today than 5 years ago; Orthodox Jews, who can be readily identified by the religious garments they wear such as a kippa, report feeling even less safe (Pew Research Center, 2021). In fact, many Jews do not readily identify as Jewish, fearing repercussions should they be visible.

Jews are often described as part of a White-majority establishment that has dominated and oppressed people of color, despite the long history of Jews' support for civil rights. As Lipstadt (2019) suggested, there should not be a macabre competition for which group is most oppressed. Eric Goldstein, an associate professor of history at Emory University, was quoted as saying "Jewish identity in America is inherently paradoxical and contradictory," and

What you have is a group that was historically considered, and considered itself, an outsider group, a persecuted minority. In the space of two generations, they've become one of the most successful, integrated groups in American society—by many accounts, part of the establishment. And there's a lot of dissonance between those two positions. (Goldstein as in Green, 2016, para. 4)

At the same time, some extreme right-wing politicians continue to refer to the Jewish community as an "impure race," similar to the Nazi designation of tainting the culture (Green, 2016).



**Beth Rom-Rymer**

### **Current Legal Strategies to Combat Antisemitism**

In 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order deeming antisemitism punishable under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, a clause addressing discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and nationality. The order states individuals can be considered victims of discrimination based on their Jewish nationality or race. During this same time, overt antisemitism was increasing among those described as White nationalists/supremacists.

Given the significant increase in antisemitic acts continuing to be observed in the United States, President Joseph Biden's current White House administration has facilitated various roundtable discussions related to antisemitism and hate speech. As a result, the Biden administration announced a new strategy to counter antisemitism by (a) increasing awareness and understanding of antisemitism as a hate crime; (b) providing safety and security to the Jewish community; (c) reversing the normalization of antisemitism; and (d) building society free from antisemitism. This plan, inclusive of over 100 specific recommendations, has been tasked to different government departments (The White House, 2023). Many leading organizations have elected to assist in the movement; it is hoped APA will also become a collaborative partner.

The current war in Ukraine, whose president is openly Jewish, has also reawakened fears of an imminent Holocaust. Through the preparation of this article, mass shootings continue to occur in the United States in which the perpetrators voice "racist replacement" and White supremacist ideology and target synagogues. The APA has indeed condemned some of these actions by issuing press releases and is in communication with the White House Staff sharing important psychological information (communication, Kathrine McBride, APA Public Advocacy Office, August 2023).

### **What Is Antisemitism?**

Antisemitism is often difficult to identify unless it includes overt violence. Definitions of antisemitism include prejudice, hostility, and/or discrimination toward Jews as a multiracial, religious, and/or ethnic group on an individual, community, institutional, or societal level (L. Schlosser & Ancis, 2008). A more complete scholarly understanding of antisemitism can be found in Katz (2022) in which Lipstadt (2022) has a chapter on "new issues." With the recent rise in documented antisemitism, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) offers a working definition of antisemitism that has been adopted by most organizations and approximately 44 governments.

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of Antisemitism are directed toward Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward the Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. (IHRA, 2016, para. 2)

Some groups, particularly those that are critical of the Israeli government's policies concerning the Palestinian people who lived in the area before the creation of the State of Israel, fear that the above definition will not specifically permit their protests and have suggested other possible definitions. However, the full IHRA definition provides that criticisms of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country may not be regarded as antisemitic while those that call for Israel to no longer exist or that blame all Jews for Israel's government policies may be antisemitic. President Biden reiterated the U.S. support for the IHRA definition of antisemitism in the recent strategy to combat antisemitism as described above.

Attacks on Jewish communities involve hate speech, overt violence, vandalism, and harassment by individuals and organized groups. Covert or unintended antisemitism, like other microaggressions, often incites people to commit other unprovoked attacks. Examples of long-standing antisemitism include but are not limited to (a) anti-Jewish slurs (e.g., "kike"); (b) perpetuation of the blood libel myth (i.e., the belief that Jews killed Christian children for religious ceremonies); (c) violence against Jews, Jewish communities, and Jewish symbols (e.g., synagogues); (d) questioning the identity of Jews based on adherence to religious practices (e.g., accusing secular Jews of not being Jewish); (e) Holocaust denial; (f) accusing Jews of cosmic evil (e.g., beliefs that Jews are plotting to take over the world and other conspiracy theories); and (g) asserting Jews have no claim to Israel (L. Schlosser & Ancis, 2008).

