

## **Contours of workplace antisemitism: initial thoughts and a research agenda**

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### Abstract

In the context of the rising tide of antisemitism worldwide, we wish to draw the contours of workplace organizational antisemitism, a hitherto ignored topic in contemporary scholarship, by presenting a framework for its study. In particular, we propose an interdisciplinary understanding of antisemitism in the workplace, drawing on theories and evidence from economics, management, and business. To contextually embed our propositions, we focus our discussion on two countries: Germany and Austria. We argue that given the deep-rooted, widespread antisemitic attitudes prevalent in both countries -- in spite of their miniscule Jewish populations --, it would be prudent for organisations and the people who work in them to be aware of and concerned with antisemitism. We offer two theoretical lenses explicating the underlying motivation for antisemitic conduct - primed goal pursuits (Goal Setting Theory) and mortality salience instigation and/or perceived violation of key worldview percepts (Terror Management Theory). These provide the dynamic element for our model on its four currents: Jewish 'presence' (real and imaginary), implicit discrimination, Jewish identity and grassroots cultural antisemitism. Highlighting selective issues of relevance to organizations and management, we end with suggestions for a research agenda.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Jew hatred and anti-Jewish sentiment in Europe, the USA, and numerous other geographies over the past two decades, has suggested the existence of a global trend of antisemitism (Cotler, 2009, Rensmann, 2020). Barely two generations after the Shoah, at a time when the last Holocaust victims and their perpetrators can still bear personal witness, antisemitism is widespread and not diminishing. This situation confronts us with “the riddle of antisemitism - its longevity and virulence, its seemingly endless capacity for renewal and reinvention” (Baumgarten, Kenez and Thompson, 2009: 15). It also draws our attention to a knowledge deficit in contemporary academia.

Business and management studies, which became major academic disciplines in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continue to grow in importance and influence in the 21<sup>st</sup>, are, with very few exceptions, conspicuous in their absence from the academic discourse on contemporary antisemitism. The same is true of the discipline of economics. Given the ‘popularity’ of antisemitism and the ongoing debate about jobs for natives as against non-natives<sup>1</sup> this ignorance is perplexing. Thus we know next to nothing about antisemitism in contemporary work organizations. A critical reflection on the reasons for this gap may be long overdue, but is beyond the scope of the present contribution. Here we wish instead to draw the main contours for an understanding and study of present-day antisemitism at the workplace.

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<sup>1</sup> This debate has held centre stage in the far right rhetoric post WW2 in, among others, Germany and Austria, with slogans such as *Deutschland zuerst*, *Österreich zuerst* (respectively: Germany first, Austria first) (Richardson and Wodak, 2009) with reference to the DVU and AfD in Germany and the FPÖ in Austria - political movements with a virulent anti-Jewish history.

Whilst antisemitism throughout history has been present in all corners of the globe and continues to be so in a globalised world (Rickman, 2012), the risk of over-generalization of a complex, deep rooted and widespread phenomenon is a trap of which to beware (Beyer, 2019). We therefore follow good practice in our respective disciplines (Johns, 2006; Mayrhofer et al., 2019, 2020), drawing on contemporary research in these fields to develop an understanding relevant to antisemitism at work. We contextualize our discourse to two geographies that have been historically among the main drivers of antisemitism as societal and cultural phenomena -- as well as core players in the Shoah and its aftermath -- Germany and Austria.

## **ANTISEMITIC CURRENTS PERTINENT TO THE WORKPLACE AND ORGANIZATIONS**

We identify four currents in our conceptual model of workplace antisemitism. These are:

- i) ‘Antisemitism without Jews’ in contemporary Germany and Austria
- ii) Implicit and explicit anti-Jewish discrimination at the workplace
- iii) The existential ontology of being a Jew in a post-Holocaust gentile world
- iv) Antisemitism as a widespread grassroots cultural phenomenon

### **Jews in Germany and Austria**

Formerly at the mainstream as well as avant-garde of its civic institutions and national culture, German and Austrian Jewry today are but a pale shadow of their formidable past, notably in the capital metropolises of Berlin and Vienna. Despite counting a minuscule 0.14% of the population in Germany (DellaPergola, 2018) and 0.1% in Austria (Staevisky and DellaPergola, 2020), at least 2275 antisemitic hate crimes were registered in 2020 in Germany, 55 of which were classified as violent – a 60% increase on the previous year (DW, 2021). Similarly, incidents in Austria in 2020 “rose to the highest level since the Jewish community’s official records began 19 years ago,” recording 585 incidents (Reuters, 2021).

