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Minority Stress and Visibility: Identity, Marginalisation and Voices in Counselling Psychology Research and Practice

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Portfolio submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (DPsych)

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Declaration

I, Ryan Oliver Braier-Lorimer confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Preface

"American Zionists get the benefits of white-privileged people but talk like they are Black people during slavery." – Julian Casablancas (The Strokes) - 21st April 2026.

Growing up a British Jew, with strong liberal values and a vehement belief in a just world of equality, I will not forget the day it felt as if liberalism appeared to be fundamentally shifting to a place in which I had begun to feel excluded. Whilst I have been lucky to train as a Counselling Psychologist and learn to help others in a career which, thus far, has provided me with enormous reward, I am also a working professional musician, and Julian Casablancas, the lead singer of The Strokes, an outspoken liberal and a fighter for social justice, is a musical hero of mine. I remember how my heart sank on hearing him speak of "American Zionists" and their "White privilege" on a YouTube segment called 'Subway Takes', simultaneously 'Whitewashing' the Jewish population and invalidating their very real experience of oppression. This, at a time when global antisemitism is at its highest since the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were murdered. Astonishing is that despite my feelings around this, I have not uttered this disappointment to a soul beyond a handful of Jewish friends, certainly not out loud, and certainly not to any creatives, even to those with whom I have become extremely close. Having been a singer, outspoken and vocal all my life, I seem to have lost my voice, and herein lies the theme of this portfolio: Identity, marginalisation and voices.

There was a time when possession of a Jewish voice, if revealed, meant certain death; then these voices grew louder, as Jews once again became part of the fabric of Western society. Now, however, it feels as if Jewish voices are increasingly being squashed. In Britain, recent years have been marked by firebombed synagogues, arson attacks on Jewish ambulances and deliberate stabbings of Jews; and yet the leader of the Green Party, Jewish himself, wonders about actual danger to Jews, saying this may just be "a perception of unsafety". Interesting, how even a Jewish politician struggles in the current climate to validate the fear facing the Jewish community today.

Of course, we are Counselling *Psychologists*, not Counselling *Politicians*, and the majority of our work takes place at the individual, therapeutic level. However, extremism is rife, whether it manifests as antisemitism or through other forms of discrimination including racism or islamophobia. Therefore, this portfolio has a clear message: the world is changing and we

as Counselling Psychologists must listen to the voices of marginalised communities; and that includes Jews. Indeed, as will be discussed in the next section, the doctoral thesis in this portfolio centres around the unique situation facing Jews and their current struggle to find a voice, but this portfolio, as a whole, represents a wider mission to identify how we can understand identity, marginalisation and hear the voices silenced as the current world polarises.

Section A: Doctoral Thesis

The first part of this portfolio, the doctoral thesis, is an exploration of what is it like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today, using a Reflexive Thematic Analysis. It centres around the changing socio-political climate in the UK, the rise of antisemitism and discrimination against British Jews, and the impact this is having on their lived experience. Twelve British Jews were sampled and included in the study if they self-identified as both British and Jewish. Those under the age of 18 were excluded, with no upper age limit placed on inclusion. The aim was also to incorporate a wide range of denominations of Judaism, the combination of this with sampling across the life span providing a breadth of rich British Jewish experiences around recent events, even factoring in the voices of those who have lived as far back as the Holocaust.

Six themes were developed in this study, which together form a picture of what is it like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today. Theme one, *Antisemitism and the Changing Sense of Safety in Britain*, described a climate of hardening antisemitism, particularly since October 7th, 2023, with fraught arguments over what does or does not constitute antisemitism, particularly where it is entangled with anti-Zionism. Along with reports of profound relational changes, including ruptures with friends, there were suggestions that antisemitism may settle into a “new baseline” rather than return to prior levels, shaping future decisions as to whether it was safe to remain in the UK long-term.

Being Visible (or not): Managing Jewish Identity comprised British Jewish difficulty negotiating being seen by others to be Jewish, and the risks associated with this. Key findings included how those who were more religiously observant, and therefore more openly Jewish (i.e. wearing kippot), may feel at greater risk, with many describing the expression of their Judaism as an ongoing, context-sensitive calculation as to whether or not openness would be dangerous. Many also felt unable to speak openly about Israel (particularly if this involved any sort of support), experiencing a lack of safety in sharing these views and fearing social sanction.

Notable findings from theme three, *Negotiating Israel, Zionism and British Identity,* included changes to one's connection to Israel, while perceptions of the Jewish state as a place of safety appeared to have intensified. Many reported moral conflict with regards to Israel's current actions, pointing out that the general public possessed a lack of nuance with respect to British Jewish loyalty to Israel. This was particularly true for those liberal Jews feeling 'politically homeless', confused in the current socio-political climate, where expressing beliefs in support of Israel no longer seemed acceptable in politically left-wing circles. In a similar vein, many described identity struggles, with their British identity coming under increasing strain as a result of public responses to October 7th, increases in antisemitic behaviours, and the brandishing of stereotypes around Jews. This included foregrounding their Jewish identity over the British, but also a perception that Jewish identity was excluded from dominant frameworks of minority status.

Holocaust Memory as a Lens for Safety, Belonging, and Striving pointed to the legacy of intergenerational trauma (Rakoff et al., 1966) resulting from the Holocaust, and its role in British Jewish perception and understanding of safety. Its emotional impact, and the strategies used to cope in what was experienced as an increasingly threatening environment, were captured in the sixth and final theme, *Emotional toll and Coping in a Hostile Climate,* with participants reporting increased fear, sadness and grief, as well as heightened vigilance and a degree of non-clinical aspects of 'paranoia'. Notably, only one participant had made use of therapy, whilst others described defensive strategies such as 'compartmentalisation' or 'rationalising', with alternate thinking used to combat what they deemed unhelpful beliefs.

Overall, the findings appeared to align with literature presenting the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) as a useful framework in which to view British Jewish navigation of rising antisemitism (Rosner et al., 2011), while theories of collective trauma and intergenerational trauma provided further lenses through which to understand this group's current struggle. The findings also resonated with theories concerning acculturative stress (Berry, 2007), foregrounding the conflicts associated with the negotiation of a British Jewish identity in the present context. With much research demonstrating the mental health struggles associated with minority stress, acculturative stress and intergenerational trauma (Cox & Marlowe, 2025; Hoy-Ellis, 2023; Shani et al., 2025), the doctoral thesis concludes with a number of recommendations for working with British Jews clinically, as well as advocating for this group in wider settings.

On a more personal note, being a British Jew trying to negotiate my own Jewish identity, including my relationship to Israel, in the current circumstances, meant that the completion of this study has not been without its challenges. As is discussed in the reflexive sections of the thesis, it was my own journey with this complex identity that sparked an interest in investigating the experience of other British Jews in an evolving socio-political climate. Yet it came as quite a shock when, the following year, the attacks of October 7th resulted a drastic shift of this climate, not only for British Jews, but indeed for Jews across the diaspora. Whilst emotionally difficult at times, the completion of this project has turned from an interesting endeavour to an important one: understanding identity, marginalisation and hearing the voices of the Jewish community when many, it seems from this study, find themselves increasingly inclined to remain silent.

Part B: Client Study and Process Report

Part B of this portfolio is a presentation of a client study and process report, involving the exploration of the impact of childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse on later adult functioning, and how this was compounded by discrimination. Lisa's early story was one of trauma and powerlessness, and while she later achieved educational and occupational success, her experiences resulted in marginalisation, as she often avoided conflict and subjugated her needs, hiding from colleagues and feeling unable to 'speak up' for and protect herself.

The client study shows how a schema-informed approach was used to help Lisa once again find her voice, thus echoing the theme of identity, marginalisation and voices in this portfolio. In that vein, I am drawn to Lisa's comment "I wanted to stop whatever it was that was stopping me from being me… Fully me." Lisa's traumatic childhood abuse had left her struggling to be her full self, hiding much of who she was to avoid punishment, difficulty or conflict. Lisa was of Jamaican descent, and much exploration took place around the compounding influence of discriminatory experiences on her psychological functioning.

Throughout my training, indeed, my whole career, I have become increasingly aware of how barriers, be those at the individual level (e.g., abusive parenting or traumatic experience) or the wider societal level (e.g., oppression or institutional racism), limit people's capacity to thrive. My work with Lisa was an important exercise in how to go about collaboratively recognising the influence of this with clients, as well as making use of psychological strategies to help Lisa to be herself and turn up volume of her voice.

In my reflexive discussion, I talk about being drawn to the role of power, culture and the wider social context. I argue that research on culturally competent schema therapy appears relatively sparse, and that my psychological approach with Lisa would have benefited from a more nuanced understanding of the role of minority stress and the sociopolitical and cultural contexts in which Lisa found herself. Nevertheless, it is hoped this portfolio, as a whole, contributes to further understanding that in the context of profound social and political shifts across the world, we must endeavour as Counselling Psychologists to continue to educate ourselves in this area. This we need to do with an attitude of openness, and with the willingness to listen to the voices of silenced communities, using our training and our humanity to better understand their experiences.

Part C: Publishable Article

The third and final part of the portfolio consists of a publishable paper, to be submitted to 'Qualitative Research in Psychology'. The paper aims to provide a more concise view of the experience of British Jews navigating rising antisemitism today, positing psychological theories that may be helpful for practitioners to use as lenses through which to view this group's difficulties today. Where very few studies, if any, have been completed on what British Jews are currently feeling, this paper is intended to be used by practitioners who, as in my work with Lisa, are looking for ways in which to provide a more culturally informed therapeutic practice.

This paper should also add to the literature exploring minority stress and strategies for managing this in the Jewish community. Though not focused on mental health settings, it may provide useful background for discussions on antisemitism in mental health (arising, in part, due to Zionism), as well as on the exclusion of Jews from DEI training and educational practice beyond the field of mental health and therapy (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024). It is hoped that this paper is received as a reminder that as Counselling Psychologists, Jewish or not, Zionist or not, we are all on the same side of empowering oppressed minority communities.

My hope with this portfolio as a whole, is that it demonstrates my ongoing commitment to further understanding the subjective experience of marginalised communities, and the psychological influence of both their own culture and the power structures in which they are situated. As a White British Jew, my own identity has often been one of confusion, feeling privileged at one level, but marginalised at another. It is perhaps this predicament which has informed much of my interest in producing knowledge in this area, with this portfolio representing a mission statement to continue to remain open to and curious of how minority

communities lose their voice, as well as how we can help them, once again, find it from a place of competent, cultural sensitivity.

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Part A: Doctoral Thesis

0.0. **Abstract**

Introduction

Following October 7th 2023, antisemitism in the UK has risen sharply within an intensely polarised socio-political climate shaped by events in the Middle East. For British Jews, this has resulted in heightened vigilance and uncertainty about safety and belonging. Whilst some research has demonstrated pernicious psychological consequences for Jews in the diaspora consistent with minority stress, collective trauma, and intergenerational threat sensitivity, Jewish experiences of these stressors are often contested or minimised within dominant Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) narratives, potentially compounding struggle through invalidation. More generally, there is a relative absence of qualitative research capturing British Jews' lived psychological experience of navigating current rising antisemitism. This is the gap this study set out to address, by exploring what it is like for British Jews navigating rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with twelve British Jewish participants of varying ages and religious denominations, and the resulting data analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis to develop an in-depth account of their lived experience.

Results

Participants described antisemitism as 'ambient', recalibrating everyday safety and future-oriented thinking, alongside increased management of visibility, including around speaking out in public, professional, and relational contexts. Experiences of misrecognition - particularly conflation of Jewish identity with Israel and the sense of being under-represented within multicultural and DEI narratives, shaped British Jews' sense of belonging, trust, and social participation. For many, current events activated historical and intergenerational narratives of threat and survival, contributing to increased feelings of stress, anxiety, depression and feelings of non-clinical paranoia, with varied coping strategies including withdrawal, rationalisation and increased reliance on the Jewish community.

Discussion

Findings overall highlight heightened social tensions, where belonging, safety, and self-expression are experienced by British Jews as increasingly contingent and precarious. This study contributes to Counselling Psychology by demonstrating how minority identity, historical trauma, acculturative stress and the socio-political context intersect to shape how British Jews navigate rising antisemitism. Findings add to our understanding of the British Jewish navigation of rising antisemitism today, highlighting the need for culturally competent therapeutic practice when working with British Jews, and the potential benefits of a review of education, training protocols and DEI policy pertaining to Jews.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

1.1. Introduction

Over the last twenty years, antisemitism in the United Kingdom has been on the rise, hitting a first all-time-high in May 2021 during tensions in Israel and Gaza. On October 7th 2023, Hamas (who govern more than two million Palestinians in Gaza) co-ordinated a surprise attack killing over 1200 Israelis as well as taking over 200 hostages, with Israel declaring war in response. This eventually led to mass protests against Israel worldwide calling for an immediate ceasefire within the region, with the Hamas run health ministry reporting that over 70,000 Palestinians have been killed at the time of writing (Mahase, 2026).

Whilst the war between Israel and Hamas led to a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip, tensions in the Middle East have recently escalated further, with the US and Israel launching wide-ranging strikes on Iran on 28th February 2026, killing the country's supreme leader in attacks aiming to destroy Iran's nuclear programme (Moench et al., 2026). By the end of April, 15 people had been killed in Israel, with 2000 injured, while the Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRANA) reported a death toll of 1,825 people (Al Jazeera, 2026).

In response to Israeli military action including Palestinian deaths, displacement and destruction of infrastructure in Gaza, widespread distress and anger have risen across the United Kingdom. This continues to shape the socio-political climate for both Jews as well as Palestinians (or those with connection to Gaza) in the UK, with increased criticism of Israeli military conduct, as well as increased support for groups advocating for Palestinian suffering in Gaza, where humanitarian aid and intervention are currently vital.

Upheaval in the Middle East has had concurrent effects for diasporic Jews in the United Kingdom. In 2025, there were 3,700 instances of anti-Jewish hate crimes across the UK, the second highest annual total ever recorded, second only to 4,298 instances recorded in 2023 following October 7th, when there was a 1350% increase in antisemitic hate crime in London, according to Metropolitan Police (Community Security Trust, 2025; Dodd, 2023). In tandem with a significant rise in incidents of antisemitism, security measures have tightened around synagogues, Jewish schools, as well as Jewish community centres, with many Jews reporting feeling unsafe or excluded in social and professional settings (Boyd, 2025).

Boyd (2025) outlined changes to the experiences of British Jews as of October 2025 in a study of 4,882 British Jews of various ages, sex, denominational and geographical locations. It was reported that 35% of Jews rated their safety in Britain at the lower end of a 10-point scale (scoring 0-4), compared to just 9% in 2023, with 45% experiencing 'Ambient antisemitism' (e.g., indirect experiences, online commentary, hostile media coverage, microaggressions, etc.) 'frequently' or 'regularly', in comparison to 8% prior to October 7th, 2023. Socially, Boyd (2025) found that Jews had gravitated towards each other and were six times as likely to feel closer to other Jews, and three times more likely to feel less close to non-Jewish friends.

In another survey, published at the end of 2025 by the charity Campaign Against Antisemitism, 51% of the 4,490 British Jews polled reported that they did not feel they had a long-term future in the UK, 45% did not feel welcome in the UK, and 61% had considered leaving Britain in the past two years, many citing rising antisemitism since 7th October 2023 as a primary reason (Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

In light of this, Jewish mental health remains of great concern, with Ghoorun and Henderson (2025) reporting that 74% of Jewish students have had lived experience of difficulties with mental health in the last 12 months, and that 3,000 Jews were being supported by NHS talking therapies in one year alone in 2023. Developing a better understanding of the lived experience of British Diasporic Jews, and of how to support them at this difficult time, therefore seems essential.

1.2. Literature Search

Relevant literature was identified through searches of electronic academic databases accessed via the EBSCOhost platform. These included: Academic Search Ultimate, APA PsycArticles, APA PsycBooks, APA PsycExtra, APA PsycInfo, CINAHL Ultimate, Health Policy Reference Center, MEDLINE Complete, Political Science Complete and Sociology Source Ultimate. Searches used combinations of key terms related to the focus of this research, including British Jews (or British Jewry), identity, antisemitism, Israel and mental health, with Boolean operators utilised to combine and refine search terms. Additional relevant sources were also identified through reference lists of key papers as well as books.

1.3. The Jewish Story

In order to understand the context in which British Jews are situated, it is important to first explore the meaning of Judaism and clarify the parameters of what constitutes the Diasporic Jewish identity.

1.3.1. Jews Defined As Other

In her book, *Jew*, Baker (2017) discusses how historically, the word 'Jew' was used binarily to describe an 'other' in Christian discourse, with Christian on one side and Jew on the other. She highlights that the word Jew was used in this context as a negative operator, to mean something bad, or actively missing. As pointed out by L. C. Berman (2018), this mirrors discourse on the definition of Jewish identity as being external to Jews themselves, with 'Anti-Judaism' (Nirenberg, 2013, p. 1) defining Judaism as "a way of positioning oneself in relation to another mode of thought, imagined as 'Judaism' but which has little to do with true Judaism." For millennia, Jews have thus been thought of as alien or different, resulting in a defining pattern of persecution, exile and migration.

1.3.2. Immigration, Zion and Diaspora

Whilst Jewish history is extremely vast and complex, this section gives a brief overview of the history of Judaism from its inception, with the goal of providing historical context to the later discussion of Jewish diasporic identity.

Early narratives around Jewish inception begin in the Hebrew Bible, biblical accounts situating the origins of the 'Israelites' in Mesopotamia in the early second millennium BCE (Knauf, 1990; Zadok, 1982). Events such as enslavement in Egypt and 'the Exodus' (liberation from slavery) are described, before the establishment of Israelite kingdoms in the Levant during the 'First Temple period' around 1006–586 BCE (Na'Aman, 2006). Babylonian conquests led to destruction of this Temple in 586 BCE, resulting in the first major Jewish 'exile' (Lipschits, 2001). This exile marked the beginning of a recurring historical pattern in which Jewish identity became increasingly defined not only by territory, but by religious practice, collective memory, and shared historical narratives (Hahn Tapper, 2016). Jewish communities were then dispersed further across the Mediterranean and Near East, following the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans around 70 CE (Grabbe, 2006).

By the 4th century CE, Jewish populations had begun spreading through trade and migration, with widespread Jewish dispersion during the Roman period (Noy, 2013). Jewish communities then became established in Egypt, Asia Minor, North Africa, and later across Europe, adapting to languages and political structures, however maintaining religious and communal institutions (Barclay, 1996; Fairweather, 1929). Between the 2nd and 6th centuries CE, with the development of the Mishnah and the Talmud (collections of oral debates and traditions), Jewish identity became increasingly centred on religious law, textual

tradition, and communal life rather than political sovereignty, allowing dispersed communities to preserve Jewish continuity across different geographical locations (Hahn Tapper, 2016). Over time, this diasporic existence produced diverse Jewish cultural formations, including Sephardi communities in the Mediterranean and Ashkenazi communities emerging in Central and Eastern Europe from around the 10th century onward (Hahn Tapper, 2016). Numbers also grew in the Ottoman empire and North Africa in the medieval and early modern periods, in response to expulsion from England and Spain in 1290 and 1492 respectively (N. Roth, 1992; Singer, 1964).

Over the following centuries, European Jewish populations grew across Western and Central European countries (for instance Poland and Lithuania), expanding in response to shifting legal restrictions for Jews (Shulvass, 2017). The 18th and 19th centuries saw social and political transformations resulting in Jewish emancipation in European areas, with increased migration to Western Europe and the Americas (Shulvass, 2017; Williams, 2017). Zionism then began to emerge in the late 19th century, particularly following the First Zionist Congress in 1897, advocating for the reestablishment of a Jewish homeland (Epstein, 2016).

The Holocaust (1939–1945), during which six million Jews were murdered, then not only radically altered the distribution of world Jewry but also intensified the significance of Jewish questions of safety, exile, belonging, and collective survival (Hahn Tapper, 2016). In its aftermath, large numbers of Jewish survivors migrated to the region now known as the State of Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom and other Western countries (Morrison, 2018). The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 gave renewed political form to Jewish self-determination after centuries of dispersion, with a dichotomy beginning to form between ‘Zion’ and ‘diaspora’ (Hahn Tapper, 2016). Jewish identity in the 21st century is therefore often shaped by an ongoing relationship between ‘diaspora’ and Israel (Hahn Tapper, 2016).

1.3.3. The Complexity of Defining Judaism

Perhaps unsurprisingly in light of Jews' geographical dispersion and complex history, defining Judaism can be challenging, with Hahn Tapper (2016) noting that *"Jews identify as 'Jews' in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture, nation, race and more."* (Hahn Tapper, 2016, p.2). Whilst many have defined Judaism as an 'ethno-religion' (Krauz, 2025), Hahn Tapper (2016) explores Judaism from each of these possible definitions, showing why no 'one' definition alone is sufficient. For example, religion can be described as a given group's set of beliefs (Bruce, 2011); however, many Jews believe that ritual practice is more important in Judaism than belief, with rabbinic authorities claiming the centrality of abidance to Jewish law rather than belief itself (Hahn Tapper, 2016). Additionally, many Jews argue that one can still be Jewish in the absence of observance of (or even when breaking) Jewish law, with 80% of the world's Jewish population preferring to define their Jewishness as their culture, heritage or ethnicity; and a fifth of American and Israeli Jews in fact, not actually believing in God (Hahn Tapper, 2016).

Nevertheless, with a number of subgroups of Jews (Ugandan Abayudaya Jews, British Ashkenazi, Syrian Aleppo-identified Jews etc…) possessing different languages, worldviews and rituals, arguing the similarity of culture or ethnicity may be disputable. Nor can Judaism be defined as a nationality, since not all Jewish people are linked to one particular territory, or share the same citizenship (Hahn Tapper, 2016). Indeed, the concept of Jewish nationalism (which for many Jews refers to the state of Israel or belief in Zionism) has also been divisive ideologically, particularly in recent times, with Boyd (2025) for example finding that 20% of young Jews aged 20-29 in the United Kingdom identify as 'anti-Zionist.'

With Judaism not fitting neatly into religion, culture, ethnicity, heritage or national boundaries, there has been historically charged debate on defining Judaism as a race, particularly with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party attempting to argue a Jewish racial type for the purpose of justifying mass genocide (Hahn Tapper, 2016). Having said this, contemporary scholars argue that race is a social construct as opposed to a biological fact (W. D. Roth et al., 2023). Weisberg (2019) points out that American Jews hold a 'values-based conception' of what it means to be Jewish, in opposition to more tribalist conceptions, while Hahn Tapper (2016) notes that one can be become Jewish through conversion. Tenenbaum and Davidman (2007) additionally highlight that the Jewish position on conversion suggests a Jewish connection not through biology, but rather through common history and similarities in religious practices.

Difficulties in attempting to define contemporary Jewishness have been compounded by shifts in postmodern theories of identity formation, that argue that it is rooted in notions of authenticity existing in an individualised self (Liakh, 2022). This complexity in categorising Judaism exemplifies an issue that follows contemporary Jewry today: a general misunderstanding of what Jews are, as well as of how to define them. Hahn Tapper (2016) explores the important idea that contemporary Jewishness, therefore, may never have been so porous, contextualising the progression of Jewish identity through historical events that have triggered new attitudes and novel expressions of Judaism over time.

1.4. The Diaspora & Diasporic Jewish Identity

As of 2025, the global Jewish population was estimated to be around 15.8 million people, with the majority of Jews residing in Israel (7.1 million) and the USA (5.7 million), and with around 0.4% of Jews (around 300,000) living in The United Kingdom. Diasporic communities have been defined as “communities of people who live outside their shared country of origin or ancestry but maintain passive or active connections with it (Nazeer, 2015). Indeed, Daniel Staetsky points to “the big picture of Jewish history” which he sees “a cyclical migratory movement”, with the land now known as the State of Israel as a “focal point” (Staetsky, 2025, p. 1). As a result, many research studies utilise the word ‘diaspora’ to describe those Jews living outside of the Land of Israel (Meijer et al., 2023), of which there are, according to recent surveys, 8.25 million, accounting for 55% of the 15.3 million Jews worldwide (The Jewish Agency for Israel, 2022). In the United Kingdom, British Jews make up a very small minority, accounting for around 0.4% of the British population (Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2025).

1.4.1. Diversity In the Jewish Diaspora

A number of ethnic subgroups exist amongst these Jews, each with varying language, customs and practices. These include (but are not limited to): ‘Ashkenazi Jews’ (descendants from communities in Central and Eastern Europe); ‘Sephardi Jews’, many of whom descend from the Iberian Peninsula; ‘Mizrahi’ Jews, thought to have come from North Africa and the Middle East regions (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024); and Yemenite Jews, originating in Yemen. Amongst these, there is also a spectrum of Jewish ‘denominations’, including but not limited to Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jews (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024). In the United Kingdom, the majority of Jews fall into the category of ‘Unaffiliated’ (47%), or Strictly/Central Orthodox (35%), with the remaining Jews either

Progressive/Liberal or Masorti (Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2025). It is worth noting that many Jews also hold intersectional identities including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender/sexuality, as well as disability status, with around 4.5% of the British Jewish population identifying as LGB+ (Jewish News, 2023).

Variability in ritual observance exists between these groups, such as engagement in Shabbat, celebration of holidays, dietary laws (e.g., *Kashrut*), or expectations around dress like wearing a Yarmulke, or a Kippah, or modest dressing more generally (Andrews, 2011). However, emphasis must be placed on the fact that one's level of observance is not to be thought of as synonymous with connection to Judaism, nor do less observant Jews necessarily experience less pain or trauma associated with antisemitism (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024). Alongside ritual observance values such as ethical practices, education, and character development tend to drive Jewish practice, with emphasis on family and community ideas like belonging, collective action, and preserving traditions or stories through generations (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024).

1.4.2. Acculturation and Assimilation: Jews as White?

With many Jews historically having arrived in various host countries as immigrants, typically escaping persecution, some point to a historical tendency within Jewish communities to assimilate[1] into larger societies as a protective strategy against antisemitism (Hahn Tapper et al., 2023). Getzoff Testa et al. (2024) for example, discuss the feelings of exclusion and danger resulting from antisemitism, and how Jewish people assimilated in an attempt to subvert aversive educational, social or professional consequences. Assimilation for Jews being contingent on hiding one's Jewish identity, a perception of diasporic Jews as 'White' grew in Western societies (or those with Christian hegemony).

Avoidance of revealing one's Jewish identity was passed down through generations, with this concealment defining survival during the Second World War. Opportunities to assimilate could be viewed as a privilege (particularly for white Jews), allowing them to "hide in plain sight" (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024). In White Christian supremacist societies for example, Diasporic Jews with lighter skin had access to a measure of White privilege but nevertheless remained disadvantaged and marginalized within the context of Christian hegemony.

Hahn Tapper et al. (2023) further explain further that mid-century American Jews aimed to promote a picture of themselves that would dovetail neatly with American values of equality

[1]Assimilation involves losing contact with the heritage culture as relations are forged with the settlement dominant culture (Berry, 2008)

and freedom, and that even at this early-stage, emphasis on religion to classify Jews "fostered a controlling image" of American Jews as a 'white religious community.' Interestingly, much literature on the assimilation of Jews in the Western world is White-centric, with books like "How Jews become white folks" (Brodkin, 1998) detailing White Jews' attempts to join the middle classes, crucially leaving out those Jews who were not white. In fact, so predominant was the perception of Jews as white in the 19th and 20th centuries that Jewish people's "newly imagined whiteness became inextricable from their Jewishness" (Haynes, 2018, p. 25). Hahn Tapper et al. (2023) go on to show how White Jews in America

began to capitalise on a certain 'white privilege' of volitional avoidance of being classed as a race or ethnicity, thereby reinforcing assumptions about their whiteness.

Contemporary research has demonstrated the influence of this phenomenon on whether or not Jews were perceived as a minority or marginalised group, with Jews today often experiencing exclusion from Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) programmes, resulting in gaps in knowledge amongst professionals working with Jews (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024). Some have endeavoured to understand this, pointing out that modern Jewry are perceived as powerful, privileged, inordinately wealthy, and importantly "categorically White", despite the fact that Jewish people are ethnically, socioeconomically and racially diverse (Baddiel, 2022; Haynes, 2024; Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2025).

Hahn Tapper (2016) discusses the interesting concept of 'dominant narratives' as they relate to Jewry in that, just as prevailing American narratives are based in 'White experience', so too are those Jewish narratives expressed through dominant Ashkenazi experiences, despite the existence of diverse and heterogenous cultural, ethnic and racial narratives across Jewish people. Ashkenazi Jews (who are typically white in skin colour, originating from Central and Eastern Europe) make up the vast majority of Diasporic Jews, accounting for 60-80% of global Jewry (Hahn Tapper, 2016). This meant, whilst assimilating Ashkenazi Jews became increasingly accepted in Europe and the United States, much of the time non-Ashkenazi Jews were still thought of as non-white or people of colour (Hahn Tapper, 2016). In fact, Hahn Tapper (2016) points to how depictions of Jews in American pop-culture have perpetuated this, with the portrayal of Jews being largely Ashkenazi-centric, be that through references to *Klezmer* music or through a focus on Jewish history limited to immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia.

Importantly here, Hersh and Royden (2023) suggest that stereotypes of Jews as white and wealthy result in more contemporary antisemitic attitudes among non-Jewish racial/ethnic

minority groups as well as their allies. Schraub (2019) for instance, points to claims that Jews are now seen as the 'epitome of Whiteness', despite their racial diversity (Glauz-Todrank, 2014).

Getzoff Testa et al. (2024) argue that this inaccuracy particularly marginalises Jews of colour who become overlooked, while the 'whitewashing' of Jewish people in the diaspora reinforces hierarchical views of race in a population that, as a group, have long experienced persecution and oppression. Importantly, this conflation of Jewishness with Whiteness means that Jews themselves become the targets of antiracism and social justice efforts, fostering antisemitism and in practice harming antiracism efforts by way of alienating the Jewish community, or distracting focus from more powerful oppressive structures (Ward, 2017).

1.4.3. Acculturation: Theories and Implications for Mental Health

Previous sections have discussed the identity of the Jewish Diaspora, including a shared history of repeated migration resulting in persistent struggles to fit into host areas. Defining Judaism as a race, ethnicity, or religion raises complex issues. Nevertheless, it has been and continues to be incumbent upon this group to acculturate into the societies in which they have moved (Dashefsky et al., 2024; Meijer et al., 2023; Mora, 2024). With a wealth of research linking acculturation to psychological difficulties (Bursztein Lipsicas et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2024), and with discrimination (such as antisemitism) complicating this process yet further and compounding mental health risks (Bekteshi & Bellamy, 2024; Rivera Baeza et al., 2022; Tikhonov et al., 2023), it is important to recognise how this process may manifest for British Jews.

Acculturation can typically be thought of as a two-dimensional process involving a country of origin, a country of settlement, and using four different strategies (Andreouli, 2013). 'Assimilation' involves losing contact with the heritage culture as relations are forged with the settlement dominant culture, whilst 'Separation' refers to retaining the original culture without forging links with dominant cultures (Berry, 2008). 'Marginalisation' occurs when individuals lose their heritage culture *and* do not participate in the culture of their new environments. 'Integration' involves both retaining one's culture and participating in the dominant new culture (Berry, 2008).

Recently scholars have criticised this model, with some like Andreouli (2013) suggesting a 'dynamic model' driven by social representation theory. This model sees acculturation as the

ongoing negotiation of shared systems of meaning, where new experiences or 'representations' continuously 'frame' situations, providing lenses through which people interpret the world. This model draws on 'dialogical self' theories, suggesting 'polyphony' of the self where the enlarging complexity of society adds to the complexity of the self (Hermans, 2002, p. 148). Importantly however, this model too posits that 'threats' to this process, such as 'othering', or 'state policies' that restrict frameworks of thinking and acting, can result in identity conflicts and being "caught between frames". Notions such as 'acculturative stress' (Berry, 2007) have been put forward that outline the psychological implications of such struggles to socialise into host country values whilst retaining a sense of belonging. Of particular relevance here, while the picture is more complex for religion or ethnicity, research has showed that theories of acculturation could be successfully applied to aspects of identity such as Judaism (Rosner et al., 2011).

With increased acculturative stress consistently associated with increased rates of psychiatric disorders and distress (Horne, 2025), and with increased discrimination consistently linked with increased acculturative stress (Bekteshi & Bellamy, 2024; Tikhonov et al., 2023), developing a better understanding of the impact of rising antisemitism on British Jewish mental health is of significant concern.

1.4.4. Jewish Acculturation Strategies in the West

At the time of writing, very few if any recent studies appear to address how British Jews have acculturated in the United Kingdom; nonetheless some scholars have written about strategies employed by American Jews. Rosner et al. (2011) for example, describe American Jews as fearful of antisemitism and standing out, with Burstein (2007) suggesting a number of years ago that they had *integrated* into all aspects of American culture, and Brodkin (1998) claiming that Jews consider themselves to be as American as anybody else, their Eastern European ancestry making them as white as any other European.

1.4.5. Jewish Acculturation: A complex picture

Much literature points to the important role religion plays in acculturation (Karim, 2021; Lerias et al., 2025; Rizzo et al., 2022), either facilitating or impinging on the process depending on the majority religion of the host country, or its degree of tolerance towards religious groups (Rosner et al., 2011). However, as pointed out by Rosner et al. (2011), the matrilineal inheritance of Jewish identity means that one can be Jewish despite leading a very secular life, so that the conception of acculturation simply through a religious lens does

not accurately capture this task for Jewish people. Furthermore, this 'ethnic' aspect of Jewish identity comprises a history and an inherent feeling of belonging that may even be cross-national (Alba, 2006; Klaff, 2006), so that there is a dual (ethnic and religious) nature of the task of acculturation for Jews.

Nevertheless, Rosner et al. (2011) point to research suggesting a *positive* correlation between American and Jewish identities, with greater Jewish identity salience associated with *less* alienation (Persky & Birman, 2005), while Jewish adolescents report greater identification with American culture compared with non-Jews (Birman et al., 2010). In 2008 Charmé and colleagues went as far as to say that being *"Jewish has become an admirable condition rather than a stigmatised social status"* (Charmé et al., 2008, p. 133). Rosner et al. (2011) use this evidence to argue in favour of a seamless integration of American and Jewish identities, as being American doesn't create any need to abandon one's Jewish identity.

1.4.6. Judaism: A stigmatised Identity in The West?

Whilst Rosner et al. (2011) discussed the seamlessness of Jewish identity acculturation in a Western country like the United States (in some ways quite comparable to the United Kingdom), just 15 years later antisemitism has spiked significantly (American Jewish Committee, 2025; Anti-Defamation League, 2025), perhaps presenting a challenge to these claims. As will be discussed in the following section, much of this change is related to Israel and Zionism, and whilst not all Jews identify as 'Zionist', it will be argued here that Judaism and/or Zionism may well becoming a concealable stigmatised identity (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2015).

Crocker et al. (1998) define a concealable stigmatised identity as one that can be hidden from others but carries with it social devaluation, with a stigmatised identity one that is considered a mark of failure or shame, 'tainting' the self in the eyes of others (Goffman, 2009). Quinn and Chaudoir (2015) point out that these identities are associated with 'negative stereotypes' that are socially devalued, rendering individuals vulnerable to discrimination and prejudice solely on the basis of this attribute.

Existing research points to a link between the possession of a concealable stigmatised identity and psychological distress (Berkley et al., 2019; Cortopassi & Nicolas, 2026; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013), with Quinn and Chaudoir (2015) finding three characteristics predicting this distress: anticipated stigma, centrality (of the identity), and salience (level of

preoccupation with the identity). When one turns their attention to recent survey data in the United Kingdom suggesting increased centrality of Jewish identity for British Jews, alongside increased fear of revealing one's Jewish (or Zionist) identity, the relevance of this notion for Jews, especially those less religiously observant, becomes clear. Once again, issues around Jewish identity seem to present a real risk for Jewish mental health in the context of rising antisemitism, as British Jews are becoming increasingly exposed to negative social representations (Moscovici, 1984).

1.5. Antisemitism

Antisemitism is widely recognised as one of the oldest forms of prejudice (Mann, 2015), and many have worked to understand its roots, as well develop an acceptable definition of it (discussed in section 1.5.1). In his paper concerning Freud, Psychoanalysis and antisemitism, Frosh (2004) discusses Freud's argument that Jewish difference from those with whom they find themselves is 'indefinable', suggesting this as a reason for hostility. He points out that this may be compounded by unsuccessful historical extermination attempts; in Freud's words: "'on the contrary, they show a capacity for holding their own in commercial life and, where they are admitted, for making valuable contributions for every form of cultural activity" (Freud, 1939, p. 91).

Interesting here, is the suggestion that antisemitism stems from Jews' ability to blend in, particularly in light of previous sections concerning Jewish assimilation and acculturation strategies. Jews in this sense are both same and other. Frosh (2004, p. 14) later suggests that "The Jews are hated partly because they survive, they are forced into difference and this in turn provokes hatred, they are excluded and then seen as holding themselves separate." In this sense, Jews cannot win: if they are forced into difference, they are disliked for this, but their survival and their capacity for integration and acculturation are perplexing and thus, similarly received.