History provides many examples where Jews are held responsible for whatever calamity befalls a nation. For example, ancient Egyptians suggested that Jews were innately evil, Spaniards justified removing Jews whom they perceived as spreading the Black Plague, and the Vatican believed Jews



**Arlene Steinberg**

killed Christ. The new antisemitism manifests itself as anti-Zionism (Chesler, 2015) and equates Jews with White privilege and thus oppressors, themselves (Paresky, 2021). The term “decolonization” is often seen by Jews as derogatory as Jews do not perceive themselves as colonizers, especially in Israel where they have existed throughout history. In fact, although Jews were forced to migrate to other countries, some remained in Israel or returned when expelled by their hosts, which is one of the reasons they adopted Zionism to make Aliya and return to their ancestral homeland.

Berenbaum (2023), former project director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, suggested that to understand antisemitism, it is important to first understand its source or where it is coming from, then its goal, followed by what is the priority of hatred toward Jews versus other groups, and finally, how stable is the society where it occurs. Berenbaum suggested antisemitism is like the canary in the coal mine that senses a lack of oxygen first. He also suggested that the different expressions of antisemitism can be grouped into five categories: First, *racial antisemitism* is a prejudice based on the belief that Jews comprise a distinct, perhaps inferior, race with inherited genetic traits. This type of antisemitism was perpetrated by Hitler and the Nazis. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center,

Neo-Nazi groups [in the U.S.] share a hatred for Jews and a love for Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. While they also hate other minorities, gays and lesbians, and even sometimes Christians, they perceive “the Jew” as their cardinal enemy.

The goal of racial antisemitism was and is the extermination of Jews as a people.

Second, *religious antisemitism* is a contempt for Judaism itself and brings with it an attempt to convert Jews, often by claiming that Judaism threatens other religions. In 1965, the

Catholic Church officially repudiated the notion that Jews killed Christ in “Nostra aetate” but that has not stopped some from continuing to blame the Jews for Christ’s death. Destruction of synagogues, Jewish houses of worship, as well as the killing of Jews at prayer are the most obvious manifestations of overt religious antisemitism.

A third subtype, *social antisemitism*, is the exclusion of Jews from various social institutions such as universities, neighborhoods, and organizations. Such overt discrimination is largely now illegal in the United States; however, examples still exist such as requiring attendance or participation in school, sports, and other events on Jewish holidays. The recent rise in what is termed “cancel culture” has negatively affected college students who support Israel and is considered social antisemitism. For example, students have been ostracized or not permitted to join a particular group because they were known to hold pro-Israel beliefs.

Fourth, *economic antisemitism* occurs when there is an attempt to reduce or identify erroneously Jewish economic influence. This is often based on a belief that all Jews are wealthy or greedy about money. Historically, in many countries, Jews were barred from becoming professionals and from the purchase of land leading to occupations as traders and money lenders. This may have given rise to the tropes associating Jews and money.

Last, *political antisemitism* is when antisemitic messages are introduced during elections, especially where Jewish candidates are standing for office. In recent years, progressives in the U.S. Democratic political party and conservatives in the Republican party have engaged in such antisemitic remarks. Some are couched in anti-Zionism but often raise the same ancient tropes about Jews controlling the world, labeling Jews “globalists” who support each other as a group across the globe and are not loyal to their individual countries.

Three major groups are known for their overt antisemitism in the modern world: (a) right-wing neofascists; (b) left-wing antisemites, especially in academia; and (c) antisemitism by terrorist groups such as Palestinian Hamas. Antisemitic discrimination occurs when Jewish people are denied opportunities or services available to others. It should also be noted that antisemitic actions may be subject to criminal prosecution when so defined by the law. For example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials are punishable criminal actions in some countries.

### **Current Antisemitic Incidents**

There can be no question that the various manifestations of antisemitism have been recently on the rise. A newly released encyclopedia by the group, Root Source, listing antisemitic incidents around the world in 1 year is almost 800 pages long (Ariel, 2022). The ADL tracks reports of antisemitism, showing substantial increases in antisemitic acts each year.