Antisemitism as a generalized anti-Jewish attitude (whether against Jews as individuals, Jews as a collective, or ‘Jews’ as an abstract concept) has been and continues to be widespread. In the early 1980s, Marin (1983) estimated that 75% of Austrians “express at least some antisemitic attitudes” (Marin, 1983:178) with the rest holding strong or very strong anti-Jewish views. The latest study (AP, 2021), based on a representative sample of the adult population in Austria, puts 31% of Austrians agreeing with the statement that “most Jews are exceptionally intelligent and wealthy” and that they “dominate the international business world” (26%). Both statements are of relevance to the world of work. Of significance too are the large numbers of respondents who do not offer an opinion - 35% on the first statement and 24% on the second, which may indicate reluctance to voice an antisemitic view (see following Research Agenda). A 2019 survey in Germany reports similar results (TLN, 2019). Both countries have active right-wing parties, with proto-fascist ideologies. The AfD in Germany and the FPÖ in Austria attract a significant following, their messages

heavily impregnated with antisemitic tropes and innuendo (for the AfD see for example Hübscher, in press; for the FPÖ, e.g. Reiter, 2018).

Given their insignificant demographic presence, and with the exception of the Haredi community (who are highly visible in their traditional attire<sup>2</sup>), Jews are practically indistinguishable from the general population; hence the persistence of active antisemitism manifested in anti-Jewish incidents and passive antisemitism reflected in opinion surveys, is puzzling. Of note here is the persistent belief in one's ability to supposedly recognize someone as Jewish - a recurrent antisemitic trope. In the latest Austrian public opinion poll (AP, 2021), 9% of respondents were confident that "when I meet someone, I know within a matter of minutes whether that person is a Jew," whereas 11% failed to voice an opinion on the statement. The probability that the average Austrian in the provinces can identify someone as Jewish is extremely low, since 86% of the country's Jewish population resides in Vienna (Staevisky and DellaPergola, 2020). The vast majority of Austrians - and that is true for Germany too - are not aware of having ever met a (real) Jew in their life (CNN, 2018). Known as 'Antisemitism without Jews' (Marin, 1980, 1983; Seidenschnur, 2013), this state of affairs may engender a two-pronged dynamic: Whilst sharpening the issue of identity for Jews (should they, consciously or unconsciously, conceal or emphasize their Jewish identity), the gregarious antisemite may happily identify someone as Jewish who is not, and for whom potentially undesirable consequences may ensue. As we shall see, these may have ramifications for the workplace.

## **Workplace Discrimination**

Due to its scarcity, the academic research effort on antisemitism pertaining to the workplace is rather easy to summarize; its researchers can be counted on the fingers of one hand and are confined to a single geography (the USA and Canada). From the mid-1960s to the late 1980s, the few relevant publications (none of the articles were published in business & management journals) concentrated on the issue of discrimination by North American big business (predominately in the USA).<sup>3</sup> The evidence showed that Jews faced barriers of entry, starting at college recruitment (Korman, 1988a; Slavin, 1976) and continuing in promotion to the corporate top echelons (Slavin and Pradt, 1982, Korman, 1988a). Slavin (1976: 24) concluded in a somber tone: "it seems the present system of corporate recruitment effectively excludes Jews from most sectors of the American economy." Jews also had to face overt and explicit generalized anti-Jewish prejudice (Quinn et al., 1968), which saw them sidelined into support functions in organisations and the professions: roles and occupations that required technical skills and intellectual capabilities but were less dependent on social acceptability (Korman, 1988b). Powell (1969) compares the level

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<sup>2</sup> Haredi (orthodox) Jews make up a tiny proportion of the miniscule Jewish population in both Germany and Austria. In Austria they comprise 7% of the Jewish community (Staevisky and DellaPergola, 2020) and in Germany the percentage is even lower (personal communication with Daniel Staevisky, May 2021).

<sup>3</sup> The implementation of Title VII from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 may play a role here: its interpretation (or lack thereof) may have inadvertently encouraged the harboring of antisemitic expressions at the workplace as courts were reluctant to rule on what constitutes a 'religion', thereby providing a blanket protection to anything that could be labeled 'beliefs' (Arem, 2012).

of hindrance to an executive career based on religion, reporting that Jews were nine times more impacted than the second most impacted denomination, Roman Catholics. Moreover, Zweigenhaft (1984) demonstrates that Jews were barred from elite social clubs, a key entry route into the executive suite. Commercial banks in particular were singled out as discriminating against Jews (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 1982).

As Korman's book title '*The Outsiders: Jews and Corporate America*' (1988b) reveals, Jews were looked upon as outsiders at a time when being an outsider could be held against you. That was decades before diversity management became *de rigueur*. In today's world of work, being a mere outsider is, on the face of it, no longer a barrier; however the implicit bias inherent in one's construal as *outsider* (Bauman, 2005; Simmel, 1908) still holds fort, though it is much more nuanced than outright discrimination.