As will be further discussed below, this catch-22 situation remains politically relevant today: second, third and fourth generation Jews who have become included in the social fabric of Western countries now receive less support from far left leaning groups and institutions (Mohdin & Osuh, 2026) as discussed in section 1.5.2; yet they still have few friends on the far right who may see them as too different. Their 'indefinability' therefore continues to haunt Jews, with similar issues found with regards to definitions of antisemitism, which will be discussed in the following section.

1.5.1. Defining Antisemitism: An Emotionally Charged Debate

A wealth of literature exists centred around the complexity of defining antisemitism (D. Feldman et al., 2025). Many definitions share the same starting point, presenting antisemitism as *"hostility against Jews, as Jews"* or as *"linguistic utterances that devalue, stigmatize, discriminate against, and defame Jews qua Jews"* (Haury, 2025, p. 51). However, Haury (2025) points to how these definitions do not distinguish *contemporary* antisemitism from earlier forms (e.g., in antiquity), highlighting that many definitions also include a set of stereotypes, images or imputations to add a level of specificity.

Helen Fein (1987) for instance suggested a definition of antisemitism that includes *"a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs toward Jews as a collective",* distinguishing how this is *"manifested in individuals as attitudes",* in culture as *"myth, ideology, folklore, and imagery",* and *"in actions – social or legal discrimination, political mobilization against Jews, and collective or state violence – which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace, or destroy* Jews as Jews." Haury (2025) criticises definitions of antisemitism like Fein's, suggesting that whilst listing individual forms of expression or stereotypes can be illustrative or helpful, it nonetheless does not produce a coherent general concept of antisemitism. Further, these definitions fail to fully account for basic features of antisemitism such as the construction of a collective national self-image in opposition to the Jews.

Additionally, there has been much use of Sharansky's '3D-test' as well as the IHRA's (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) working definition of antisemitism, both of which place antisemitism against Israel as a more central principle. The '3D-test' for example, posits that criticism of Israel is antisemitic when

> *"(1) double moral and political standards are applied, that is, when different standards are applied to Israel than to its adversaries or other states; (2) when Israel is delegitimated as a state and its right to exist negated; and (3) when Israel is demonized (e.g., as the only guilty actor to blame for the conflict or by equating it with National Socialist Germany)"* (Haury, 2025, p. 53).

However, Haury (2025) argues this still does not distinguish hatred towards Israel in the form of double standards, demonization, and delegitimization from other forms of antisemitism, for example those directed at other states, citing Russia's war propaganda against Ukraine.

The IHRA definition, published in 2016, includes the 3D test, as well as *"a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred of Jews […] expressed in word and as well as in deed, against everything deemed 'Jewish,"* going on to list more concrete forms of expression including *"the phantasm of Jewish power and world conspiracy, holding all Jews responsible for wrongdoing by individuals or for Israeli policy, the use of traditional antisemitic stereotypes, and Holocaust denial*." (Haury, 2025, p. 52).

This "working definition of antisemitism" is largely based on the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia's (EUMC) definition and is currently the one used most frequently in politics and media. But even this definition has received criticism, some arguing that when the IHRA definition mentions "taking account of the overall context", there is no further explanation of how this should be understood (D. Feldman et al., 2025). Moreover, many of those involved in the 2021 "Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism" (JDA)[2] argued that this definition was *"unclear in key respects*, proposing their own alternative definition of antisemitism which places more emphasis on the contents of classic antisemitic sentiment, including *"secret power attributed to Jews, conspiracy, control of governments, and the nexus Jews-money-banks"* (Haury, 2025, p. 53).

An important takeaway from Haury's 2005 paper is the idea of a "blurring" of the difference between antisemitic hate speech and legitimate criticisms of Israel and Zionism, giving rise to an increasingly wide and emotionally charged debate in recent years (Sutcliffe, 2025). Further, Jaspal (2023) points out the lack of consensus about *"what actually constitutes antisemitism"* arguing that this in turn may result in the delegitimisation of charges of antisemitism, particularly should the focus be upon apparent hostility against Israel. Jaspal notes that this facilitates antisemitism as accusations may simply be rejected, enabling antisemites to discriminate.

[2]The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism is a tool to identify, confront and raise awareness about antisemitism as it manifests in countries around the world today. It includes a preamble, definition, and a set of 15 guidelines that provide detailed guidance for those seeking to recognize antisemitism in order to craft responses (Anziska et al., 2021)

1.5.2. Zionism and Antisemitism: The Shifting Political Spectrum

At the risk of oversimplifying the deep historical, socio-political and sociological arguments underpinning a hotly debated topic, this section aims to outline the importance of the debate around Zionism and antisemitism as it pertains to the shifting socio-political climate in which British Jews currently find themselves. That is to say, while the current war in Iran places Israel and events in the Middle East at the forefront of global news, one must make clear the impact anti-Zionism has on the psychological wellbeing of British Jews. The importance of this is demonstrated by the following quote by Yaron Matras in 'antisemitism in the discursive space' following October 7th':

> *"But 'Zionist' is not just a placeholder for Jews. It has come to denote generic evil. It references Jews in a way that resurrects the meaning of the term 'Jew' in pre-Holocaust Europe when it was treated as synonymous with evil conspiracies that have a worldwide reach."* (Matras, 2024, p. 103)

Whilst many, including Haury (2025), discuss the historical and indeed empirical inaccuracy of seeing *"Israel-related antisemitism"* as a relatively new or a distinct type of antisemitism, there has been more recent literature on the concept of 'left-wing antisemitism', particularly in Western countries such as the UK, North America and Canada, as well as Australia (Ginsberg, 2024; Grayson & Rubin, 2025; Mendes, 2026). Hirsh (2017) points out that left-wing antisemitism can often be typified by extreme hostility towards Israel, including its delegitimisation, with this view tending to be presented in more 'progressive' discourse, in turn enabling antisemitism to become more mainstream.

Jaspal (2023) writes about this criticism of Israel in the context of left-wing opposition to imperialism, neo-liberalism and capitalism, showing that it has clear antisemitic tropes, with those attempting to take issue accused of *"politicising the issue of antisemitism for (right-wing) political self-gain"* (Jaspal, 2023, p.9). The relevance of this for British Jewish experience in the United Kingdom becomes clearer when one factors in the shift of the Labour Party, once a long-standing supporter of Zionism, which has faced consistent allegations of antisemitism since 2015, an investigation in 2020 confirming elements of antisemitism in the party (Jaspal, 2023). In fact, Jaspal (2023, p. 9), even goes as far as to argue that now "antisemitism may be used as a mechanism for safeguarding the 'progressive', identity of left-wing activism" and that this may "simply come to be perceived as 'being progressive'."

The risk is for British Jews, 68% of whom identify as Zionist (Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2025), to be left not only feeling that an institution that once supported them no longer does but may also now discriminate against them. In fact, it was left-wing progressive parties (like the Labour party) which allowed for increased Jewish entry into the UK at the time of the Holocaust, with institutional antisemitism well known amongst right-wing fascist parties (Brown, 2021). This represents a dramatic change for British Jews, who are now tasked with navigating institutions that no longer seem to prioritise their safety.

Even more pertinent, the label 'Zionist' or supporter of Israel is increasingly perceived as right-wing, attached to allegations of imperialism and colonialism (Bolton, 2026; Choonara, 2024). For instance, at the time of writing Zach Polanski's Green Party is pledging to back motions identifying 'Zionism' as a form of racism should they win the next general election (Keate, 2026). Once again, significant strain is placed on the perception of Jews as a minority group who continues to suffer from discrimination and persecution.

1.6. Minority Stress and its Impact on Diasporic Jews

1.6.1. Minority Stress

As pointed out above, antisemitism has risen substantially in recent years, with a global survey finding that nearly half of all people worldwide hold elevated levels of antisemitism (Anti-Defamation League, 2025), and with 2024 seeing the highest number of antisemitic hate crimes on record in the United Kingdom (Community Security Trust, 2025). As outlined by Avidor and Gutman (2026), exposure to any form of prejudice, hatred or exclusion aimed at a certain group, like antisemitism, can lead to experiences of distress known as 'minority stress', demonstrated to have significantly adverse effects on both physical and mental health.

Integrating a number of identity, social and psychological theories of stress, the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 1995, 2003) aimed originally to highlight the adverse mental health effects of prejudice and discrimination on lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (Hoy-Ellis, 2023). The minority stress model sees social conditions and structures (e.g., internalised stigma) as being foundational in the development of stressors specific to minority groups, alongside identifying individual characteristics (e.g., identity) and group-level resources that can buffer the impact of such stressors.

In the context of LGBT minority stress, different types of stressors can be placed on a continuum. At one end are external discriminatory events or conditions, be they acute and interpersonal (e.g., individual acts of criminal victimization, like hate crimes), or chronic, environmental conditions such as discriminatory legislation denying equal access or protection under the law. At the other end, are internal stressors such as expectations of discrimination, rejection or victimization (Meyer, 1995, 2003). Hoy-Ellis (2023) points out that a state of 'over-arousal' and fear can result for members of marginalised groups, in which there is a tendency to develop awareness of, and acute sensitivity to, potential rejection.

Moreover, the model outlines that these expectations can result in a level of 'hypervigilance' as members of minority groups are left scanning their environment for potential threats, with Nurius and Hoy-Ellis (2013) finding that the chronic overactivation of stress-response systems can lead to psychiatric morbidity and psychological distress. Hoy-Ellis (2023) also notes the importance of concealment of minority identity in the Minority Stress Model as it relates to the LGBT community, where these groups are not readily identified and as such attempt to hide their minority identity. Meyer (2003) further highlights how this constant surveillance and attempts to subvert exposition of one's (in this case non-heterosexual) identity can prove psychologically taxing, even though in the immediate term concealment may be a protective coping strategy (Hoy-Ellis, 2023).

1.6.2. Minority Stress and Jews

As outlined above, the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003) outlines the pernicious psychological impact of hate crimes and discrimination on the members of minority groups, including the influence of this on individuals' emotional states as well as behaviour, including increased vigilance and concealment in attempts to evade such impacts. Shani et al. (2025) further highlight how theoretical models such as Minority Stress Theory can be successfully applied to antisemitism (e.g., Rosen et al., 2018; Trilesnik et al., 2025). They also draw attention to how fear of antisemitism leads to concealment of one's Jewish identity as well as to the avoidance of public spaces, resulting in social isolation and reduced participation in community life (Himmelstein et al., 2015; Watson-Singleton et al., 2019); these behaviours then compound anticipatory stress, with the emergence of perseverative cognitions and chronic worries and fears (Sawyer et al., 2012).

Evidence from Beyer et al. (2025) in a study of German Jews showed identity concealment, whilst intended as a coping mechanism, led to increased vigilance, intense worry and

persistent monitoring (all consequences of living ‘on high alert’), lending further support to the relevance of Minority Stress Theory for Jewish experience. So too, does a paper on Canadian Jewish older adults by Avidor and Gutman (2026) in which participant experiences are interpreted using Minority Stress Theory, once again illustrating how the members of minority ethnic groups exposed to exclusionary practices or negative stigmas present a greater risk of mental and physical health difficulties.

Despite extensive social psychological research showing a demonstrably negative impact of exposure to discrimination on physical and psychological health and wellbeing, relatively little is understood about the influence of antisemitism on Jewish communities across the diaspora (Enstad, 2023; Walker et al., 2025), particularly in the United Kingdom. Shani et al. (2025) point to a significant gap in existing research, despite the existence of an evidence base showing that Jewish people report significantly higher fear of victimization in comparison with other religious groups.

1.6.3. Minority stress: Resilience & Buffers

Whilst the Minority Stress model makes clear the negative impacts of minority group membership in terms of both mental and physical health, it is also important to consider the ‘buffering’ influences of membership. Meyer (2003) for example, proposes in the context of the LGBT community that group connection may result in both group-level and individual coping resources buffering minority stressor effects. More specifically, buffering effects at the individual level occur through social comparison, while at group level, social environments are experienced as inclusive, contributing to norms and values that self-enhance rather than stigmatise (Meyer, 2003). Further, the Minority Stress Model posits that the development of relationships with other minority group members plays a protective role in stress coping, acting as a source of social support (Hoy-Ellis, 2023).

When considering Jewish populations existing findings appear to align, but research in this area is scarce. For instance, in Avidor and Gutman’s study (2026), Jewish older adults talked about the mitigation of antisemitism-based distress thanks to ‘community-based resilience’ (Meyer, 2015). Participants also reported the deepening of connections with their respective Jewish communities and networks of Jewish friends and family. In fact, engagement in acts of support towards Israel proved an important strategy to cope with feelings of social exclusion, boosting resilience and belonging despite fears for one’s safety (Avidor & Gutman, 2026).

Shani et al. (2025) also highlight a doctoral dissertation study by Pearl (2023), in which American Jews outlined the 'potential' of Jewish identity as a coping mechanism, with benefits derived from cultural pride, community connection, and engagement with Jewish traditions, including a historical perspective emphasising survival as a source of strength. The authors also point to research suggesting that greater in-group identification increases resilience despite increasing Jewish visibility, claiming that greater group cohesion may attenuate worry or fear experiences (Enstad, 2023; Wallengren & Mellgren, 2015).

That being said, Shani et al. (2025) outline a more complex picture at the individual level. They point out that while Jews may well utilize their identity as a buffer against the adverse impacts of antisemitic experiences (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2014), diasporic Jews may also distance themselves from their Jewish identity as a coping strategy (Becker & Tausch, 2014; van Veelen et al., 2020). Moreover, they draw attention to research offering consistent evidence for the existence of a positive relationship between self-reported experiences of antisemitism and Jewish identification, citing a study by Enstad (2023): a survey of 16,400 European Jews investigating predictors of Jewish victimisation and fear across 12 countries, which may help to explain this phenomenon.

Getzoff Testa et al. (2024) further argue that the degree to which Jews choose to remain "in the closet" is associated with their fear of ostracism and with the centrality of Jewishness to their identity (Hecht & Faulkner, 2000). Shani et al. (2025) actually frame these findings using Social Identity Theory, arguing that those individuals who derive much of their self-concept from group membership are left more sensitive to potential threat and discrimination and thus, increasingly vigilant around subtle forms of antisemitism or microaggressions. However, they make it clear that further exploration is warranted around engagement or disengagement-based coping strategies, as well as sources of resilience for diasporic Jews in the aftermath of October 7th.

1.6.4. Jewish Minority Stress: Trauma and Invalidation

As argued above, whilst there may be a degree of nuance to the manifestation of minority stress, Jews in the United Kingdom, at the very least, make up an undeniable minority, with increases in antisemitism recently leaving British Jewish mental health at significant risk. Despite this, in recent years Jewish people have been consistently excluded from conversations about diversity, despite reporting experiences of antisemitism in DEI spaces in a number of research studies (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025). Rubin (2018) points out that discussions on antisemitism and Jewish oppression, Jewish Identity, Judaism and

antisemitism are often excluded from DEI curricula. Getzoff Testa et al. (2024) offer reasons for this, including the conflation of Whiteness and Jewishness since the mid 20th century, and the way Jews historically assimilated or integrated into larger societies as a survival strategy.

One consequence of this in the context of the post-October 7th world was noted by Bar-Halpern and Wolfman (2025). In their paper, the authors detail the impact on Jewish people of 'traumatic invalidation', a notion defined by Marsha Linehan as *"extreme or repetitive invalidation of individuals' significant private experiences, characteristics identified as important aspects of themselves, or reactions to themselves or to the world"* (Linehan, 2025, p. 304). Traumatic invalidation typically *"comes from a very important person, group, or authority"* and *"leads to psychological exclusion or perception of the individual as an outsider"* (Linehan, 2025, p. 304). Bar-Halpern and Wolfman (2025) point out that extreme or chronic experiences of traumatic invalidation can be a risk factor for the development of behavioural, emotional and interpersonal problems, including depression, anxiety and emotional dysregulation as well as more general dysfunction (Selby et al., 2008; Yap et al., 2008). They then discuss how minority stress in the form of discrimination or prejudice may be conceptualised as an *invalidation* of an individual's social and material needs as well as their social characteristics, increasing the risk of developing an emotional disorder (Sibrava et al., 2019). In order to highlight the Jewish experience of traumatic invalidation in the form of 'exclusion', the authors reference a report by Diamond et al. (2024), who found that despite experiencing harassment on university campuses, Jewish and Israeli communities frequently found little to no support from DEI programs supporting other minority groups on campus.

Bar-Halpern and Wolfman (2025) also argue that Jewish experiences of oppression are met with challenge in a myriad of ways, citing nine types of invalidation including 'blaming' (being criticised for complaining about antisemitism), 'denying reality' (being told antisemitic things never happened), and emotional neglect (being told you're not supposed to feel or express distress in response to antisemitism) amongst others. Whilst they go on to suggest a number of other experiences that can be conceptualised as traumatic invalidation, their research pinpoints a unique position Jews find themselves in, where their minority stress experiences are either met without compassion, or ignored and dismissed altogether, placing them at even greater risk of developing mental health issues.

In addition to this, a number of research studies have shown that Jewish experiences of discrimination are often understudied, ignored, and at times even purposely diminished (S. Feldman, 2026). It is also clear from Bar-Halpern and Wolfman's research that this has been

compounded by the debate surrounding October 7th and ongoing events in the Middle East, with many Jewish experiences of traumatic invalidation revolving around perceptions of Israel and Zionism.

1.7. The Psychological Impact of October 7th

1.7.1. Intergenerational Trauma: October 7th

It is vital in this section to make clear again the distinction that not all Jews associate themselves with Israel, nor do all Jews self-identify as Zionist, nor believe in Zionism (Boyd, 2025). Nevertheless, for the majority of diasporic Jews, Israel is often regarded as a 'homeland' and a cornerstone of Jewish identity and continuity, possessing much emotional and cultural significance (Poll, 2023). For many, this connection is more than symbolic; it is historical, familial as well as ideological, with events in Israel *"acutely relevant to diaspora Jews' emotional and psychological well-being."* (Regev, 2025, p. 2).

In this regard, terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas on October 7th, 2023, were felt by many diasporic Jewish people as an assault on their peoplehood and family, creating emotional devastation, grief and widespread fear in the following weeks and months (Gutman and Landau, 2024). Regev (2025) points out that October 7th felt, for many Jews, like an existential threat to Israel, resulting in trauma responses and, for many Jewish people, activating Intergenerational Trauma in the shape of existential threat, thanks to affective residues of historical persecution and displacement (Abrams & Armeni, 2023). Felsen and Frumer (2024) for instance discuss Jewish "trauma reminders" activated by current events in the Middle East, experienced by many as *"latent transgenerational vulnerabilities rooted in collective Jewish history"* (Regev, 2025, p. 2).

Hibel et al. (2025) also argue that Jews in the diaspora actually suffered *two* traumas: the collective trauma experienced in the wake of October 7th, and that born out of increased antisemitism in the diaspora, that emphasises Jewish insecurity and vulnerability. They make the important point that post-disaster mental health trauma studies tend to focus on 'direct' trauma exposure (North et al., 2015), whilst acts of terrorism (such as those perpetrated on October 7th) aim to generate far-reaching anxiety (Neria et al., 2006), citing increased trauma in Americans located outside of New York following the 9/11 attacks as evidence of this. They argue that diasporic Jews experienced a 'collective trauma' as their belief in a predictable world was violated, intensifying vulnerability (Hirschberger, 2018).

Hibel et al. (2025) too use the minority stress framework to understand the impact of antisemitism following October 7th on Jewish mental health in the diaspora, citing increased antisemitism and Jewish minority identity discrimination as risk factors for mental health. Importantly, they highlight the dearth in quantitative studies focusing on the mental health of Jews in the diaspora post October 7th, when their own findings showed symptoms of anxiety, depression and stress in Canadian Jews following the events.

Findings from Vitman-Schorr et al. (2026) shed further light on the psychological impact of October 7th on Jews. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, it is important to recognise that this study took place with Israeli participants rather than the diaspora, the gravity of experiences of war therefore likely felt significantly more than those living further away from Israel. Nonetheless, whilst focused on older adults, their study shows that irrespective of age, experiences of war constitute traumatic events posing substantial threat to life. Vitman-Schorr et al. (2026) suggest that this takes place not only through direct encounters with violence or observation of brutality, but also through indirect *exposure*, resulting in enduring psychological consequences (e.g., PTS, anxiety, depression and emotional distress) impacting individuals across age groups. They point to studies indicating that exposure to news of violence, graphic images, bereavement as well as pervasive uncertainty, undermines one's sense of safety. Chudzicka-Czupała et al. (2023) for instance, argue that emotional distress may stem from *indirect* exposure (viewing scenes of conflict via or social media or television), media coverage therefore transforming local disasters into 'collective trauma' and resulting in harmful health outcomes (Vasterman et al., 2005).

In this respect, diasporic Jewish exposure to media coverage of the war between Israel and Hamas as well as to the horrors of October 7th may have exacerbated the mental health difficulties of diasporic Jews (Vitman-Schorr et al., 2026).

1.7.2. Diasporic Jewish Experience: The Field of Mental Health

In a study of diasporic Jewish mental health professionals, Shklarski et al. (2025) simultaneously highlight the importance of understanding antisemitism in the world of therapy, and the necessity to consider the experience of mental health workers in the US post-October 7th. In a sample of 91 American mental health professionals working with those affected by October 7th self-identifying as Jewish, this study made use of thematic analysis to draw conclusions about the data. It is important to highlight that this was a US based

study, rather than UK, a recurring theme throughout the literature this study hopes to address.

In any case, pointing to the collective trauma experienced by diasporic Jewry post-October 7th (Hibel et al., 2025), they discuss findings from Potash (2022) regarding the dismissal of Jewish suffering, the conflation of criticism of Israel with antisemitism, as well as the merging of Jewish identity with Whiteness in mental health professional settings. As a result, Jewish therapists often faced the challenge of confronting these stereotypes and engaging in self-disclosure. Participants in this study frequently pointed to experiences of antisemitism as well as anti-Zionism in virtual mental health communities (e.g., Facebook groups for mental health practitioners), and described feeling marginalised in broader therapeutic spaces, in particular when confronted with anti-Zionist rhetoric (Shklarski et al., 2025).

Shklarski et al. (2025) conclude that therapists engage in antisemitic and anti-Zionist activities despite the requirements of strict codes of ethics, with empathy and social justice noticeably absent with respect to the Jewish community in the context of upheaval in the Middle East. They also point out the exclusion of Jews from conversations concerning anti-racism, urging professional organisations in the field of mental health to pay closer attention to growing antisemitism impacting the field. Bar-Halpern and Wolfman (2025) echo these findings, identifying similar experiences among trauma therapists post-October 7th in the form of traumatic invalidation within mental health spaces. Unfortunately, at the time of writing there appears to be no published studies concerning experiences of therapy for Jewish clients in the diaspora post-October 7th.

1.8. British Jewry

1.8.1 British Jewry: The United Kingdom Today

In order to fully understand the context of the present research, it seems important to explore nuances in the experience of antisemitism in the UK in the years following October 7th. Politicians from different sides have acknowledged the stark change in antisemitism in recent years, Michael Gove in 2024 pointing to an ‘explosion of antisemitism’ (D. Feldman et al., 2025), and Keir Starmer, prime minister at the time of writing, discussing the necessity to fight a ‘resurgence’ of antisemitism (Starmer, 2024). Survey data further highlights that British Jewish feelings of safety have declined dramatically following October 7th, nearly all Jews in Britain feeling less safe than before the attack, and over half trying not to show

visible signs of Judaism for fear of antisemitism (Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

It is clear from these statistics, at the very least for British Jews, that 'perceived antisemitism', defined as *"interpretations of behaviours, beliefs, or institutional practices one attributes to antisemitic bias"* (Shani et al., 2025, p. 2), has grown exponentially. D. Feldman et al. (2025, p. 8) suggest that the blurring of what constitutes antisemitism or anti-Zionism has left British Jews (two thirds of whom self-identify as Zionists) "*committed to supporting the Jewish state as well as to combating antisemitism […] locked in conflict over Israel/Palestine with others for whom anti-racism is a core conviction".*

D. Feldman et al. (2025, p. 8) further argue that allegations against Israel, characterised as an apartheid state committing genocide by many respected scholars, means that "s*upport for what Israel has become incompatible with anti-racist politics."* The picture becomes increasingly complicated if one considers that in the last two decades the majority of Jewish organisations have accepted the IHRA definition of antisemitism that extends the meaning of antisemitism to include certain criticisms of the State of Israel and Zionism (Haury, 2025), and that disregarding this definition is experienced by British Jews as denying Jewish people the right to define their oppression (D. Feldman et al., 2025).

However, some have argued that the IHRA definition's stipulation that each case be assessed by 'taking into account the overall context' stifles legitimate criticism of Israel, supressing free speech and creating *"a climate of uncertainty"* (D. Feldman et al., 2025). In fact, in 2024 matters were further complicated by a UK Employment Tribunal ruling that anti-Zionism is a Protected Belief (Bolton, 2026). The reality then, is that ongoing war involving Israel and increased controversy surrounding Zionism have compounded perceived antisemitism in the United Kingdom.

Important to recognise however, is the diversity of views around Zionism amongst Jewish people in the United Kingdom following October 7th. For instance, British Jewish Zionist identity is actually in decline (Boyd, 2025), and there has been growing polarisation in the Jewish community with the proportion of Jews identifying as Zionist as well as anti-Zionist both growing in the last five years, the latter position being particularly common in younger Jews (Boyd, 2025). Moreover, whilst in 2024, 78% of British Jews felt 'very' or 'somewhat' attached to Israel, 80% 'strongly' or 'somewhat strongly' disagreed with Benjamin Netanyahu and the current Israeli government. These distinctions are necessary in order to avoid

presenting Jews as ‘monolithic’, when they are actually a very diverse population (Glauz-Todrank, 2014).

Further, whilst this research foregrounds anti-Zionism and ongoing conflict in Israel as a result of October 7th, it is vital to make clear that anti-Zionism and what some call ‘left-wing antisemitism’ have grown alongside typical, better known forms of antisemitism, including ‘far-right’ and ‘Islamist’ antisemitism (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2025). One need only turn their attention to the harrowing events of the Heaton Park Synagogue terrorist attack in Manchester on Yom Kippur (the day of atonement and perhaps the most important Jewish holiday of the year), or the more recent arson attack in which four ambulances belonging to a Jewish-run charity were set ablaze in London (Counter Terrorism Policing, 2025; Manning, 2026).

Interestingly however, locating research or evidence on right-wing antisemitism in the United Kingdom was challenging; in fact, many now point to an alignment of the political right-wing in support of Jews and Zionism, with claims this is being used as a strategy to ‘divide and conquer progressives’ (Shabi, 2025).

1.8.2. The Experience of Diasporic Jewry today

The previous sections attempted to outline the current socio-political context for diasporic Jews and use existing research to explore its psychological impact, more specifically the impact of minority stress on Jews, whose experience of oppression often goes invalidated (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025).

Whilst there is a general dearth of qualitative studies on the experience of diasporic Jews, in their study of Canadian Jewish older adults Avidor and Gutman (2026) highlighted a number of experiential themes concerning the experience of their respondents post-October 7th in a qualitative study of 15 older adults (ages 65-92, 60% women). Completed in Vancouver, their recruitment focussed on obtaining LGBTQ+ participants, as well as Holocaust survivors, with analysis using a ‘bottom up’ approach relying on open coding (Burnard, 1991). The first of three main themes*, A bolstered sense of Jewish identity* comprised narratives around feeling connected to Israel (including disapproval of the current Israeli government), as well as isolated and distant from non-Jewish neighbours. *Tension between the need for safety and the need for connection and community* was a theme comprised of concerns over fear and safety (linked with increases in antisemitism and attacks towards

Zionism), and seeking out of community and social support in spite of threat (with collection in Jewish spaces and voluntary work in pro-Israel organisations).

The final theme was *Intersectionality: Previous traumas or vulnerabilities were linked with more concern and distress, alongside resilience*. This theme pointed to the compounding influence on distress of either belonging to other minority groups (LGBTQ+), having had a holocaust background or being immigrants from the USSR. Those belonging to LGBTQ+ groups for instance discussed feeling isolated in queer communities, which were experienced as hateful towards Israel, where *"the vitriol was astonishing"*, but *also* from Jewish gatherings, where 'unequivocal pro-Israeli lines' left no room for complexity or nuance. Avidor and Gutman (2026) also highlight strategies for coping, with evidence of 'resilient coping', the ability to promote positive adaptation despite high stress (Sinclair and Wallston, 2004), as well as support for the 'inoculation hypothesis', the idea that previous adverse experiences can result in resilience in the face of adversity (Palgi et al., 2015). Beyond the aforementioned research, there does not appear to be, at the time of writing, any other qualitative studies on the experience of diasporic Jewry post-October 7th, including that of British Jews in the United Kingdom. The current study therefore goes beyond the work of Avidor and Gutman (2026), addressing experiences of Jews across the lifespan (rather than just older adults), as well as sampling a variety of denominations of Judaism to ensure a breadth of Jewish voices are included.

1.8.3. British Jewry: What do We Know?

This section will begin with a quote from David Hirsh, a professor of Sociology at the University of Goldsmiths, London.

> *"There is a relationship between the social alienation of Jews, who are faced by the hostile assumption that they are 'Zionist', by which is meant, in this context, racist and supporters of genocide; and the pure, physical and absolute alienation of Jews who find themselves literally and completely abandoned, and beyond help, when their social alienation is transformed into alienation from humanity itself."* (Hirsh, 2024)

As mentioned, as yet there appears to be no qualitative studies on the lived experience of British Jews over the recent period. However, a number of books, and collections of articles and speeches in 'Responses to October 7th: Antisemitic Discourse' (Freedman & Hirsh, 2024), have been put together to paint a picture of what the climate may be for British Jewry

today. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to detail the sociological arguments around contemporary antisemitism, these books point to British Jewish perception of antisemitism as being deniable, arguable and contested, and to the emergence of antisemitism not through explicit hatred, but rather through subtler means, including antisemitism disguised as anti-Zionism.

Further, there is much discussion of the way Jews are pictured as 'powerful', 'imperial' and 'colonial', with British Jews experiencing negative shifts in support from the political left, with whom they once felt aligned. There is also much writing about October 7th as being a turning point, intensifying polarisation (often through slogans, and simplified narratives), and resulting in an increased normalisation of conspiracy theories about Jewish power, and in stereotypical beliefs in more mainstream discourse compounding anti-Jewish hatred. Ultimately, conclusions drawn from these books are that British Jews are feeling increasingly isolated, lacking in support, and unwelcome in the United Kingdom today.

1.9. The Current Study: Rationale

As was discussed in previous sections, while a number of psychological theories can be used to make sense of Jewish navigation of rising antisemitism in recent years, there is currently a lack of work exploring the experience of British Jews. In addition, few studies beyond that by Avidor and Gutman (2026) strive to understand the psychological impact of October 7th, and of the on-going upheaval in Israel and the Middle East, on diasporic Jews, including British Jews. This study aimed to fill this gap, looking to understand British Jewish navigation of resulting antisemitism and to draw on relevant psychological theories to explore the impact of the current socio-political climate on their wellbeing. To do this, it adopted the following research question:

> What is it like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today?

1.10. Relevance to Counselling Psychology

There are several ways in which this piece of doctoral research is relevant to Counselling Psychology practice. First, the ethos of discipline of Counselling Psychology is firmly grounded in social justice, with the *Handbook of Social Justice in Counselling Psychology* labelling this a defining feature of the profession (DeBlaere et al., 2019). Giving

voice to British Jews at a time when they are experiencing growing levels of persecution and marginalisation clearly aligns with this.

The current study is also clinically relevant in its endeavour to support psychological practitioners working with Jewish clients, by helping them appreciate how past and current socio-political contexts may affect their clients' psychological health in unique and complex ways, once again in line with Counselling Psychology's humanistic value base.

Moreover, while important work has been carried out on the impact of minority stress on sexual minorities and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) communities (Hoy-Ellis, 2023; Parmenter & Barrita, 2026), very few studies if any appear to consider the implications of minority stress for the Jewish community. At a time where mental health for British Jews appears to be in decline (Jami, 2025), and as pointed out by Frost and Meyer (2023), research on minority stress has the capacity to inform crucial policy reform and to inspire community and individual health interventions, including in the field of Counselling Psychology.

Last, Shklarski et al. (2025) point to the importance of understanding the subjective experience of Jewish therapists, and of teaching clinicians how to effectively support clients in discussions about global events whilst managing their own emotional experiences concerning those same events. While this research aims to shine a light on the experience of British Jews more generally, there is hope that it may benefit both Jewish and non-Jewish practitioners working with this group during an extremely emotionally charged moment in time.

1.11. Reflexivity

A British Jew myself, it may not be a surprise I was naturally very drawn the research question at hand. Indeed, the last 3 years have involved much deliberation and reflection on my own British Jewish identity, and whilst they have been foregrounded in the circumstances, negotiation of these has been an ongoing process through my whole life. While my mother was a British Jew herself, my father was an Irish protestant who converted to Judaism both due to his love for my mother, but also his love for the religion and culture.

My upbringing was therefore one that included much emphasis on my Jewish identity: celebrating holidays, attending a Jewish primary school (for a short period), being Bar

Mitzvah, as well as involvement in Jewish youth movements that included trips to Israel. Antisemitism did not really become apparent until secondary school, with friends making comments about greediness should I ask for money back, or exposure to Arab classmates who would call me ‘Yehudi’, throw pennies at my feet and giggle together.

Of course, I found ways to rationalise this as teenage ‘banter’, and it was not until sixth form where my relationship to Israel became a problem. I will not forget the vitriol I faced at just 16, from a group of people in response to my openness about believing in Zionism, and a Jewish right to self-determination in the Land of Israel. I was met with anger, misunderstanding and hate, despite being a strong believer in freedom, and liberalism, I was brandished a ‘Tory’, with every student with any interest in politics seemingly having no interest in me in the months following.

I felt ashamed, but worse still, I did not really understand why, with much of my experience of Israel having felt positive growing up. My interest in this area peaked at university, one of the first flyers I noticed on the walls at the University of Sussex, the results of a BDS vote to boycott student union support of any Israel affiliated services with well over 70% of students in favour. This became particularly difficult when exposed to antisemitic graffiti on the floors of the square at the university, drawings of swastikas only a few meters from comments such as ‘filthy Jews’.

What followed was many years of reflection of my own Jewish faith, and the role of Israel in my life that would increase and decrease in connection depending on what I’d read or what I had seen in the news. But the confusion never wavered, and it sparked my initial interest in pursuing this in the summer of 2023, just a few months before October 7th. Of course, the last 3 years have been tumultuous, with much sadness and worry about the current circumstances for British Jews, moving between processing the situation, and burying my head in work and withdrawing myself to a certain degree.

Negotiating my distance to the research question at hand therefore has been a real challenge. Whilst as a researcher, I have attempted as much as possible not allow my own experience and assumptions to cloud the voices of the participants sampled, all aspects of this study are imbued to a degree, with my subjective experience and assumptions (Madill et al., 2000), as is discussed further in section 2.2.2. My hope is that my openness around this throughout this project provides context for you, the reader, so that you can draw your own conclusions around the influence of this on the outcomes. The reality is this project is a culmination of my interests in psychology, experience and development as well as that in

British Jewish identity and my own journey with this (particularly recently). The goal was to utilise this to provide insights that support British Jews, as well as systems and practitioners working with them.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter aims to outline the philosophical and methodological framework underpinning this research, and to explain the procedures involved in the generation and analysis of the data. First the research will be situated within its broader philosophical foundations, outlining the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the project, before describing the rationale behind the chosen methodological approach. Subsequent sections look to detail the processes of participant recruitment, data collection, and ethical considerations, followed by an account of the analytic strategy used to develop the themes. The chapter concludes with a detailed reflection on the researcher's role and the implications this had for the generation and interpretation of the data.

2.1. Research Paradigm

In addition to defining research paradigms as sets of values, attitudes and beliefs providing frameworks in which theoretical explanations can be developed, Aliyu et al. (2015) discuss the importance of changing scientific paradigms over the years, and the philosophical movement of scientific discovery away from logical positivism into pluralistic paradigms. Different research paradigms offer different answers to the questions of what can be considered 'real' and what can be known, and in so doing fundamentally shape the process and outcome of the research (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015). One must therefore be transparent about the dimensions of one's research paradigm, as they define the values of the researcher as well as what can be considered within, or outside the limits of legitimate research (Chafe, 2023). The following section will involve a discussion of the research paradigm underlying this project, articulated around its ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions.

2.1.1. Theoretical position

As pointed out by Willig (2019), adequate recognition of the philosophy in which one's research is situated is important for psychological practitioners, both as they develop new knowledge through research and in their professional therapeutic work. It is necessary therefore, prior to discussing the epistemological and ontological assumptions of this project, to explore the context in which this research took place, as well as the values of the researcher and the goals of the research itself.

This research aimed to embody the philosophical underpinnings of Counselling Psychology practice, those of humanism, while adopting a Scientist-Practitioner stance. James (2017) acknowledges the importance of phenomenology in Counselling Psychology research, based on the idea that knowledge concerning people arises from discussing their experiences with them. However, he also argues that the scientific method in Counselling Psychology aligns with a more positivist perspective, with the research base made of both experiential and hypothesis-testing research, with the two positions are held in tension.