**Susan Warshaw**

Ill-informed accounts of the Israeli–Palestinian conflicts have also served to increase antisemitic incidents worldwide. During the conflict between Gaza and Israel in 2021, the ADL received a 141% increase in reports of antisemitic incidents including 211 cases of harassment, 71 cases of vandalism, and 15 assaults across the United States. Nearly early 40% of the total incidents included explicit references to Israel or Zionism. Some of these incidents included mocking Jewish school children, threatening and harassing phone calls to synagogues, desecration of gravesites in Jewish cemeteries, and assaults against individuals visibly attired as Jewish people (ADL, 2023). After the Hamas massacre of Jews in Southern Israel on October 7, 2023, and Israel’s retaliation causing death and destruction of Palestinians in Gaza, ADL reported an almost 400% rise in antisemitism in the United States (ADL, 2023).

The number of people in the United States with deep-seated beliefs in antisemitic tropes has nearly doubled since 2019. In 2021, the ADL investigated almost 10,000 hate crimes (ADL, 2021), with antisemitic incidents rising 36% in 2022, including 3,697 incidents, which may be attributed to a resurgence in White supremacist activity. The many disturbing remarks of highly influential artist Ye (Kanye West) and other political leaders further normalized antisemitism, with dozens of incidents directly referencing him (ADL, 2023).

### **Antisemitism, the Media, and Scholarly Research**

Antisemitism itself is furthered by news media that publish antisemitic tropes, requiring reactive measures of correction. For example, *The New York Times* freelance reporter, Fady Hanona, was exposed for his stories based on his bias against Jewish people. “I don’t accept a Jew, Israeli, or Zionist or

anyone else who speaks Hebrew. I’m with killing them wherever they are: children, elderly people, and soldiers.” And “The Jews are sons of the dogs ... I am in favor of killing them and burning them like Hitler did. I will be so happy.” (Van Koninhsveld, 2022, para. 15). Other news media have published inaccurate news with doctored pictures. Many publish events out of context that give negative impressions of Jews. APA itself initially published a press release that, although rightfully focused on the trauma associated with the Gaza conflict, only mentioned the harm to Palestinian children, neglecting to discuss harm to Israeli children from the same traumatic conflict. Further, it did not accurately depict the facts of the conflict (APA, 2021f). The organization, Honest Reporting, publishes weekly accounts of similar inaccurate reports in the traditional media (<https://www.honestreporting.com>).

The consequences of social media postings that publicized disputed or clearly false information about conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians remain under study by the Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University. Many scholars believe some of the rise of antisemitism has developed because of “progressive” left-leaning Jews’ own criticisms of Israel and the movement on university campuses to punish Israel for its treatment of the Palestinians by withdrawing from Israel’s economic and social support using the boycott, divestment, and sanction (BDS) movement (Elman, 2020). Using a meta-analysis of published studies, Schlosser and Ancis found antisemitism was higher when the BDS movement was encouraged. Those who support BDS believe that such sanctions will cause the Israeli government to change its policies toward the Palestinians. Although it has negatively impacted world opinion about Israel and Jews, the Israeli government has not responded. The fact that there are at least two sides to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, including the fact that historically, the conflict and the plight of Palestinians may also be associated with decisions by their own Arab leaders, has not been acknowledged. Frequently, the history of the very complex conflict and the national aspirations of the two partners to the conflict are lost on many who engage in BDS rhetoric especially those who do not live in Israel or Palestine. A recent ADL study reported people who held antisemitic attitudes and tropes were less educated on the history of the Jews (ADL, 2023). This suggests education is important in reducing antisemitic beliefs.

### **History of Antisemitism and Psychology**

The history of organized psychology’s role in perpetrating antisemitism begins at the beginning of the APA and in its adoption of or at least silence about the theories of scientific racism and eugenics subscribed to by the early APA leaders. Many such as Robert Yerkes, Lewis Terman, Henry Goddard, Edward Thorndike, Clark Wissler, William MacDougall, Carl



Seashore, and Carl Brigham were on the American Eugenics Association's Advisory Council (see Winston, 2022). Psychology journals as described below continued to publish accounts by Jensen and others on alleged inherited racial differences in intelligence (cf. Jackson, 2023), nature versus nurture, and inherited intelligence until more recently. Eugenics theories stated that certain genetic groups produce desirable or undesirable inherited characteristics and that psychology can identify and "weed out" undesirable ones. Psychology leaders in the APA used these various theories to support their exclusion of Jews from psychology training programs and faculties as reported below. Although it was the Black race that was considered intellectually inferior as a mainstay of scientific racism, under eugenics theories, Jews also were considered to have undesirable characteristics, which were then partially used as a rationale for their exclusion and elimination (Tucker, 1994, 2002). APA as an organization still has not acknowledged its silence at its leaders' discrimination against Jews at that time, even though the APA has issued an "Apology to people of color" (APA, 2021b); but Jews are not mentioned in it.