Whilst at the macro level, the occupational profile of Jews has attracted the attention of economists,<sup>4</sup> the literature on antisemitism from the perspective of labor economics is singularly sparse. Mocan and Raschke (2016: 6) reveal that in Germany "xenophobic, antisemitic and racist feelings are tempered when people believe that their own economic situation is in good shape, and these feelings are magnified when people think that their personal economic situation is bad. The same relationship exists for beliefs about national economic conditions". Economic theory however provides us useful insights. For example, *taste-based discrimination* would suggest that if an employer does not like Jews, then, one would expect that Jews or those believed to be Jews would face a harder time finding and keeping their job. If customers dislike Jews, then a company may have to keep its Jewish employees out of sight (as was the case with oil companies in the 1960s and 1970s: Korman, 1988a, Slavin, 1976), This in turn could impair the performance of employees categorized as Jews which may impede the chances of future hires - so-called *statistical discrimination* (Neilson and Ying, 2016).

The empirical literature shows that employment discrimination against Jews in the USA has receded fast. By the early 1990s, Dinnerstein (1994: 248) notes: "in the most visible areas of society antisemitism is simply a non-factor", although the high rate of the self-employed and entrepreneurs among Jews in that period may suggest otherwise (Chiswick, 2020). By the early 2000s commercial banks no longer appeared to discriminate against Jews (Gale, 2004) and towards the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Dinnerstein (2016: 53) states "Jews have become the most successful, admired and respected religious group in America. They have attained a place in society and a level of security and success in the United States that would have been thought unimaginable in the middle of the twentieth century", a point reiterated by Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2018); and Chiswick (2020: 326) concludes: "Throughout their over 350 year presence in the US, American Jews have demonstrated extraordinary economic achievements."

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<sup>4</sup> For a recent review see Jeff Lipkes (2019) "Capitalism and the Jews": Milton Friedman and his critics *History of political economy*, 51 (2), 193-236

This raises an interesting conundrum. If Jews are so successful, why concern oneself with antisemitism (whether it manifests itself or not)? This question brings us to the third current of our conceptual model.

### **The other side of the coin: Jews in a post-Holocaust gentile world**

In his review of Korman's book, Schwartz (1989: 304-305) offers the following insight:

*"To grow up Jewish, at least in my time, was to grow up with the knowledge that one's possibilities were limited. One knew that one could not be a member of certain groups, hold certain occupations, even go to certain schools...being a corporate executive was never something that I considered as an open possibility. As I grew older I came to realize that the sense of limitation is deeply a part of the Jewish heritage...Later, I came to understand that it was this belief in limitation, the frailty of man, and the tenuousness of life that was in large measure responsible for some people rejecting the Jews. Often the world of these gentiles was a world full of manic optimism, the denial of death...No wonder they did not want these Jews around. From their dreams, the Jews keep waking them."*

Schwartz directs our attention to the underlying existential tension of a minority group's living experience as being *different*. It is a universal propensity, but for Jews, due to their historical baggage as the canonical outsiders, there are added particularistic undertones, such as being universally disliked because they are unlike, as Baron (1976) put it. To complicate matters, Jews are also disliked because they are too un-different (Wistrich, 2007: the sameness hypothesis) as has been the case in Germany and Austria in the period leading up to the Third Reich and the Shoah, when assimilated Jews, including converts to Christianity were particularly singled out in Nazi ideology precisely because they appeared to be indistinguishable from the general population.

Schwartz also directs our attention to the interaction between a minority's existential state (and state of mind) and its impact on the majority's worldview; inter alia defining Terror Management Theory (see following) in all but name.

In the preface to their book, Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (1982: v) refer to a remark from a friend who learnt about their project "“Is a book about successful Jews ever good for the Jews?” We understand the depth of this concern” the authors note. Remarkably, some 40 years later, in a very different epoch for American Jewry, Chiswick (2020: i) notes in the preface to his book: “I ran into a challenge...concern expressed by a few and held more quietly by many others, that research revealing Jewish economic success might generate negative social, cultural and political consequences”. We are into the terrain of what has been dubbed the ‘Diaspora motive’ (Brenner and Kiefer, 1981) - the perennial insecurity of migrants; or as Jews would put it, ‘what will the *goyim*<sup>5</sup> say’? Of course in the case of Jews that is not merely a matter for recent arrivals, but an existential ontology: the possibility and potentiality of forced unrootedness being integral to Jewish identity.

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<sup>5</sup> Goyim (Hebrew, Yiddish) = gentiles.