In situating this research philosophically then, a balance is necessary. This research aimed to foreground individual subjective experience and acknowledge the interdependence of participant and researcher, whilst also, embracing postpositivist assumptions such as the existence of an external reality, with a focus on the real-world applicability of its eventual research findings.

2.1.2. Ontology and Epistemology

This research adopted a critical realist ontology, which suggests that reality exists and operates independently of our awareness of it (Bhaskar, 1975). Rather than suggesting that reality is limited to what can be empirically known (as suggested by positivism) or entirely constructed (as suggested by constructivism), critical realism suggests three levels of reality, the empirical, actual, and the real levels (Fletcher, 2017). At the empirical level one finds measurable events; at the actual level, events that occur independently of human experience and may be different from empirical observations; whilst causal mechanisms or structures operate at the real level (Fletcher, 2017). While the mechanisms and structures operating at the real level cannot be directly apprehended, they can nonetheless by conceptualised through the study of empirical level phenomena, for example human experience (Bhaskar, 1979).

Critical realism aligns well with the philosophical stance taken in this research. Whilst constructivism's appreciation of individual perceptions of reality aligns with the humanistic value base of Counselling Psychology, this position runs the risk of treating social phenomena like antisemitism as discursive constructions rather than structural phenomena with material psychological effects. Community psychologists have struggled to adopt constructivism as a research paradigm, arguing that issues facing the world such as racism, abuse and poverty do indeed exist beyond the words we as humans use to describe them (Lauzier-Jobin et al., 2025). By contrast, critical realism accepts the existence of a reality,

albeit one that can only be known imperfectly, creating space for an understanding of antisemitism in 'real' terms.

Whilst ontologically critical realist, epistemologically this research adopted a contextualist perspective (Madill et al., 2000). Contextualism assumes that knowledge is situation dependent (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988), so that there will be variation in the results depending on the context in which data collection and analysis take place. It also argues that all accounts are imbued with subjectivity, be they those of researchers or participants. Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) further identify four dimensions influencing knowledge production: participants' own understandings, researchers' interpretations, cultural meaning systems informing both researchers' and participants' interpretations, and acts of "judging particular interpretations as valid by scientific communities" (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997, p. 250). All of these were considered here.

Critical realism sees the development of knowledge as involving humans who are socially situated, so that our understanding of reality is not only inevitably fallible, but also shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts (Lauzier-Jobin et al., 2025). This intersects well with a contextualist perspective which argues that participants' narratives are inevitably shaped by cultural, socio-historical and relational conditions. Contextualism also offers an alternative to stronger constructionist positions in that it recognises the consequences of social threat and discrimination, as well as acknowledging the importance of meaning making and interpretation.

This piece of research looked to understand the experience of British Jews navigating rising antisemitism today. This placed great emphasis on the context in which the investigation took place, amidst great unrest in the Middle East following one of the largest terrorist attacks in Israel's history, and with a death toll in Gaza in the five-figure range according the Hamas-run health ministry (Mahase, 2026). With these events having had concurrent effects on discourse with regards to Palestinian suffering in the UK, as well as rising antisemitism in the UK, context was thrust into the forefront of this study. A contextualist positioning allowed for an analysis of how the meanings attached to being British and Jewish were being negotiated in the UK, whilst also retaining an analytic commitment to the real-world constraints and consequences within which these meanings were produced.

Last, a contextualist epistemological stance rejects the positivist conceptual notions of 'objectivity' or 'reliability'. Instead, contextualism replaces objectivity with the concept of 'permeability', suggested by Stiles (1993) to mean the capacity for encounters with

observations to change theories or understandings. Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) for example, outline that contextualism assumes there will be variance in the results depending on the context in which data was collected and analysed, contending that the interpretations of the researcher, as well as the understandings of participants, influence knowledge production.

This is of particular relevance here given the likelihood that the researcher, who also identifies as both British and Jewish, might share with the participants cultural assumptions that may then influence the intersubjective construction of interview material as well as the analysis of it. Indeed, Madill et al. (2000) also outline that a shared cultural perspective can create empathy and act as a bridge between participant and researcher, which may be particularly powerful given the tumultuous social and political situation British Jews currently find themselves in. More will be said below on the pros and cons of 'insider' research (see section 2.5 on reflexivity).

2.2. Research Methodology

This research aimed to garner an in-depth understanding of how British Jews are navigating rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today. It therefore did not look to provide an 'objective' account of social phenomena, but rather to explore the complexity of the meaning and context of experiential phenomena (Lim, 2025). Whilst quantitative research approaches provide the means for measuring cause-and-effect relationships and produce generalisable findings, qualitative research approaches more effectively capture both context and nuance generating rich, non-numerical experiential data (Pathak et al., 2013), and thus aligning well with the goals of the project.

In order to explore how British Jews made sense of their experiential reality, this investigation utilised Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method (as opposed to a methodology) for the identification, analysis and reporting of themes within a set of data. As such it possesses true paradigmatic flexibility and can be combined with a range of epistemological and ontological perspectives. Reflexive Thematic Analysis is an updated version of TA developed by Braun and Clarke (2019), which further emphasises the role of the researcher in the production of knowledge. Unlike post-positivist forms of TA which can use coding frames and measure coding reliability to manage 'threats' of researcher subjectivity, RTA aims to use researcher subjectivity as a 'resource' (Braun & Clarke, 2019), thus fitting with the

contextualist epistemological approach, and the axiological values, of the present study.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) was initially considered for this study, as it seemed a good fit for its experiential focus. However, IPA's idiographic, case by case approach did not align with the aims of this research, in identifying similarity of experience across a set of accounts. Reflexive Thematic Analysis was also deemed more appropriate here as it allowed for a slightly larger and less homogenous sample, thus enabling the capture of potentially significant variations within the group (Braun et al., 2023).

Finally, discourse analysis was also considered. However, whilst the political discourse both currently and historically is likely to have had a great impact on how British Jews are feeling in the United Kingdom, discourse analysis seemed an inappropriate methodological choice, with its roots in social constructionism meaning too great a focus on the use of language in constructing reality (Jaspal, 2023), rather than on the exploration of the subjective experience of British Jews within the context of their historical, social and cultural realities.

2.3. Outline of Research Procedures

This section will outline the research procedures involved in carrying out this investigation including how participants were recruited, data was collected, as well as how the pilot interview was completed.

2.3.1. Participants and Recruitment

A target sample of 12 participants was set, in line with Braun and Clarke's (2013) suggestion of 10-20 participants being an appropriate sample size for a project using reflexive thematic analysis at doctoral level. Of course, a larger sample size may have produced even richer data. However, the analysis of more transcripts than this did not seem feasible within the confines of a professional doctorate programme. In addition to this, transcripts were coded in tandem with the completion of interviews, and as the research developed similar themes began repeating consistently, particularly around interview 10 and 11, suggesting data saturation.

The study purposively sampled British Jews from across the life span. Participants below the age of 18 were omitted for a number of reasons, including difficulty in obtaining consent and the fact that this age group may not be as easily able to discuss identity development in any

significant detail given that it is in early adulthood that identity begins to fully develop (Schwartz et al., 2013). No upper age limit was put in place, in order to incorporate the rich experiential historical experiences of older adults. Participants were included in the study if they self-identified as both 'British' and 'Jewish', with no limit placed on denominations of Judaism for the purpose of ensuring the inclusion of diverse religious perspectives.

The initial plan had been to recruit participants by contacting synagogues (of varying denominations of Judaism) and businesses located in areas densely populated by Jewish people, with permission asked to place adverts for the study on bulletin boards (see Appendix 3). However, this proved unnecessary as the full 12 participants were sampled through word of mouth and snowballing. This took place with the researcher making use of personal and community networks, approaching people directly and asking for researcher details to be passed on. Many participants then used these contact details to share interest in taking part in the study. This helps to explain why the majority of participants are centred around London and the South-East of England, as well as being predominantly liberal, and non-orthodox.

Details of the demographics collected using a questionnaire (Appendix 1) can be found in Table 1.

Participant alias	**Age (band)**	**Gender**	**Denomination of Judaism**	**Location in the UK**
Max	35-44	Male	Secular/Just Jewish	London
Joseph	55-64	Male	Masorti	London
David	55-64	Male	Secular/Just Jewish	London
Gemma	55-64	Female	Secular/Just Jewish	London
Penelope	86-95	Female	Secular/Just Jewish	London
Harry	25-34	Male	Reform	London
Stevie	35-44	Female	Orthodox	London
Robert	45-54	Male	Masorti	South East England (Excluding London)
Benji	25-34	Male	Masorti	South East England (Excluding London)
Holly	18-24	Female	Orthodox	London
Yvonne	25-34	Female	Secular/Just Jewish	South East England (Excluding London)
Elise	65-74	Female	Masorti	London

Table 1: Table of Demographics

2.3.2. Service User Involvement

This study aimed to involve service users as much as possible. Jewish research centres such as BIAJS, and Jewish mental health services like Jami UK, Neshomo, and Jewish Care, as well as synagogues, were contacted via email to ask if they would be willing to collaborate with the study, either by commenting on the language, phrasing and content of the interview schedule, or by offering more general comments on the proposed study. Unfortunately, such collaboration had to be abandoned after a number of attempts, with many of the aforementioned services either signposting to other institutions or responding that they did not have the expertise or time to help.

2.3.3. Data collection (setting, materials, procedure)

In response to interest, participants were emailed an information sheet describing the study, and they were asked to take part in a screening phone call a week later. It was hoped that this would give potential participants sufficient time to read about the study and get a clear sense of what was likely to be discussed.

The screening call aimed to give a brief summary of the research topic, aims, and procedure, and answer any questions. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, and the ongoing emotional intensity of the current conflict in the Middle East (with interviews taking place between January and October 2025), it also looked to assess whether participants felt they could cope with participating in the interview (the script used for screening calls can be found in Appendix 2). If a joint conclusion was reached between researcher and participant that participation may feel too distressing, potential participants were to be excluded from the study and signposted to appropriate mental health services. These included local IAPT or low-cost counselling services as well as mental health services specifically working with Jewish people like Jewish care. In practice, no potential participant was excluded from the study following a screening call.

Following inclusion in the study, a date was set for the interview to take place within two weeks, and participants were e-mailed a copy of the consent form, to be signed prior to the beginning of the interview (see ethics section below for more information).

Data was to be collected using semi-structured interviews, with a preference for face-to-face interviews as opposed to online so as not to disqualify older or less techno-savvy respondents, and thus risk losing historical contextual information relevant to this study.

Semi structured interviews were utilised here with their capacity flexibility to pursue individual accounts for each participant, allowing the participant to fully explore narratives unbound by structured interview questions (Smith, 1995). This was particularly useful in the current study, with its aim to generate rich, experiential data, where use of a structured interview may have limited this.

Participants were therefore offered a choice of locations, including; bookable spaces at City University, private spaces within Jewish community centres or synagogues, and the participants' own home, (as long as it was a safe and confidential space), alongside virtual spaces on Zoom and MS Teams (both of which allow for encrypted recording). In practice however, all but one of the participants chose to be interviewed online.

The interviews used an interview schedule (Appendix 4), were audio-recorded, and lasted between 60-90 minutes. Development of the interview schedule took place in a number of steps. The literature was reviewed initially to identify key areas of discussion including theory (e.g. identity, minority stress, intergenerational trauma, visibility) as well as reviewing news articles as well as other journals focussed on the UK as a home for British Jews including the history, as well as current events (e.g. rising antisemitism, protests, the current war).

Questions were then developed with these topics in mind, in tandem with wording that aimed to draw out information on emotional experience or wellbeing. It is also necessary to make clear that given my insider position, my own conversations with members of the community suggested areas of significance for this group (e.g. experiences of banners/stickers/signs). An attempt was then made to create a balance between these facets of the interview schedule in order to develop open questions with prompts that could create an effective interview to answer the research question at hand.

2.3.4. Pilot Interview

Sampson (2004) suggests that piloting one's interview schedule is a powerful way to refine it, and to identify any areas for methodological improvement at an early stage. A pilot interview was therefore carried out prior to recruitment by asking a friend fitting the inclusion criteria of the study to volunteer to take part in an interview. The volunteer was then asked how they felt, what they might change, and what they would have like to have spoken more about. Small changes were made to the interview questions as a result. For example, question one was developed further to add "Would you say there has been a change, how so?" This was because following the pilot, the first question was a little broad and was not

quite focused enough on the current context foregrounded in this research. Beyond this, very little changed to the interview schedule other than addition of prompts that were deemed useful (e.g. “How has this changed over time”).

The pilot interview offered an important opportunity for me as a researcher to develop experience and understanding of carrying out interviews, including checking how I might feel and how to best allow interviews to flow.

2.3.5. Data Storage

Online interviews were recorded through their respective platforms, and the sole in-person interview using the Olympus DS-9000 audio recorder (an encrypted audio recorder). Interviews were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher, taking care to remove all personal identifiers and to replace participants’ names with pseudonyms chosen by them during the interview. The transcripts were kept in a password protected computer, with hard copies of sensitive data (for example consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s home. In line with City St Georges, University of London’s guidelines, data will be stored on the University One Drive, which is both password and authenticator protected, and kept for a maximum of 10 years following completion of the study.

2.3.6. Ethical Considerations

This project adhered to the BPS and HCPC guidelines for ethical research (Health and Care Professions Council, 2012; Oates et al., 2021) and was given ethical approval (Appendix 5) by the Psychology Department Ethics Committee at City, University of London (ETH2324-0540). Once potential participants had showed interest, they were sent an information sheet (Appendix 6) clearly outlining the research rationale, aims, procedures and how data would be managed, with adequate time to read it and become familiar with it before the screening call.

As described above, the screening call was an important opportunity to effectively signpost members of the British Jewish community needing psychological support to relevant sources of help. During the screening call, participants were asked how closely connected to Israel they were (e.g., whether they had family or friends who lived there etc…), whether and how they experienced antisemitism, and how they felt they would manage emotionally during the interview. To better ascertain participant risk levels, the researcher also asked some questions abbreviated from the PHQ-9 (Spitzer et al., 1999) and the GAD-7 (Spitzer et al.,

2006), with participants excluded from the study if they were deemed a risk to themselves. Had a participant been deemed a risk to others, their GP or the police would have been made aware of this in the interest of safeguarding, something the participants were warned of. No participants were deemed at risk (or a risk to others) however, so such action was not necessary.

Following the screening call, selected participants were emailed a copy of the consent form (Appendix 7) in advance of the interview. Informed consent was obtained by asking participants to sign a hard copy of the form on the day of the interview if it was to be conducted in person, and by asking them to email the signed form back prior to the interview if the latter was to be held online.

At the start of the interview the researcher once again explained confidentiality and its limits, reminded participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, and made it clear that interviews were being recorded. They were also reminded that the interview could be paused at any time. Counselling skills were utilised to help participants feel at ease and hold them emotionally in their difficulty. Participant presentation was carefully monitored throughout, with questions sensitively guided so that a conscious decision to pause or stop interviews could be made should participants show signs of excessive distress.

Additional measures were taken in the case of the interview held at a participant's home. In the interest of safety, the name and address of the participant were left with a trusted colleague in a sealed envelope, with instructions to open the envelope if they did not hear from the researcher at an agreed time after the interview.

After the interview, participants were debriefed on the research for 10-20 minutes, with discussions around how they had experienced taking part and in-depth explanations of the rationale of the research as well as how it would be used. This was aided with a debrief sheet (Appendix 8) that participants were given both as a hard copy if present, and via e-mail; participants were also given the option to be sent the research findings at a later date, provided they had given consent.

2.4. Analytical Strategy

This study used the 'six-phase' analytic process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013) and carried out broadly in line with the sequential steps set out by Braun and Clarke (2012). Analysis was carried out iteratively, with earlier stages returned to in the development of new themes, or when the identification of repeated narratives helped contextualise older codes (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

2.4.1. Phase one: Familiarisation

Each interview recording was listened to from start to finish prior to beginning the coding. The aim of this was to listen carefully to the tone of voice of both researcher and participant, paying close attention to its emotional quality to better understand the nuance of breaks, pauses or inflections and immerse myself within each interview. It also provided an early opportunity to engage reflexively with my own role in the interview, including my emotional responses as well as the wording and impact of follow up questions. Following this, each transcript was read and reread several times, prior to generation of any initial codes.

2.4.2. Phase two: Generation of Initial Codes

Transcripts were worked through line by line, identifying data items of relevance to the research question that could be useful in later theme development. This was facilitated using Microsoft Word's 'comments' function: codes were recorded in the side margin, and corresponding sections of text highlighted (see example in Appendix 10). In line with Braun and Clarke's guidelines (2012), initial codes aimed to be concise whilst providing sufficient detail to stand independently and convey underlying similarities between data items related to the research question.

While Reflexive Thematic Analysis can be carried out either inductively or deductively, these approaches are not mutually exclusive and often a combination of both is utilised (Byrne, 2022), allowing for both phenomenological and more theoretical insights to emerge. Early stages of coding took place inductively, with the goal of sticking close to participants' meaning-making about their experience. As the research progressed however, coding at times became more deductive, with some initial codes further interpreted using psychological theory, particularly in light of repeated narratives that appeared to reflect broader psychological phenomena (i.e. identity conflict or intergenerational trauma). Examples of this can be found in Appendix 11.

This approach blended well with the theoretical positioning of this research. Madill et al. (2000) discuss Parker's suggestion that 'contextualism can adopt a critical realist stance grounding discursive accounts […] in social practices whose underlying logic and structure can, in principle, be discovered' (Parker, 1996, p. 4). In practice, this may mean using deductive coding that situates participant narratives in psychological theory, attending to possible underlying mechanisms (e.g., intergenerational trauma, identity conflict or belonging).

In line with RTA's iterative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2024), this coding process was repeated through all 12 transcripts, with careful reflective engagement with what my own position and preconceptions brought to and from the data using a reflective diary.

Once codes had been generated for all 12 transcripts, they were collated on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet along with corresponding data from the transcripts (see example in Appendix 12). They were then revisited and were amended when deemed necessary, in order to better answer the research question. At times, codes (highlighted in orange) were refined because they were not experiential enough; at other times, because on reflection they alluded to common psychological phenomena. Some codes were also discarded as they were not analytically useful or did not answer the research question, whilst others were collapsed under broader codes.

2.4.3. Phase Three: Generation of Initial Themes

Braun and Clarke (2024) see the use of thematic maps as intrinsic to RTA. To review the combination of codes in terms of shared meaning and ascertain which codes may be developed into themes, broad themes and subthemes were initially placed on a mind map using Apple's 'Pages' application and then colour-coded (Figure 1). This helped to actively map out the connections between various subthemes and later decide which themes and subthemes should be kept, and which revised or subsumed under others.

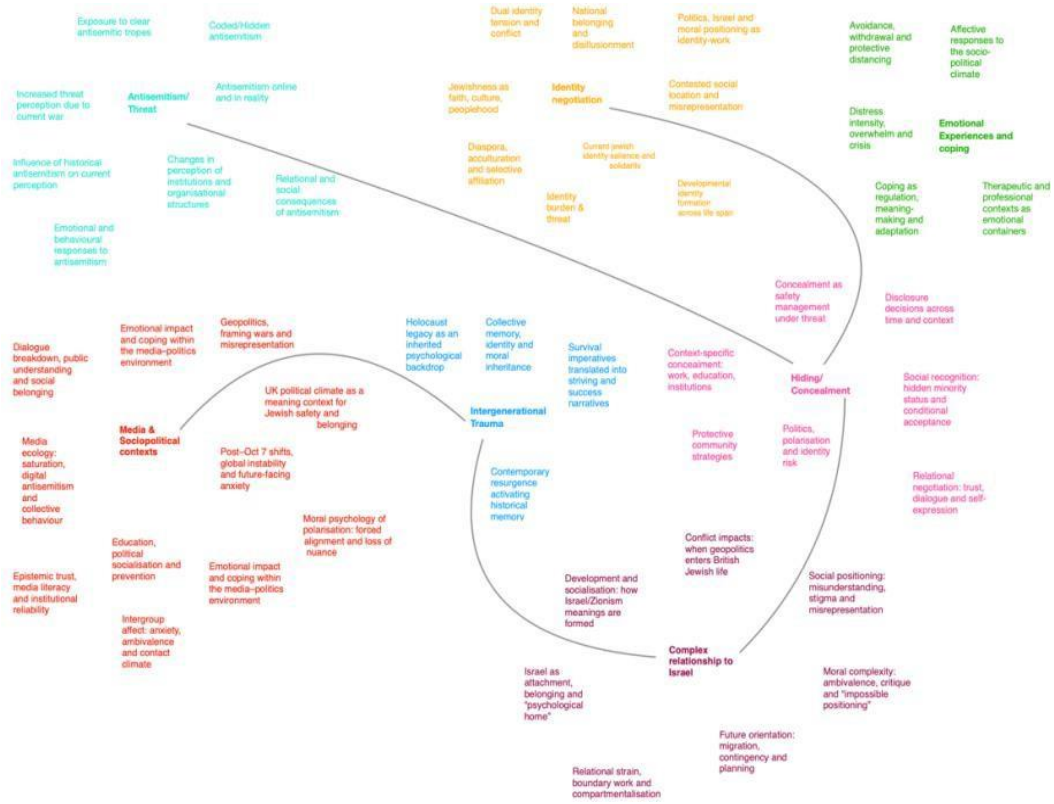


Figure 1: Initial broad colour-coded themes with links

2.4.4. Phase Four: Reviewing Potential Themes

In line with Braun and Clarke's (2012) guidance, a recursive review was then carried out on prospective candidate themes, revisiting both their wording and the constituent codes. This resulted in the development of broader themes and subthemes, while also providing a more coherent explanation of the relationship between themes and sub-themes (Figure 2). The analytical work also involved looking individually at each provisional theme and corresponding subthemes, making assessments as to whether the subthemes were sufficiently related or possessed similar experiential quality such that they could be combined, or so that one or other could be removed to streamline the themes.

The strategy here typically involved going back through the evolution of each subtheme from the raw data itself, analysing the experience or phenomenon being described and how they were then grouped together in terms of the research question. Comparing the journey of each subtheme from its birth from transcript data provided opportunities to reflect on the role of my own interpretation at every stage, and how my own contextual experience influenced the eventual meaning making of each subtheme. Repetition of this for each subtheme and

comparison of their respective meanings allowed for a decision to be made as to whether subthemes could be combined or removed.

In the ‘Intergenerational Trauma’ theme for example, the subtheme ‘Holocaust legacy as an inherited psychological backdrop’ captured narratives framing current ambient feelings of threat in terms of a more general shared experience of anxiety amongst all Jews, that has always felt present. This theme was combined with ‘Contemporary resurgence activating historical memory’, a theme describing the reactivation of feelings of threat from the Holocaust that can lay dormant and become salient in response to external events. The result was a combined theme (as seen in Figure 2) labelled ‘Inherited threat sensitivity and reactivation in the current climate’. The rationale was that this new subtheme demonstrated both concepts of inheritance of Holocaust anxiety as well as reactivation of this in particular contexts. This process was repeated for all subthemes under each provisional theme.

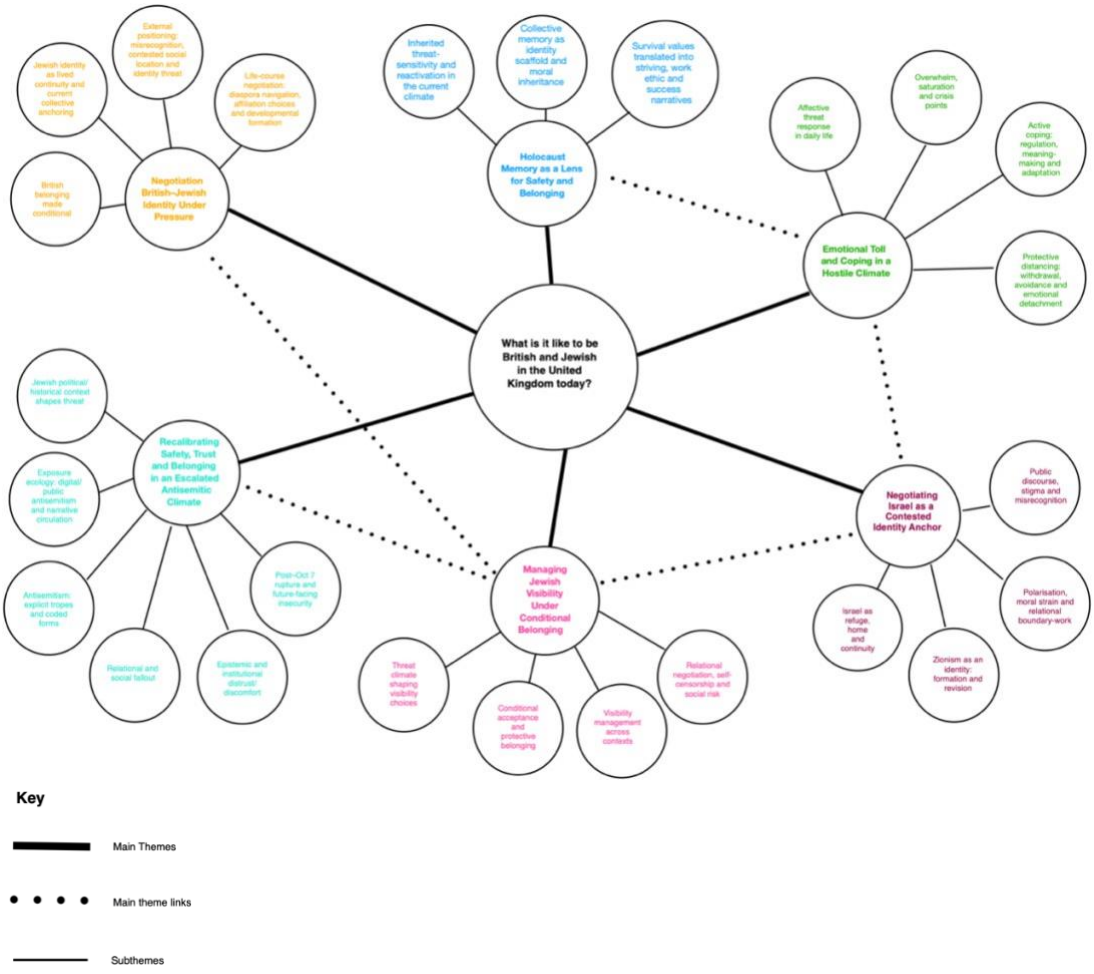


Figure 2: First iteration of themes, subthemes and relationships between themes

2.4.5. Phase Five: Refining, defining and naming themes

Following this, it became important to look at the relationship between the new refined subthemes, and to decide whether the names of the themes still captured the new subthemes, or whether the labels for each themes now needed refinement. For instance, the initial theme of 'Internal and External Identity negotiation' was refined into 'Negotiation of British-Jewish identity under pressure', to reflect the experience of pressure whilst negotiating one's British Jewish identity running through all new subthemes.

Then came a further streamlining of all subthemes in order to ensure they were not better placed elsewhere. In the theme 'Managing Jewish Visibility Under Conditional Belonging', the subtheme 'Relational negotiation, self-censorship and social risk' was removed. Accounts making up this theme revolved around managing one's relationships in terms of revealing Judaism and the perceived consequences of this socially. It was decided that the 'relational and social fallout' subtheme in 'Recalibrating Safety Trust and Belonging In an Escalated Antisemitic Climate' theme already captured the fear of social risks associated with one's Jewish faith being known, whilst visibility management across contexts in the 'Managing Jewish Visibility Under Conditional Belonging' theme accounted for decisions around disclosure of Jewish identity.

The theme 'Post-October 7th rupture and future-facing anxiety' was also removed at this stage. The conclusion here was that 'The "new normal" – Threat Escalation with Historical Significance' theme captured the context of the post-October 7th rupture, with many accounts discussing October 7th as the main driving force behind the current threat escalation. The 'future-facing anxiety' aspect of this subtheme was mainly made up of fears that threat levels today were more likely to either stay the same or get worse, with "the new normal" an attempt to capture this experience. The subtheme of "Antisemitism: explicit tropes and coded forms" was combined with 'Exposure ecology: digital/public antisemitism and narrative circulation' to form a subtheme titled 'Where antisemitism is encountered and how it is recognised'. This new subtheme captured the variety of where British Jews experience antisemitism, as well discussions around what counts as antisemitism either to Jews or to the general public.

This process of refinement, definition and re-labelling was repeated until all themes and subthemes had been combined in a final thematic map (see next chapter, section 3.1).

2.4.6. Phase Six: Writing up the Report

Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that there is no clear separation between analysis and writing up in RTA, and the process of writing up each theme and subtheme, selecting the most appropriate quotes, provided a last opportunity to query previous analytical decisions. In this stage, the aim was to select extracts from multiple transcripts that provided compelling examples demonstrative of each respective theme whilst simultaneously attempting provide voice to each participant that took part. In line with Braun and Clarke (2012), extracts were interpreted in relation to the constitutive themes and contextualised within the broader context of the research question, developing an *"analytic strategy that informs the reader what is interesting about this extract and why"* (Byrne, 2022, p. 1407). Considered here also, was whether data was to be presented illustratively or analytically.

Here an illustrative strategy was selected, and as such it is important that the writeup communicated the "complexities of the data" (Byrne, 2022, p.1407), with the report going beyond the simple description of the data, with the provision of theoretically informed arguments pertaining to the research question (Byrne, 2022). To this end, the write up involved interpreting the data using elements of psychological theory wherever appropriate (e.g. around intergenerational trauma, minority stress or identity), while communicating patterns of meaning as well as nuance within each theme.

2.5. Reflexivity

In an interpretative approach such as RTA, the researcher is given an active role in data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This role involves meaning-making, which is inevitably influenced by the researcher's position and requires reflexivity with respect to the research question and interaction with the participants (Pearson et al., 2025). I, the researcher, am a white heterosexual British Jew in my 20's, as well as a trainee Counselling Psychologist. My background is of significant relevance here: being a British Jew myself, I resonated with many of the experiences reported by participants during this period. It was therefore important to consider the extent to which my being an 'insider' (Berger, 2015) influenced my own assumptions and reactions with respect to the research, whether helpful, or unhelpful. Berger (2015) highlights a number of benefits of studying the familiar, including a better understanding of nuanced participant reactions and achievement of rapport with participants amongst others. I noticed an ease with which I felt able to address certain topics, with a

degree of linguistic sensitivity, understanding nuances and asking questions in a way that seemed to diminish the distance between myself and my participants.

However, equally important to recognise are the risks associated with this position, be they the imposition of my own values on participants experience, or assumptions that my participant and I shared the same language (Finlay, 2002). It was therefore important to take a tentative approach, with constant engagement with reflexive practice so as to strike a balance that created a bridge between my participants and I (Madill et al., 2000), facilitating deeper phenomenological understanding, without imposing on my participants' experience.

It was also vital for me to consistently engage in honest reflective practice. This involved monitoring my own psychological well-being throughout the research, aided by supervision and personal therapy as well as the consistent use of a reflective diary. The use of a reflective diary also provided a space to explore individual beliefs and interrogate the ways my own personal goals for and assumptions around the research might shape the findings (Russell & Kelly, 2002).

For instance, there were moments during the interviews when I attended to particular subjects as they related to either my own knowledge of the studied phenomenon or to my emotional state. In my second interview, I reacted to the participant's report of feeling "targeted", but I did not follow up on their mention of "subterranean antisemitism", although this could have been a fruitful avenue for exploration. In hindsight, I wondered whether my own interest in the notion of feeling targeted had unwittingly influenced the conversation.

In early interviews, there were also moments when I was surprised at what my participants' emotional responses conjured in me. As a participant began discussing the experience of an antisemitic assault as a young teenager, I felt a deep sadness. The result was twofold: in the first instance, there was a moment when I felt myself listening less as a researcher and more as a clinician, oriented more to the emotional quality of the disclosure and what to say to 'help' this participant than to his experience. Secondly, once I had recognised the emotional space I was in, I had to attend to this briefly, before returning my full attention to my participant and keeping track of the interview. Looking back, it felt important to recognise how this mutual interaction shaped the data. It is possible that my decision not to probe further allowed the participant to hold ownership of the narrative and to provide a rich account of other experiences. However, it is equally possible that thicker, richer data around the experience of the attack was lost.

More generally, it was important to remain conscious of how my own emotional state and responses were shaping the context in which data was collected. Initial interviews took place at a time where tensions in Israel were particularly high, and as can be seen in my reflective diary (Appendix 9), there were interviews in which it became extremely challenging to remain emotionally calm myself. Some participants for example discussed avoidance of the news or social media as a coping strategy and I noticed myself drawn to these topics, as I had been engaging in a similar behaviour myself throughout this time. Where I noticed mirroring of my participants' experience, I carefully journalled this, facilitating awareness of whether narratives were generated by participants or developed through my own questioning.

Vital to consider here, within the context of insider research, was my emotional identification with Jewish or Israeli suffering in the context of a research question targets British Jewish navigation of rising antisemitism. My orientation to Jewish suffering may have meant that I missed relevant information around how Palestinian suffering, as well as UK responses to this, shaped British Jewish responses to antisemitism today. As seen in 3.1.2, Robert for example discusses "*something, fairly horrendous, let's be honest, in the Middle East"* in reference to Israeli military action and its influence on rising antisemitism; however, my interpretation foregrounds this in the context of October 7th as a turning point for antisemitism. As a result, some analytical information around the influence of Palestinian suffering on British Jewish experiences was lost.

Finally, I would like to point out here that in hindsight, much of my follow up questioning revolved around the emotional meaning-making of my participants. This may have pulled the interview towards meaning and affect, with fewer opportunities for political dialogue and exploring the specifics of institutional policy for example. There may have been a number of reasons for this, including my natural curiosity in participants' subjective experience. However, I aimed to remain reflective, particularly during the analysis, noting moments when my questions narrowed the frame, and revisiting transcripts and interpretations to look at where the contextual, social and political content offered by participants may be competing with my own focus on psychological meaning or theory.

Chapter 3: Analysis

This chapter presents the main themes and subthemes created using Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analytic approach (2022). In the process, patterns of meaning across the data set are explored, as well variance and nuance between participant experiences, with the aim of answering the question: 'What is it like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today?' The final thematic map can be found below (Figure 3).

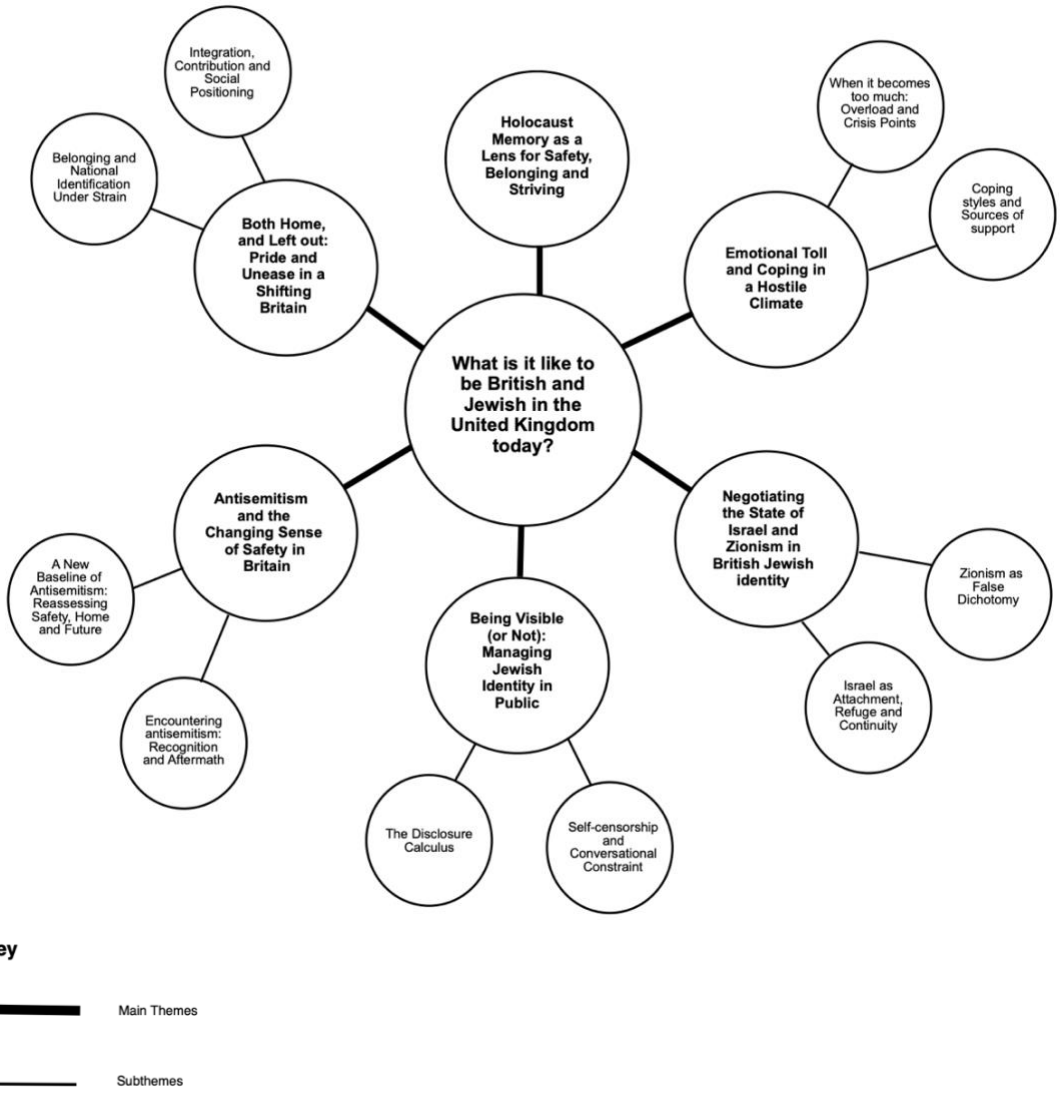


Figure 3: Final thematic map

3.1. Theme 1: Antisemitism and the Changing Sense of Safety in Britain

Across the interviews, a social climate of antisemitism was described as hardening, particularly since October 7th, 2023, re-shaping perceptions of everyday safety and of welcomeness in the UK. Participants reported increased exposure to antisemitism across multiple channels (online, interpersonal encounters, and public spaces), alongside a growing sense that antisemitic tropes and dehumanising narratives have become more visible and normalised. A key feature of this theme is the struggle over recognition. Participants described the difficulty of arguing back, particularly where antisemitism gets entangled with anti-Zionism, minimised, or treated as socially permissible. This theme also captures the relational fallout of this new situation, including disappointment at silence from others, friendship strain, and a felt need to hide away or withdraw socially. Participants further highlighted a broader sense of increased threat, with suggestions that antisemitism may settle into a “new baseline” rather than return to prior levels, with consequences for future plans and the sense of whether the UK remains a secure home.