### **E. G. Boring**

Even though E. G. Boring, professor and director of the Psychology Laboratory at Harvard from 1924 to 1949, was not involved in the eugenics movement of that time, his preserved letters illustrated how the theory of eugenics was used to justify keeping Jewish students out of or within quotas, both in studying psychology and in academic appointments. Winston's (1998a) article on E. G. Boring describes the letters that give a clear example of how these racist theories perpetuated the belief that Jewish individuals were born with specific defects and thus justified excluding them from universities and faculties.

Between the 1920s and 1950, Boring wrote supportive letters of reference for some Jewish students and colleagues and assessed whether they showed "objectionable traits" stereotypically attributed to Jews (Winston, 1998a). As an example, Boring wrote a letter in support of Kurt Lewin, implying Lewin's personal charm mitigated the "defect" of Jewishness. Lewin later wrote: "History amply shows that 'good behavior' on the part of the Jew is by no means an insurance against anti-Semitism" (Lewin, 1948, p. 182).

Admission quotas pertaining to Jews at many universities also served to prevent Jews from becoming part of the mainstream in psychology at that time. Although the issues of "character" and "Jewishness" are thought to be separable from a contemporary perspective, they certainly were conjoined in centuries-old antisemitic discourse characterizing Jews as wicked, perverse, false, aggressive, disloyal, traitorous, sinister, cowardly, unpatriotic, greedy, materialistic, money-grubbers, clannish, ostentatious, unclean, and ill-mannered (Winston, 1998a, p. 30). These ascribed

characteristics were commonly used to keep Jewish students from admission to universities and to keep successful graduates from being hired by universities. As far as it is known, the APA did not act to denounce or stop this practice among its leaders or its members. We believe history is important to recount and warrants an apology from APA to Jews much like has been done with other ethnic, racial, and culturally marginalized people.

### **Rudolf Hippius and Konrad Lorenz**

At least one psychologist is known to have actually participated with the Nazis in the eugenics movement. Rudolf Hippius was known for his work in "racial psychology," specifically, his study of the "suitability" of people of mixed German and Slav descent as a determination of whether individuals of such mixed heritage were suitable for consideration as German citizens. During this same period Konrad Lorenz, a military psychologist, worked with Hippius on the project. This later diminished the reputation of Lorenz, who sought to hide this relationship, by omitting it from his official biography when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1973.

### **Hans Asperger and Other Nazis**

Although not solely tied to psychology and antisemitism, the Nazis and other advocates of racial purity made eugenics part of their anti-Jewish agenda. The Nazis used eugenics arguments to initiate the T4-Gutachter (in English, "Action T4 experts") in which medical experts were deployed to organize and carry out a "euthanasia program" aimed at the mentally ill and disabled. They decided who would be killed in their "euthanasia" centers. Several Nazi doctors who participated and faced war crimes charges were psychiatrists or neurologists including Dr. Hans Asperger. Although the APA had considerable expertise in diagnosing and treating the mentally ill and disabled, as far as it is known, it did not use such expertise to condemn that so-called "euthanasia program." Once his role in such war crimes became publicized, it was recommended to eliminate the use of the term named after him, *Asperger's syndrome*, in favor of the diagnostic category of autism spectrum disorders without his name (see Baron-Cohen, 2018, for further discussion).

### **Frederick C. Thorne**

Another leading psychologist who engaged in flagrant antisemitic activities and has not yet been censured by APA is Frederick C. Thorne (Thorne, 2000). Described as impulsive and iconoclastic (Harris, 2009), Thorne founded the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, and in an unsigned opening editorial, proposed limiting the acceptance of Jewish applicants to clinical psychology graduate programs (Harris, 2009; Routh,

2000). A storm of public protest erupted, several editorial board members resigned, and Thorne unconvincingly attempted to deny responsibility for the editorial (Harris, 2009). Carl Rogers notably did not resign from the editorial board following this incident, later asserting a wish to “work from within” to no good effect and with no public statements in opposition (Harris, 2009). APA remained silent on the issue, but the Eastern Psychological Association, under its president, E. G. Boring, took a clear stance in opposition.