The latest survey of European Jews concerning their perception and experience of antisemitism (FRA, 2018) confirms that. 73% of Austrian respondents agree that antisemitism is a very big or fairly big problem and 75% agree that it increased in the past five years. In response to the question: “Do you ever avoid wearing, carrying or displaying things that might help people recognize you as a Jew in public” 67% of Austrian respondents replied in the affirmative (ranging from ‘always’ to ‘occasionally’). Significantly, 31% have considered emigrating “because I don’t feel safe living here as a Jew”. The figures for Germany were higher: 85%, 89%, 75% and 44%, respectively. These figures are staggering. They suggest communities living in a permanent state of fear, feeling exposed to ongoing threat to their safety and well-being, unable to freely exercise their religion and manifest their identity.

### **Antisemitism as a cultural phenomenon**

Cotler (2009: 11) defines cultural antisemitism as a “mélange of attitudes, sentiments, innuendo and the like in academia, in Parliaments, among the literati, public intellectuals, and the human rights movement - in a word, *la trahison des clercs*”, in reference to Julien Benda’s seminal study of 1920s Europe, depicting the ‘betrayal of the elites’. Applebaum (2020) brings us up-to-date as concerns, for example, Poland under Kaczyński and Hungary’s Orbán where antisemitism is actively encouraged by the authorities and the intelligentsia. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, put it squarely: “we have to recognize that antisemitism has been the root and origin of most racist behaviour for the past 1,000 years in this country [England]. It goes right back to the early Middle Ages...It seems to be something that is latent and under the surface, and it bubbles to the surface very, very easily indeed. I think it is one of those things that, when we see it, tells us that there are strains and stresses in society. It is the canary in the mine”.<sup>6</sup>

We concur with Welby. Notwithstanding the critical role elites play in legitimizing and validating antisemitism at a given place in a given time, the potentiality of antisemitism is in itself a given - the so called *continuity thesis* (Ettinger, 1978) which comes under different titles, such as ‘the eternal hatred’ (Goldhagen, 1996), ‘the longest hatred’ (Wistrich, 1991), ‘permanent neurosis’ (Talmon, 1965): anti-Jewish sentiment has been around at least since the birth of Christianity (Eco, 2013) and it may be traced back to pagan times (Freud, 1955). Antisemitism is woven into the social-cultural fabric of Western society, notably Europe - a perverse *cultural capital*<sup>7</sup> of sorts. In stating that, we follow Volkov’s (1978, 2006a, 2006b) depiction of antisemitism as anchored in cultural codes. She highlights “the total interconnected ways of thinking, feeling, and acting,” subsuming both *Weltanschauung* and ideology, not excluding philosophy, science, and the arts, and “includes traditions that consciously and subconsciously affect such a collectivity, habits of mind, a variety of automatic reactions, and a plethora of accepted norms” (Volkov, 2006b: 110-111). Cultural codes, according to Volkov, signify larger important life positions, which stand out in particular in times of crisis and strife. Whilst a higher level of formal

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<sup>6</sup> Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, in evidence before the Home Affairs Select Committee at the House of Commons, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> In reference to Bourdieu’s **embodied** cultural capital.

education was found to be associated with weaker antisemitic attitudes (Fertig and Schmidt, 2011), Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz (2013) in their study of Germany (as well as Austria to a lesser extent) highlight the ubiquity of antisemitism among all social strata.

Contributory factors to widespread grassroots antisemitism in Germany and Austria are *secondary antisemitism*<sup>8</sup> and *victimhood competition*<sup>9</sup>. Both concepts refer to national and personal identity construction. The former refers to individuals' ingrained defensiveness against guilt and addresses those descendants who are aware that members of their families were Nazi supporters (not necessarily as direct perpetrators). The latter refers to the resentment against Jews aroused due to the perception that their own non-Jewish families were also victims of the Nazi period. This sentiment is particularly present in Austria, which held the official position that the country as a whole was 'the first victim of Hitler' decades after WW2. Nowadays, one may add *tertiary antisemitism* to the count, as the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators, supporters, and sympathizers come of age (Hohenlohe-Bartenstein, 2011). Indeed, according to Bodemann (2002) the Jewish trope is a central element in German identity.

Antisemitism being part and parcel of the cultural milieu of Germany and Austria, we would expect the day-to-day to be imbued with antisemitic behavioral conduct, though not always in an obvious way, since antisemitism went underground in the aftermath of the Holocaust (Silverman, 2017). Thus, 'Jews' is used as a dirty word (Seidenschnur, 2013), and that habitual expression is not confined to the older generation. 'Du Jude!' is a derogatory expression common among youth (Scherr and Schäuble, 2007) and typically directed against non-Jews (Bernstein, 2020; Jikeli, 2010). Jokes about Jews feature regularly in popular culture, establishing a norm of verbal antisemitism (Seidenschnur, 2015), though malice may not always be intended (Scheichl, 1987). Yet, the distance between words and action could be rather short, as the history of Germany and Austria taught us.