3.1.1. Subtheme 1: Encountering Antisemitism: Recognition and Aftermath

The first subtheme *Encountering antisemitism: Recognition and Aftermath*, captures how participants described an increase in antisemitism exposure, particularly since October 7th, 2023. Participants discussed how and where they had encountered antisemitism, which often included multiple channels such as online, with friends or strangers in everyday interactions, as well in public spaces (e.g., in stickers, graffiti, posters or banners at protests). David evoked the rise in antisemitism and reported feeling currently unwelcome in the United Kingdom.

> *“I think since the 7th of October 2023, there's a strong realization, for me, and I would imagine not only myself that antisemitism is not something that is part of the past… And the Jews are tolerated, but not necessarily in a general perspective, welcome… to be welcome, a part of the culture the, you know the country.”* (p. 1, l. 14)

Many reported instances of antisemitism on social media, with increased prevalence of racism, stereotyping and more blatant antisemitic hate. Max for instance described the use of antisemitic tropes:

> *"I see so many like memes on there and things that will be like a, a, very large nosed Jewish man just basically saying something awful about Gentiles or how they don't care about the rest of them and how or how they're trying to be puppet masters of non-Jewish people"* (p.16, l. 731).

Yvonne pointed out frustrations with social media platforms for not doing enough, saying:

> *"I've reported comments in the past, and then I get a notification from Instagram saying, 'yeah, we reviewed your report, and we didn't see anything wrong in the comments, so we've just left it', and it'll be like, 'all filthy Jews must die', or something like that […] It might be with a real person, and that's even more worrying"* (p. 8, l. 349-353).

Many participants also took issue with news organisations, pointing out changes to their consumption of particular news sources. Gemma for instance felt the BBC to be biased: *"But you take something like the BBC, which is supposed to be impartial. And there's nothing impartial about BBC."* (p. 3, l. 135-136). This lack of trust was echoed by Joseph: *"I love the BBC. It's a fantastic institution. It's not like Fox News. It's not like government-controlled news organisations. But I'm afraid in this particular instance, I think they have really got a lot of it wrong."* (p. 4, l. 155-157). Yvonne disagreed: *"BBC News is the most balanced, because it's publicly owned, I believe"* (p. 7, l. 282); she nonetheless explained that her family no longer used the BBC ("*I think they've all switched to Sky"* - p. 6, l. 279-280), before concluding that *"I don't really… Trust the… Balance of any of the news sources"* (p. 6, l. 280-281).

This decrease in trust or fairness in British Institutions at times extended to the police and government with Joseph pointing out news organisations were not the only institutions creating feelings of disappointment or lack of trust:

> *"Education, national health service again, have come out and said all sorts of you know pretty inflammatory things about, you know, Jews and Israel and everything else. So, all of these areas of society, which I've just taken for granted as being, supportive of, suddenly are coming out and saying things which I find very, very difficult to take."* (p. 4, l.162-166).

Elise took this further in her interview, pointing to Birmingham: *"their mayor is a raving anti-Semite, a vile, raving anti-Semite. Some of the things he said are just despicable. So, yeah, I*

have no faith in the police, I'm afraid". (p. 4, l. 151-153). She also believed that Jews expressing disreputable views would have received harsher punishments: *"When you hear a doctor being… Outwardly… Completely and utterly anti-Semitic. They should be struck off! It's… it's not rocket science. If I were to do that about a Muslim person, I'd be in jail, hate speech. So, it seems like there's one rule for them, and one rule for us"* (p. 2 l. 68-70).

Perceived changes were also reported around the recognition of antisemitism, with many participants outlining new difficulties when arguing over what constitutes antisemitism. Gemma discussed the blurring of antisemitism and anti-Zionism, and how this had changed over her lifetime. She talked of how she had *"always fought antisemitism, I've always tried to not see antisemitism and try to explain that the majority of people were anti-Israeli government policy…"* (p. 7, l. 283). Recently however, this had become more difficult: *"somehow the older I get and the more events I'm witnessing, I see that the, you know, it's such a such a thin line and such a fragile […] it's very hard to keep them separate"* (p. 7, l. 283).

Several participants talked about the way people used anti-Zionism as a disguise for antisemitism. They felt that the word 'Zionism' was increasingly being used negatively, and perhaps as a more acceptable proxy for the word 'Jew', Max for example said that *"people are using I mean, I'm sure there are people that are using their anti-, anti-Israeli sentiments to basically target Jews"* (p. 6, l. 233), adding:

> *"And I can't help but feel they want to say, 'the Jews.' It's so like so often I hear that phrase and I'm like, 'you want to say Jew, that's what you really want to say, but you know you can't get away with that'"* (p.6, l. 238-241).

Benji echoed these sentiments; people might say *"'these Zionists and blah, blah, blah', whatever, saying these horrible things, you're basically saying 'these Jews.' You're not fooling anyone"* (p. 17, l. 781-782).

A number of accounts discussed increased antisemitism particularly amongst the political left, or younger people, with some feeling it had even become more popular with anti-Zionism, to the point that certain sentiments were now considered less racist or discriminatory. Participants for example described how Israel was seen as wealthy, powerful, and colonial, with anti-Zionism held as a proud belief by those on the left. Accounts also described how those who were proudly anti-Zionist seemed unaware of making use of antisemitic statements. Yvonne for example pointed to pro-Palestinian marches:

> *"Even that saying from the 'river to the sea, Palestine will be free', loads of people were… We're chanting it, and… Didn't know the kind of underlying reason, basically saying that Israel should be wiped out 'from the river to the sea' in terms of its geographical location, but just thought, 'oh, it sounds good, like, everyone's saying it, I'm just gonna join in.'"* (p. 6, l. 244-248).

Stevie noted that left-wing progressives were unaware of the antisemitic connotations of the phrases they utilized:

> *"Surely, they don't want to be anti-Semitic consciously. Surely, like, if you're an extreme left-wing really progressive, really liberal, it would be such a juxtaposition and contradiction. But often, they end up subconsciously, without realizing, kind of parroting some sayings that are anti-Semitic"* (p. 5, l. 213-215).

Stevie also queried the impact of anti-Zionism being increasingly presented as virtuous:

> *"They're almost holding up, like, there's this sort of… It's almost a desire to be called antisemitic, because then they're… they're being, um… Because then they feel like they're being […] critical enough of Israel. And if they haven't been called anti-Semitic, it means they're not being loud and proud enough"* (p. 2, l. 66).

Similarly to Yvonne and Stevie, Harry discussed the increase in popularity of anti-Zionism in tandem with a lack of understanding about how the phrases used in crowds influence a sense of safety, saying:

> *"Bob Vylan, yeah, getting the entire crowd to, um, chant, you know, 'death, death to the IDF', you know […] that is kind of killing of all those people, most of whom are, you know. Just, like, 17, 18-year-old Jewish kids that have been conscripted into the army […] that makes you feel quite, you know… Unsafe and quite paranoid"* (p.10, l. 430-535).

A number of accounts discussed perceptions of increased circulation of stereotypes, conspiratorial beliefs and dehumanising imagery with respect to Jews, both online and in real life. Benji recalled overhearing strangers outside a shop saying to one another *"really loudly, 'Jews control the banks here in London.' […]' and he went, 'brother, Jews run everything. They control everything"* (p. 12, l. 549). For him and others, October 7th had

been a turning point: *“I can't help but feel like before October 7th, that wouldn’t be a normal thing you could expect to hear in London. I knew there was antisemitism, but I guess it wasn't. I'd never heard anything like that beforehand”* (p. 12, l. 554).

Some however, felt that the situation for British Jews in the UK had been changing over the last decade, as antisemitism became normalized*: “things that may not have been acceptable for people to say, I don't know, 10 years ago, are now much more acceptable.”* (Yvonne, p. 1, l. 25).

These experiences had significant social and relational fallout, creating strains in friendships (particularly with but not limited to, non-Jewish friends), and disappointment at silence from others, especially following October 7th. Stevie described increased caution in social participation, and a new level of social ostracism:

> *“[…] and we're just sort of… people only look at the bad things, they're not looking at the good things anymore, they're not looking at… and it makes us shrink a little bit. It makes the community sort of feel like we have to go into our little… a little hidey hole, and ‘just don't look at me, just leave us alone’.”* (p. 16, l. 738).

Interestingly, participants often discussed a concurrent return to Jewish friendships and social circles where they felt safer, more welcome, or better understood. Hence a perceived increase in Jewish community strength, with members feeling more connected during a time of hardship. Benji for example talked about attending the Jewish festival ‘Simchat Torah’ around the time when Israeli hostages were being released from Gaza, and how it was not *“like the Simchat Torah I remember growing up. It was a real, like, let's look after each other, a real amazing community”* (p. 18, l. 809). He even spoke of a ‘silver lining’ for British Jews: *“If there was one silver lining of everything that's happened over the past two years, is Jews have never been closer. Jews have never been kinder to one another”* (p. 18, l. 811).

Overall, however, participants agreed that increased exposure to antisemitism, the rising popularity of anti-Zionism (and blurring of this with antisemitism), and the revival of Jewish stereotypes have left British Jews feeling increasingly socially ostracised.

3.1.2. Subtheme 2: A New Baseline of Antisemitism: Reassessing Safety, Home and Future

Captured in the subtheme *A New Baseline of Antisemitism: Reassessing Safety, Home and Future* were accounts of antisemitism rising to a new and possibly enduring level, with far reaching consequences. Joseph described how this had been happening slowly since October 7th, 2023:

> *"And then it has been a sort of drip, drip, drip. Because again, of what's happened in some of Israel and the Middle East but clearly since, what is it 15 months ago, it has gone to a completely different level. And one which I suspect many other British Jews never thought they would have to see. So, it has gone to a level which we didn't see and didn't expect. And I'm not quite sure when it's going to get down to anything bearable again"* (p. 1, l. 15-19).

While October 7th was widely seen as a turning point in this respect, with perceptions of threat feeling closer, more public and more normalised, several participants noted that antisemitism remains 'dormant' until reactivated. This was often framed through historical awareness, with present changes in antisemitism understood as part of a historical scapegoating of Jews. In Robert's words: *"antisemitism is a very light sleeper."* (p. 3, l. 127). He saw events in the Middle East as having reawakened old feelings towards diasporic Jews, saying that *"what it takes is, uh, you know, something, in this instance, something, fairly horrendous, let's be honest, in the Middle East, to, you know, legitimize and awaken all lovely feelings that I just… Convinced myself weren't really there, but clearly, they are"* (p.3, l. 127-130). Max echoed this when discussing Israel's policy, as did Harry:

> *"I feel like every, every, time he [Netanyahu] bombs Palestinians, then Jews around the world will get more and more abuse"* (Max, p.17, l.777).

> *"is what we're doing... You know…. Not a good thing anymore, you know? It'll do more harm to Jewish people worldwide by doing what we're doing. You know, is what Israel is doing actually increasing, you know, antisemitism against the diaspora."* (Harry, p. 4, l. 173-176).

An escalation in antisemitism over the past five to ten years was also discussed, with Yvonne pointing to how *"five to ten years ago, George Galloway, you know, that politician, he was on, and he was… Saying stuff that was obviously anti-Israel […] there was definitely, like, an anti-Semitic undertone to it, and I remember in that Question Time audience, he got booed"*; while Max highlighted that *"I never, I never really felt like I'd ever really experienced antisemitism until maybe five years ago"* (p.10, l. 436). Robert also alluded to this change in the last five years, and how this had influenced his public openness about being Jew: *"Whereas, I think, even five […] I would make it known."* (p. 1, l. 37-38).

Many participants talked about the future of British Jews in the United Kingdom, with predictions on how the climate may progress. Whilst Joseph felt that antisemitism would not return to anything *"bearable"*, Robert's perception was slightly different:

> *"I don't think it will go back to how it was prior to all of this. So, I think… I do think there's a general higher level of animosity or dismissiveness, or maybe even outright racism towards Jewish people, but I don't think it's going to be quite as acute. I think it would… I think it would just settle down to a new baseline, but that baseline will be harder than what it was before"* (p. 11, l. 505-507).

As they considered future risks to themselves as well as their family, participants evoked longer-term life decisions including whether to stay in the UK. Some, like Harry, questioned the necessity to leave the country (*"I don't necessarily feel um, that's the case"* - p.9, l. 396-397) while others, such as Elise, spoke of the United Kingdom being less safe even than Israel for Jews, despite Israel being at war.

> *"You know, it has, you know, it has the law of return in Israel […] You know, the feeling there, and uh… I don't know, there's something about the country. Look, if I didn't have children here, you know, or family here, I'd be gone. I wouldn't stay here. I literally wouldn't stay here. I feel… and I've been… Five times since October the 7th? Five? Five or six. I felt safer there than I did here. And I was afraid that the sirens would go off, and, you know, I was, I was lucky it didn't, but I felt safer there."* (p. 8, l. 339-345).

These feelings were echoed by Holly, who compared exposure to antisemitism on the streets to her experience in Israel: *"I feel that in Israel, it's just feels, what I feel, personally, like, a lot like, safer, that's more just, like, hatred here than, in Israel, or other places. Um, like… There's a lot of, like… I don't know, like, posters and, like, stickers on,*

like, lampposts and stuff." (p.7, l. 325-328). Benji went on to discuss having conversations with his parents about whether it was safe to have a family in the United Kingdom:

> *"I don't feel I could have a family here. I genuinely wouldn't want a kid living in this […] and you know what's funny? I told them recently that I can't live here the rest of my life and both of my parents said without hesitation, 'I fully support you.'"* (p. 9, l. 403-410).

These narratives shine a light on how British Jews currently view the climate in the UK with respect to safety, and how they may grapple with the decision of whether to stay. Despite some still indeed experiencing the UK as safe, many reported making constant threat appraisals and weighing up safety in the United Kingdom against leaving – with a warn-torn Israel even seen by some as safer.

3.2. Theme 2: Being Visible (or Not): Managing Jewish Identity in Public

This theme captures current British Jewish perceptions that expression of Judaism, or affiliation with Israel, became increasingly linked to perceived risk. The subtheme *The Disclosure Calculus* focuses on the disclosure of being Jewish becoming a context-sensitive calculation, and how to navigate uncertainty about how Jewishness will be received in workplaces, social situations, and broader public spaces. Participants described concealment as increasingly common, sometimes framed as a shift from previous experiences of openness or pride.

Self-Censorship and Conversational Restraint centres on the management of speech, with participants describing holding back, avoiding topics, and adopting cautious conversational strategies (particularly around Israel) due to fear of judgement or potential ostracism. Across both subthemes, narratives explore how the current climate has pulled openness about Jewish identity into a field of heightened risk, shaping how British Jews currently present themselves as well as how freely they feel able to speak out against perceived antisemitism or show support of any kind to Israel.

3.2.1. Subtheme 1: The Disclosure Calculus

Making up the subtheme *The Disclosure Calculus* were accounts revolving around disclosure of Judaism as an on-going, context-sensitive calculation. Narratives centred

around the visibility of one's Jewish identity, how to manage this across contexts and situations in terms of where to go and what to wear or say, and the consequences of this on various facets of life including work and relationships. Participants discussed worries over institutionalised antisemitism, concerned that openness about Jewish faith would limit professional opportunities:

> *"Um… And then, you know, I'm looking for a new job at the moment, what are they gonna… like, there's always a sort of, like, will I be discriminated against looking for a job outside the community, like… And you just don't know. And I'll never know if I don't get a job because of it, you know? I don't know"* (Stevie, p. 8, l. 364).

Additionally, accounts often revolved around heightened sensitivity to the visibility of one's Jewish identity and the uncertainty of how disclosure of this would be received by either friends and strangers, with fears of misunderstanding or hostility resulting in increased concealment. Robert saw this as a recent development: *"I'm more conscious of it from the perspective of… You know, um… Not revealing it. Whereas, I think, even five years ago, um, like, say, in business meetings, with people I didn't know. You know, I would… I would make it known, um…As a point of, sort of, pride"* (p. 1, l. 36-39). He went on to discuss how in the current climate, a much larger degree of trust is required before one feels able to share this openly: *"Whereas now, um… I have to really sort of trust the person before I, uh… Either remind them that I am, or tell them that I am"* (p. 1, l. 43-44).

Benji discussed an increase in Jewish identity concealment on a more global scale, feeling that the world had turned less accepting of Jews generally, with public discourse on Zionism playing a part in this.

> *"It's horrible. It's horrible. I hide it. I hide it like I hide it at my new job, my identity for my new job. I'd avoid bringing it up as much as possible and truthfully. I am. I all my life, I had this big dream of being this musician and now I'm completely behind the scenes […] I've let go of this idea of being famous. Because I know if people find out that I'm a Zionist, which will inevitably come out, because it will come out, I'm Jewish and then they want to know what my views are, I'll be cancelled like I've like committed a sin. Zionist in the music industry is like an insult. It's like it's like a fascist. It's like being known as this bad person."* (p. 17 l. 756-770).

Unsurprisingly there was a difference between those who were Orthodox (or those whose Jewish religious practice results in greater Jewish visibility) and those who were not, with the

former not as easily able to 'conceal' their identity, perhaps leaving them at greater risk. Stevie for example discussed how it's *"very obvious that I'm Jewish. My husband wears a kippah. It's very obvious. We can't escape it"* (p. 7, l. 309-310); she then went on to describe how *"walking around with my husband with a kippah, and there's just this feeling of, like, who's looking at us, and who's thinking this, and who's thinking that […] it's definitely a little bit of a fear and a little bit of a tension that didn't used to be there."* (p. 8, l. 332-333). This seemed to create an extremely difficult situation for those who were more openly Jewish and perhaps marks an important difference in how levels of fear may vary amongst denominations of Jewish faith and practice.

The above also exemplifies the unique position British Jews can find themselves in, with a minority identity that is not immediately visible and can indeed be 'revealed'. Max explained how this can manifest for Jewish people using a quote from a writer in 20th century France:

> *"And he described Jews effectively I don't know paraphrasing it as um 'the undercover black person.' He went 'because Jews can get away with not being noticed as Jews, but once it's revealed, they said they will be treated the same way as somebody of colour.' This is back in early 20th century France, so it's a different, different scenario."* (p. 6, l. 372-377)

Some participants said that whilst they did not always feel compelled to hide their Jewish identity and were proud to be Jewish openly, they were aware of the consequences of doing this. Stevie for example pointed out that *"Now there is a sense of pride you know, 'no, I will be Jewish, and I'll stand up, and I'll hold my head up high, because I am proud of my… and I'm so connected to my culture and who I am. You know, I should be proud of it. Um, but that pride comes with that fear"* (p. 17, l. 756-758). Elise discussed how this manifested in her support for Israel, explaining that *"I was in town, um, in [named pub], and I wanted to see Israel thing [..] I took my [Israeli] flag out, and I wrapped myself in it, and walked through the restaurant into the bar at the other end. And I got a couple of really horrible looks"* (p. 10, l. 432-435).

Managing visibility thus came across as an everyday task for British Jews today, many participants seeing events in Israel as driving forces behind their increased desire for concealment.

3.2.2. Subtheme 2: Self-censorship and Conversational Constraint

A number of participants further highlighted the need to manage speech and verbal expression. This was often framed in the context of fears that openness about views on Israel may risk judgement or social sanction. This subtheme captured perceptions of the need to avoid certain topics, withhold opinions, or adopt a narrowed and cautious conversational style with the goal of evading potential conflict, stigma, or ostracism. Joseph for example felt unable to comment on allegations levelled at Israel in an occupational context.

> *"There are situations, and it might be with people who are of different backgrounds or faiths or religions, where I've either passively decided not to sort of respond to something or I've had to make a decision that if I do it could end in something awkward, unpleasant […] and they said, 'oh, yeah, we finished, we moved on to talking about the genocide now.' And, you know, what can I say? So, I just ignored it and moved on. And there are situations like that where I don't think anything would have been gained by me questioning the use of that term or discussing"* (p. 5, l. 207-222).

Participants at times discussed this dilemma, feeling on one level a desperation to educate or challenge the views of those around them, and on another, that silence was the only option. Gemma for example explored the conflict involved in this level of self-censorship: *"I want to… I want them to know my side. So that they have, let's say an uncensored channel and perspective of a… let's say a British Jew and an Israeli Jew"* (p.5, l. 228-230); and yet *"some friends, […] they've already made up their mind on the situation… and they it's almost, a no, you know, you, you don't go there. You don't talk about that"* (p. 6, l. 232-234).

Anticipatory social evaluation played a central role here, with descriptions of monitoring/predicting how others may interpret one's words and whether disagreement would lead to social sanction. Yvonne explained that *"balanced debate might be tricky, because you might feel like, 'oh, am I going to be cancelled for raising some element of support towards the Jewish perspective?' So that's why it's kind of off-limits"* (p.5 l. 194-196).

This was at times coupled with feelings of a potential lack of safety to express views, with this self-censorship compounding a sense of persecution. Harry said that *"I can't believe, you know, like… that Israel should exist. It makes you feel… unsafe to express that, that*

view, you know, you become, you know, a victim of persecution almost here" (p. 2, l. 78-80). Some described feeling unable to express these views in public when going about typical days, with Holly feeling that *"we're talking about… Something to do with Israel, um… Like, it's either whispered, or just, like… Not talked about loudly"* (p. 1, l. 27-28).

Despite this, participants also reported feeling able to express their views at times, for different reasons. Stevie felt capable of divulging her views, even with those with whom she may disagree, if there was as sense of mutual respect: *"Um, and then I had friends who did listen, but I knew were… Um who were pro-Palestinian […] if they're gonna treat me with respect and dignity and not blame Israel's actions on me as a Jew, you know, that's okay. Um, and I did talk to them"* (p. 4, l. 157-160). Benji on the other hand said that his capacity to share his views with strangers could be contingent on alcohol consumption, with a level of bravery emerging from a limiting of one's inhibitions: *"And I don't think I would normally have this kind of courage to say something, but I had a little bit of Dutch courage, I guess, from drinking or whatever, and I went. 'Mate, do you really think that?'"* (p.12, l. 552).

Overall, however, the British Jews interviewed here found themselves less and less able to express their views freely, with increased fear of sanctions resulting in conversational restraint, and described a degree of internal psychological conflict arising when attempting to make sense of this dilemma.

3.3. Theme 3: Negotiating Israel, Zionism and British Jewish Identity

This theme explores the nature of Israel and Zionism as central but complicated tenets in British Jewish identity, with accounts describing both deep attachment to Israel alongside moral and relational complexity. In *Israel as Attachment, Refuge and Continuity*, narratives positioned Israel as an emotional anchor, linked with feelings of safety, refuge, and belonging. These feelings have been intensified by increased perceptions that Jewish safety in the UK has deteriorated since October 7th. Participants described Israel as a place where Jewishness goes without question, where one can feel part of a majority or even family, despite acknowledging the reality of war and its impact on actual safety.

The second subtheme, *Zionism as False Dichotomy*, highlights the changing socio-political climate and its influence on thinking and debate. Some participants reflected on moral conflict with Israeli politics and actions alongside the centrality of Israel to identity, as well as the burden of public misunderstanding around the diversity of Jewish connection to Israel.

Many participants described being pressured to have a view, to account for Israel as a condition of social acceptance, and to manage "good/bad Jew" dynamics in politicised spaces.

Additionally, participants explored how positions on Zionism led to 'political homelessness', drawing a link with their confusion over the perceived increase in Jewish support on the political right, and decrease in the political left, in marked contrast with recent historical trends. This theme therefore captures both the place of Israel as a complicated anchor in Jewish identity, and the work required to navigate its contentiousness within British social life, relationships, and political allegiances.

Important to note in this theme, is that concepts such as Jewish attachment to Israel, support for Jewish self-determination or Zionism, or indeed support for Israeli governments and their actions, are related but distinct. That is to say, the analysis of participant accounts involved an understanding that holding of one of these positions does not imply that participants hold another. Whilst many participants for example had thought of Israel as a place of refuge, suggesting an underlying belief in Zionism, the analysis does not permit definitive conclusions to be made about all participant positions on this.

3.3.1 Subtheme 1: Israel as Attachment, Refuge and Continuity

The subtheme Israel as *Attachment, Refuge and Continuity* comprised narratives around the function of Israel as an emotional anchor within Jewish identity as well as a psychological home. For some, Israel represented a place of refuge, somewhere to go or escape to when diasporic Jewish safety felt threatened. Harry explored October 7th as an example of why Israel must exist, feeling Jews can never feel truly safe:

> *"October 7th, perhaps, if you look back to that, that was, um, you know. For me, a great example of why Israel has got to exist, for instance. You know, this was a… group of people that carried out a terrorist attack against Jews and murdered 1,500 Jews and it's basically one of the most major acts of terrorism since you know, 9/11, basically worldwide. Um, and so that, for me, you know, it's… Evidence of why Israel needs to exist, you know, that… Jews will never be safe completely. From those who want to do them harm"* (p. 4, l. 152-158).

Accounts often framed the importance of Israel historically, with Jewish historical oppression and the Holocaust compounding the necessity of establishing Israel and the centrality of

Zionism in Jewish identity and continuity. Penelope discussed this alongside sadness at the current lack of safety in Israel:

> *"There was a Holocaust, but a few people survived it, so what do we do with them for God's sake?" […] so that seems a logical, logical development to give them a tiny, tiny bit of land, very tiny bit of land, where they think they will feel safe. Didn't work, did it? I know people want to leave Israel now and live somewhere else. It is pathetic, tragic."* (Penelope, p. 8, l. 331-334).

Many referred to the current climate, with increased perception of social threat resulting in a desire to escape to a 'safe haven'. Robert talked about this, saying that *"when you don't feel totally safe in your own country, obviously you're going to look to, well, where would you feel safe?"* (p.5, l. 215-217). While some, like Penelope, felt that October 7th had made Israel less safe, others saw it as safer than the United Kingdom, even in a time of war:

> *"But you kind of think, well, I'd rather be in an environment where I could… Doesn't matter whether I walk down the street with a massive Star of David and a couple and, you know… A black hat on. I'd rather be able to do that, and I might get blown up, than walk around in the UK […] worrying that someone might… Acost me in the street, or say something nasty, or whatever"* (Robert, p. 5, l. 220-224).

Some evoked a longstanding attachment to Israel, with Stevie stating that *"When I go to Israel, it does feel like going home"* (p. 9, l. 395), and Holly saying: *"I guess it is like a… second home, or like a home for the Jews"* (p. 3, l. 134). Others, like Robert, talked of a strengthening connection: "*don't have an awful lot of affiliation to it at all. That being said, because of what's going on. Kind of emotionally feel like you need to… Stick up for your own. So, weirdly, I've got a stronger connection to it now than I ever have"* (p. 5, l. 198-201). Later he explained that *"It's almost like the situation's forced me to pick a side"* (p. 5, l. 204-205). Yet others, like Max, described having the opposite reaction: *"but I've definitely I don't know if it's to do with um what's going on and how much I disagree with what the government does or like having a greater understanding, but I've definitely lost that connection a lot now"* (p.1, l. 31-34).

It seems important to mention that both Stevie and Holly were orthodox Jews, whilst Robert and Max were Masorti and secular respectively. Yvonne, also a secular Jew, described herself a Zionist but marked a certain distance to Israel: *"so, I have a lot of respect for its existence, and of course, I believe in a Jewish homeland, so I guess, by definition, that*

makes me a Zionist" (p. 3, l. 131-133). Other secular Jews echoed this when discussing an overall lack of religious connection to Israel from a religious perspective: *"I don't get emotional about or interested, but I don't I don't feel that kind of emotional connection to them"* (David, p. 4, l. 151-153). Denominational differences in Judaism thus appeared to have some impact on perceived connection to Israel amongst British Jews.

Israel was also described as a place of belonging and heritage, where Jewishness and Jewish identity go without question, with narratives describing people there, including strangers, like family: *"you're in the majority. You're not in the minority there. You feel… You feel like your… your family with the person next to you ordering a coffee"* (Stevie, p. 10, l. 443-445). This would apply regardless of differences in religious laws or practices: *"you might be religiously different, politically different. You know, they might be Sephardi and I'm Ashkenazi, you know, lots of diff… culturally different but ultimately, we're all family, we're all… One there"* (p. 10, l. 446-448).

3.3.2. Subtheme 2: Zionism as a False Dichotomy

Captured within this theme are narratives around the moral and political complexity of situating Israel with respect to British Jewish identity. A first dimension of this lay in the contested centrality of Israel and Zionism in Jewish identity, some emphasising it and others upset by the conflation of Jewishness with support for Israel/Zionism. Max for example discussed the complexity of being Jewish and how this influences one's relationship to Zionism.

> *"Not all Jews are Zionists, but I don't know. It's um yeah, it's a difficult one. And I think it's also I don't I think I don't like is assuming that all people who are Zionists are bad or evil. I mean, you can disagree over it, but um yeah, I don't know"* (p. 6, l. 253-256).

A number of accounts included the idea of feeling 'politically homeless', with participants describing a difficulty marrying up their political beliefs, values and loyalties with a complex, ever-changing relationship to Israel. Some acknowledged historical antisemitism on the political right, feeling closer to left-wing political parties. Yet, many also noted increased antisemitism as well as anti-Zionism on the political left and pointed to increased support for Jewish people and Israel on the political right.

The result of this was a degree of internal conflict as to one's own values, with support for Israel experienced as a kind of blemish by those normally leaning towards leftist values: *"it*

makes you a little bit politically homeless as well […] the left has become, um. More… obviously. You know. I certainly have felt that the right have become more defensive of Jewish people" (Harry, p. 7, l. 304-306). Harry further explored the consequences of these confused feelings: *"and then… that makes you question your own political beliefs and who are, who are your friends? The people who share your beliefs don't seem to like you very much. But those people who you used to… You always generally disagreed with, seem to be able to still want to defend us"* (p. 7, l. 307-309).

Common across the dataset were narratives around feeling obligated to have a view and be an 'expert' on the political situation in Israel, with Benji discussing the way *"every time, anywhere you go in the world, you mention you're Jewish… Immediately 'what your thoughts on Israel?' Immediately"* (p. 8, l. 371-372). Having said this, whilst some seemed to resent others' expectations that they should have a view on Israel or be an expert, others, like Max, were actually motivated to educate themselves on the history of Israel and the conflict in the Middle East for the purpose of educating others or defending Israel's right to exist: *"I wrote my dissertation about Israel […] part of the reason why I chose it with my dissertation is um, because I wanted to be educated enough that I could argue or debate about it. And actually, not be seen as just being biased, but I, actually be seen as being educated on it"* (p.2, l. 61-65).

Participants also reported feeling pressured to account for the actions of Israel as a condition of social acceptance, with a lack of blanket criticism of Israel or Zionism creating the risk of social sanction. This sense of conditional acceptance was captured by Robert: *"I have to have a point of view, and if I'm right on, I'm on the right side of history […] I immediately should denounce Israel and be anti-Zionist. If I… if I want to be accepted into, uh… What was, like, my left cohort, then that's the position I must take"* (p. 13, l. 578-581). Robert also pointed to a lack of nuance in this respect, so that one could easily be branded with offensive labels: *"If I do not [denounce Israel], then there's something… There's some question marks at best, or at worst, I'm a genocide apologist. Um, baby killer."* (p. 13, l. 581-582).

This lack of nuance was also mentioned by Stevie, alongside the growing difficulty of holding conversations about Israel:

> *"A person at university who I tried to have a conversation with, […] and she just would not talk to me. She refused, 'so I don't talk… I won't talk to you.' It was horrible, because I was like, 'but you don't… you don't know anything. And I'm not trying to,*

> *like, change your mind, I'm trying to show you that actually we can be on the same side, which is pro-peace. We can have the same opinion, but you won't listen to me'"* (p. 12, l. 515-520).

Many described political opinions as having become more 'black and white', some pointing to social media as a cause for this. David for example felt social media had led to changes in what people view as truth, pointing out how many people in the UK *"get knowledge and information from social media which is not regulated or controlled"* (p. 6, l. 267-268); he thought that *"social media is… dangerous"* (p.6, l. 269), in that *"it can support established opinions about things" (p. 6, l. 270),* adding that *"when you see a lot of this and all the time and not everything is necessarily true then it creates a very specific narrative."* Max also highlighted that *"social media around gives a lot of people snippets of information without giving them the whole story"* (p. 7, l.317-319).

Others pointed to 'trends' compounding British Jewish difficulties in navigating the situation in Israel. Stevie for example described how people were getting *"swept up in this movement and this trend, and haven't really looked fully at the history, and haven't really fully understood how we've got this terrible place that we're in"* (p. 11, l. 469-470). Max explored this further, explaining the role of social media and its lack of a comprehensive explanation in rallying groups of people together: *"I think it sort of creates almost trends of what's cool to, or dislike or protest or be angry against. And um I think in some ways it can be good, um and it gets people engaged, but I think as I say I think sometimes it just gives people little bits of information and not a full story"* (p. 8, l. 334-336).

This was echoed by Robert, who also discussed how this influenced his sense of political homelessness and that opinions have become polarised, for those who support Zionism as well as those who don't.

> *"Yeah, it just polarizes everything. Polarizes everything on the… on the anti-Jewish side, and it also polarizes things on the sort of pro-Jewish side, is that people… Neither side listens to each other. Like I said, it's like, you know, it's like becoming like football, tribal. You know? And they… each side just hurls insults at the other, which is… So, as a more liberal Jew, as I said, I feel completely homeless"* (p. 8, l. 334-338).

This was often framed alongside perceptions of 'double standards' placed upon Jews and Israel by the public, with stronger scrutiny of Israel's actions compared with other

conflicts, and with a felt sense that this is driven by antisemitism. Joseph discussed this in his interview:

> *"For any other race you know, what's going on in Sudan, what's happening in Afghanistan whatever, we don't run around blaming Afghans around the world for that or Muslims around the world for what's going on in Pakistan or whatever. But it's different, unfortunately. Jewish people seem to have to bear the brunt of explaining and justifying what's going on in Israel, whether they consider themselves Zionist or not"* (p. 7, l. 291-296).

Central to this subtheme was British Jews' complex relationship with Israel, and how the actions of the Israeli government sit with a deep connection to the ancestral homeland. Harry discussed internal moral questioning of Israel and how this sits with one's loyalty or emotional connection to the country, feeling he was *"wrestling with the question of, by extension, are the actions of Israel in the name of Judaism as well. Or are they completely separate from Judaism"* (p. 4, l. 163-164). He, like others, talked of trying to hold these two ideas in mind, asking *"is it possible to be Jewish and think that… Um, Israel shouldn't exist, perhaps, or you don't…. Does it make you almost say… A race traitor to be critical of what Israel's done as a Jewish person?"* (p. 4, l. 166-171).

Participants often referred to wrestling internally with loyalty to Israel, having grown up with very pro-Israeli narratives and Zionist values, but consequently struggling with criticism of Israel. Yvonne referred to a conversation with a friend, where *"he felt it was almost like brainwashing. I don't know if I'd necessarily say it was that intense, but of course there was a bias that, we couldn't really criticize Israel. Israel could do no wrong, et cetera, et cetera."* (p.2, l. 90-91). Benji also alluded to this:

> *"And I'll be completely honest here. Being raised in that kind of Zionist narrative, going to a conservative school and being with a family that's so pro-Israel. I was completely blind, completely blind to any form of other side, any, like, I knew there was conflict, but if you would have told me that there were struggles in Palestine, I probably wouldn't have believed you"* (p. 5, l. 212-216).