### Henry Garrett and Herbert Sanborn

After World War II, the 1946 APA President Henry E. Garrett was involved with antisemitic groups that attempted to revive scientific racism and maintain segregation (Jackson, 2005; Tucker, 1994, 2002; Winston, 1998b). Herbert Sanborn, chair of Psychology at Vanderbilt University was similarly involved at that time and was particularly involved in spreading the antisemitic myth of the international conspiracy theories attributed to Jews (Winston, 2021). As mentioned earlier in this article, conspiracy theories suggest that Jews want to replace the White race through inbreeding using their “belief” that racial equality exists. Interestingly, the chants of the White supremacists during the 2017 Charlottesville rally reenacted that erroneous idea.

### Kevin MacDonald

Kevin MacDonald is an evolutionary psychologist who also contributed his work to creating a scientific version of the classic Jewish conspiracy theory according to Winston (2021). Winston documents how MacDonald, in his books, attempted to claim Jews had a competitive “group evolutionary strategy” based on their inbreeding with each other. He blamed antisemitism on what he claimed was the Jews’ plan for a multicultural society that would serve Jewish interests such as the old tropes of Jews wanting money and political interest. Apparently, MacDonald and psychologist Richard Lynn worked closely with Richard Spencer, one of the 2017 organizers of the Charlottesville rally. MacDonald’s work continues to be defended, most recently in the journal, *Evolutionary Psychological Science*.

There is no evidence that APA has ever condemned or even criticized the work of Garrett, Sanborn, or MacDonald. Further, Bird et al. (in press) argued that without strengthening the APA Ethical Standards, psychologists may continue to publish articles that are used to promote antisemitism and violence.

### Raymond Cattell

Raymond Cattell, another prominent psychologist, was an early supporter of National Socialism and adherent of Nazi racial theories, in which he continued to preach as part of

the secular “religion” he founded known as “Beyondism” while simultaneously trying to obscure their origins (see: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/raymond-cattell>). Described as a neofascist contrivance (Mehler, 1997), Cattell used Beyondism to promote ideas that he formulated reminiscent of radical eugenicists and racists (Tucker, 2008). In 1938, Cattell argued the rise of the Axis powers “should be welcomed ... as reassuring evidence that in spite of modern wealth and ease, we shall not be allowed to sink into stagnation or adopt foolish social practices in fatal detachment from the stream of evolution.” He did condemn the Holocaust as immoral, although he was primarily focused on the fact that Nazi atrocities made it more difficult for people “to think objectively on the inheritance of individual differences in mental characteristics.” He was reluctant to unequivocally condemn genocide, but he preferred what he called “genthanasia,” or the “phasing out” of unfit racial and cultural groups “by educational and birth control measures,” as opposed to “literally killing [racial minorities] off.”

In 1997, the American Psychological Foundation, the APA’s philanthropic organization, selected Cattell to receive its APF Gold Medal Award for Life Achievement in Psychological Science, citing his “prodigious, landmark contributions to psychology.” In response to this announcement, several APA members and others protested. APA leaders were concerned about what to do in response. In a statement sent by fax, Cattell said, “my views of eugenics have evolved over the years,” and that he now believes in eugenics only on a voluntary basis. APF and APA “postponed” the award and in December 1997, Dr. Cattell wrote an open letter to the APA seeking to correct “the misconceptions” critics promulgated. He objected to the public examination of his personal beliefs which he admitted were controversial, but not racist, in the context of his scientific work for which the award was bestowed. A review of Cattell’s work revealed that in the 1970s and 1980s, he assisted neo-Nazi activist Robert Pearson, an anthropologist, in publications on race and eugenics described by Tucker (2008). Winston (2022) also described the Cattell issues further. To put an end to what Cattell viewed as a personal attack, particularly in light of his failing health, he wrote a letter to the APA president declining the award and removing his name from consideration. He died the following year. APA has yet to apologize for or censure Cattell’s racist eugenics ideology.