## **TOWARDS A MODEL OF WORKPLACE ANTISEMITISM**

Whilst overt antisemitic incidents (e.g., physical attacks, damage to property, verbal abuse) are evidently on the rise, they pale in significance, at least in terms of number of occurrences, compared to implicit antisemitic manifestations. In modern Germany and Austria, expressing antisemitic views is no longer *salonfähig* (socially acceptable) and in both countries' constitutions and legal systems, expressing such views may land one in jail. Hence, without underestimating the gravity of these overt incidents, an emphasis in understanding day-to-day antisemitism and its prevalence to the workplace should be on its indirect presentation and coded nuance. Importantly, antisemitism as a widespread grassroots ingrained cultural phenomenon necessarily

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<sup>8</sup> P. Schönbach (1961). *Reaktionen auf die antisemitische Welle im Winter 1959/60*. Frankfurt a. M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.

<sup>9</sup> For a recent article, see G. Antoniou, E. Dinas, and S.M Kosmidis (2020) Collective victimhood and social prejudice: a post-holocaust theory of antisemitism *Political Psychology* 41(5), 861-886

points us towards protagonists' subconscious, if not of entire communities' collective unconscious.

Having outlined the currents relevant to workplace antisemitism, we next introduce our model's conceptual building blocks. While the four currents may be construed as 'constant' elements, the periodic rise and fall in the intensity of antisemitic manifestations (expressions, incidents, attitudes, beliefs) are a variable of the zeitgeist (Becker and Pascali, 2019).

### **Conceptual building blocks**

We identify two theories that could be instrumental in understanding the alternating peaks and troughs of anti-Jewish sentiment and may provide promising avenues for research into workplace antisemitism: Terror Management Theory and Goal Setting Theory.

**Terror Management Theory (TMT).** TMT postulates the role of death salience in human behavior (Burke, Martens and Faucher, 2010). Central to the theory is the need for defense of one's *cultural worldview* and *self esteem* in buffering humans against the universal threat of mortality (e.g. Schmeichel and Martens, 2005; Schmeichel et al., 2009).

"TMT may be particularly useful for understanding antisemitism because outbreaks have often occurred following major social disruptions - military defeats, epidemic lethal disease, and massive economic deterioration. Either death, or some threat to people's most cherished beliefs, or both have become salient. TMT suggests that, under such circumstances, many people will attempt to protect themselves by affirming their core values. Jews' survival, their financial success and their unique religious beliefs threaten the worldview of others. This threat can be parried by denigrating Jews" (Cohen-Abady et al., 2016, 107). Hence, "when focused on their own mortality and in need of the protections that their world views provide, non-Jews may become more hostile towards Jews; this is because Jews represent a challenge to their world views by being out group members" (op. cit., 108).

Thus, in periods characterized by strife, threat (to life, livelihood), crises (political, economic, environmental, civil unrest) that produce enhanced death awareness and/or challenge to one's central beliefs, antisemitism, manifesting non-tolerant, aggressive responses, would be expected to rise. Indeed, in one of their earlier studies, Greenberg et al. (1990) demonstrated that evoking mortality salience drives Christians to rate more positively fellow Christians and more negatively Jews. Schimel et al. (1999) demonstrated a preference for stereotyping and stereotypic thinking in such circumstance.

TMT, a psychoanalytically informed theory, underscores the possibility of activating mortality salience or perceived damage to one's central beliefs, subconsciously<sup>10</sup> as well as consciously.

**Goal Setting Theory (GST).** GST is an organizational behavior theory that deals with the relationship between learning, feedback, and work performance (Locke and Latham, 1990, 2019). GST has built on Bargh's automaticity model (Bargh, 1990) "that a goal is a mental representation stored in memory, and that it can be activated by a situational cue in the absence of conscious awareness (i.e. priming effect)" (Chen et al. 2021a: 217) developing an integrated model (Locke and Latham, 2006; Stajkovic, Locke and Blair, 2006; Latham, Brcic and Steinhauer, 2017). The theory shows that subliminal priming is often achieved by manipulating visual clues (like photos), but also verbally. Priming to behave cooperatively has been shown to enhance performance, while negative feedback (communicating low achievement against self-set goals: Bipp and Kleingeld, reported in Chen 2021a) is detrimental to one's performance. Chen et al. (2021a) conclude: "primed goal effects on organizational behavior exist, and these effects are not restricted to the laboratory" (p. 227).