Participants talked of developing more balanced views on Israel later in life, with Yvonne stating that *"watching like, non-religious political shows has made me aware of the truths on all sides, so I think it's a good thing, because it means I'm not… Um, as swayed purely based on, like, a personal connection to one side"* (p. 3, l. 94-95). Benji saw this as starting

at university, where being faced with conflicting perspectives led him to look for ways to engage in more dialogue.

> *"I was raised in this culture in society in the UK, where it's just like, 'Israel is this perfect place. It's done nothing wrong.' And to me, that was like, so it was really shocking coming to Brighton. A city which has loads of Israel-related events, but very anti-Israel and stuff like that. So, for me, that was a real shock. And right away I was just like, I need to talk to these people, I need to get engaged and have a good understanding about it"* (p. 5, l. 218-222).

Overall, the British Jews interviewed here spoke of the significance of Israel as a place of safety or refuge for them, and of its heightened importance in the context of increased antisemitism, as the events of October 7th compounded the legacy of historical oppression. They also described a complex and evolving relationship to Israel, in a sociopolitical climate that is becoming increasingly polarised, emotionally charged and lacking in nuanced debate.

3.4. Theme 4: Both Home, and Left Out: Pride and Unease in a Shifting Britain

This theme addresses how participants make sense of their dual British and Jewish identity in the current climate and how this is shaped by upbringing, belonging, integration, and social positioning, increasingly under strain as a result of recent events. The first subtheme, *Belonging and National Identification Under Strain,* captures how external events and public discourse (particularly post October 7th) have unsettled participants' sense of national belonging, with some describing shifts in whether Britishness can remain foregrounded or comfortably integrated with their Jewish identity. Participants spoke of pride in their British identity and cultural values, but also of feeling increasingly unwelcome, or that Jewishness has become "a dirty word," resulting in a reappraisal of Britain as home.

Integration, Contribution and Social Positioning highlights pride in Jewish faith and culture alongside strong narratives of integration and contribution to British society, as well as frustration when this is overlooked or eclipsed by stereotyped narratives. A key element of this theme is the complexity of Jewish social positioning in British society, participants describing how they feel excluded from dominant frameworks of minority status, with a sense that British multiculturalism does not reliably include Jews. Overall, this theme presents British Jewish identity as both integrated and contested, shaped by a changing socio-political climate and by the struggle to be recognised accurately within it.

3.4.1 Subtheme 1: Belonging and National Identification Under Strain

Here, accounts revolved around the negotiation of one's Jewish and British identity, and how this was shaped by external events. Participants often discussed aspects of their Jewish identity culturally, be that in terms of food, humour, affinity for the arts or creativity, and how this intersected with British aspects of their identity.

Whilst some placed their Britishness at the forefront of their identity, others pointed to a mixed, intersectional identity. David discussed the entangled nature of his Jewish, British, and Israeli identities, noting that *"It's almost like spaghetti. It's all entangled together and it influences each other"* (p. 4, l. 160-161). However he also discussed pride in his British identity, which he perhaps chose to foreground: *"so there's elements of my 'Britishness' that I'm very proud and happy and I allow it to remain visual and dominant […] being polite and listening and things like that, which are very, let's say British I'm happy to hold them up and wave with them and follow them also in places that are less acceptable or less popular"* (p. 4, l. 161-167). By contrast, Max pointed to a more bicultural identity, positioning himself with a foot in each 'camp': *"Yeah, it's strange, um kind of feel like I'm I don't know, half in one camp, half in the other, like I'm considered like British, but also considered Jewish"* (p. 7, l. 299-300).

At times, participants discussed British and Jewish aspects of their identity as being very 'tied up'. Harry for example reported that:

> *"At Jewish functions and weddings, or um Bar mitzvahs […] you always do a toast, um, to the monarch, you know, and, you know, we'll stand up and raise a glass, but… More importantly, also, you're also singing the Hatikva, you know, the national anthem of Israel as well, and so, you know, in that sense. You know, your identity is British and Jewish, therefore very, for me, very tied up in them"* (p. 3, l. 136).

Whilst many participants described a smooth intersection of these aspects of their identity, feeling patriotic and welcome in the United Kingdom as well as proudly Jewish, this had come under strain of late, particularly following October 7th. Some participants cited exposure to mass marches in response to events in the Middle East, public discourse and rising antisemitism fostering a lack of national belonging and a distance from the British aspects of their identity. Whilst at times participants discussed events like marches from the perspective of their Jewish vulnerability, the data did not permit for conclusions to be made

that participation in such marches, or criticism of Israeli military action is in itself inherently antisemitic, with participants regularly criticising the current Israeli government. Nonetheless, Benji for example described feeling unwelcome (*"It feels like 'get out of this country Jews, get out'"* - p. 12, l. 534), and Elise explored how her British identity had taken more of a backseat in recent times:

> *"You know, my parents were always… As I say, proud, proud British Jews. They were British before they were Jewish, my parents. Um, I think I'm Jewish before I'm British. But nevertheless… But now, it seems like it's… A dirty word to be Jewish. And I, you know, I'm not prepared to have that. I'm, you know, I'm just normal"* (p. 4, l. 174-177).

Some spoke of the increased salience of their Jewish identity in the current climate, with a felt need to band together with other Jews. Robert for example described being *"from a secular point of view, you know, English/British first, Judaism, very core, and set, you know, secondary core part of my identity, but doesn't define… Isn't my defining characteristic."* (p. 12, l. 526-527). But in light of recent events, he now thought that *"maybe that characteristic's becoming more of a dominant characteristic as a result of what's going on. You feel almost like a need to… Club to get, you know, club together, band together"* (p. 12, l. 520).

This was echoed by Holly who discussed a desire to be more Jewish in response to the current social climate, pointing to the sacrifices made by others in order for Jews to be able to live a Jewish life: *"so many people have, like, sacrificed Um… Like, loads […] I feel that it's created a greater sense of community, for sure […] like, it makes me, like… Want to be Jewish even more"* (p. 4, l. 173-178).

The above may also help to explain why for some participants, consideration of the shared intergenerational trauma and historic oppression was a driver of Jewish identity, beyond cultural or religious norms, Max for example pointing out that his mother would say *"'you don't have to believe in Judaism and go to synagogue, you don't have to follow any of it, but you'll always be Jewish'"* (p. 14, l. 607-609). Max explained that this was because "*It feels like it's more than a religion. It's an ethnicity […] as with Judaism, maybe because we've been so ostracized from society and um yeah, it's the history behind it"* (p. 14, l. 611-613).

Penelope went further. *"What makes somebody Jewish, it's a good question. Well, I mean my whole story is a typical Jewish story"* (p.3, l. 119-120) she said, before elaborating in reply to the researcher's question: *"Well I mean… That your parents were murdered…I mean what is the Jewish story? Murder, murder, on a big scale."* (p. 3, l. 124-126). In these

accounts, participants appeared acutely aware of the generational struggle of the Jewish people for survival and continuity, perhaps especially salient to their Jewish identity in the current climate.

3.4.2 Subtheme 2: Integration, Contribution and Social Positioning

The subtheme *Integration, Contribution and Social Positioning* covers accounts discussing British Jewish identity as it relates to faith and culture, as well as Jewish integration into British life. Descriptions highlighted Jewish civic participation, including professional and cultural presence, community, creativity, and a sense of Jews as part of the British social fabric. This was framed negatively at times however, with perceptions that Jewish contribution and integration into British society were being overlooked, misrecognised, or eclipsed by stereotyped narratives.

Penelope discussed this in her interview: *"what we forget is contributions that Jewish people have made. in every field, practically, in every field"* (p. 6, l. 246-247). She went on to say *"Jews were only allowed to be money lenders, looking after animals. Yeah, Jews were very, very restricted and really kept down over the centuries. Yeah. So, it's no wonder that they uh you know, they stuck together and they, they, found solace in um, acquiring knowledge"* (p. 8, l. 305-308).

Some described how Jewish people had historically integrated into British society, proudly becoming part of the social fabric. Stevie for instance thought that Jewish people *"want to be part of society, and we believe in social justice causes, and we… We believe in the sense of community spirit, not just Jewish community, but British community spirit, you know"* (p. 16, l. 727-729). She described the patriotism of British Jews in the Second World War, and how it was still expressed in her family: "*my husband and my father-in-law go every year to honour [her grandfather-in-law who fought in the British army]. And to march and to say, 'yes, we're part of this culture, and we're part of the fabric of this society, and we… contributed, and we're so, so, so proud of that."* However, this was soon caveated: *"And now it's just… It just feels like all of that is kind of […] overlooked"* (p. 16, l. 732-738).

Narratives often revolved around Jewish social positioning and the complexity of negotiating a Jewish identity, how British Jews did not feel part of the national 'we', whilst not quite fitting in with typical minorities. Accounts readily referred to David Baddiel's book *Jews don't count*, which argued that Jews were neither included in liberal, progressive British multiculturalism nor considered White British or fully included in more right-leaning politics. According to

Robert, *"If you're on the left, Jews are white colonialists, like, conquering, like, parts of the Middle East. Okay, so we're white, right, yeah, we're white, okay, fine."* (p. 8, l. 354-355). However, things seemed different at the other end of the political spectrum: "*go to the far right […] We are non-white. We're not really white, in fact, we're like, you know, sort of evil, sort of, snakes in the grass, you know, um… So, we're not proper white"* (Robert, p. 8, l. 355-358). Robert then summarised this position of Jews in the current social climate:

> *"So, we're either white, if you're a lefty, or we're not white if you're on the right. So, either, which way, like, you know, you're attacked. That's what it means"* (p. 8, l. 358-359).

This tied in with perceptions of Jews being misrepresented as white and privileged, despite being a minority. For Stevie, *"we're too white for the left-wing space. They…They, um, see brown people, black people, as the only… or who, you know, are the… sort of ethnic minorities"* (p. 6, l. 258-259). Yet if one considers the historical context of Jewish persecution: *"we're not white enough for the… extreme right ideologies, you know, in Nazis… Hitler, we were not white enough. During Nazi Germany. That's why they persecuted us. We were not Aryan. So, we're not white enough for them."* (Stevie, p.6, l. 254-256).

Some discussed changing perceptions of Jews' social position over time, highlighting that at the time of the Holocaust, Jews were perceived more clearly as an oppressed group, especially by progressive political movements, something which had changed more recently. Max explained that *"it was it was the Communist party and the Socialist parties that were pushing for Jews to be taken in. because we were oppressed like a clearly oppressed group at the time, but I think now it's not we're not seen that way"* (p.5, l.199-202). Max also acknowledged that perhaps the existence of more successful Jewish people complicated this*: "so, I think it's, it's uh it's a difficult one because I don't know in many… In many ways I think there are a lot of Jews in positions of power, but at the same time we are a very small group"* (p. 5, l. 202-204).

Referring to a recent conversation, Stevie no longer seemed in any doubt that Jews ought to be regarded as a minority:

> *"And I was like, oh, but it's fine, because we don't need to be talked about, like, we're fine. We're doing okay, you know? Just, they don't need to think about us, we're right, we're all right, you know? And she was always like, no, hang on a minute, we have*

> *been through this and this and this, and we are a minority, and she really put her foot down. And now, looking back, I'm like, she's 100% right, we should be talking about how we're a minority. We should be talking about how these acts of discrimination are enacted against us all the time"* (p. 17, l. 765-773).

Several participants thus reported difficulties in negotiating their British-Jewish identity in the current climate, compounded by a lack of recognition of Jewish minority status and suffering: British Jews were perceived as too white and privileged for left-wing liberal spaces, but not white enough for right wing spaces, ultimately leaving Jews politically homeless.

3.5. Theme 5: Holocaust Memory as a Lens for Safety, Belonging, and Striving

This theme captures how Jewish historical persecution, the gravity of the Holocaust and the resulting intergenerational narratives shaped British Jewish understanding of safety, belonging and contemporary antisemitism, often making the past feel psychologically present. Accounts described heightened vigilance and sensitivity to "early warning signs" of a potential repeat of the Holocaust as they experienced scapegoating, hostility, and reduced empathy in the aftermath of October 7th:

> *"You know, it's all these little things, it, you know, Jews not welcome here. It's a bit 1930-ish. And that worries me a lot"* (Elise, p. 13, l. 581-582).

> *"The Nazis got into power through legal means […] and we're seeing some of the signs of, like, the early inferences of it"* (Yvonne, p. 6 l. 270-274).

The Holocaust was not necessarily always foregrounded, but it nonetheless functioned as a strong reference point reactivated by present events, shaping anticipatory planning and interpretations of social risk. Narratives in this theme also focused on British Jewish transmission of meanings around responsibility, building stability, and working hard, often understood as responses to knowledge of prior persecution and survival. In this way, values are carried not only through memory but through ongoing orientation to security, duty, and striving, which have become particularly salient in response to current events that are threatening assumptions of safety and belonging in the United Kingdom.

Several participants compared the current climate in the United Kingdom with that of Nazi Germany, and a level of intergenerational trauma seemed ubiquitous through the vast majority of interviews. Yvonne for instance voiced her worries: *"Learning about the Holocaust growing up, and the 1930s, like, um, kind of culture and mentality and how it led to the events of the Holocaust […] And kind of seeing the signs of it potentially leading to a repeat of history. So, it is worrying"* (p. 2, l. 50-51). Harry had thought about planning for a possible repeat of the Holocaust, albeit noting that he did not feel the need to leave yet: *"thought it more, and certainly, you know, I've considered, you know, whether I would need to leave the country, you know, if things got… Yeah, worse in the country, you know, right? Uh, well, would I need to move somewhere?"* (p. 9, l. 392-394). Like him, a number of participants spoke of the decision to escape being contingent on whether or not the current situation got worse, feeling that it was not quite unsafe enough to warrant leaving the country.

Participants also discussed feeling at home in the UK and the difficulty associated with leaving, with Harry saying, *"would I even want to, you know?"* (p. 9, l. 394). Like him, Joseph didn't feel ready to go: *"I noticed a lot of people have been coming out and saying, you know, 'we should leave' you know it's time for the Jews to you know in a sense emigrate to Israel […] I don't feel we're at that stage. I'd like to feel that we're not, we're not giving in yet."* (p. 7, l. 304-306). As for Stevie, while she could understand *"Jewish people who are saying, 'well, it's terrible, I need to leave the country" (p. 5, l. 197),* she also pointed to *"the glee that comes from them of, like, 'we've won'"* (p. 5, l. 200).

At times, historic Jewish persecution and the resulting vigilance (often compounded by stories from older generations) functioned as a lens informing threat appraisal, anticipatory planning, and emotional responses to perceived social hostility or threat. Gemma wondered whether she would be able to *"see the signs in time to do something about it?"* (p.13, l. 574), while Harry weighed up whether or not he could rely on friends to protect him should the threat materialise:

> *"Like it makes you question. You know, if, um… If, like, an authoritarian regime. Through that came power in the other kingdom. Um, uh… Yeah, that was, like, who's, sort of à la Nazis in 1945, 1940s Germany, you know… Um, which of my friends would, you know hide me in their ceiling, like Anne Frank, or help me to skip country, and which of them would, you know… Or would you turn them over to the authorities to be sent to the gas chambers"* (p. 8, l. 370-374)

Participants frequently described a feeling of colloquial ‘paranoia’ of older generations as perhaps bringing them closer to the truth. Gemma for example said: *“and suddenly, you know, little things, my dad making sure that all his grandchildren have access to another passport, which amused me back in the day […] as I'm getting older, it's making me think again and again… You know, will I be able to recognize the signs and make sure that me and mine are all safe”* (p. 13, l. 575-582). These sentiments were echoed by Max who felt that:

> *“Like my mum […] she wouldn't let me wear a star David when I was a kid. And I thought it was ridiculous because growing up in London you don't get any trouble like that… But over the years I've come to kind of understand what she was on about”* (p. 5, l. 209-212).

Finally, some accounts described not only stories about Jewish oppression and survival, but also how resulting expectations were shaped by these stories. Joesph for example discussed how his father had escaped Poland around the time of the Holocaust, explaining how the stories shared by his father had influenced his view of antisemitism: *“So, I remember growing up with that and him telling stories of that and everything else […] It became very apparent there were people who just thought Jews were evil and should be kicked out”* (p. 1, l. 34-36). Likewise, Stevie described how the past “*trickles down for all of us through all these… Stories of persecution over the centuries and so on”* (p. 10, l. 426-427) leading to having a perpetual feeling of *“having your bag packed”* (p. 10, l. 427). Some narratives also alluded to how these stories had generated some of the values British Jews still lived by today, including around the importance of building a stable life and integrating into society.

> *“Those people would have been the children of Holocaust survivors, probably, and so those people would have, grown up knowing that harrowing awful things happened to their parents and they had gone through a lot or hearing about it […] that will inspire you to work hard and do your best and try and do as much as you can for your family. I think that's where a lot of it comes from, it’s that persecution and um hearing the stories of former generations”* (Max, p.12 l. 522-528).

3.6. Theme 6: Emotional Toll and Coping in a Hostile Climate

This theme brings together accounts of the emotional impact of living in the current UK climate, and of the strategies used by British Jews to cope with sustained uncertainty and social strain.

As captured in the subtheme, *When it becomes too much: Overload and Crisis Points*, many described fear, sadness, anger, grief and heightened vigilance, often intensified by repeated exposure to news, online content, protests, and everyday antisemitism. Some also described difficulty 'switching off', be that from worrying or engaging with news and social media. Emotional responses were framed not only as reactions to specific incidents but as resulting from the cumulative effect of living with a degree of ambient threat and social tension, and with a reduced sense of agency and predictability.

Coping styles and Sources of support focuses on coping strategies and available support, participants describing cognitive styles including rationalisation, as well as engagement in reflection and meaning making. Accounts also described protective strategies such as withdrawing from media exposure, avoiding difficult conversations (as covered in theme 2), and emotional detachment. Some participants spoke of reaching a threshold where the volume of exposure or distress became too much, prompting stronger avoidance or reliance on support.

3.6.1. Subtheme 1: When it becomes too much: Overload and Crisis Points

The following subtheme aimed to specifically capture the emotional experiences described by the participants. Across the data set, many accounts described a sustained emotional load, particularly in the months following October 7th. They referred to fear, sadness, anger and grief, as well as constant vigilance.

At times, this vigilance extended to what could be thought of as colloquial 'paranoia', something that participants attempted to rationalise internally. They spoke of heightened distress following October 7th, that often reached a peak at times of increased exposure to news and social media posts related to Israel and anti-Israel protests, as well as online or real-life antisemitism and social tension. Stevie for instance reported that "*news is just so overwhelmingly… Bad, that… Either I'm in a place that I have to consume it, or I just completely shut it away"* (p. 12, l. 536-538), while Benji said: *"it got to a point where I was*

like, 'I can't keep up with this.' It's just gonna cause me to have like nervous breakdowns and stuff like that" (p. 13, l. 578-579).

Joseph discussed how his mental health had been impacted more generally: *"yeah, it's very upsetting. I mean, absolutely, you know… I'm always reluctant to sling terms like mental health around because I, I'm not a clinician. But there's no doubt that it affects one's mental health"* (p. 4, l. 176-178). He reported a sense of pressure as well as a felt lack of control or agency:

> *"Good health of the brain relies to some extent on things being predictable and having a sense of agency and control in psychology. But all those have been threatened because I feel I have less agency and control. I feel I'm, as I said earlier, sort of under pressure, feeling I'm being targeted"* (p. 4, l. 178-183).

Some listed strong negative emotions. Stevie for instance reported *"I'm definitely more… Sad and angry and scared, and… distressed than I used to be"* - p. 12, l. 535). Max spoke of feeling *"anxious and uncomfortable seeing that sort of thing"* (p. 3, l. 112), and Benji described a *"combination of a sense of dread, anxiety"* (p. 13, l. 604). Gemma cautiously brought in clinical terminology: *"Yeah, it's just, it's, deep maybe depression is too strong a word, very, very sad that we haven't been able to dismantle antisemitism"* (p. 12, l. 554-555).

Several participants referred to a degree of non-clinical 'paranoia', Harry for example pointing out to the difficulty of expressing views on Israel: *"it feeds into a paranoia […] you become more hardened in your own views on it, um, and become more paranoid about what other people really think"* (p. 2, l. 88-90). Benji described the way this colloquial paranoia has influenced his ability to feel safe and protected in London: *"I'll be honest, I feel like I, I've been so self-aware and maybe a little bit paranoid that… I haven't really been caught up in anything over the past couple of years that's made me think I handle myself in London"* (p. 10, l. 442-444). Stevie concurred, though she was quite measured when outlining her emotional responses and the basis thereof: *"just this feeling of, like, who's looking at us, and who's thinking this, and who's thinking that, and… And maybe it's paranoia, I don't know. Maybe no one's thinking anything"* (p. 8, l. 330-332).

Still, some participants discussed feeling less deeply impacted emotionally, perhaps with some defiance. Gemma for example highlighted that *"It doesn't scare me because that's not the sort of person I am"* (p. 2, l. 64), whereas David explained that *"on a personal level um it*

doesn't give me that kind of down emotions or anything like that" (p. 6, l. 252-253) when discussing levels of popular ignorance around Jews and Israel in the United Kingdom.

3.6.2. Subtheme 2: Coping styles and Sources of support

The theme Coping styles and Sources of Support covers narratives around how British Jews coped psychologically in the current climate, as well as what provided support. Participants described various coping mechanisms, including cognitive strategies such as internal rationalisation and reappraisal (in response to experiences of antisemitism or social tension) as well as meaning-making efforts to manage distress. Gemma for instance explained how she tried to remain rational, yet struggled: *"I would say, I mean, you take it then personally and you take, it's also it's an attack on me. And my people. It pushes me also into places maybe that I don't, you know, I don't want to be… I want to be rational, not necessarily defensive"* (p. 2 l. 59-61). Others, like Elise, were able to step back and take a different perspective on British public opinion, one which may have kept the threat of antisemitism at a distance:

> *"I actually… I actually think that the greater majority of the British people are not anti-Semitic. I think the problem is that social media… Shows us these… Horrendous things […] I don't think the British public generally are anti-Semitic, and I think that they… They understand what's going on here, but actually, they don't care. Because it's not affecting them […] I don't think they hate the Jews"* (Elise, p. 10, l. 446-453).

Robert described a similar process: "*because I've got an affiliation or 'skin in the game', or whatever you want to call it, but for your average person, it's just like… 'Can you stop talking about this war, please?' Like, you know… I'm worried about the NHS and my bins being collected. So, that's the way I rationalize it, at least anyway"* (p. 11, l. 468-472). He then went on to say that this helped curb feelings of anger in that *"if I didn't rationalize it that way, I'd just get quite angry. So, what's the point?"* (p. 11, l. 472-473).

Across the transcripts there were discussions of withdrawal from media exposure, social spaces, certain conversations, as well as emotional detachment strategies for improving emotional states. Benji talked of avoiding the news and social media:

> *"So, and I just kind of hit a breaking point and I just decided I need to turn off all my news alerts. Stop reading the news because you're just going to become so depressed with this state of affairs and everything like that and hearing people's*

> *opinions and stuff like that and still even like social media, I try to avoid getting involved. I really do. I hate it, to answer your question. It's impacted my dread"* (p. 13, l. 591-595).

This withdrawal, and the need to protect herself emotionally, were also echoed by Elise: *"And in the end, I just thought, you know what, I can't… I can't look at this anymore. Because I feel my blood pressure rising"* (p. 5, l. 227-228); she then added: *"if it comes on about Israel, I need to turn it over. I need to listen to something else. If I need to hear it, I'll hear it"* (p. 5, l. 228-230). Robert used the term 'compartmentalisation', a reaction both deliberate and subconscious:

> *"I haven't been thinking about it, and I don't think it's, like, subconscious thing where I'm just compartmentalizing it. I think at one point in time, it was a deliberate strategy to, like, okay, I'm just pulling back from this, because it's just… Bit, um, all-encompassing and a bit, sort of, stressful. And I just sort of tell myself that… I think it will slowly recede"* (p. 11, l. 495-499).

While for some participants withdrawal manifested behaviourally, be that through the avoidance of news, turning off notifications on their phone or switching over channels, Yvonne identified a degree of emotional withdrawal over time, rather than allowing herself to become angry when faced with those who are not "*standing up for my tribe"* (p. 9, l. 376). She described how *"I guess I've developed over the years the ability to just detach myself and see everyone as equal. And therefore, when I see a comment like that, I don't necessarily get riled up or angry"* (p. 9, l. 376-378).

Despite almost all participants bringing up the impact of recent events on their wellbeing in terms of increased fear and vigilance, only one person discussed making use of therapeutic spaces. Stevie described the value of therapy as a safe space at this difficult time, whilst noting that currently she would struggle to work with a therapist who was not Jewish: *"it's come into therapy a lot, and I've always had a Jewish therapist, so I've always felt safe in that space […] If I didn't have a Jewish therapist, I think I would struggle to bring it in more"* (p. 12, l. 529-532).

Participants' accounts thus suggest that British Jews are struggling significantly to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom, with mentions of fear, aspects of non-clinical paranoia, anger and vigilance. Some described levels of distress nearing breaking point

since October 7th, and many talked about using withdrawal and avoidance as coping strategies, although only one had turned to therapy.

3.7. Summary of Results

Overall, results appear to suggest that British Jews, exposed to increasing antisemitism (online, as well as in real life) are feeling increasingly vigilant, experiencing greater avoidance and concealment, as well as decreasing levels of belonging in British Society. Much of this appears attributable to socio-political changes around October 7th, Zionism and Israels military action in Gaza, with intergenerational trauma around the holocaust and shared identity of fears of a repeat of this, seemingly compounding recent struggles for British Jews in the current climate.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This chapter aims to draw together the findings presented in chapter 3 and to revisit the research question: “What is it like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today?”. It begins with a summary of the findings, replacing them in the context of extant research and considering where new material has emerged from this study. The clinical implications of this research are subsequently considered, alongside the strengths and limitations of the project, and suggestions offered for future research.

4.1. Summary of Findings

4.1.1. Antisemitism and The Changing Sense of Safety in Britain

Consistent with findings from Boyd (2025), all the participants thought that antisemitism had worsened in the United Kingdom in recent years. They reported having been exposed to antisemitism in various aspects of their life, including but not limited to social encounters at work, in public spaces, and online such as on social media. More than this, many described feeling unwelcome in the United Kingdom, appearing to corroborate claims from the Campaign Against Antisemitism that as of December 2025, 45% of British Jews did not feel welcome in the UK.

Participants frequently pointed to social media as a source of distress, a place where they encountered blatant antisemitic hatred, citing attempts to report antisemitic comments resulting in closed cases with no action taken on the part of app regulators. This was coupled with perceptions of antisemitism in state institutions such as the BBC, the NHS and the police force; many participants reported an overall decrease in trust in British institutions, perhaps providing some qualitative evidence of Boyd (2025)’s findings. In assessing the influence of this on British Jewish wellbeing, one may consider the concept of ‘societal resilience’ (Eshel et al., 2024). Defined as *“trust in the social sustainability, strength, and integrity of national (e.g., government and parliament), faith in social solidarity, and patriotism”* (Eshel et al., 2024, p. 3), societal resilience is negatively correlated with distress levels and a sense of danger (Kimhi & Eshel, 2019). It is possible then, that British Jewish lack of trust in British institutions may be influencing capacity for navigation of rising antisemitism.

Many participants struggled as they tried to get antisemitism recognised, pointing to the blurring of antisemitism and anti-Zionism also documented in the literature (D. Feldman et al., 2025; Haury, 2025; Jaspal, 2023). Evident from participant accounts was a sense that the word 'Zionist' was being used as a placeholder for 'Jew', with perceptions that this provided both a route for antisemitism and an easy way to subvert accusations thereof.

As discussed in chapter 1, many papers have been written regarding the nebulousness of the definition of antisemitism and the blurring of the boundary between anti-Zionism and antisemitism (D. Feldman et al., 2025; Haury, 2025; Volodarsky et al., 2025). However, the accounts provided powerful illustrations of how this may play out for individual British Jews. This is particularly important in the context of suggestions from Volodarsky et al. (2025) that a 'bottom-up' approach to antisemitism is needed, one that is built on empirical data from those personally affected by antisemitism (i.e., Jews themselves).

Multiple examples were also given of antisemitic comments emanating from younger people, more specifically those on the political left, with anti-Zionism a strongly held belief amongst this age group. These experiences align with an abundance of literature addressing the concept of left-wing or left-coded antisemitism (D. Feldman et al., 2025; Ginsberg, 2024; Grayson & Rubin 2025; Haury, 2025; Jaspal, 2023; Mendes, 2026; Morstead & DeLongis, 2025; Sutcliffe, 2025). Participants reported antisemitism in the form of Israel-related chants and slogans (e.g., 'from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free'), as well accusations of Israel as being 'genocidal' or an 'apartheid state'. Whilst some participants felt that behaviour of this kind was not always intended to be antisemitic, many pointed to a degree of 'hatred' towards Israel and said that the increase in popularity of anti-Zionism only compounded feelings of insecurity and alienation. Findings from this study therefore might suggest that the increased popularity of anti-Zionism could be having an influence on British Jews' ability to navigate rising antisemitism today.

Alongside 'coded' forms of antisemitism, particularly those intertwined with anti-Zionism, participants also pointed to increased experience of overt antisemitism in the shape of conspiratorial beliefs concerning Jews, as well as stereotypical comments or dehumanising imagery, be that in person or online. These experiences, which according to Hoy-Ellis (2023) may generate more acute interpersonal minority stress, were perceived to be more common since October 7th, many feeling that whilst antisemitism has been on the rise for the last decade, the terrorist attacks on Israel have marked a turning point. This is borne out by quantitative data on the resurgence of antisemitism, which shows that the highest rate of antisemitic hate crimes on record according to the Community Security Trust (2025) has

been recorded in the last two to three years. Perhaps then, increased exposure to overt antisemitism online, and in real life post October 7th is compounding British Jewish difficulty coping with rising antisemitism.

Captured within this theme was a degree of social fallout associated with the rising experience of antisemitism in the United Kingdom in recent years, many feeling isolated from society as Jews. These findings sit alongside those from Shani et al. (2025), who found that increased fear of antisemitism in their sample of German Jews resulted in reduced participation in community life and elevated avoidance of public spaces.

Participants in this study discussed both positives and negatives associated with a desire to retreat to Jewish Communities or friends (as opposed to non-Jewish friends), some pointing to the 'strength' of the current Jewish community in the face of adversity, others evoking the sadness of isolation. In the context of the minority stress model, Hoy-Ellis (2023) points to the protective function of relationships with other minority group members, who act as a source of social support. This may help to explain the general inclination shown by the participants to gravitate towards Jewish circles of friends, with this perhaps providing buffering effects in the face of minority stress (Meyer, 2003). These findings also accord with those from Avidor and Gutman (2026), who described the mitigation of antisemitism-based distress as a result of 'community-based resilience' among Jewish older adults. Perhaps then, qualitative findings from this study may show that gravitation towards Jewish circles may have a reparative influence on British Jewish navigation of rising antisemitism.

Lastly, there was a general sense that one may feel safer in Israel as a Jew, many British Jewish participants bringing up the possibility of '*Making Aliyah*' (moving to Israel), even though Israel is currently at war. This too fits with findings from Avidor and Gutman (2026), which suggest that engagement in Israel-related support mitigated feelings of social exclusion and boosted belonging, as well as resilience, in spite of increased feelings of fear. Whilst this was not shared by all participants, evidence from this study might indicate some British Jews are coping with rising antisemitism by entertaining the possibility of leaving the United Kingdom.

4.1.2. Being Visible (or Not): Managing Jewish Identity in Public

Participants reported a desire to conceal their Jewish identity, something which seemed to represent a shift from 15 years ago, when openness may have come with an element of pride. Neuberger (2010) for example wrote of what it was like to be Jewish in the UK back

then, noting that "*it is suddenly hip to be Jewish"*, with Jews *"stepping out of the Kosher closet"*, walking around *"with their heads held high- and it's HUGELY exciting. So, there's NO conflict between being British, and Jewish in these endeavours."* (p.101). The experiences of British Jews sampled in this study stood in stark contrast, as they revealed fears that disclosing their Jewish Identity may not only be received negatively, but that it may even deprive them from job opportunities or social participation. These results thus appeared to add experiential evidence to survey data collected in the last year, that suggests that nearly half of Jews in the UK are attempting to conceal their Jewish faith for fear of antisemitism (Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

The findings in this study also point to British Jews, particularly those more open about their Judaism by way of religious observance (e.g., Orthodox Jews wearing the kippot), feeling increasingly worried about what those around them may think or how they may act. This echoes findings from Shani et al. (2025) and Beyer et al. (2025), showing that increased fear of antisemitism results in increased Jewish identity concealment and vigilance.

In this respect as well, a tentative link might be drawn with the minority stress model, since Hoy-Ellis (2023) outlines how expectations of discrimination, victimisation and rejection can result in a level of 'hypervigilance', with minority group members scanning environments for potential threats. Important to note however is that there is not sufficient data to distinguish these participant's 'vigilance' from 'hypervigilance', nonetheless, this may still be a useful lens through which to view this difficulty for British Jews currently. Moreover, in line with findings from Wallengren and Mellgren (2015) and Enstad (2023), some of the British Jews interviewed here in fact, reported increased feelings of pride in the face of adversity, lending support to the idea that the in-group identification associated with greater visibility may also mitigate worry or fear experiences. Perhaps these feelings of pride in the face of adversity may provide buffering effects for British Jews navigating rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today.

Still, when considering the potential risks to British Jewish wellbeing of navigating the current rise of antisemitism, it seems essential to consider the findings from Sawyer et al. (2012). According to the authors, identity concealment may lead to the emergence and maintenance of "*perseverative cognitions"* that exacerbate the aversive impacts of racism-related stress on mental and physical health. With participants in this study regularly discussing both identity concealment and the anticipation of negative social judgement driving this behaviour, further understanding of psychological processes underlying this, and its influence should be of interest in future research.

This study also points to the risks of engaging in self-censorship and concealing views on Zionism and Israel for fear of being met with social risk or judgment, which participants also reported. Here one may return to the idea of Zionism as a concealed stigmatised identity, with this study tentatively putting forward the idea that stigmatisation of Zionism may also exacerbate British Jewish difficulties when navigating rising antisemitism.

4.1.3. Negotiation of Israel, Zionism and British Jewish Identity

Demonstrated in this theme was the diversity of experiences associated with the role of Israel and Zionism in the identity of British Jewry. In line with existing research, many British Jews pointed to the centrality of Israel in their identity, as a place of refuge or a 'safe haven' (Avidor & Gutman, 2026; Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025; Hibel et al., 2025; Regev, 2025), particularly in the context of antisemitism. Again however, it is important to mention that this does not constitute any 'one truth' about British Jews as a whole, and relationships to Israel in the Jewish community are indeed diverse (Boyd, 2025). Nevertheless, those participants for which this was true frequently cited Jewish historical oppression and the October 7th attacks as reasons why they held Zionism as a belief, potentially providing qualitative evidence for claims by Regev (2025) that for many Jews, connection to Israel is more than symbolic, with threats to Israel perceived as existential threats to Jewish safety globally.

This may help explain why increased antisemitism and social threat in the United Kingdom seem to have compounded the importance of Israel as a place of safety for the British Jews sampled in this study. It also aligns with evidence from Boyd (2025), indicating that the number of British Jews now regarding 'Support for Israel' as "very important" to their Jewish identity has increased from 38% to 45% since 2022, alongside increases in 'emotional attachment'.

As already mentioned however, British Jews should not be viewed as a 'monolithic' group (D. Feldman et al., 2025), but rather as a diverse population in which connection to Israel varies (Volodarsky et al., 2025), as was evident in this study. Those who were farther along the continuum of religious observance (e.g., Orthodox Jews) were more likely to consider Israel as a 'second home', in comparison for those who were perhaps more secular. This appears to fit with literature suggesting a correlation between religious observance among British Jews and their commitment and connection to Israel (Greene & Shain, 2016; Miller et al., 2015). It is worth noting however that these studies are now ten years old, and that updated research in this area may be warranted.

Acknowledging this diversity of views seems particularly important for those participants who felt that their Jewishness was being conflated with unwavering support for Israel and its government, a phenomenon well documented in the literature (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025; Volodarsky et al., 2025). In fact, evident in this theme was the importance of political identity, and the complex process whereby British Jews tried to navigate the contentiousness of Israel and Zionism alongside the British (as opposed to more Jewish) aspects of their political allegiances, relationships and social connections.

Whilst some research, such as that of Volodarsky et al. (2025), has outlined how political identity influences what diasporic Jews consider to be antisemitism (or not), this study unpicked how British Jews' political identity could in turn be challenged by their experience of antisemitism. Several participants referred to 'political homelessness', a term which often reflected the views of liberal Jews experiencing antisemitism from the political left (be that through anti-Zionism or not), and as a consequence no longer knew which side of the political spectrum, they could turn to for support. Bornschier et al. (2021) looked at internal political conflict with respect to voting and the implications of this on how one thinks about who they are from the perspective of identity. The phenomenon of political homelessness therefore here, which could well be quite specific to liberal British Jews, may be worth investigating further in terms of its psychological impact on this group. Political parties represent power structures in which minority stressors (such as antisemitism) can become embedded, emanating from social dynamics, institutions and structures that exceed individual agency to change and adapt, typically affecting the entire socially stigmatized, minority group (Meyer, 2003). This study puts forward the idea that political homelessness for liberal British Jews, as sampled in this study, and navigation of Zionism may have an influence on British Jewish wellbeing and coping in a United Kingdom with increased antisemitism.