### Current Antisemitism

As shown here, the APA has been mostly silent on Jewish issues within the association even during the recent renewed interest in diversity and eradicating systemic racism (Lowenthal, 2021). For example, the APA has been

silent on the issue of BDS sweeping across high schools and colleges causing psychological harm to students and faculty (Elman, 2020). In 2021, the APA first issued a press release with a stereotyped picture of a Hassidic Jew representing all Jews and another mentioned earlier that did not mention the harm also to Israeli children from a war initiated by the leaders of Gaza. This was revised after consultation with this article's authors. The first edition of the APA *Inclusive Language Guidelines* (APA, 2021e) did not list many common antisemitic tropes. Fortunately, when brought to their attention, the APA staff responsible for this publication consulted with the authors of this article during the second edition that is now available. That same year, the APA did not respond publicly to complaints of antisemitism on division listservs.<sup>1</sup> Although the perception is that there are many Jews who are APA members, there are no data to support that view.

### What Can the APA Do Now?

The APA can have significant professional and cultural impact by utilizing its resources to assist the world in using scientific knowledge to reduce and eliminate antisemitism and its profoundly negative impact on people's lives. Steps taken earlier in May 2005 following the APA's participation in the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa (Shullman et al., 2005), led to a robust policy statement condemning antisemitism (APA Council of Representatives, 2007: *Resolution on Anti-Semitic and Anti-Jewish Prejudice*) and posted on the APA website. In addition, APA has issued other resolutions on the negative impact of prejudice and of genocide among others that can be found on the APA website. In 2021, with the rise in antisemitism noted, the APA issued a press release calling for "The End to Continued Antisemitic Violence in the U.S." (<https://www.apa.org/news/apa2021/antisemiticviolence>). However, today, more needs to be done to combat rising antisemitism. This means acknowledging its antisemitic history and silence in many areas within the APA, as well as the inclusion of antisemitism in its efforts to dismantle all forms of racism, prejudice, and bias.

Using the APA 2022 priorities to inform the organization's commitment to racial equity and knowledge production provides a clear educational pathway. Priority statements highlighted during the APA 2022 Summit on Psychology's role in dismantling systemic racism included health, APA/workforce, education, and training of psychologists. Further, the APA needs to engage with other groups including the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in developing a blueprint for future psychological and social science research on how antisemitism, hate, and prejudice develop; its impact on human development; and how to reverse and ameliorate its traumatic damage.<sup>2</sup>

### Within APA Workspace, Governance, and Members

The newly created APA Office on EDI claims it will seek to combat antisemitism as part of the office's mission, but no clear and longitudinal plans have emerged to date. In early 2023, the APA leadership and assigned staff from the Office on Human Rights, also in the Public Interest Directorate, have continued consultation with this article's authors begun in 2021 to jointly develop educational action plans to help raise awareness about antisemitism and its growing harm. Bias and hate must be called out continuously, especially considering antisemitism's recent increase.

However, we suggest this is not enough. We recommend APA consult psychological scientists, professionals, and other experts who are aware of the psychological barriers to changing attitudes and habits. We are hopeful Association of Jewish Psychologists (AJP) will be granted a seat on the ethnic diversity advisory group and on the APA Council of Representatives so a Jewish voice is represented when policy decisions are being made. Moreover, we would like to see APA develop and implement a program to educate its staff and the volunteer members of APA's governance about Jewish people, our history, contributions to the field, and antisemitism.<sup>3</sup> Familiarity with Jewish history, culture, and the history of antisemitism are prerequisites for ameliorating or eliminating expressions of antisemitism from within the APA organization.

A recent APA document on preferred inclusive language suggested elimination of subtle, yet hurtful antisemitic tropes, but did not include many examples of most of the hate speech used in antisemitic attacks as described in this article (APA, 2021e). In addition, the underlying narrative in many APA documents uses socially referenced racial categories such as White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and First Peoples. We believe this discriminates against others who are marginalized, including Jews, who do not fit into those categories. This type of categorization is artificial, based largely on skin color, and does not account for the great diversity of history, experience, and ways of being within each category. In the APA document on preferred inclusive language, "White"

<sup>1</sup> Complaints were filed against Division 39 (Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology) and Division 48 (Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict and Violence: Peace Psychology Division) in connection with disturbing comments on their listservs considered antisemitic by the complainants from the Psychologists Against Antisemitism organization.

<sup>2</sup> National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine's Board on Children Youth and Families with the Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences are now developing a Consensus Study in response to (a) a May 3, 2023, letter from Drs. Sarah L. Friedman, Ron Avi Astor, Marc H. Bornstein, Ester Cole, Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, Kathy Hirsh Pasek, Michael Lamb, Richard M. Lerner, Michael H. Pasek, Arlene (Lu) Sternberg, Lenore E. A. Walker, and Susan Warshaw and (b) a July 6, 2023, document of *Background and Needs* authored by the same group with Drs. Charissa Cheah and Peter Orenstein. It is hoped that the study will provide the call for blueprint.