Importantly, subconsciously primed goals, enacted without one's intention or awareness, do not show a differential effect than when they are consciously activated; and any aspect of it, feedback included, could be non-conscious (Frese, 2021) and plays a similar role to the primed goal-performance linkage (Itzhakov and Latham, 2020). Furthermore, habits - automatically repeated in-context behaviors or associations in memory between a context and a response - when activated, may be stronger than (changed) attitudes (Itzhakov, Uziel and Wood, 2018). Chen et al. (2021b: 77) comment on organizations more generally: "Over time a [organizational] climate can become second nature, and as result, can influence an employee's behavior unconsciously".

The emphasis in GST is on the subtlety of desired outcomes, mediating processes and achievable conduct in a work environment, represented in memory, sometimes symbolically and subliminally primed (e.g. Latham and Piccolo, 2012). An environment (not necessarily work environment) that sends out antisemitic cues may activate antisemitic conduct, with a correspondence between the level of environmental cues and expressed (antisemitic) behavior, the workplace included. Hence, in times of increased antisemitic expressions (in the media, online messages, incidents) we would anticipate correspondent expressions also at the workplace: social priming and goal priming are actually the same (Bargh, 2021). Significantly, the target population of antisemitism - Jews - may be more inclined to construe events as antisemitic (i.e., they are more sensitive to interpret cues this way) than non-Jews do (DellaPergola, 2020 and see footnote 12 below): Are they 'primed' to detect antisemitic behavior (that may be unintended as such) more easily, or does their sensitivity 'prime' an erroneous judgment?

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<sup>10</sup> We use here interchangeably subconscious, subliminal, unconscious, non-conscious, in line with the terms employed by the different sources we cite. We are aware of, but do not attempt to fine-tune, the differences among these terms.

## THE JEWISH QUESTION AND THE WORKPLACE

“Notions of Jews as malign financial and criminal geniuses...remained a mainstay of antisemitic discourse”<sup>11</sup>

“The world is swarming with antisemites. A Jew is always on the lookout for deadly enemies.”<sup>12</sup>

Since the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century when Jews started to gain emancipation and, in tandem antisemitism as a modern ideology emerged, the issue of how to resolve the ‘Jewish question’ in Europe figured prominently on the continent’s civic and political agenda; and since at least Karl Marx’s *Zur Judenfrage* (1844) also in the discourse of the social sciences. Jews’ civic/political responses: agnosticism and/or assimilationism (suppressing or abandoning one’s Jewish identity), Zionism (opting for self-determination and statehood) and cosmopolitanism (a search for universal identity) may have, we suggest, their equivalent in the world of work.

Thus, distancing and detracting from one’s Jewish identity would mark assimilationism, whether by change of name, or by prominently celebrating non-Jewish festivals, for example. Entrepreneurship may be construed as a (positive) attempt at self-determination in response to a negative work experience or perceived lack of opportunities (Dana, 1997). Could cosmopolitanism possibly be traced to exemplary Organisational Citizenship Behavior, championing Corporate Social Responsibility or rigorous trade union activity? We will not be surprised to learn if the antisemitic representations to these civic/political responses, respectively: the ‘parvenu Jew’, the ‘pariah Jew’ and the ‘rootless cosmopolitan Jew’ (Fine, 2019) have their workplace equivalents too.

Consider the following non-hypothetical scenario.

*At a time of a global viral pandemic that found the world community unprepared, resulting in millions losing their lives and livelihoods - a major upheaval that engulfed all continents; a worldwide rise in antisemitism (incidents, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes) occurs, including a conspiracy theory that blames Jews, for: a) creating and spreading the disease; and b) benefiting from it financially.*

*During the pandemic, the tensions between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian faction that controls the Gaza strip, flare up to a seasonal war, with civilian casualties and damage to personal effects and community infrastructure inflicted by both sides. The Austrian government hoisted the Israeli flag on the roof of its Chancellery in Vienna as a sign of solidarity. In Germany, in an act of solidarity, pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli demonstrations took place in Berlin, Frankfurt, Leipzig and several other cities.*

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel Vyleta *Crime, Jews and News: Vienna, 1895–1914*. Oxford: Berghahn, 2007, p. 225

<sup>12</sup> Elias Canneti *Auto-Da-Fé* London: Harvill Press, 2005.

How does a workplace respond? TMT would predict enhanced hostility towards out-group persons, Jews in this instance. Would that hostility manifest in any tangible (and measurable) way?