Moreover, if navigating support for Zionism proved challenging for the participants, so did holding opinions critical of Israel, particularly in Jewish circles. In line with findings from Avidor and Gutman (2026), several participants discussed the difficulty of appearing to question their loyalty or connection to Israel with Jewish friends and family, oftentimes after growing up with narratives framing Israel as 'perfect', and they described discomfort with the somewhat rigid pro-Israel opinions of some of their acquaintances. Whilst demonstrating once again the diversity of British Jewish Zionist identities, these accounts shine another light on the challenge of belonging for British Jews, with the risk of not appearing pro-Israeli enough in some Jewish circles, and not critical enough for anti-Zionist groups.

Psychologically, it is important to consider the difficulty of navigating Zionism as a 'concealable stigmatised identity' (Crocker et al., 1998) in a changing socio-political climate, with the increased popularity of anti-Zionism leading British Jews to feel perceived either as a 'good Jew' if positioning themselves as anti-Zionist, or a 'bad Jew' should they express support for Israel in any way, however complex and nuanced their actual opinions. This research therefore tentatively suggests increased experience of cultural stigma around Zionism for British Jews, and that increased cultural stigma around one's concealable identity may negatively influence British Jewish navigation of an increasingly antisemitic United Kingdom environment (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2015).

With participants pointing to social media and increased societal polarisation (Qureshi & Bhatt, 2024) as a strong driving force behind the popularity of anti-Zionism (Fleischman, 2025; Grayson & Rubin, 2025), several also reported a pressure to 'educate' themselves on the topic of conflict in the Middle East. This was often to defend Zionist beliefs, with some feeling obligated simply to have a view, as if anticipating stigma. With a wealth of literature outlining the decline in psychological wellbeing associated with increased anticipatory stigma (Le Forestier et al., 2024; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2015), this study adds to literature looking at the influence of increasing popularity of anti-Zionism on British Jews, especially (but not only) those holding Zionism as a belief.

4.1.4. Both Home, and Left Out: Pride and Unease in a Shifting Britain

In line with literature pointing to increased discrimination and acculturative struggle in recent years (Bekteshi & Bellamy, 2024; Rivera Baeza et al., 2022; Tikhonov et al., 2023), participants reported difficulty integrating their British and Jewish identities in the current sociopolitical climate. Many cited exposure to mass pro-Palestinian marches as contributing to a growing distance from their national, British identity, leading to a degree of reactive foregrounding of their Jewish identity, and the choice to associate more with Jewish circles. On the surface, this may be viewed as British Jews 'separating' (Berry, 2008), forging closer links with their ethnic counterparts and perhaps losing touch with their British national identities.

However, this view would be overly simplistic, many participants outlining the interconnectedness of these identities, forged over many years. Instead, this study appears to provide evidence for a more dynamic model of acculturation for British Jews (Andreouli,

2013). This would be one in which increased exposure to antisemitism would lead to a 'reframing' of one's British and Jewish identities in line with new experiences or 'representations' (Moscovici, 1984), resulting in internal conflicts often driven by shared historical intergenerational trauma. British Jews may therefore be at greater risk of acculturative stress as they struggle to effectively integrate different aspects of their identity in a United Kingdom with rising antisemitism (Bekteshi & Bellamy, 2024; Rivera Baeza et al., 2022; Tikhonov et al., 2023).

As participants struggled to make sense of their dual identities in the face of rising antisemitism, shared trauma appeared to be become more salient, in several cases driving a foregrounding of Jewish identity. This may fall in line with suggestions from Regev (2025), who argues that the resurgence of antisemitism may well be 'activating' intergenerational trauma, discriminatory experiences in the United Kingdom. These experiences, therefore, may represent 'trauma reminders' (Felsen & Frumer, 2024) and place aspects of Jewish identity such as survival and continuity ahead of aspects of British identity. In this case, it may be that increased intergenerational trauma salience in a climate of increased antisemitism is exacerbating British Jewish difficulty.

Findings from this study also point to the longstanding desire of British Jews to integrate into British society (Berry, 2007), now at odds with the feeling of being increasingly excluded (in various ways), while Jewish contribution in society is consistently overlooked. In fact, much of what drove feelings of exclusion for British Jews in this study revolved around the perceived misunderstanding or misrepresentation of Jewish social positioning. Without explicitly using this word, participants regularly pointed to the 'Whitewashing' of Jews (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024), increasingly presented as colonial or imperial, especially through their link with Zionism. Several participants further endorsed the suggestions put forward by Baddiel in his 2022 book *Jews don't count*, feeling that Jews were being excluded from left-wing spaces, lacking any support from progressives.

This last point could easily dovetail with the idea that Jews are being excluded from conversations regarding DEI (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025; Brosbe et al., 2026; Getzoff Testa et al., 2024). What is perhaps most interesting, is that whilst feeling excluded from left-wing progressive spaces for perhaps being 'too white', the liberal British Jews interviewed here did not feel 'white enough' for right-wing spaces. In the context of acculturative stress, participants appeared to be "caught between frames" (Andreouli, 2013), no longer fitting or belonging anywhere. Therefore, this study suggests that it is conceivable that capacity for

navigation of increased antisemitism for British Jews currently is hampered by a degree of a lack of belonging.

4.1.5. Holocaust Memory as a Lens for Safety, Belonging, and Striving

The findings suggested that the experience of collective trauma following October 7th (Hibel et al., 2025), as well as hostility and a lack of perceived public empathy have left British Jews increasingly worried about their safety and survival, fearful of a 'repeat Holocaust'. Participants gave evidence of a shared identity of intergenerational trauma from the Holocaust, weaved through stories passed down from parents and education on the history of Jews, an identity that appeared to have become foregrounded in the aftermath of October 7th. In turn, this seemed to have exacerbated fears to such a degree that several respondents were wondering whether to leave the United Kingdom: some considered making *Aliyah* and moving to Israel in line with survey data (Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025); others reported feeling conflicted, torn between their attachment to Britain as 'home' and their fear of the future; all may be at risk of some level of acculturative stress (Berry, 2007).

Several participants spoke of a degree of non-clinical 'paranoia', of no longer knowing whether friends or organisational structures could be trusted to protect them. This could be seen as further evidence of minority stress among British Jews who are increasingly living 'on alert' (Beyer et al., 2025), with fears around survival in the UK further exacerbated by the salient legacy of intergenerational trauma. This study then suggests that British Jewish navigation of antisemitism may be challenged by decreased faith on institutions to protect them, with intergenerational trauma perhaps also playing a compounding role.

4.1.6. Emotional Toll and Coping in a Hostile Climate

This theme covered the negative emotional responses reported by the participants, often in response to news, protests and everyday antisemitism, as well as their strategies for coping in the current sociopolitical climate. Many participants discussed heightened distress in response to October 7th, compounded by exposure to news and social media coverage of the conflict in the Middle East and of domestic protests against Israeli actions. These findings align with others showing how indirect exposure to violence or terror attacks (e.g., through television or social media) can result in collective trauma and emotional distress (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2023; Hibel et al., 2025; Vitman-Schorr et al., 2026). For British Jews in this study, some mentioned increased, anxiety and aspects of non-clinical paranoia,

mirroring those described by older Canadian Jews following October 7th in Hibel et al. (2025).

Participants also described a number of coping strategies to manage these experiences, including avoidance of some social spaces (including news and social media) and attempts to 'rationalise' perceived experiences of antisemitism, with just one participant discussing making use of therapeutic spaces. These findings echo the literature on the use of withdrawal as a coping strategy for discrimination and antisemitism (Brosbe et al., 2026; Morstead & DeLongis, 2025). Participants also spoke of 'rationalising' when engaging in internal dialogue, fighting feelings of fear and insecurity by using alternative beliefs, reasoning and logic, much like in therapeutic approaches such as CBT (Beck, 1963; Roscoe & Taylor, 2023; Sheffield et al., 2024). They explained how they would remind themselves of bigger problems facing the country, fighting feelings of insecurity by attempting to remember that what they are exposed to (either in real life or on social media) is not representative of the views of the country as a whole. Some participants also described a degree of emotional detachment or 'compartmentalisation' (Barton, 2026; Suiza, 2025), temporarily pushing thoughts and feelings away in the short term in order to cope in the current climate.

Only one participant reported discussing the ongoing situation and her own difficulties with a therapist, making it clear that she would have found it very difficult to open up to a non-Jewish therapist. This difficulty has been documented (albeit in very few papers, see A. J. Berman & Woolley, 2025), and may well benefit from further therapeutic dyad research for Jewish clients and non-Jewish therapists in the context of rising antisemitism, where institutional trust may be at risk.

4.1.7. Contribution, and Unresolved Questions

Overall, findings appear to support existing literature around rising perceptions of antisemitism, a decreased sense of safety and belonging, and increased management of Jewish visibility as well as greater orientation to Jewish communities and circles. In terms of original contribution, this study highlights complexity around the need for a 'disclosure calculus' currently experienced by liberal British Jews. This involved in the moment decision making around sharing of one's Jewish identity or (should they have them) Israel-related beliefs. Whilst literature some literature exists around liberal Jews losing identification with the political left (see Baddiel, 2022), this study looks more closely at the influence of this on British Jewish navigation of rising antisemitism in the UK today, as well as labelling it using words of participants – 'political homelessness'. Indeed, there are some unresolved

questions, including whether the findings would be shared by those less liberal Jews in other areas of the United Kingdom. Further, it was difficult at times to distinguish experience of antisemitic hostility from political criticism of Israel or its military action, this too as mentioned potentially complicated by my own insider positioning as a researcher. Finally, whilst the study indeed uncovered much about the experience of navigating antisemitism in the current climate of the UK, breadth of interviews, and the interview schedule may have diminished capacity for understanding deeper psychological processes as will be discussed in the following section (4.2.2).

4.2. Methodological Considerations

4.2.1. Strengths

I believe that my position as an insider researcher represented a significant strength in this study for a number of reasons. First, as already mentioned, it provided an element of linguistic sensibility which facilitated rapport building (Berger, 2015), enabling the collection of detailed accounts of participants' experiences. Important to note, is that interviews took place at a particularly emotionally challenging time, between January and October 2025 where antisemitism was at nearly record highs, second only to 2024 (Boyd, 2025). While the influence of my own identity as a British Jew had to be managed reflexively throughout, it also allowed me to tap into shared meanings during the analytical stage of the research. As pointed out by Braun and Clarke (2019), themes in RTA do not exist separately from the researcher – in fact they are indeed generated by the researcher through engagement with the data, the researcher bringing their values, skills and training into this process. Here, I strove to use my insider insight to sensitively bring to the fore complex and often painful aspects of my participants' experience.

Sampling was a strength in this study to some degree, with the current research sampling a range of ages and denominations of the British Jewish population, albeit within a smaller sized sample where the majority of the sample was non-orthodox. In placing no age limit, the current research captured experiences of the British Jewish population from across the lifespan including those who would have lived through the times of the holocaust, as well as those who may well be in their very early adulthood. The richness of data this provided was also bolstered by sampling of different denominations of Jews (albeit majority liberal) who may well have very different cultures, levels of Jewish religious observation and thus diverse experiences in the current UK climate.

A further methodological strength in this investigation is that the use of RTA allowed for the capture of nuanced, in-depth experiences where the majority of research on British Jewish experience post-October 7th to date has relied on survey data (see Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025). While survey data can provide a cross-sectional picture of likely views across a group, it does not allow for much nuance, something of particular importance given the diversity of the Jewish population in the United Kingdom and the dangers of viewing Jews as monolithic (Glauz-Todrank, 2014). By contrast, RTA allowed for both a more varied sample approach and an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, thus offering a sensitive, nuanced account of what it is like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the current UK sociopolitical climate.

4.2.2. Limitations

Within the limits of its small sample, typical of a qualitative research study, the present research aimed to gather accounts of British Jews of differing ages and denominations. Whilst the sample showed a fairly even spread of denominations of Judaism, 'Ultra-Orthodox' or Haredi communities were missing, perhaps limiting the relevance of the findings for this particular group. This is regrettable, particularly in the context of research suggesting that this group is hard to reach, with literature pointing to issues of access to therapeutic support in these communities (McEvoy, 2017; Perry et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the demographic questionnaire utilised in this investigation did not gather data on participants' ethnicity, including whether or not they were Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahi or other. Again, this is unfortunate, firstly because more could perhaps have been said in relation to the aforementioned literature concerning the assimilation of Ashkenazi Jews and the 'Whitewashing of Jews' (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024; Hibel et al., 2025). Secondly, because the voices of those Sephardic or Mizrahi Jews who experience racism as well as antisemitism should not have been overlooked.

More generally, intersectionality could perhaps have been foregrounded to a greater extent. For instance, this study did not distinguish sexual orientation even though Avidor and Gutman (2026) have flagged the specific difficulties encountered by LGBT+ Jews who often feel marginalised, not fitting neatly into either Jewish circles or left-leaning progressive circles. With research pointing to adverse mental health outcomes for those possessing intersectional identities (Collins-Anderson et al., 2022; Hempeler et al., 2024; Swann et al.,

2024), as well as limitations in their use of psychological services (Hempeler et al., 2024; Rhead et al., 2022), it would have been helpful to provide psychological practitioners with recommendations based on the in-depth experiences of those intersectional British Jews.

Whilst this study aimed to sample British Jews from across the country, all participants ended up being geographically located around London or the Southeast, so that British Jewish voices from other areas were missing in this investigation. It is unfortunate that Jews who may represent an even smaller minority in their respective areas and may as a result be at even greater risk of marginalisation (Alegría et al., 2022; Hoy-Ellis, 2023), were not included. Furthermore, there were no Jews from Manchester sampled in this study, even though the majority of British Jews are located either there or in London, and despite Manchester being at acute risk as shown by the recent terrorist attack at Heaton Park Synagogue.

Further, whilst the current research aimed for a diverse sample, acknowledgement of the degree of homogeneity of the sample, and the influence of this on findings as well as recommendations is key. Whilst the initial aim had been to sample British Jews of different denominations from across the country, the sample is majority non-orthodox and based in London and the South-East of England, with many participants discussing being politically liberal and left leaning. In practice, this may mean that the findings of this study reflect the experiences of these groups rather than those of British Jews as a whole. Future research may therefore benefit from including a larger, more diverse sample that includes more orthodox, less liberal, or more politically right-leaning participants.

Additionally, important to note is that the original research question “What is it like to be both British and Jewish in the United Kingdom today” prior to amendments was very broad. In tandem with a semi-structured interview format, this also meant that the interviews themselves covered many areas, perhaps leaving more flexibility for me as the researcher to bring my own self and thoughts into the interview in the moment, and further shaping knowledge production in this work.

Of note, is the descriptive nature of the analytic reporting in this study. Whilst this research indeed produced rich, detailed description of participant experiences of antisemitism in the United Kingdom today, perhaps the broader nature of both the original research question and of the interview questions placed limits on the interpretation of in-depth psychological processes. As a result, theoretical claims about psychological phenomena such as minority

stress, or intergenerational trauma can only be made tentatively. Indeed, alternative methodological strategies may allow for a more in-depth exploration of these processes. For instance, a more focused interview schedule that more deliberately taps into these phenomena could have produced richer accounts around these deeper psychological processes, while the use of narrative approaches could have provided more detail on individual processes for each participant. Such changes however, would have steered the research away from the identification of broader patterns of meaning across a data set, as was the intention in this study.

For instance, a more focused interview schedule that more deliberately taps into these phenomena could have produced richer accounts around these deeper psychological processes, as well as use of narrative approaches which could provide more detail on individual processes for each participant. The aforementioned changes, however, could steer the research away from identification of broader patterns of meaning across a data set, as was the intention in this study.

Previous reflexivity sections have focused on the influence of my insider positioning on how I felt carrying out the research and conducting the interviews. However, my positioning also affected the analysis and interpretation of participant accounts, particularly with respect to the theme *Zionism as False Dichotomy*. For example, there were moments where my personal sensitivity to antisemitism may have created potential blind spots, and made it difficult for me to differentiate participant accounts of support for Israel, Zionism or antisemitic hostility more finely.

Initially for instance, many accounts appeared to refer to feelings of hostility in response to anti-Zionism, so that there was a potential danger of developing of a theme that treats Jewishness and support for Israeli action as equivalent. However, reflexive journalling, as well as interpretation of accounts such as Yvonne's (who recognised "truth on all sides") or Max's (who talked of dis losing connection with Israel) permitted the development of themes that recognised this moral conflict. Whilst in this case reflexive practice and engagement with conflicting or divergent views within the data meant a degree of recognition of this blind spot, this process may have happened in other aspects of the study so that repetition of the research by a non-insider may well yield different and interesting interpretations.

It is also important to recognise that while a choice was offered, all but one interview took place online. Hanna and Mwale (2017) point out that whilst online interviews allow for a degree of assessment of body language, visual cues are limited, with 't Hart (2023) noting

the emotional connection developed via the physicality of bodily cues, which may go missing in online interviews. This said, De Villiers et al. (2022) suggest that online interviews can enable participants to feel more comfortable.

4.3. Clinical Implications

4.3.1. Counselling Psychology and Mental Health

Social Justice underpins Counselling Psychology practice (Tribe & Charura, 2023), with a commitment to advocate for minority groups suffering in the face of discrimination, and to strive to further understand these groups and develop psychological approaches and tools to support them. There is already considerable literature on the harmful impact of intergenerational trauma and antisemitism on diasporic Jewish mental health (Cox & Marlowe, 2025; Seeman, 2020; Shani et al., 2025; Skrodzka et al., 2022). The findings of the present study highlight how recent events, including October 7th, may have further influenced the wellbeing of British Jews navigating antisemitism.

The findings from this study specifically contribute to the field of Counselling Psychology in its stance of social justice, remaining curious and open as to how Jewish Identity and contextual events may impact wellbeing at a time when British Jews face record levels of antisemitism. Based on the findings presented above, a number of recommendations therefore have been put forward for Counselling Psychologists and other mental health professionals working to support British Jews in the United Kingdom.

Recommendations for Clinicians:

1. As discussed, British Jewish identity is complex and intersectional, so that detailed exploration of how this manifests for individual British Jewish clients (be that in relation to denomination, ethnicity, relationship to Israel or other characteristics) is vital. Mindfulness of the trap of viewing British Jews as 'monolithic' (D. Feldman et al., 2025) is key, as is exploring how British Jewish clients have navigated their identity *throughout* their life, and how this has shifted over time (particularly in the last 5-10 years).
2. It may be helpful to normalise minority stress and feelings around the current lack of safety for British Jews. Where this group currently faces Traumatic Invalidation (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025), naming this may be therapeutic. This might

include labelling vigilance or threat monitoring as a normal and understandable response in what is currently a hostile climate, as well as working collaboratively to identify when this becomes unhelpful.

3. Potential difficulties around Jewish visibility should be acknowledged, and British Jews should be supported in this. This could include encouraging clients to discuss and display signs of their 'Jewishness' in therapy. However, this should first include an open exploration of *how* this management of visibility manifests for individual clients, with sensitivity to each client's intersectional Jewish identity and what visibility means for them. Further, framing concealment as a strategic adaptation rather than an avoidance strategy may be experienced as validating.
4. Exploration of Judaism (or indeed Zionism) as a stigmatised identity resulting in self-censorship and tendencies to hide or remain silent may be important. It may be useful to gain clarity with clients of when this self-censorship manifests as an agentic choice or boundary, and when it is actually experienced as coerced, exploring this nuance carefully and sensitively, always remaining mindful of validating this behaviour as normal against a backdrop of rising antisemitism.
5. Formulations with this group may include aspects of the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) and associated therapeutic strategies (see Cardoso et al., 2023). This might include formulating British Jewish difficulty in terms of repeated exposure, expectations of rejection, pressures to conceal, and social or institutional constraints. Whilst remaining mindful of any assumptions, it may be useful to also consider intergenerational or collective trauma (Bowe et al., 2025) as a lens through which to view current struggle, and to keep in mind the possibility of acculturative stress, particularly in the context of British Jewish feelings around 'political homelessness' and exclusion (both socially and institutionally).
6. A careful, sensitive approach to Israel, Zionism and events in the Middle East (October 7th in particular) is essential. Mindfulness of assumptions about clients' connection to Israel or Zionism may be needed, and therapists should be led fully by clients in terms of their individual relationship with Israel and views in this area. As this represents an emotionally charged topic, awareness of language is of great importance. Therapists may benefit from remaining attentive to meanings of the use of phrases such as 'both sides' that, whilst for many can be experienced as contextualising complexity, for others may feel invalidating or minimising. If a mistake is made, and therapeutic rupture ensues, it should be sensitively named and apologies made.

7. Addressing the use of social media may be important. This might include assessing triggers (e.g., news alerts, social media comments sections, or other online content) and collaboratively exploring the impact of each on the client's mood. Therapist and client may jointly devise strategies to limit social media triggers that may compound feelings of overwhelm (e.g., avoiding 'doom scrolling' before bedtime, visiting certain pages less frequently, or using the 'not interested' button on apps to reduce the level of content pushed to one's feed).

4.3.2. Training, Education, and Advocacy: The Wider Social Climate

Literature in the field of mental health in the last two to three years has consistently pointed to Jews being excluded from DEI programmes (Brosbe et al., 2026), with research identifying overlooked experiences of antisemitism in this field (Rubin, 2018). Set out below are a number of recommendations that may improve education and perhaps contribute to policy reform at a time of high and rising antisemitism.

Further recommendations:

1. Findings may support considerations of teaching on Jewish diversity (including ethnicity, denomination and diasporic) in doctoral training programmes. These programmes may also include education on contemporary forms of antisemitism, including the overlap between antisemitism and anti-Zionism and how this overlap can be perceived by Jewish people. It may be helpful to consider the potential impacts of misrepresenting Jewish diversity and identity. This might include a focus on responding to the disclosure of Jewish identity, ruptures and repair in the therapeutic relationship, as well as how to handle politically charged content (e.g., conflict in the Middle East) and work with nuance. Jewishness may benefit from being presented as multidimensional, avoiding assumptions about Jewish Whiteness, privilege, or political stance, with complaints pathways treating antisemitism as seriously as any other form of identity-based discrimination.
2. The DEI and inclusion frameworks used in mental health services may benefit from review and reform to insure Jews are included as a minority. This may include the development of pathways for reporting antisemitism in the workplace, education on culturally competent supervision (with regards to working with Jewish clients), or adequate signposting to Jewish support in the community (e.g., Jewish Care or JAMI). It may be useful to add options for clients to request

Jewish-affirming therapists, or therapists comfortable working with Israel-related material.

3. It would be useful for Counselling Psychologists in universities, the NHS, charities as well as other workplaces to address Jewish-related hate incidents, particularly where there may be confusion with anti-Zionism, so that Jewish staff, students and other workers can be better supported. This may include the use of dedicated think tanks and opportunities for open discussion, as well as raising awareness of how Jewish struggle can manifest (e.g., fear, withdrawal, identity concealment, and vigilance), with the goal of supporting Jewish mental health, belonging, safety and care.
4. Similarly to programmes set up for the LGBTQ+ community, institutions, including mental health institutions could consider working alongside Jewish charities, synagogues and community hubs to facilitate access to mental health support where this has been challenging (Ghoorun & Henderson, 2025), and to improve understanding and care quality for Jewish people.

4.3.3. Dissemination of Findings

The key findings of this study will be submitted for publication in the peer-reviewed journal Qualitative Research in Psychology (see the publishable paper presented in Part C of this portfolio), with the hope that they can be of interest to psychologists and other mental health professionals working with British Jews.

Further, given the relevance of this topic to the field of Counselling Psychology and its grounding in social justice, it may be suitable to consider presentation at professional and academic conferences. These may include (but are not limited to) the Division of Counselling Psychology (DCoP) Annual Conference or the British Psychological Society Annual Conference. It may also be useful to share the results of this study through seminars or teaching sessions at City St Georges, University of London (where this research took place), with the hope that this would contribute to discussions around antisemitism on university campuses, where this has been a documented problem in recent years (Weale, 2026).

4.4. Suggestions for Further Research

There are a number of fruitful avenues for future research based on existing literature as well as on the limitations of the present study. Firstly, as mentioned above, the study did not collect data on the ethnicity or sexual orientation of the participants. This could prove especially valuable given widespread assumptions about Jewish privilege (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024), and the danger of marginalising intersectional Jewish identities. Research could focus specifically on underprivileged groups of Jews or on minority groups within the British Jewish population, such as Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews or LGBTQ+ Jews.

As yet, the concept of 'Political Homelessness' as it relates to British Jews in this study appears relatively novel, so that it may well be important to further understand its roots and implications. Where institutional trust is low among British Jews, it may be worth exploring what this means for this group's sense of belonging in the UK, particularly in the context of a reported rise in British Jewish desire to emigrate to Israel (Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

With this research and other literature (Brosbe et al., 2026; Getzoff Testa et al., 2024) pointing to the exclusion of Jews from DEI and inclusion programmes, a systematic review of DEI policies across multiple institutions (e.g., NHS and Universities) may provide further evidence and point to necessary reforms.

Finally, while this research focused on British Jews, antisemitism is rising globally (Anti-Defamation League, 2025), in both Western and non-Western countries (Ginsberg, 2024; Grayson & Rubin, 2025; Mendes, 2026). Research on the experience of the Jewish diaspora in other countries, including some where Jewish groups may be small, placing them at risk of further marginalisation and discrimination, seems urgently needed. Finally, future research should look to develop a methodology that can look at psychological processes operating for British Jews navigating rising antisemitism at depth, perhaps using an alternative interview schedule specifically targeting these phenomena.

4.5. Concluding Statements

This study aimed to explore what it is like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom at the present time. Key findings based on this sample of liberal British

Jews suggest that British Jews may be experiencing increased antisemitism both online and in real life, and with friends as well as in workplaces and other institutions. This seems to have diminished British Jewish trust in British institutions, compounding their felt lack of safety and belonging. Drawing on psychological literature, this study further suggested that British Jews may have experienced minority stress, acculturative stress, and the activation of intergenerational trauma as result of October 7th and its aftermath. Participants mentioned the blurring of the boundary between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, as having compounded problems already associated with rising antisemitism.

The misrepresentation of Judaism as a minority identity, and the perceived exclusion of Jews from conversations around minority status, proved difficult for participants. Many of the liberal Jews sample in this study experienced a degree of 'political homelessness', feeling unsupported by either end of the political spectrum. The British Jews in this study had become more inclined to hide their Jewishness, many feeling unable to share their Jewish identity with friends and colleagues, let alone discuss any support for Israel or Zionism. Historical oppression appeared to have further compounded British Jewish sensitivity to the rise of antisemitism, many scared of a potential repeat Holocaust. As a result, some participants reported increased fear, anxiety, and feelings (albeit non-clinical) paranoia, the United Kingdom increasingly experienced as a scary environment for British Jews.

The above conclusions represent a call to action for Counselling Psychologists to educate themselves on the experiences of this group. It is hoped that the recommendations set out in this thesis will contribute to a clearer picture for clinicians of how to work with the diverse, complex and nuanced experience of British Jews navigating rising antisemitism. As Counselling Psychologists, it is our duty to help minority communities struggling with discrimination and feeling increasingly marginalised. Another hope for this study is therefore that it will help pave the way for a review and reform of DEI policies across British institutions so that risks to Jewish wellbeing in the current socio-political climate can be addressed.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Demographics Questionnaire



Title of study: ***What it is like to be British and Jewish in the United Kingdom Today: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis***

Demographics

Please complete the questions below by either placing a tick in the box or writing your answer in the line provided if appropriate.

Age

Please select your age range:

18 - 24 [ ]

25 - 34 [ ]

35 - 44 [ ]

45 - 54 [ ]

55 - 64 [ ]

65 - 74 [ ]

75 – 84 [ ]

85 – 94 [ ]

95+ [ ]

Prefer not to say [ ]

Gender

How do you describe your gender?

Female [ ]

Male [ ]

Non-binary [ ]

Trans woman [ ]

Trans man [ ]

Prefer to self-describe: _____

Prefer not to say [ ]

Jewish Denomination

How would you describe your Jewish identity or affiliation?

(Select the option that best fits, or self-describe)

Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) [ ]

Orthodox [ ]

Masorti [ ]

Reform [ ]

Liberal [ ]

Secular / "Just Jewish" [ ]

Other (please specify): _____

Prefer not to say [ ]

Location in the United Kingdom

Which region of the UK do you currently live in?

London [ ]

South East England (excluding London) [ ]

South West England [ ]

Midlands [ ]

North of England [ ]

Scotland [ ]

Wales [ ]

Northern Ireland [ ]

Prefer not to say [ ]

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Appendix 2: Screening Call Schedule

Screening call schedule

Summary
Thanks for your interest in taking part in this study. Just to give you some background, this study is being carried out in order to help understand the experience of British Jews in the UK given rising antisemitism – particularly in the context of recent events in the middle east. This research will require you to take part in interviews of up to 60 – 90 minutes in length. Questions will ask about your connection to Israel (if any) how the current war in Israel and Gaza is influencing you at the moment, as well as what impact domestic events like regular mass protests against Israel may be having if at all.

Exclusion criteria

So just a couple of quick questions initially to double check…

Would you consider yourself Jewish?

Would you consider yourself British?

Impact on you

Some of these questions may bring up some difficult feelings around discrimination and antisemitism…
-How will that feel for you?

Some questions may ask you to think about Israel and the war between Israel and Gaza…
-How will this be for you?
-Are you quite closely linked to Israel/know anyone living there?

Mental health

Just for safety, I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your mental health if that's okay?

On a scale of 0 to 3, 0 being not at all, 1 being 'several days', 2 being 'more than half the days' and 3 being 'nearly every day', over the last 2 weeks how often have you:
-felt nervous, anxious or on edge*
-felt down, depressed or hopeless*
-Not been able to stop or control worrying*
-Little interest or pleasure in doing things*

One final question, on a scale of 0 to 3, 0 being not at all, 1 being 'several days', 2 being 'more than half the days' and 3 being 'nearly every day', over the last 2 weeks how often have you:
-Had thoughts that you might be better off dead or hurting yourself in some way*

*Questions adapted from the PHQ-9, PHQ-2 & GAD-2

Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., & Williams, J. B. (2001). The PHQ-9: validity of a brief depression severity measure. *Journal of general internal medicine*, *16*(9), 606-613.
Kroenke K, Spitzer RL, Williams JB. The Patient Health Questionnaire-2: Validity of a Two-Item Depression Screener. Medical Care. 2003;41:1284-92.
Kroenke K, Spitzer RL, Williams JB, Monahan PO, Löwe B. Anxiety disorders in primary care: prevalence, impairment, comorbidity, and detection. Ann Intern Med. 2007;146:317-25.

Following results of mental health screening

I noticed you've answered x to some of the above questions, this might indicate you could be experiencing significant emotional distress at the moment. How do you think this might affect you during the study?

(Probing questions, tell me more, what is that makes you say that)

Questions for me

Thank you for your time, do you have any questions for me?

*Questions adapted from the PHQ-9, PHQ-2 & GAD-2

Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., & Williams, J. B. (2001). The PHQ-9: validity of a brief depression severity measure. *Journal of general internal medicine*, *16*(9), 606-613.
Kroenke K, Spitzer RL, Williams JB. The Patient Health Questionnaire-2: Validity of a Two-Item Depression Screener. Medical Care. 2003;41:1284-92.
Kroenke K, Spitzer RL, Williams JB, Monahan PO, Löwe B. Anxiety disorders in primary care: prevalence, impairment, comorbidity, and detection. Ann Intern Med. 2007;146:317-25.

Appendix 3: Advert

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PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH...

What is it like to be British and Jewish today?

Do you consider yourself both **British** and **Jewish**?

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study looking to understand the climate of the United Kingdom for **British Jews** and **how it feels to live in this country right now**

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to take part in an interview which will be approximately *60-90* minutes in length

For more information about this study, or **to volunteer** for this study, please contact:

Ryan Braier-Lorimer - [redacted] ***Or***
Daphne Josselin - [redacted]

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

Research interview Schedule

1. How has it felt for you to live in the United Kingdom as **a** British Jew in recent years? Would you say there has been a change? How so?

Prompts: have domestic politics influenced how you feel as a British Jew? How? How has this influenced you emotionally? Has this influenced the British or Jewish parts of you?

2. Could you tell me about your experience of antisemitism in the United Kingdom?

Prompts: How has this changed over time? How has this affected you?

3. Could you tell me about the significance of Israel in your identity as a British Jew?

Prompts: What sort of connection do you feel? How does this fit with the British parts of your identity?

4. What impact, if any, have events in Israel and the Middle East had on you as a British Jew living in the United Kingdom?

Prompts: Recent events? How? Past events? Which and how? Have recent events impacted you differently from previous ones? How so? Have they changed anything in your day-to-day life or that of your loved ones (e.g., daily or weekly routine, social life…)?

5. How are the ongoing protests Israel influencing your experience of being a British Jew in the United Kingdom?

Prompts: What about stickers, banners, and signs? Do you come face-to-face with them regularly? What is that like for you?

6. How does news reporting in the UK on current events in Israel impact how you feel as a British Jew in the UK?

Prompts: How about conversations you hear? What about when you hear strangers, friends or colleagues discussing these events?

7. Is there anything you would like to add around your experience of being a British Jew living in the UK at the present time?

General prompts: What makes you say that? Tell me more? Why? How? In what sense?

Appendix 5: Ethical Approval

Dear Ryan

Reference: ETH2324-0540

Project title: What is it like to be both British and Jewish in the United Kingdom today? A Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Start date: 30 Sep 2024

End date: 30 Sep 2025

I am writing to you to confirm that the research proposal detailed above has been granted formal approval from the Psychology committee: medium risk. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Approval has been given for the submitted application only and the research must be conducted accordingly. You are now free to start recruitment.

The approval was given with the following conditions:

- Please consult with data protection re storage of data on your personal computer to ensure that this storage meets City data protection requirements. (it is unlikely that you will be able to store this without disk encryption, and City may advise to use OneDrive storage). Until data protection has approved this, you may only store data on City IT resources in line with City data protection policies.
- You do not have approval for storing the recordings for 10 years. Please delete the recordings as soon as possible after transcription, but no later than the project end date. Ensure that recordings and transcripts are stored securely per City data protection policies. If you require storing recordings for up to 10 years, please apply for an amendment detailing the reasons for this.

Please ensure that you are familiar with City's Framework for Good Practice in Research and any appropriate Departmental/School guidelines, as well as applicable external relevant policies.

Please note the following:

Project amendments/extension

You will need to submit an amendment or request an extension if you wish to make any of the following changes to your research project:

- Change or add a new category of participants;
- Change or add researchers involved in the project, including PI and supervisor;
- Change to the sponsorship/collaboration;
- Add a new or change a territory for international projects;

- Change the procedures undertaken by participants, including any change relating to the safety or physical or mental integrity of research participants, or to the risk/benefit assessment for the project or collecting additional types of data from research participants;
- Change the design and/or methodology of the study, including changing or adding a new research method and/or research instrument;
- Change project documentation such as protocol, participant information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, letters of invitation, information sheets for relatives or carers;
- Change to the insurance or indemnity arrangements for the project;
- Change the end date of the project.

Adverse events or untoward incidents

You will need to submit an Adverse Events or Untoward Incidents report in the event of any of the following:

a) Adverse events

b) Breaches of confidentiality

c) Safeguarding issues relating to children or vulnerable adults

d) Incidents that affect the personal safety of a participant or researcher

Issues a) and b) should be reported as soon as possible and no later than five days after the event. Issues c) and d) should be reported immediately. Where appropriate, the researcher should also report adverse events to other relevant institutions, such as the police or social services.

Should you have any further queries relating to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me. On behalf of the Psychology committee: medium risk, I do hope that the project meets with success.

Kind regards

Andreas Jarvstad

Psychology committee: medium risk

City, University of London

Appendix 6: Information Sheet

Title of study: ***What it is like to be British and Jewish in the United Kingdom Today: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis***
Ethics approval code:
Name of principal researcher Ryan Braier-Lorimer

We would like for you to take part in a research study. Before making your decision as to whether to take part, your understanding of why this research is being carried out and what it would involve is important. Please do take time to carefully look over this information, and should anything be unclear or you would like more information, please feel free to ask.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study seeks to understand what it is like to be both British and Jewish in the United Kingdom today in the context of rising antisemitism and recent significant upheaval in the middle east. This study takes place as part of a thesis for the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at City, University of London.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to participate in this study as you have told the researcher you are both British and Jewish, and are above the age of 18.

Do I have to take part?

You can choose whether or not to participate in part or all of the project, with participation in this study entirely voluntary. At any stage of the project, you are able to withdraw without any penalty or disadvantage of any kind. Should you decide to take part, you will be asked for your signature on a consent form. Following interviews, you will be able to ask for your interview data to be erased up to six weeks following the interview data, and it will not be involved in any analysis.

What will happen if I take part?

Should you decide to take part, you will be invited to one interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes. However, prior to this, you will be invited to take part in a phone call which will be an opportunity to discuss together how you will cope with the interview process. During this call, a collaborative decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate for you to take part, if you are currently experiencing significant emotional distress for example, a discussion is warranted about whether you will feel able to cope. Should you not take part for this sort of reason, you will be given detailed instructions on what help is currently available for you.