<sup>3</sup> This will be difficult as the workforce is mostly working from home since the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

referred to people of European ancestry, with a note that Southern and Eastern Europeans have been discriminated against and harmed by mainstream, Western-oriented psychology. This statement fails to correctly identify European Catholic and Protestant (particularly White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) colonial ideologies as the origin of racism in North America. We assume the authors of the above classification are well-meaning yet are unaware implications of these categories for Jewish citizens of the United States, some of whom are identified as White.

We recommend the establishment of a center within the Public Interest Directorate, specifically charged with fighting and eradicating antisemitism throughout APA. This will require educating the workforce about Jews, Jewish history, Jewish contributions to psychology, and how to address and combat antisemitism (see Footnote 3). The center we envision would also be responsible for educating the APA membership at large about antisemitism and its impact on psychology and the work we do. Much of this knowledge will need to be discussed in groups with the intent of clarifying misunderstandings and encouraging informal learning among members. Other groups that believe they too are being discriminated against could be included in the APA's activities designed to implement antidiscrimination policies while understanding prejudice and bias impacts each group differently. Utilizing social media, creating webinars or other materials supported by psychological knowledge regarding the basis of discrimination and barriers to its eradication will be helpful for implementing and reinforcing the sustainable practices that need to be adopted and integrated into daily practice.

Tool kits focusing on multicultural exchange, not just one culture, can assist in creating and fostering such attitude and behavior change (e.g., Fixen et al., 2005; Kaufman et al., 2020). There is increasing research that exposure to people of diverse backgrounds is a potent way to improve understanding of and even civility toward those of diverse backgrounds. For example, the recent Rand Corporation study on extremist religious and political groups found that in some cases such exposure, in supportive, structured contexts, appears to be even more effective than directly teaching or educating people about those toward whom they are prejudiced (Brown et al., 2021). Often called "contact theory," the APA reported on its opportunity for success back in 2001 but nothing further has been put into action (see "All you need is contact," November 2001,32[10]). This research suggests that creating opportunities for all the minoritized groups to work together may in itself be helpful.

We also recommend the establishment of a proactive plan to study and utilize psychological knowledge and evidence-based practices to reduce/eradicate discrimination and hatred against Jews, as well as people of color, as called for in the APA's Racial Equity Action Plan. AJP has filed a formal petition to APA to add the AJP as an affiliate with a seat on

the ethnic advisory group and a New Business Item to have a seat on the APA Council of Representatives with the other ethnic, racial, and culturally marginalized groups. We also recommend that antisemitism be included as a form of hate in all multicultural materials, and such materials address intersectionality in all groups. The latter suggestion is based on evidence that almost 30% of American Jews under the age of 30 identify as diverse people of color. Memoirs, such as Marra Gad's *The Color of Love* and Aronheim's *Soles of a Survivor*, and Celeste Hedley's essay collection, *The Racism of People Who Love You*, can provide materials to begin conversations around the diversity of Jewish people (Cole, 2023; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013; Greene & Brodbar, 2010). Further, we recommend that APA encourages and facilitates our work on the creation of a scientific framework for future research about the intersection of social sciences, including psychology, and antisemitism across the lifespan.

### **APA Assistance to Universities and Students Experiencing Antisemitism**

The condemnation of Israel and increase in the BDS movement on campuses have partly led to the increase in antisemitism in the United States and around the world against all Jews, not just the Israeli government where it was intended (ADL, 2021; Ancis et al., 2022; Feinberg, 2021; The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2021). This has impacted psychology departments in universities and incited violence against Jewish students and organizations such as Hillel (Nelson, 2021). Students at universities such as California's Berkeley Law School and Boston's Wellesley College have attempted to create "Jew-free" zones, while others exclude Jewish faculty and students supporting Israel from activities (AMCHA Initiative, 2018). We would like to see APA take a strong stand against such hate and cancel-culture activities on these and other campuses using its contacts in the psychology departments and counseling centers. An APA that upholds the values of human rights and EDI must call out negative comments by Arab or other student organizations when these organizations condemn all Jews because they oppose Israeli Government policies instead of favoring Palestinian rights.