In an environment saturated with anti-Jewish images (from the TV, social media, the press) and an organizational culture conducive to anti-Jewish sentiment, a generalized negative feedback loop may be directed against Jewish members of the organization and those believed to be Jewish, GST would predict. Would they feel it? Would non-Jews get what is happening? The former may have a (subconscious) invested interest to see no evil, or on the contrary, may be oversensitive; the latter may not recognize the issue at hand - unaware of their own prejudices "since one simply invents who and what is to be stigmatized as 'Jew' or 'Jewish'" (Marin, 1983: 187).

## SELECTED ISSUES AND ASSOCIATED QUESTIONS

### Negative symbiosis

"In a letter to Karl Jaspers in 1946, on the occasion of the Nuremberg Trials, Hannah Arendt addressed the basic idea of a 'negative symbiosis' of Germans and Jews after Auschwitz... 'One can do nothing either personally or politically about a guilt that lies beyond crime and an innocence that lies beyond good or virtue... For the Germans are burdened with thousands, or ten thousands or hundreds of thousands who can no longer be properly punished within a system of laws; and we Jews are burdened with millions of innocents, because of whom each Jew today looks like innocence personified'.<sup>13</sup>

Consider the following imaginary tale.

*Joseph K., a rather ordinary bank clerk in a commercial bank in Munich, Germany, feels unease. He can't quite put his finger on it, but in his quotidian dealings with customers and peers he senses a tension that he did not notice before. Is he imagining things? As it happens, Joseph K. is a Jew, and whilst not wearing his Jewish identity on his sleeve, so to speak, he never made a secret of it either.*

*Over dinner at home (the pandemic has greatly diminished their social life) the subject of the war in Israel comes up as his wife has relatives there. Joseph K. tries to distract his mind, but the feeling of unease doesn't go away. He spends a sleepless night. The following morning, a colleague at the bank asks him if all is well. He too noticed that Joseph K. isn't his usual self.*

Negative symbiosis - that is, a closed feedback loop involving Jews and non-Jews, whereby both sides, for different reasons, share the same source of discomfort, feeding on each other's misery. Jewish apprehension engages non-Jewish resentment, leading both sides to become trapped in habitual (past) perceptions and behavior - *Huis Clos* indeed. Is there a concrete organizational form to this abstract conceptualization? If so, how can it be de-coupled?

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<sup>13</sup> Dan Diner 'Negative Symbiosis', in Levi, N. and Rothberg, M. (Eds.) *The Holocaust. Theoretical Readings*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. P. 425.

### **False positives.**

"The Jew is one whom non-Jews consider as Jewish: it is the gaze of others that makes the Jew, a Jew."<sup>14</sup>

Consider the following imaginative vignette.

*Gregor S. is a travelling salesman in Vorarlberg, Austria.*

*Gregor S. isn't Jewish, but since his school days, when he acquired the nickname 'Jew', he got used to be mistaken, from time to time, as one.*

*Gregor S. is not sure why, since he never met a Jew in his life, so he can't tell whether there is any resemblance.*

*Last week one of his customers asked him, with a wry smile on his face, 'Do you think it's kosher what Israel is doing to Palestine?' Gregor S. shrugged his shoulders and didn't reply. 'It's just one of those things' his friend comforted him, when Gregor S. told him about that.*

In the 1960s USA Quinn et al. (1968) report that nearly half of those executives who were inclined to discriminate against Jews agreed with the statement 'most of the time you can tell a person is Jewish by his physical appearance'. What are the implications for someone in an organization believed to be Jewish when s/he is not? According to a 2018 CNN poll, two thirds of Germans and Austrians were not aware of ever having met a Jewish person (CNN, 2018).

### **Pygmalion effect**

"A Jew had the choice of being counted as insensitive, shy and suffering from feelings of persecution. And even if you managed somehow to conduct yourself so that nothing showed, it was impossible to remain completely untouched."<sup>15</sup>

Consider the following factual case.

*Seen by the Christian midshipmen<sup>16</sup> as a fringe religious group, Jewish midshipmen received multiple comments from the Christian respondents pertaining to acts of intolerance... it is interesting that the Christians note the intolerance towards Jews...more often than the [Jewish] respondents do.<sup>17</sup>*

To comprehend the impact a negative or poor self-image may have on a person's view of themselves and on their occupational aspirations; the way it blinds them from facing a (painful) reality, we may need to go back over half a century and consider the status of women in the world of work then. Bem and Bem (1970) tell us in a (hyper-realist) *Case study of a non-conscious ideology: Training the woman to know her place* what it looks like and feels like at a time of an overwhelming consensus about the place of women in society (home maker) and at work (minimal engagement, marginal roles): "The consequence is a non-conscious ideology, a set of beliefs and

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<sup>14</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre (1948) *Antesemite and Jew* NY: Schocken Books.

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Schnitzler *My Youth in Vienna*, quoted in the Introduction by Frederic Raphael to *Dream Story* (1999) London: Penguin, P. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Midshipman - officer of the lowest rank in the US Navy.