Following selection, on your preference, the research interview might take place in a private room at City University or, should that feel more comfortable, in your own home. The interview will be semi-structured, with a small number of open-ended questions, expected to

lead to other topics. You will be encouraged to take the lead in sharing your experiences. If you feel any questions are uncomfortable or intrusive, you can choose not to answer without penalty or disadvantage of any kind. The interview will be audio-recorded on an encrypted recording device, and later transferred to a password-protected laptop.

Following the interview, transcription of recordings will take place, with identifying or personal information replaced with pseudonyms, ensuring your identity remains anonymous. The transcripts will then be analysed using thematic analysis, which involves finding repeating patterns or 'themes' in the data.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Given that this research will be exploring your experience of being both British and Jewish in the United Kingdom today, and how this may be influencing your psychological wellbeing, discussions may bring up some emotionally challenging memories or experiences particularly given recent events in Israel and Gaza. Should this occur, the researcher will ask you if you would like to take a break. You can also choose not to answer all the questions, or decide to terminate the interview. If you feel you may benefit from some support following the interview, the researcher will provide you with the names of suitable organisations.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that your taking part will mean knowledge gathered from this study can be used by psychological practitioners and professionals to better understand British Jews in the hope of providing them with better psychological help.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Both your taking part and all disclosed information will be kept confidential. If, however, the researcher feels there is any risk of serious harm to either yourself or others, or where the researcher is legally obliged to do so, your information may be shared with relevant services on a need-to-know basis.

All recordings and transcriptions will be encrypted and kept on a password-protected laptop. Transcripts will be kept for a maximum of 10 years after data collection, in accordance with City, University of London's research guidelines.

Your contact details will not be shared with any third parties, and your personal contact information will only be used in the future if you express an interest in being informed of the results of the study following completion.

Data privacy statement

The sponsor and data controller of this study is City, University of London, based in the United Kingdom. Therefore, we are responsible for taking care of your information, ensuring its proper use. The legal basis under which your data will be processed is City's public task.

Your information will be managed in a specific manner in order for the research to be reliable and accurate, meaning your right to access, move or change your information is limited. A minimum level of personally identifiable information as possible will be utilised to assist in safeguarding your rights (visit https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide- to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/public-task/. for further information).

Your name and contact details will only be used by City to contact you about this study as necessary. Your contact details will also be kept for the purpose of sending you the results of the study should you wish to see them. Ryan Braier-Lorimer is the person at City who will have access to your identifiable information.

To find out more about how City handles data, please visit https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/legal. Should you find yourself concerned about how your personal data has been processed, you may contact the Information Commissioner's Office (IOC) https://ico.org.uk/.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

As part of a thesis for the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology, findings of this investigation will be written up. Findings may also be included in various academic publications in the future. To ensure and maintain anonymity, all details (including direct quotes from interviews) will be listed using a pseudonym. In the final thesis or any other publications, there will be no way for readers to identify you, as there will be no identifiable or personal information. Should you wish to be sent the results of the study, please consent to your contact details being kept for this purpose on the 'participant consent form' and inform the researcher.

What if there is a problem?

The principal researcher of this study is Ryan Braier-Lorimer ([redacted])
His research supervisor is Daphne Josselin ([redacted]).

Should any problems, concerns or questions arise for you about this study, please ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you are still unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, this can be completed through City's complaints procedure. To make a complaint about this study, call 020 7040 3040 and ask to speak to the Secretary at Senate Research Ethics

Committee informing them of the name of this project: The name is *What it is like to be British and Jewish in the United Kingdom Today: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis.*

You can also write to the Secretary at:

Ms Annah Whyton

Research Governance and Compliance Manager City, University of London, Northampton Square London, EC1V 0HB
Email: [redacted]

Further information and contact details

Researcher: Ryan Braier-Lorimer [redacted] Research Supervisor: Daphne Josselin [redacted]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 7: Consent Form

Title of study: ***What it is like to be British and Jewish in the United Kingdom Today: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis***

Ethics approval code: [approval code]

Name of principal researcher: Ryan Braier-Lorimer

Please initial box

1.	I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above named study. I have had the opportunity to consider this information and to ask questions about what is involved. I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep for my records.	
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate or to withdraw at any stage without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.	
3.	I agree to the interview being audio recorded. I understand that any information I provide is confidential and that no identifiable personal information will be published or shared with third parties. I understand that the original recordings will accessible only the researcher, will be stored securely and destroyed following the completion of the research project.	
4.	I understand information I provide will be used as part of the researcher's doctoral thesis in counselling psychology and a pseudonym will be used when referring to this information, including direct quotations, as a way of maintaining anonymity.	
5.	I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) explained in the participant information and my consent is conditional on the university complying with its duties and obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (1998).	
6.	I would like to be informed of the results of this study once it has been completed and understand that my contact details will be retained for this purpose.	
7.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix 8: Debrief Form

Title of study: ***What it is like to be British and Jewish in the United Kingdom Today: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis***

Ethics approval code: [approval code]

Name of principal researcher:

Thank you for taking part in this research study. Contribution in this study means you have provided important insights into what it is like for British Jews in the United Kingdom today. This investigation aims to further understand how being British and Jewish in the United Kingdom influences psychological wellbeing in the context of rising antisemitism and the war in the Middle East, with the hope of providing improved psychological therapy for British Jews.

Should anything we discussed today cause you distress, please reach out to your GP or to any of the following organisations:

If you have a deep connection to your Jewish faith, the following services may be useful:

- Jewish Care Mental Health services:
    - **Website**: https://jewishcare.org/our-services/social-care-and-other-support-services/mental-health-services
    - **Phone number**: 0208 922 2222

Jewish Care is the leading provider of care and community services for the Jewish community in London and the South-East. Jewish care celebrate Jewish culture and values throughout their work with Jewish values of care and respect for others running through all they do. As well as running care homes for the elderly this organisation also offer mental health support for Jewish people.

- JAMI – Mental health support for the Jewish community:
    - **Website**: https://selmind.org.uk/directory/jewish-association-for-the-mentally-ill-jami/#:~:text=Jami%20is%20the%20mental%20health,here%20to%20address%20those%20needs.
    - **Phone number**: 0208 458 2223

Jami aims to enrich lives impacted by mental health in the Jewish community.
They look to guide people through navigating mental health services, as well as providing expert advice and person-centred treatment for people from all ages.

If perhaps you are more secular, the service below may be helpful:

- Samaritans: Call 116 123 (24/7)

Samaritans is a registered charity aiming to provide emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope or at risk of suicide throughout the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

- NHS Talking Therapies Service
    - **Website**: https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/nhs-talking-therapies/
    - **Phone number**: see information below

You may wish to contact your local NHS Talking therapies (formerly known as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies, IAPT). These services offered evidence-based psychological therapy delivered at the appropriate dose and intensity and duration of delivery is designed for optimising outcomes. Simply type your area followed by 'NHS Talking Therapies'

(e.g. NHS Talking Therapies Southwark) into google to find out more. More information can be found below.

We hope you found the research interesting. Please contact us at the following if you have any further questions:

Researcher: Ryan Oliver Braier-Lorimer at [redacted]

Supervisor: Daphne Josselin at [redacted]

Appendix 9: Diary Following Pilot study

Carrying out the first interview today was a mixed experience. On the one hand, I was excited to get started with the interview process, having put a lot of work into design the interview schedule as well as all the work leading up to this point.

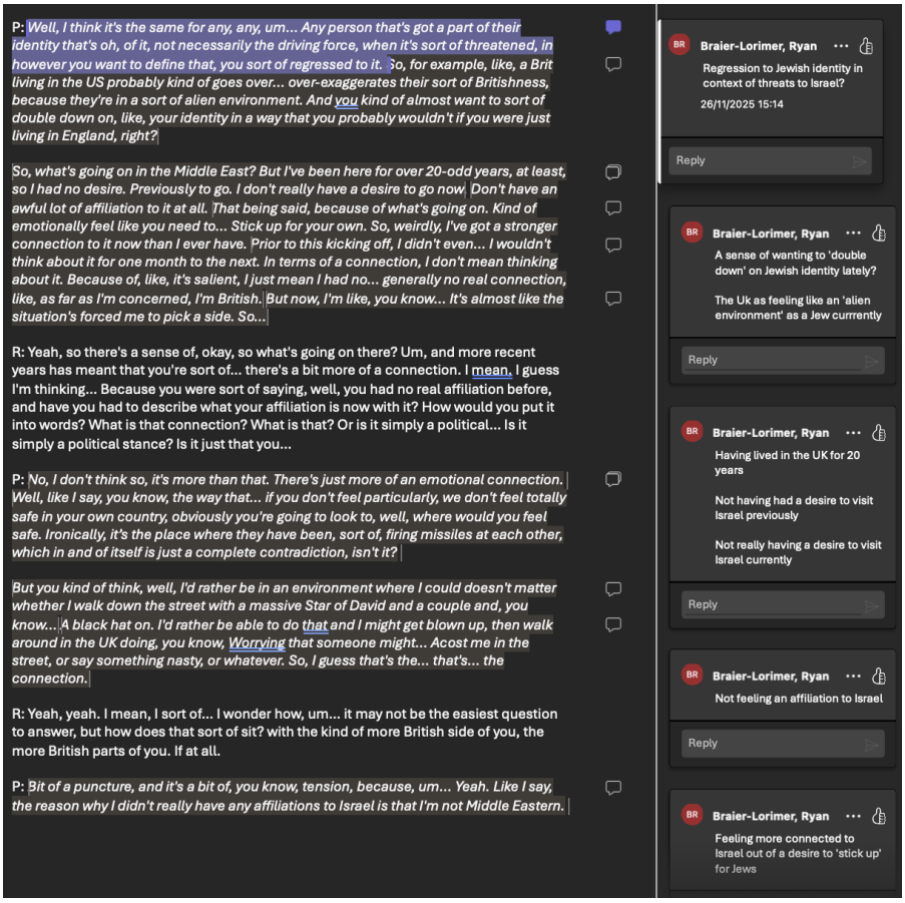
Having been a little stressed and busy throughout the day, I noticed that in preparation for the interview I was feeling a little flustered. It is possible that I was just a little bit nervous, this being the first interview and not knowing what was going to happen, but it was challenging to relax prior to starting.

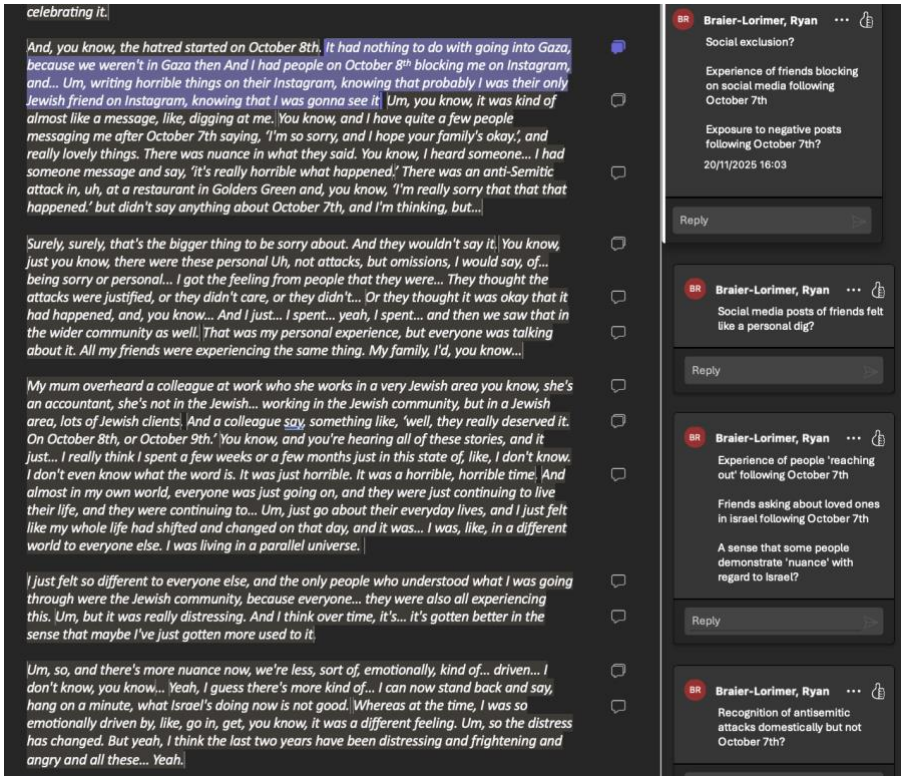
The Interview itself was both interesting as well as evocative. I noticed the participant talking about many things which reflected my own experience as a British Jew living in the United Kingdom. One particular moment in the interview when the participant became tearful talking about wanting to leave the United Kingdom, I found noticeably challenging. It reflected many fears of my family and friends that, I have in general been able to argue rationally in my head. However being faced with this participants visible fear and reaction evoked something within me and it took a lot to focus on the task at hand and bring myself back to centre.

One of my reasons for carrying out this research was having had my own experiences at university amongst progressive intellectuals with strong opinions both on the birth of Israel, its existence as well as the actions of the government. When this participant began talking about negotiating their own political positioning in response to friends and others I found myself thinking about my own experiences, and listening to the recording, there were moments where I asked questions further about this as opposed to other narratives.

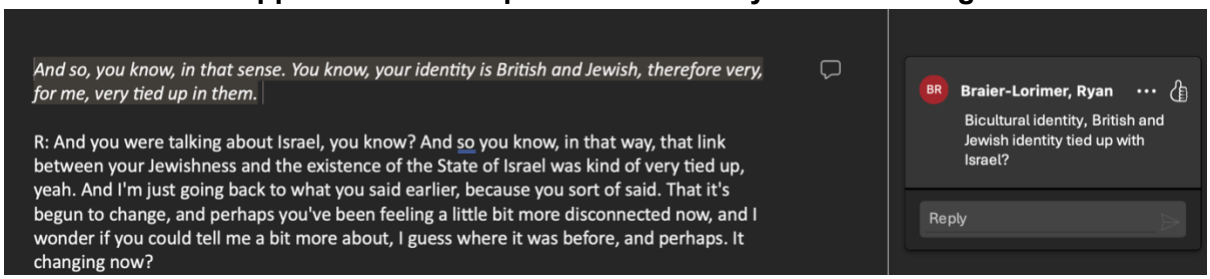
This initial experience has led me to a number of conclusions, including placing interviews away from clinic days if possible in order to manage my own emotional state. Further, paying close attention to my follow-up questions and the way this guides the interview will be vital going forward in order to understand how my own perspective is influencing discussions and knowledge that is being produced.

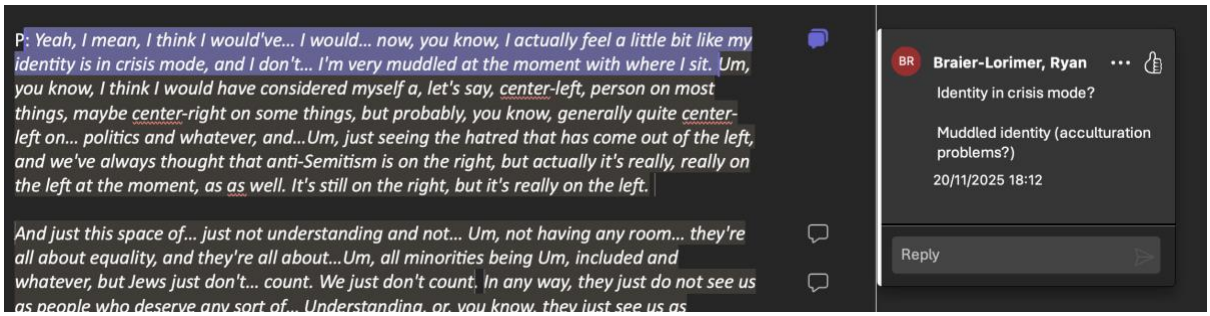
Appendix 10: Example Coding Using Word

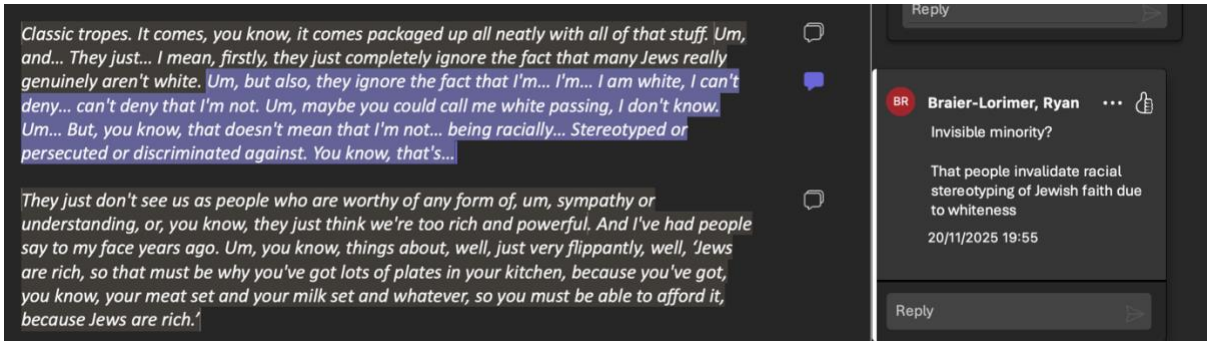




Appendix 11: Example of More Theory Driven Coding







Appendix 12: Extract of Excel Spreadsheet

Misunderstanding, Historical Context & Need to Educate	Acceptance that there is legitimacy in beliefs Israel should not exist (T1) -> Increased popularity of Anti-Zionism	So, like it's like I think people misconstrue the history and like I think it's you're perfectly legitimate to say Israel shouldn't ex
Historic persecution as a backdrop for current climate	A belief that Israel would always have existed due to European persecution (T1) -> Consideration of necessity of Israel in context of historical persecution	Um for me, I think it's the case I think it would have always happened because I know historically that people were Jews wer
Historical Framing, Colonial Narratives & Misrepresentation	Annoyance over Israel being seen as colonial (T1)	But um yeah, it kind of just a annoys me when it kind of gets grouped as a colonial sort of state
Historical Framing, Colonial Narratives & Misrepresentation	Feeling of misappropriation due to juxtaposition of Jews as powerful despite historic oppression (T1)	And um yeah, I think maybe because like historically we've been such oppressed people to see us as like the sort of the pov
Antisemitism on the Political Left & UK Sociopolitical Context	Marches as well-principled but attracting anti-semitic people (T1)	Yeah, I mean, I think um something I just think uh there are those those marches, although they were good in their principle
Antisemitism on the Political Left & UK Sociopolitical Context	Reference to antisemitism on the political left (T1)	Because I think there's a problem in the sort of far left in this country with anti-Semitism.
Antisemitism on the Political Left & UK Sociopolitical Context	Media coverage of Marches as exacerbated by the press -> Exacerbation of Marches by British Presss	I don't know if it's as bad as sort of it was made out to be by the press and I think
Antisemitism on the Political Left & UK Sociopolitical Context	Experience of a problem of antisemitism in the Political left (T1) -> Subsumed by 53	um but um there is, I think there is a problem there with anti Semitism and um and I also am
Perceptions of Arab Communities & Intersection with Antisemitism	Experience of large population of Arabs in London (T1)	And I also am aware that London has a very big Arab population and I think there's a l generally feel
Perceptions of Arab Communities & Intersection with Antisemitism	Perception of antisemitism amongst Arab population (T1)	... I don't know if statistically be backed up, but that amongst Arab people there is a higher rate of and antisemitism maybe b
Perceptions of Arab Communities & Intersection with Antisemitism	Experience of comments from Arab people that are antisemitic (T1)	And I know from my experience I have heard comments from Arab people I know that are quite antisemitic.
Perceptions of Arab Communities & Intersection with Antisemitism	Aligning of Arabs and far left at marches (T1)	And I think that those marches were very much like it was a sort of mix of mostly Arab people and far left people.
Perceptions of Arab Communities & Intersection with Antisemitism	Sadness at experience of Arabs and far left as groups most likely to have antisemitism (T1)	And I think those two, those two groups are more likely than most to have antisemitism among them sadly...
Perceptions of Arab Communities & Intersection with Antisemitism	Being far left and having Arab friends but feeling there is antisemitism amongst that group (T1) -> Friendships with people from groups with antisemitic views	But even though I I consider myself to be pretty far left, I have many Arab friends and I I just think that that is generally that t
Perceptions of Arab Communities & Intersection with Antisemitism	Lack of certainty over evidence of antisemitism amongst Arab population and UK political far left but a perception (T1)	I don't know how that would be backed up by evidence, but I don't know. I reckon there probably would be pretty good evi
Shifts in Political Identity & Views on Israel	Recent events perhaps pushing political beliefs from left, further right towards the centre (T1) -> Political identity pushed away from the political left	Yeah, it's it's difficult. I think actually it's maybe pushed pushed me, I don't know, I think my my general core political belief
Shifts in Political Identity & Views on Israel	Disagreement with actions of Israel -> Disagreement with actions of Netanyahu and current Israeli government	I feel like there is um as much as I do disagree with what's going on with Israel and how much I despise Netanyayu and the g
Shifts in Political Identity & Views on Israel	Negative attitudes towards Benjamin Netanyahu (T1) subsumed above	
Shifts in Political Identity & Views on Israel	Perception of Israel spoken about more (T1) -> A sense of increased focus on negative actions of Israel compared with other nations	I, I, feel like it's always talked about Israel, but it's not talked about Saudi Arabia or Qatar or UAE or these other countries in t
Shifts in Political Identity & Views on Israel	Israel held to different standards in comparison in terms of 'horrible actions' to surrounding Arab countries (T1) -> Subsumed above	
Shifts in Political Identity & Views on Israel	Perception of the left 'punching up' as a reason for criticising Israel (T1) -> Experience of lack of support by political left as a minority group	I think it's um it is it is a thing with the with the left and to like the far left, which I think it comes from a good place they want t
Jewish Social Positioning, Power & Oppression Narratives	Jews seen as 'oppressed enough' by the political left? -> Subsumed above	which I think it comes from a good place they want to punch up, they they think well our people have been oppressed enou
Jewish Social Positioning, Power & Oppression Narratives	Jews as predominantly white and therefore not seen as an oppressed group (T1) -> Experience of lack of recognition of Jews as opressed minority group	But I don't know it's maybe because Jews are predominantly white I don't know they they don't see us in the same way as a s
Jewish Social Positioning, Power & Oppression Narratives	Jews as wealthy, and a group that requires punching up (politically). (T1) -> Experience of being seen as wealthy and powerful rather than minority group	And I think because of this association that we're wealthy as well, I think um Jews are seen as like punching up and um yeah
Jeremy Corbyn, Left Politics & Jewish Identity	Liking Jeremy Corbyn and wanting to vote for him, but discomfort with his comments about Jews (T1) -> Alignment with left-wing political figures	I think um being like, in the case of like Jeremy Corbyn, I voted for him. I very much believed in his politics....
Jeremy Corbyn, Left Politics & Jewish Identity	A sense that Jeremy Corbyn did not care about Jews (T1) -> Experience of a lack of care for Jews by left-wing political figures	but I was always a bit uncomfortable with how he talked about Jews and I never really felt like he cared a huge amount at the same time
Jeremy Corbyn, Left Politics & Misrepresentation of Jewish Social Positioning	Experience of Jeremy Corbyn not as racist, but rather not seeing Jews as oppressed (T1). Subsumed under 70	
Jeremy Corbyn, Left Politics & Misrepresentation of Jewish Social Positioning	Concentration of the left on those who are perceived as oppressed. (T1) - Removed, lack of experiential quality	
Jeremy Corbyn, Left Politics & Misrepresentation of Jewish Social Positioning	Left leaning parties as those advocating for rights of Jews during the Holocaust in the UK (T1) -> Consideration of historical left-wing support of Jews during persecution?	And so, if you looked at like when my granddad came to this country, it was it was the Communist party and the Socialist pa
Jeremy Corbyn, Left Politics & Misrepresentation of Jewish Social Positioning	Jews now not seen as a 'clearly oppressed' group (T1) - Subsumed by 70	
Jeremy Corbyn, Left Politics & Misrepresentation of Jewish Social Positioning	Acknowledgement of Jews in positions of power, but recognition of Jews as a minority (T1) -> Dichotomy of Jews as both sucessful but minority opressed group	so I think it's it's uh it's a difficult one because I don't know in many in many ways I think there are a lot of Jews in positions o
Historic persecution as a backdrop for current climate	Intergenerational trauma (T1) -> Intergenerational trauma and experience of Jewish paranoia due to holocaust persecution	And I think I think there's a paranoia amongst Jews. And I I think it's it's obviously well because we're three generations away
Historic persecution as a backdrop for current climate	'Paranoia amongst' Jews due too being 3 generations from attempted elimination (T1) - Subsumed above	
Historic persecution as a backdrop for current climate	Paranoia due to the holocaust that has increased over the years (T1) -> Increased feelings of paranoia over the years	So it's it's it's it's a paranoia that has definitely also increased over the years for me.
Intergenerational Trauma, Fear & Identity Concealment	Experience of parents not allowing children to wear Jewish Jewellery (T1) -> Parental attempts to conceal children's judaism out of protection	Like my mum used to be I used to have it. She wouldn't let me wear a star David when I was a kid.
Intergenerational Trauma, Fear & Identity Concealment	Perception as children of parents perhaps being too careful about hiding Judaism (T1)	And I thought it was ridiculous because growing up in London you don't get any trouble like that...
Intergenerational Trauma, Fear & Identity Concealment	More recent agreement with parental worries over public recognition of Jewish identity (T1)	But over the years I've come to kind of understand what she was on about an d um I kind of yeah I don't know if I'd want to
Visibility, Identity Management & Fear of Antisemitism	Thinking more about wearing a star of David (or not) (T1) -> Subsumed above	
Visibility, Identity Management & Fear of Antisemitism	Increased experience of antisemitism (T1) -> Increase in frequency of hearing antisemitic comments & stereotyping	I don't know. I think it's I've experienced more people sort of say anti-Semitic things, sort of like leaning into stereotype...
Visibility, Identity Management & Fear of Antisemitism	Increased experience of antisemitic stereotyping (T1) -> Subsumed above	
Israel as Stagnatised National Identity	Increased experience of aggressive anti-Israel (T1)	... And um and yeah, generally just, I don't know, aggressive aggressively anti-Israeli and um and I don't know
Blurring of Anti-Israel Critique & Antisemitism	Experience of being critical of Israel as a Jew	It's um I say now I I am I'm quite a sort of vocal critic of Israel,
Blurring of Anti-Israel Critique & Antisemitism	But a perception that others criticising Israel leans more towards hatred of Jews generally (T1)	There are times when I hear people talking about Israel and I to me it feels like it goes beyond a sort of a human rights thing.
Blurring of Anti-Israel Critique & Antisemitism	Jewish paranoia increasing sensitivity to antisemitism?	And I don't know, it's just there's sometimes I and I don't know, yeah, maybe that is that is the paranoia.
Blurring of Anti-Israel Critique & Antisemitism	(...but perception this may be paranoia) (T1) -> A feeling that people are using Anti-Israeli sentiments to target Jews	Maybe people are using I mean, I'm sure there are people that are using their anti-anti-Israeli sentiments to basically target J
Zionism, Conspiracy Theories & Linguistic Substitution	Experience of conspiracy theories around Zionists (T1) -> Hearing conspiracy theories around 'Zionists'	And it's just sometimes when I hear, particularly when, this is... Conspiracy theories around Zionists , that's why not...
Zionism, Conspiracy Theories & Linguistic Substitution	Perception that those criticising 'Zionists' want to say 'Jews' (T1)	There's so many times I've heard people say or read things online and they're saying, oh, the Zionists did this, the Zionists d
Zionism, Conspiracy Theories & Linguistic Substitution	Perception that those criticising 'Zionists' would say Jews if they could get away with it. (T1) -> Perception of criticism of 'Zionists' rather than Jews due to social acceptability	It's so like so often I hear that phrase and I'm like, 'you want to say Jew that's what you really want to say, but you know you
Zionism, Conspiracy Theories & Linguistic Substitution	Qualifying of opinions as perhaps due to paranoia (T1)	And so, and I, I maybe there is an element of that paranoia, but I think I think I'm I'm right in many instances on that
Zionism, Conspiracy Theories & Linguistic Substitution	As it is not 'acceptable' to criticise Jews, the word 'Zionist' is used to create conspiracy around Jews (T1) -	I think there are people that want to want to say Jew, but no, that's not acceptable anymore. So, they say Zionist because that's their way of pu
Zionism, Conspiracy Theories & Linguistic Substitution	Political figures encountering trouble for using the word Zionist to lean into antisemitic stereotypes (T1) ->Perception of the word 'Zionist' to perpetuate antisemitic stereotypes	but somebody like that did make some comment about Zionists and um and yeah, they gotten some trouble for it because they said they were

Part B: Client Study and Process Report

This section has been removed as per the City Research Online Guidelines

Part C: Publishable Article

What is it like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Abstract

Keywords: British Jews, British Jewry, Identity, Antisemitism, Israel, Mental Health

Following October 7th 2023, antisemitism in the United Kingdom has risen sharply within an increasingly polarised socio-political climate shaped by events in the Middle East. For British Jews, this has heightened uncertainty surrounding safety, belonging, and identity expression. There remains however, limited qualitative research exploring British Jewish lived experience in the current climate. This study therefore aimed to understand the experience of British Jews post-October 7th, exploring psychological frameworks including minority stress, intergenerational trauma, and acculturative stress which may be useful for practitioners working with this population.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve British Jewish participants of varying ages and denominations, with data analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Participants described antisemitism as increasingly "ambient", shaping everyday safety, social participation, and future-thinking. Many reported heightened management of Jewish visibility and self-censorship across public, professional, and relational contexts. Experiences of misrecognition, including conflation of Jewish identity with Israel and exclusion from multicultural and DEI narratives, contributed to feelings of political homelessness, distrust, and social isolation. Current events also activated historical and intergenerational narratives of persecution and survival, contributing to increased anxiety, vigilance, distress, and withdrawal.

Findings highlight the psychological impact of contemporary antisemitism on British Jews with recommendations for culturally competent therapeutic practice.

Word count: 9,944

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, antisemitism in the United Kingdom has been on the rise, hitting a first all-time-high in May 2021 during tensions in Israel and Gaza. On October 7th 2023, Hamas (who govern more than two million Palestinians in Gaza) co-ordinated a surprise attack killing over 1200 Israelis as well as taking over 200 hostages, with Israel declaring war in response. This eventually led to mass protests against Israel worldwide calling for an immediate ceasefire within the region, with the Hamas run health ministry reporting that over 70,000 Palestinians have been killed at the time of writing (Mahase, 2026).

Since then, there have been 3,700 instances of anti-Jewish hate across the UK in 2025, the second highest annual total ever recorded, second only to 4,298 instances recorded in 2023 following October 7th where there was a 1350% increase in antisemitic hate crime in London, according to the Metropolitan Police (Community Security Trust, 2025; Dodd, 2023).

These events have had a profound impact on Jewish mental health, Ghoorun and Henderson (2025) reporting that 74% of Jewish students have experienced difficulties with mental health over the last 12 months and that 3,000 Jews were supported by NHS talking therapies in one year alone in 2023. In the current sociopolitical climate, a majority of British Jews do not feel they have a long-term future in the UK, half do not feel welcome, and 61% have considered leaving Britain in the past two years, many citing rising antisemitism since 7th October 2023 as a primary reason (Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

Developing a better understanding of the lived experience of British Diasporic Jews, and of how to support them at this difficult time, therefore seemed essential.

The Jewish Diaspora

As of 2025, the global Jewish population is estimated to be around 15.8 million people, with the majority of Jews residing in Israel (7.1 million) and the USA (5.7 million) with around 0.4% (300,000) Jews living in The United Kingdom. Diasporic communities have been defined as communities of people who live outside their shared country of origin or ancestry but maintain passive or active connections with it (Nazeer, 2015). Indeed, Daniel Staetsky points to “the big picture of Jewish history” which he sees “a cyclical migratory movement”, with the land now known as the State of Israel as a “focal point” (Staetsky, 2025, p. 1). As a result, many research studies utilise the word ‘diaspora’ to describe those Jews living outside of the Land of Israel (Meijer et al., 2023), of which there are, according to recent

surveys, 8.25 million, accounting for 55% of the 15.3 million Jews worldwide (The Jewish Agency for Israel, 2022). In the United Kingdom, British Jews make up a very small minority, accounting for around 0.4% of the British population (Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2025).

The Diversity of Jews: Whitewashing

Defining Judaism has been challenging, with Hahn Tapper (2016) discussing that *"Jews identify as 'Jews' in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture, nation, race and more."* (Hahn Tapper, 2016, p.2). Whilst many have pointed to definition of Jews as an 'ethno-religion' (Krauz, 2025), Hahn Tapper (2016) argues no one definition alone is sufficient. Nevertheless, a number of ethnic subgroups exist amongst Jews. These include (but are not limited to) 'Ashkenazi Jews' (descendants from communities in central and eastern Europe) 'Sephardi Jews', many of whom descend from the Iberian Peninsula, as well as 'Mizrahi' Jews argued to originate from North Africa and the Middle East regions (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024) as well as Yemenite Jews descending from Yemen. Amongst these, there is also a spectrum of Jewish 'denominations' including but not limited to Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jews (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024).

In this respect in the United Kingdom, the majority of Jews fall into the category of 'Unaffiliated' (47%), or Strictly/Central Orthodox (35%), with remaining Jews either Progressive/Liberal or Masorti (Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2025). Amongst these Jews, some also hold intersectional identities including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender/sexuality, as well as disability status, with around 4.5% of the British Jewish population identifying as LGB+ (Jewish News, 2023).

Despite the above demonstrating both the minority status, as well as the diversity amongst the Jewish population in Britain alone, Jews in the diaspora (particularly the West) continue to face 'Whitewashing', with all Jews (wrongly) viewed as white (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024), with accusations of being wealthy, powerful and privileged. Much of this may well be due to Jews historically having arrived in various host countries as immigrants, (typically escaping persecution), with some pointing to historical tendency within Jewish communities to assimilate to larger society as a protective strategy against antisemitism (Hahn Tapper et al., 2023). In practice, this avoidance of revealing one's Jewish identity as a strategy was passed down through generations, with this concealment following the second world war defining survival. Opportunities to assimilate then, could be viewed as a privilege (particularly for white Jews), allowing them to "hide in plain sight" (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024).

Contemporary research has demonstrated the influence of this phenomenon on the perception of Jews as a minority or marginalised group (or not), with Jews today often experiencing exclusion from Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) programmes resulting in gaps in knowledge amongst professionals (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024). Some have endeavoured to understand this, pointing out explanations that modern Jewry are perceived as powerful, privileged, and "categorically White" despite that Jewish people are, ethnically, socioeconomically and racially diverse (Baddiel, 2022; Haynes, 2024; Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2025). In fact, at that time, Charmé and colleagues went as far as to say that being *"Jewish has become an admirable condition rather than a stigmatised social status"* (Charmé et al., 2008, p. 133). Rosner et al. (2011) use this evidence to argue a seamless integration of American and Jewish identities with being American therefore not meaning any need to abandon any sense of one's Jewish identity.

Jewish Identity in the West: Recent Stigma

Whilst the above argues historic seamlessness of Jewish identity acculturation in a Western Country like the United States (in some ways quite comparable to the United Kingdom) in 2011, just 15 years later, antisemitism has spiked significantly (American Jewish Committee, 2025; Anti-Defamation League, 2025), perhaps presenting a challenge these claims. These findings do seem to mirror that of the United Kingdom, Neuberger (2010, p. 101) writing of what it was like to be Jewish in the UK in 2010, discussing it being "*suddenly hip to be Jewish"* and that there is *"NO conflict between being British, and Jewish in these endeavours."* This indeed may represent a change when one factors in that 45% of British Jews do not feel welcome in the UK, and 61% had considered leaving Britain in the past two years (Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

Much of this change indeed may be related to Israel and Zionism, and whilst not all Jews identify as 'Zionist', it will be argued here that Judaism and/or Zionism may well becoming a concealable stigmatised identity (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2015). Indeed, much research points to possession of a concealable stigmatised identity and psychological distress (Berkley et al., 2019; Cortopassi & Nicolas, 2026; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013), with Quinn and Chaudoir (2015) finding three characteristics predicting this distress, anticipated stigma, centrality (of the identity), as well as salience (occupation of identity in one's thoughts). For many Jews, particularly those less religiously observant Jews, in the context of record highs of global antisemitism, it is reasonable to suggest this identity represents an example of an increasingly stigmatised concealable identity.

Furthermore, when one turns their attention to survey data in the United Kingdom suggesting increased centrality of Jewish identity, increased fear of revealing one's Jewish (or Zionist) identity, this indeed presents a real risk for Jewish mental health in the United Kingdom, such that exploring this is therefore of great importance. In the context of acculturation and negotiation of one's Jewish identity, this may well also present a risk to meaning making of Jewish identity in the United Kingdom for British Jews who, are now becoming increasingly exposed to negative social representations (Moscovici, 1984). This could result in greater identity conflicts (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2015), or 'othering' of Jews in the United Kingdom impacting on acculturation, with discrimination in the form of record levels of antisemitism (Community Security Trust, 2025) further compounding risk.