For example, APA's silence regarding the recent civil rights complaint filed against George Washington University's professional psychology program is unfortunate given that the named psychologist in that complaint is also an elected president of one of APA's divisions. The complaint cited that faculty member's hate-filled posts on social media and her antisemitic behavior toward Jewish students in a required psychology diversity class as well as her retaliation against them when they complained (Burston, 2021; Nelson, 2021). Other cases have been documented by various study centers including Brandeis University and the University of Tel Aviv where clearly biased texts and curricula against Jews have

been required in classes. At present, there are no standards or guidelines as to what curricula constitute a required diversity course.

Antisemitism against Jewish professors on university campuses is also on the rise including in psychology departments (AMCHA Initiative, 2018). The abovementioned complaint against George Washington University filed with the U.S. Department of Education Office on Civil Rights is one of several against colleges and universities filed by organizations such as StandWithUs and the Academic Engagement Network, among other civil rights organizations. With the publication of the 2023 White House Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, it is anticipated that more civil rights complaints will be filed and upheld. We suggest APA engages in a campaign to educate psychology departments and offices on EDI and to include antisemitism in its attempts to eradicate hatred and prejudice.

We acknowledge that university faculty and departments are autonomous. Yet, we suggest APA has an educational role to play through its established accreditation relationships with psychology departments, internship centers, and through its membership that includes many academics. Indeed, the APA used these relationships to call out racism against people of color and rightfully insisted on including multicultural teaching in training program curricula. We envision an APA that strives to use its connections to academia to decry antisemitism and call for activities to combat it. These activities can occur within APA-accredited clinical training programs (e.g., clinical programs, counseling programs, internships, other supervised programs) that address the psychological effects of antisemitism and can also be integrated into psychological treatment (L. Z. Schlosser, 2006).

APA might also consider assisting psychology faculty on campuses with model programs designed to eliminate racism and antisemitism or at least mitigate its effects and support faculty and students. Again, preparation of materials that could be utilized as education and support would be useful for those on campuses where there are already antisemitic activities and the same or similar programs could be used to prevent the spread of antisemitism. Further, we hope that APA will partner with other groups including our AJP to develop programs around antisemitism, hate, prejudice and its development, impact, and disassembly. We are pleased that APA has recently appointed the staff in the Office of Human Rights in the Public Interest Directorate to organize and assist in activities to respond to antisemitism.

### Health Care and Psychotherapy

The field of trauma psychology has greatly expanded during the past 50 years with APA assisting clinical and health psychology programs to introduce research on evidence-based programs that focus on healing from various

forms of trauma. The trauma effects from antisemitism need to be studied and addressed especially given its prevalence in high schools and colleges. For example, the impact of experiencing antisemitism on youth of various developmental stages is not well known. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2018) has put forward a treatment for children after the bombing of the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. The ADL acknowledges it has created intervention programs to deal with antisemitism but there is no evidence they have been effective. Psychology could offer to sort out those that might meet our standard of evidence-based treatment.

Articles have been published suggesting addressing trauma responses in adults exposed to antisemitism especially those who have histories of family members who experienced the Holocaust (Felsen, 2020; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013). Treatment programs for survivors of domestic violence and other forms of gender violence may have the potential to be adapted to help survivors of various forms of antisemitism (Walker, 2017). We would like to see the APA Practice Directorate encourage further research in utilizing trauma treatment programs with both child and adult survivors who have been retraumatized by antisemitism.

The authors of this article have contributed to the formation of an APF grant fund to study psychology and antisemitism. It can be used by students, early career psychologists to begin a research program, or by other psychologists to address particular issues raised from other studies. APA can assist in publicizing and utilizing this fund as we move into the future.

### Summary and Conclusion

In this article, we suggested how Jews in psychology identify themselves, defined historical and current antisemitism, and described its many faces in U.S. society today and within the profession of psychology. We have delineated some actions the APA has taken to acknowledge antisemitism in the world, but not within its own borders. While there is significant research on the harm from prejudice and bias against ethnic, cultural, and racial groups, there is not sufficient research specifically on antisemitism and how it develops and is fostered in both the perpetrator and victim. As psychologists and members of the APA, we hope our professional and scientific organization will work with AJP to recognize the complex nature of Jewish identity, the unfortunate history of antisemitism including silence in not addressing known acts, and its psychological and social harm. Finally, we have described some ways in which we hope the APA will become active in responding to the recent rapid increase in antisemitism by using our psychological knowledge and organizational structures.

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