<sup>17</sup> M.B. Krauz (2006) *The Impact of Religiosity on Midshipmen Adjustment and Feelings of Acceptance*. Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School. MA Dissertation. P. 46.

attitudes which [one] accepts implicitly...A society's ability to inculcate this kind of ideology into its citizens is the most subtle and most profound form of social influence. It is also the most difficult kind of social influence to challenge because it remains invisible." (op. cit., p. 89).

Looking back and realizing the long way we have come in Western developed economies as regards a society's view on the place and role of women, may direct us towards possibilities in dealing with other embedded negative beliefs on minority groups, including the most protracted one: Jews.

## **RESEARCH AGENDA**

We know a fair amount about antisemitism in the public arena; we know less about the theory of antisemitism (Judaken, 2018); we know little about contemporary targets of antisemitism (DellaPergola, 2020); we know next to nothing about antisemitism at the workplace and in organizations. Therefore, a number of issues rank high on an emerging research agenda to fill this knowledge gap and support action.

### **Reliable data**

Establishing the extent and depth of antisemitic conduct and its relevance to work and organisations is no simple task. To start with, we don't have reliable information on its prevalence in the general population. Relying on public opinion surveys on such a sensitive topic is problematic, and in the case of Germany and Austria highly questionable, since expressing antisemitic views may not be compatible with formal and informal norms and could be risky (Beyer and Krumpal, 2010). As pointed out by Kovacs (2002), in both countries there is a strong incentive not to reveal one's true positions as regards Jews - a so-called *communicative latency* (Luhmann, 1984). Hence, in addition to those who express an antisemitic sentiment, at the very least the 'no opinion' figures should be viewed with skepticism (Kovacs, 2002).<sup>18</sup> It is possible to improve on the standard public opinion survey, up to a degree, but it comes at a cost,<sup>19</sup> And alas, there are no shortcuts.

Data on workplace antisemitic issues is glaring in its absence. It is conceivable that the lack of data indicates a non-issue, i.e. there is no antisemitism at the workplace worthy of mention. On the other hand, it may be the case that the lack of data is simply the result of not asking the correct questions or in a correct manner; and, we would add, not listening attentively to what is not being said. Both in-depth qualitative enquiries and field experiments are called for.

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<sup>18</sup> Kovacs refers to a 1989 opinion survey in Germany and a 1991 survey in Austria, referencing respectively W. Bergman and R.A. Erb (1991) *Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* Opladen: Leake+Budrich; and Karmasin, F.A. (1992) Austrian attitudes towards Jews, Israel and the Holocaust. *Working Papers on Contemporary Antisemitism* NY: American Jewish Committee.

<sup>19</sup> For a fine example see I. Krzeminski (2019) Polish national anti-Semitism *Polin* 31, 512-542.

## **Mapping organisational antisemitism**

We have a well-developed set of theories and concepts to map organizational structures, norms and values, and culture (e.g. Cameron and Quinn, 2011). With a specific focus on the issue at hand, one can use them as a starting point and ask questions such as: What does an antisemitic organisation look like? Feel like? How shall we categorize an organisation's culture as antisemitic? What are the key parameters and how to diagnose them? What is the role of management; or vice versa, how does a non-antisemitic organisation that is immune against antisemitism look like and feel like?

On the first set of questions we have the recent case of the British Labour party which was found to have been antisemitic under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn (2015-2019) in an official enquiry (EHRC, 2020) and may serve as an example. There are already a good number of academic and other publications on this case. On the latter, the literature on the healthy workplace, which has had a comeback in recent years, may prove helpful; as well as attempts by various bodies to combat widespread campus antisemitism (Klaff, 2010; Pollack, 2010) that may serve as blueprints for other institutions.

### **Is antisemitism a special case?**

How antisemitism compares to Islamophobia, anti-black racism, and other current anti-minority trends remains unclear, notes Judaken (2018). In organisational contexts, the relative success of Jews, of which we have evidence for the USA and Canada, raises a further interesting question, since discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of religion or race has typically been formulated in terms of denial or restriction of opportunities (e.g. Phipps, 2019). Our analysis points towards more subtle forms of discrimination, the implications and consequences of which are yet to be established; thus calling for an examination of the workplace in the widest terms (Mainemelis and Altman, 2010).

## **FINAL NOTE**

The launching pad for this discourse has been the rising tide of antisemitism in our day and age. Our aim is to bring to the foreground its possible configurations in organisational life. Given the paucity of empirical data, the absence of theoretical frames and lack of know-how on grounded responses, we are necessarily at the very beginning of a scholarly voyage. Still, the journey has started.

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