Jewish Minority Stress

With a global survey finding nearly half of all people worldwide hold elevated levels of antisemitism (Anti-Defamation League, 2025) exposure to any form of prejudice, hatred or exclusion aimed at a certain group, like antisemitism, can lead to experiences of distress known as 'minority stress', demonstrated to have significantly adverse effects on both physical and mental health (Avidor & Gutman, 2026).

The Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 1995, 2003) aimed originally, to highlight the adverse mental health effects of prejudice and discrimination on lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (Hoy-Ellis, 2023). Hoy-Ellis (2023) points out that a state of 'over-arousal' and acute sensitivity to potential rejection manifests for members of marginalised groups. This can be in response to *external* discriminatory events or conditions, (e.g. individual acts of criminal victimization, like hate-crimes or discriminatory legislation), or internal stressors such as expectations of discrimination, rejection or victimization (Meyer, 1995; Meyer, 2003).

It follows then, that the experience British Jews, that; account for just 0.4% of the British population, experienced the highest frequency of antisemitic hate crime on record in 2024, and two thirds of whom feel less confident displaying their Jewishness recently (Boyd, 2025), may be well understood through the lens of this minority stress model. In this regard, Shani et al. (2025) highlight theoretical models that link experiences of discrimination to well established theoretical models including minority stress theory (amongst others), identifying these frameworks as successfully applied to antisemitism (e.g. Rosen et al., 2018; Trilesnik et al., 2025).

Whilst the Minority Stress model makes clear negative impacts of minority group membership both in terms of mental health and physical health, important to consider are 'buffering' influences of membership. There has, for example, been much literature that argues group-level and individual coping resources buffering minority stressor effects (Avidor & Gutman, 2026; Hoy-Ellis, 2023; Meyer, 2003; Shani et al., 2025) as well as literature exploring the nuance of this, where at times Jews may actually distance themselves from their Jewish identity as a coping strategy (Becker & Tausch, 2014; van Veelen et al., 2020). Nonetheless, exploration of this nuance is warranted to understand the experience of British Jews in the UK today.

Jewish Exclusion: Traumatic Invalidation in the Current Climate

Despite the above literature concerning increased antisemitism, Jewish minority stress and risk of acculturative stress, much research has demonstrated consistent exclusion of Jewish people from conversations about diversity in recent years, in fact, in many research studies Jewish people actually regularly report experiences of antisemitism in DEI spaces (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025). More than this, Bar-Halpern and Wolfman (2025) further point out Traumatic Invalidation, with Jewish experiences of oppression met with challenge including 'blaming' (being criticised for complaining about antisemitism), 'denying reality' (being told antisemitic things never happened) or emotional neglect (amongst others) (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025). In addition to this, a number of research studies have shown Jewish experience of discrimination is often understudied, ignored and at times even purposely diminished (Feldman et al., 2025).

These findings are particularly crucial in the current climate, Regev (2025) pointing out that October 7th felt, for many Jews like an existential threat to Israel, resulting in trauma responses, and for many Jewish people, activating 'Intergenerational Trauma' in the shape of existential threat, affective residues of historical persecution and displacement (Abrams & Armeni, 2023). Further, Hibel et al. (2025) argue Jews in the diaspora as having suffered *two* traumas, both collective trauma experienced in the wake of October 7th as well as trauma born out of increased antisemitism in the diaspora that emphasises Jewish insecurity and vulnerability. Diasporic Jews in the current climate therefore, at significant risk of mental health as a result of intergenerational trauma, collective trauma, rising antisemitism and minority stress find themselves in a constant battle to cope in the fallout of October 7th, all the while negotiating this against a wall of traumatic invalidation (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025).

The Current Study

In the context of October 7th and rising antisemitism, there appears to be no studies looking at the in-depth experience for British Jewry at the time of writing. This study aimed therefore, to fill this gap, looking to understand the lived experience of British Jews and investigating the utility of frameworks such as minority stress to understand the impact of the current socio-political climate on the psychology of British Jews.

Materials and Methods

Research Methodology

In order to explore how British Jews made sense of their experiential reality, this study adopted a qualitative approach underpinned by a critical realist ontology and a contextualist epistemology (Madill et al., 2000). This allowed for an analysis of the meanings attached to being British and Jewish in the UK today, keeping in awareness the real-world constraints and consequences within which these meanings were produced.

The methodology used was Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), an updated version of TA developed by Braun and Clarke (2019).

Participants and Recruitment

A target sample of 12 participants was set, in line with Braun and Clarke's (2013) guidelines for professional doctorates. This study purposively sampled adult British Jews, and potential participants were included if they self-identified as both 'British' and 'Jewish', with no limit placed on denominations of Judaism. Participants were sampled through word of mouth using connections in the Jewish community, with further snowballing to achieve the full 12.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, with participants offered a choice of locations, and all but one choosing to be interviewed online. The interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 60-90 minutes. They were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher, taking care to remove all personal identifiers and to replace participants' names with pseudonyms.

Ethics

This project adhered to the BPS and HCPC guidelines for ethical research (Health and Care Professions Council, 2012; Oates et al., 2021) and was given ethical approval by the Psychology Department Ethics Committee at City, University of London (ETH2324-0540).

Analytical Strategy

This study used the ‘six-phase’ analytic process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013), Analysis was carried out iteratively, with earlier stages returned to in development of new themes, or identification of repeated narratives that helped contextualise older codes (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Reflexivity

In RTA, the researcher is given an active role in data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is inevitably influenced by the researcher’s position (Pearson et al., 2025). Being a white heterosexual British Jew in his 20s, the author resonated with many of the experiences reported by participants during this period. While the position of ‘insider’ researcher (Berger, 2015) allowed for ease of rapport and, arguably, a more nuanced understanding, it also required constant engagement with reflexive practice.

Results

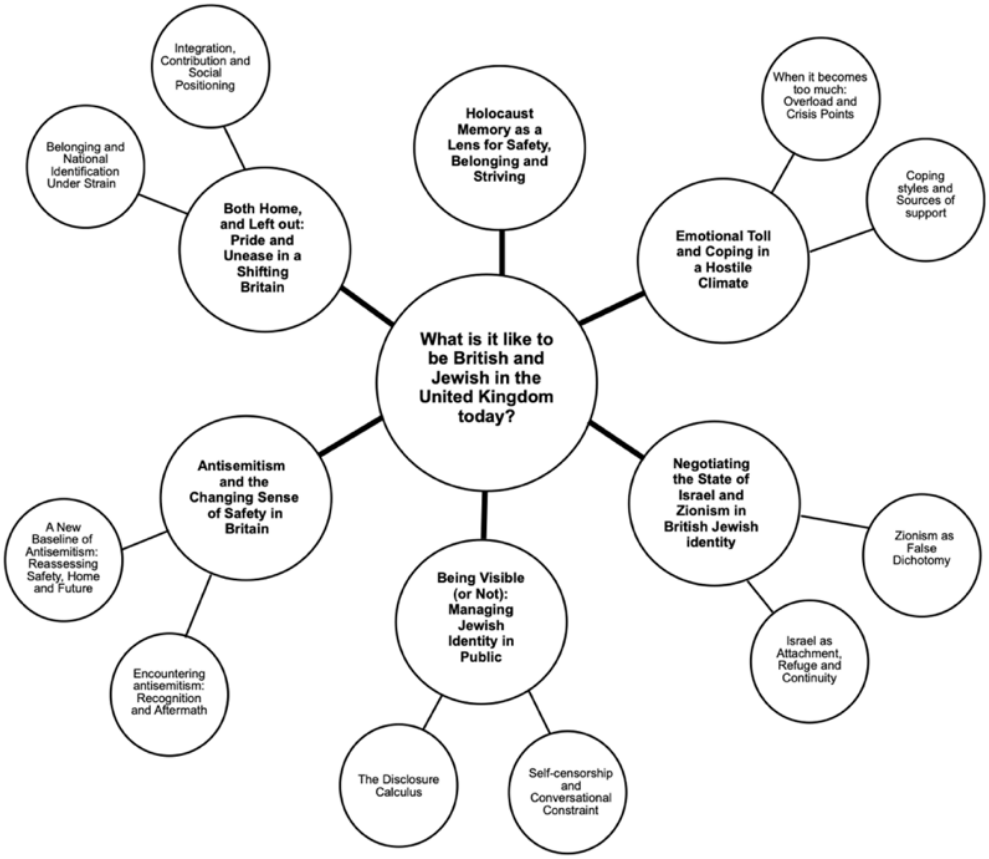


Fig. 1: Final thematic map

Theme 1: Antisemitism and the Changing Sense of Safety in Britain

In *Encountering antisemitism: Recognition and Aftermath*, participants described an increase in antisemitism exposure, particularly since October 7th, 2023, which often included multiple channels such as online, with friends or strangers in everyday interactions, as well in public spaces (e.g., in stickers, graffiti, posters or banners at protests). Many reported instances of antisemitism on social media, with increased prevalence of racism, stereotyping and more blatant antisemitic hate, Yvonne pointing out frustrations with social media regulators saying "I've reported comments in the past, and then I get a notification from Instagram saying, 'yeah, we reviewed your report, and we didn't see anything wrong in the comments, so we've just left it', and it'll be like, 'all filthy Jews must die.'"

Participants took issue with news organisations, pointing out changes to their consumption of particular news sources, Gemma for instance felt the BBC to be biased saying it is "supposed to be impartial. And there's nothing impartial about BBC." This decrease in trust or fairness in British Institutions at times extended to the police and government with Joseph pointing out "education, national health service again, have come out and said all sorts of you know pretty inflammatory things about, you know, Jews and Israel and everything else."

Many participants also outlined new difficulties when arguing over what constitutes antisemitism. This was coupled with feelings that anti-Zionism was used as a disguise for antisemitism, 'Zionism' increasingly being used negatively, and perhaps as a more acceptable proxy for the word 'Jew'. Accounts discussed increased antisemitism particularly amongst the political left, or younger people, with some feeling the popularity of antizionism meant certain sentiments were now considered less racist or discriminatory. Participants for example described how Israel was seen as wealthy, powerful, and colonial, with anti-Zionism held as a proud belief by those on the left, who were unaware of making use of antisemitic statements.

A number of accounts discussed perceptions of increased circulation of stereotypes, and conspiratorial beliefs, Benji recalling strangers outside a shop saying, "brother, Jews run everything. They control everything." For him and others, October 7th had been a turning point, while some like Yvonne, felt antisemitism had become more normalised in the last decade*:* "things that may not have been acceptable for people to say, I don't know, 10 years ago, are now much more acceptable." This had led to social and relational fallout, with strains in friendships (particularly with but not limited to, non-Jewish friends), with concurrent returns to Jewish social circles and a perceived increase in Jewish community strength despite hardship. Overall, however, participants agreed that increased exposure to antisemitism, the rising popularity of anti-Zionism (and blurring of this with antisemitism), and the revival of Jewish stereotypes have left British Jews feeling increasingly socially ostracised.

A New Baseline of Antisemitism: Reassessing Safety, Home and Future included accounts of antisemitism rising to a new and possibly enduring level. While October 7th was widely seen as a turning point in this respect, perceptions of threat feeling closer, more public and more normalised, several participants noted that antisemitism remains 'dormant' until reactivated. This was often framed through historical awareness, with present changes in antisemitism understood as part of a historical scapegoating of Jews. In Robert's words: "antisemitism is a very light sleeper." Many saw events in the Middle East as having

reawakened feelings towards Jews, with Max saying, “I feel like every, every, time he [Netanyahu] bombs Palestinians, then Jews around the world will get more and more abuse.”

Participants discussed the future of British Jews in the United Kingdom, with predictions on how the climate may progress, Joseph feeling antisemitism would not return to anything *“bearable”*, while others, like Robert felt it “would just settle down to a new baseline, but that baseline will be harder than what it was before.” This led to thinking over longer-term life decisions including whether to stay in the UK. These narratives highlighted a British Jewish experience of the climate in the UK with respect to safety, and how they may grapple with the decision of whether to stay. Despite some still indeed experiencing the UK as safe, many reported making constant threat appraisals and weighing up safety in the United Kingdom against leaving – with a warn-torn Israel even seen by some as safer.

Theme 2: Being Visible (or Not): Managing Jewish Identity in Public

This theme captures current British Jewish perceptions that expression of Judaism, or affiliation with Israel, became increasingly linked to perceived risk. The subtheme *The Disclosure Calculus* included accounts revolving around disclosure of Judaism as an on-going, context-sensitive calculation. Narratives centred around the visibility of one’s Jewish identity, how to manage this across contexts and situations in terms of where to go and what to wear or say, and the consequences of this on various facets of life including work and relationships. Participants discussed worries over institutionalised antisemitism, concerned that openness about Jewish faith would limit professional opportunities.

Additionally, accounts often revolved around heightened sensitivity to the visibility of one’s Jewish identity and the uncertainty of how disclosure of this would be received by either friends and strangers, with fears of misunderstanding or hostility resulting in increased concealment. Robert saw this as a recent development: “I'm more conscious of it from the perspective of… You know, um… Not revealing it. Whereas, I think, even five years ago, um, like […] You know, I would… I would make it known, um…As a point of, sort of, pride.” Benji discussed an increase in Jewish identity concealment on a more global scale, feeling that the world had turned less accepting of Jews generally, with public discourse on Zionism playing a part in this. He discussed for instance “I know if people find out that I'm a Zionist […] I'll be cancelled like I've like committed a sin […] It's like it's like a fascist. It's like being known as this bad person.”

There were denominational differences where those who were Orthodox (or those whose Jewish religious practice results in greater Jewish visibility), were not as easily able to 'conceal' their identity. Stevie for example discussed how it's "very obvious that I'm Jewish. My husband wears a kippah. It's very obvious. We can't escape it." This creates a difficult situation for those who are more openly Jewish. Whilst some did not always feel compelled to hide their Jewish identity and were proud to be Jewish openly, they reported awareness of negative consequences of doing so, Stevie for example pointed out that "no, I will be Jewish, and I'll stand up, and I'll hold my head up high." with Elise discussing "I took my [Israeli] flag out, and I wrapped myself in it […] I got a couple of really horrible looks." Managing visibility thus came across as an everyday task for British Jews today, many seeing events in Israel as driving forces behind their increased desire for concealment.

In terms of *Self-Censorship and Conversational Restraint*, a number of participants highlighted the need to manage speech and verbal expression. This was often framed in the context of fears that openness about views on Israel may risk judgement or social sanction. This subtheme captured perceptions of the need to avoid certain topics, withhold opinions, or adopt a narrowed and cautious conversational style with the goal of evading potential conflict, stigma, or ostracism.

Participants at times discussed this dilemma, feeling on one level a desperation to educate or challenge the views of those around them, and on another, that silence was the only option. Anticipatory social evaluation played a central role here, with descriptions of monitoring/predicting how others may interpret one's words and whether disagreement would lead to social sanction. This was at times coupled with feelings of a potential lack of safety to express views, with this self-censorship compounding a sense of persecution. Harry said that "I can't believe, you know, like… that Israel should exist. It makes you feel… unsafe to express that, that view, you know, you become, you know, a victim of persecution almost here."

Despite this, participants also reported feeling able to express their views at times, for different reasons. Stevie for example, felt capable of divulging her views, even with those with whom she may disagree, if there was as sense of mutual respect: "Um, and then I had friends who did listen, but I knew were… Um who were pro-Palestinian […] if they're gonna treat me with respect and dignity and not blame Israel's actions on me as a Jew, you know, that's okay. Um, and I did talk to them." Overall, however, the British Jews interviewed here found themselves less and less able to express their views freely, with increased fear of

sanctions resulting in conversational restraint, and described a degree of internal psychological conflict arising when attempting to make sense of this dilemma.

Theme 3: Negotiating Israel, Zionism and British Jewish Identity

In *Israel as Attachment, Refuge and Continuity*, narratives positioned Israel as an emotional anchor, linked with feelings of safety, refuge, and belonging. These feelings have been intensified by increased perceptions that Jewish safety in the UK has deteriorated since October 7th. Accounts often framed the importance of Israel historically, with Jewish historical oppression and the holocaust compounding the necessity of establishing Israel and the centrality of Zionism in Jewish identity and continuity. Many referred to the current climate, with increased perception of social threat resulting in a desire to escape to a 'safe haven', Robert saying "when you don't feel totally safe in your own country, obviously you're going to look to, well, where would you feel safe?", while some, felt that October 7th had made Israel less safe, others saw it as safer than the United Kingdom, even in a time of war.

Participants often evoked a longstanding attachment to Israel, with Stevie stating that "When I go to Israel, it does feel like going home", while others, like Robert, talked of a strengthening connection: "because of what's going on. Kind of emotionally feel like you need to… Stick up for your own. So, weirdly, I've got a stronger connection to it now than I ever have." Denominational differences appeared to have some impact on perceived connection to Israel, more orthodox Jews, more likely to describe Israel as "home" with secular Jews at times discussing Zionist identities with a little more distance. Israel was also described by many as a place of belonging and heritage where Jewishness, and Jewish identity go without question, with narratives describing people there, including strangers, like family.

In *Zionism as False Dichotomy* were narratives around the moral and political complexity of situating Israel with respect to British Jewish identity. A first dimension of this lay in the contested centrality of Israel and Zionism in Jewish identity, some emphasising it and others upset by the conflation of Jewishness with unwavering support for Israel/Zionism.

Some acknowledged historical antisemitism on the political right, feeling closer to left-wing political parties, yet many also noted increased antisemitism as well as anti-Zionism on the political left with to increased support for Jews or Israel on the political right. The result of this was a degree of internal conflict as to one's own values, support for Israel experienced as a kind of blemish by those normally leaning towards leftist values: "it makes you a little bit

politically homeless as well […] the left has become, um. More… obviously. You know. I certainly have felt that the right have become more defensive of Jewish people" (Harry). Internal conflicts extended to British Jews' relationship with Israel, and how the actions of the Israeli government sit with a deep connection to the ancestral homeland. Harry discussed feeling he was "wrestling with the question of, by extension, are the actions of Israel in the name of Judaism as well. Or are they completely separate from Judaism."

Common across the dataset were narratives around feeling obligated to have a view and be an 'expert' on the political situation in Israel, and resentment around this. On the other hand, this motivated others to educate themselves on the history of Israel and the conflict in the Middle East for the purpose of educating others or defending Israel's right to exist. This was coupled with feeling pressured to account for the actions of Israel as a condition of social acceptance, a lack of blanket criticism of Israel or Zionism creating the risk of social sanction. Robert for instance reported "I have to have a point of view, and if I'm right on, I'm on the right side of history […] I immediately should denounce Israel and be anti-Zionist. If I… if I want to be accepted into, uh… What was, like, my left cohort, then that's the position I must take."

Many described political opinions as having become more 'black and white' in the current climate, some pointing to social media as a cause for this, David sharing people in the UK *"get knowledge and information from social media which is not regulated or controlled."* Others pointed to 'trends' compounding British Jewish difficulties in navigating the situation in Israel. Stevie for example described how people were getting "swept up in this movement and this trend and haven't really looked fully at the history", and how it rallies groups of people together: "I think it sort of creates almost trends of what's cool to, or dislike or protest or be angry against." This was echoed by Robert, who felt "it's like becoming like football, tribal. You know? And they… each side just hurls insults at the other, which is… So, as a more liberal Jew, as I said, I feel completely homeless." Overall, the British Jews interviewed here spoke of the significance of Israel as a place of safety or refuge for them, but also a complex and evolving relationship to Israel, in a sociopolitical climate that is becoming increasingly polarised, emotionally charged and lacking in nuanced debate.

Theme 4: Both Home, and Left Out: Pride and Unease in a Shifting Britain

Belonging and National Identification Under Strain revolved around the negotiation of one's Jewish and British identity, and how this was shaped by external events. Whilst some placed Britishness at the forefront of their identity, others pointed to mixed, intersectional identities.

David, for example discussed the entangled nature of his Jewish, British, and Israeli identities, noting that *"It's almost like spaghetti. It's all entangled together and it influences each other."* By contrast, Max pointed to a more bicultural identity, positioning himself with a foot in each 'camp': "Yeah, it's strange, um kind of feel like I'm I don't know, half in one camp, half in the other, like I'm considered like British, but also considered Jewish."

Whilst many described a smooth intersection of these aspects of their identity, feeling patriotic and welcome in the United Kingdom, this had come under strain of late, often due exposure to mass marches, public discourse and rising antisemitism fostering a lack of national belonging. Benji described feeling unwelcome *"It feels like 'get out of this country Jews, get out'"*, with Elise feeling her British identity had taken more of a backseat, "my parents were always… As I say, proud, proud British Jews […] But now, it seems like it's… A dirty word to be Jewish." Some spoke of the increased salience of their Jewish identity in the current climate, Robert describing "from a secular point of view, you know, English/British first, Judaism, […] secondary core part of my identity." However, in light of recent events, "that characteristic's becoming more of a dominant characteristic as a result of what's going on. You feel almost like a need to… Club to get, you know, club together, band together."

For some participants, shared intergenerational trauma and historic oppression were drivers of Jewish identity, beyond cultural or religious norms. Penelope explained "well I mean… That your parents were murdered…I mean what is the Jewish story? Murder, murder, on a big scale", with Max pointing out his mother would say "you don't have to believe in Judaism and go to synagogue, you don't have to follow any of it, but you'll always be Jewish." From these accounts, participants appeared acutely aware of survival and continuity with the generationally oppressive struggle of the Jewish people salient in their Jewish identity in the current climate.

Integration, Contribution and Social Positioning covered British Jewish identity as it relates to faith and culture as well as Jewish integration into British life. Some described how Jewish people had historically integrated into British society, "we want to be part of society, and we believe in social justice causes, and we… We believe in the sense of community spirit, not just Jewish community, but British community spirit" (Stevie). This was framed negatively at times, with perceptions of Jewish contribution and integration feeling overlooked, misrecognised, or eclipsed by stereotyped narratives. Stevie feeling "now it's just… It just feels like all of that is kind of […] overlooked."

Narratives often revolved around Jewish social positioning, readily referring to David Baddiel's book *Jews don't count*, with Jews neither included in liberal, progressive British multiculturalism nor considered 'White' British or fully included in more right-leaning politics. According to Robert, "If you're on the left, Jews are white colonialists, like, conquering, like, parts of the Middle East. Okay, so we're white, right, yeah, we're right, okay, fine." However, things seemed different at the other end of the political spectrum: "go to the far right […] We are non-white. We're not really white, in fact, we're like, you know, sort of evil, sort of, snakes in the grass." This tied in with perceptions of Jews being misrepresented as white and privileged, despite being a minority. For Stevie, "we're too white for the left-wing space. They…They, um, see brown people, black people, as the only… or who, you know, are the… sort of ethnic minorities."

This represented a change in perceptions of Jews' social position over time, highlighting that at the time of the Holocaust Jews were perceived more clearly as an oppressed group, especially by progressive political movements, Stevie feeling Jews ought to be regarded as a minority "we should be talking about how we're a minority. We should be talking about how these acts of discrimination are enacted against us all the time." Several participants thus reported difficulties in negotiating their British-Jewish identity in the current climate, compounded by a lack of recognition of Jewish minority status and suffering: British Jews were perceived as too white and privileged for left-wing liberal spaces, but not white enough for right wing spaces, ultimately leaving Jews politically homeless.

Theme 5: Holocaust Memory as a Lens for Safety, Belonging, and Striving

This theme captures how Jewish historical persecution, the gravity of the Holocaust and the resulting intergenerational narratives shaped British Jewish understanding of safety, belonging and contemporary antisemitism, often making the past feel psychologically present. Accounts described heightened vigilance and sensitivity to "early warning signs" of a potential repeat of the Holocaust as they experienced scapegoating, hostility, and reduced empathy in the aftermath of October 7th, Elise saying "You know, it's all these little things, it, you know, Jews not welcome here. It's a bit 1930-ish. And that worries me a lot."

Several participants compared the current climate in the United Kingdom with that of Nazi Germany, and a level of intergenerational trauma seemingly ubiquitous through the vast majority of interviews. Yvonne for instance voiced her worries: "Learning about the Holocaust growing up, and the 1930s, like, um, kind of culture and mentality and how it led to the events of the Holocaust […] And kind of seeing the signs of it potentially leading to a

repeat of history. So, it is worrying." Further, a number of participants spoke of the decision to escape being contingent on whether or not the current situation was to get worse, feeling that it was not quite unsafe enough to warrant leaving the country yet.

Participants also discussed feeling at home in the UK and the difficulty associated with leaving, with Harry saying, "would I even want to, you know?", and Joseph saying: "I noticed a lot of people have been coming out and saying, you know, 'we should leave' you know it's time for the Jews to you know in a sense emigrate to Israel […] I don't feel we're at that stage."

At times, historic Jewish persecution and the resulting vigilance (often compounded by stories from older generations) functioned as a lens informing threat appraisal and emotional responses to perceived social hostility or threat. Gemma wondered whether she would be able to "see the signs in time to do something about it?" with Harry considering: "which of my friends would, you know hide me in their ceiling, like Anne Frank, or help me to skip country, and which of them would, you know… Or would you turn them over to the authorities to be sent to the gas chambers."

This resulted in a degree of what can be thought of as colloquial 'paranoia' from older generations perhaps bringing them closer to the truth now. Gemma for example said: "and suddenly, you know, little things, my dad making sure that all his grandchildren have access to another passport, which amused me back in the day […] as I'm getting older, it's making me think again and again…" For Stevie, these stories led a perpetual feeling of "having your bag packed." Some narratives also alluded to how these stories had generated some of the values British Jews still lived by today, including around the importance of building a stable life and integrating into society.

Theme 6: Emotional Toll and Coping in a Hostile Climate

This theme brings together accounts of the emotional impact of living in the current UK climate, and the strategies used by British Jews to cope with sustained uncertainty and social strain. *When it becomes too much: Overload and Crisis Points* aimed to specifically capture the emotional experiences described by the participants, with accounts describing a sustained emotional load, particularly in the months following October 7th, emotions including fear, sadness, anger, grief and vigilance. Some listed strong negative emotions, with Stevie for instance reporting "I'm definitely more… Sad and angry and scared, and… distressed

than I used to be." Max spoke of feeling "anxious and uncomfortable seeing that sort of thing" and Benji described a "combination of a sense of dread, anxiety."

Several participants referred to 'paranoia', Harry for example pointing out to the difficulty of expressing views on Israel: "you become more hardened in your own views on it, um, and become more paranoid about what other people really think." Stevie concurred though she was quite measured when outlining her emotional responses and the basis thereof: "just this feeling of, like, who's looking at us, and who's thinking this, and who's thinking that, and… And maybe it's paranoia." Still, some participants discussed feeling less deeply impacted emotionally, David explaining that "on a personal level um it doesn't give me that kind of down emotions or anything like that" when discussing levels of popular ignorance around Jews and Israel in the United Kingdom.

Coping styles and Sources of Support covered narratives around how British Jews coped psychologically with descriptions of cognitive strategies such as internal rationalisation and reappraisal (in response to experiences of antisemitism or social tension) as well as meaning-making efforts to manage distress. Gemma for instance explained how she tried to remain rational, yet struggled: "It pushes me also into places maybe that I don't, you know, I don't want to be… I want to be rational, not necessarily defensive." Robert described a similar process: "for your average person, it's just like… 'Can you stop talking about this war, please?' Like, you know… I'm worried about the NHS and my bins being collected. So, that's the way I rationalize it."

Across the transcripts there were discussions of withdrawal from media exposure, social spaces, certain conversations, Benji for instance feeling the need to "turn off all my news alerts. Stop reading the news because you're just going to become so depressed with this state of affairs." This withdrawal was also echoed by Elise who described "I just thought, you know what, I can't… I can't look at this anymore. Because I feel my blood pressure rising." Robert used the term 'compartmentalisation', a reaction both deliberate and subconscious, "I haven't been thinking about it, and I don't think it's, like, subconscious thing where I'm just compartmentalizing it." While for some withdrawal manifested behaviourally, Yvonne identified a degree of emotional withdrawal over time "I guess I've developed over the years the ability to just detach myself and see everyone as equal".

Participants' accounts thus suggest there may have been changes to psychological states of British Jews navigating antisemitism today, with mentions of fear, paranoia, anger and vigilance. Some described distress hitting a breaking point since October 7th, and many

talked about using withdrawal and avoidance as coping strategies, although only one had turned to therapy.

Discussion

The following section will synthesise the key findings of the analysis with literature on psychological frameworks such as Minority stress (Meyer, 2003), Intergenerational Trauma, Collective Trauma, as well as identity theories such acculturative stress (Berry, 2007). Findings are discussed in view of where the experience of British Jews in the current climate can be helpfully viewed through frameworks, with the goal of further understanding the psychology of this group and therefore how to provide useful, culturally sensitive psychological support.

Antisemitism: Lenses For Safety and Threat

All participants shared an experience of feeling antisemitism had worsened in the United Kingdom in recent years, pinpointing feeling unwelcome in the United Kingdom, sitting alongside the literature (Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025). In light of this, there were a number of factors compounding this experience, providing lenses with which participants viewed recent increased threat perception. Firstly, participants pointed to social media, encountering increased antisemitic hatred and ineffective app regulators, antisemitism in state institutions and an overall decrease in trust in British institutions fitting with findings from Boyd (2025).

Findings suggested experiences of collective trauma (Hibel et al., 2025; Hirschberger, 2018) following October 7th and activation of intergenerational trauma (Rakoff et al., 1966) left British Jews increasingly worried about their safety and survival, fearful of a 'repeat holocaust'. It appeared salience of a shared identity of intergenerational trauma was exacerbating awareness of potential rejection, minority stress and fears of safety with many Jews considering leaving the UK or making *Aliyah* in line with survey data (Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

Rising antisemitism, the shifting socio-political climate and changes to institutions had resulted in increased 'paranoia', participants unsure of whether friends or organisational structures could be trusted to protect them providing evidence for the experience of Minority

Stress for British Jews who are increasingly living 'on alert' (Beyer et al., 2025). Anticipatory stress (Sawyer et al., 2012) about one's survival in the UK also appeared to be exacerbating chronic worries and fears, driven by salience of intergenerational trauma in the current climate.

Identity: Zionism, Judaism and a Socio-Politically Shifting Home

British Jews in this study wrestled with many aspects of their identity including Zionism. Whilst, in line with much research, many pointed to the centrality of Israel in their identity as a place of refuge or a 'safe haven' (Avidor & Gutman, 2026; Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025; Hibel et al., 2025; Regev, 2025), though this was not the case for all participants. Connection to Israel varied (Volodarsky et al., 2025), with those further down the continuum of religious observance (e.g. Orthodox Jews) in this study possessing stronger connections in comparison to those more secular in line with literature (Greene & Shain, 2016; Miller et al., 2015). This is important with some feeling Jewishness was conflated with unwavering support for all of Israel's government actions, a phenomenon well documented in the literature (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025; Volodarsky et al., 2025). In line with Avidor and Gutman (2026), many discussed the difficulty navigating loyalty or connection to Israel with Jewish friends and family, pro-Israeli acquaintances experienced as a rigid in unwavering support for Israel, challenging British Jewish belonging.

Evident, was the role of political identity, with nuance and moral complexity experienced for British Jews navigating the contentiousness of Zionism. What was referred to in this study as 'political homelessness' reflected those liberal Jews for whom experiences of antisemitism from the political left, resulted in struggles to navigate of which side of the political spectrum to turn to for support. Results indicated antisemitic exposure from those on the political left, anti-Zionism a strongly held belief amongst this group, with an abundance of literature addressing this (Feldman et al., 2025; Ginsberg, 2024; Grayson & Rubin 2025; Haury, 2025; Jaspal, 2023; Mendes, 2026; Morstead & DeLongis, 2025; Sutcliffe, 2025). Many discussed antisemitic sentiment as increasingly more socially acceptable since October 7th, with a lack of empathy for Jewish or Israeli suffering, and blurring of antisemitism and anti-Zionism (Feldman et al., 2025; Haury, 2025; Jaspal, 2023) compounding this.

This change may present evidence of Zionism as a 'concealable stigmatised identity' (Crocker et al., 1998). With increased popularity of anti-Zionism, participants felt perceived as a 'good Jew' if one was anti-Zionist, or a 'bad Jew' should they express support for Israel in any way. Increased cultural stigma (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2015) around Zionism for British

Jews, may result in anticipated stigma (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2015) with fear of potential inquisitions on one's Zionist identity. This presents a risk, with a wealth of literature demonstrating lower psychological wellbeing associated with possession of concealable stigmatised identities as well as anticipated stigma (Berkley et al., 2019; Cortopassi & Nicolas, 2026; Le Forestier et al., 2024; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2015; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013).

Zionism was not however, not the only identity struggle in this study. with literature pointing to increased discrimination and acculturative struggle (Bekteshi & Bellamy, 2024; Rivera Baeza et al., 2022; Tikhonov et al., 2023), British Jews in this study showed signs of difficulty integrating their British and Jewish identities with increased antisemitism. Distance from one's British identity was evident, with reactionary foregrounding Jewish identity, with a degree of acculturative stress (Berry, 2007). Some pointed to activation of intergenerational trauma and salience of survival narratives resulting in a tendency to 'separate' (Berry, 2007) and leave, while others experienced conflict in this area feeling Britain as 'home', and integrated (Berry, 2007) with desires to stay.

Many however, discussed a level of interconnectedness of these identities that has been forged over years, providing some evidence for a more dynamic model of acculturation (Andreouli, 2013). Increased antisemitism may 'reframe' one's British and Jewish identities in line with new 'representations' (Moscovici, 1984), resulting in internal conflicts (often driven by shared historical intergenerational trauma), acculturative stress and thus, greater mental health risk (Bekteshi & Bellamy, 2024; Rivera Baeza et al., 2022; Tikhonov et al., 2023).

Findings pointed to desires of British Jews to integrate (Berry, 2007) into society but currently feeling excluded (in various ways), reasons for this revolving around perceived misunderstanding of Jewish social positioning in line with the literature (Baddiel, 2022; Getzoff Testa et al., 2024; Haynes, 2024; Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2025). This related to a degree of 'Whitewashing' (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024), Jews increasingly perceived (particularly through belief in Zionism) as colonial or imperial. Narratives reflected suggestions put forward by Baddiel (2022) in 'Jews don't count', of Jews excluded from left-wing progressive spaces and conversations regarding DEI (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025; Brosbe et al., 2026; Getzoff Testa et al., 2024) for perhaps being 'too white', but not 'white enough' for right-wing spaces, where there was still fear over fascism. In the context of acculturative stress, participants appeared to be caught between frames (Andreouli, 2013) lacking a place in which to fit, impinging on a British Jewish sense of belonging.

Survival, Visibility and Coping

Evident from this study, was that British Jews are feeling increasingly fearful, less able to be openly Jewish and thus, attempting to find ways to cope and survive. As is clear from the literature (Beyer et al., 2025; Himmelstein et al., 2015; Watson-Singleton et al., 2019) desires to conceal one's Jewish identity was evident from participant experiences in this study. These results appear to provide experiential evidence for survey data suggesting nearly more than half of Jews in the UK are attempting to conceal their Jewish faith for fear of antisemitism (Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

In contrast however, there was also some evidence from this study demonstrating concurrent strength in openness of one's Jewish identity in the current climate, with increased feelings of pride in the face of adversity which may sit with those findings from Wallengren and Mellgren (2015) or Enstad (2023) emphasising that, in spite of increased Jewish visibility, in-group identification may may mitigate worry or fear experiences.

Results demonstrated British Jewish fear that openness about views on Zionism and Israel would be met with social risk or judgment, many discussing attempts to subvert conflict and ostracism with a degree of self-censorship as a strategy for evading social sanction. In the context of minority stress, self-censorship and concealment may be psychologically taxing (Hoy-Ellis, 2023). This was coupled with reports of feeling isolated from society with returns to Jewish circles, sitting alongside literature indicating reduced community life participation and elevated avoidance of public spaces (Himmelstein et al., 2015; Watson-Singleton et al., 2019). The minority stress model may explain this, Hoy-Ellis (2023) pointing to the protective function of relationships with other minority group members facilitating stress coping, in accordance with from Avidor and Gutman (2026) identifying Jewish older adults as experiencing mitigation of antisemitism-based distress as a result of 'community-based resilience'.

Furthermore, many discussed heightened distress in response to October 7th, (Hibel et al., 2025), compounded by exposure to news and social media coverage (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2023; Vitman-Schorr et al., 2026) of conflict in the middle east, as well as that of domestic protests against Israeli action. These findings sit alongside literature demonstrating indirect exposure to violence or terror attacks (e.g. through television or social media) can result in collective trauma and emotional distress (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2023; Hibel et al., 2025; Vitman-Schorr et al., 2026).

Participants described a number of strategies to manage these experiences psychologically, naming avoidance of social spaces, news and social media line with literature on withdrawal as a coping strategies for discrimination (Brosbe et al., 2026; Morstead & DeLongis, 2025). Some also discussed attempts to 'rationalise' perceived experiences of antisemitism internally, with only one participant making use of therapeutic spaces. Labelled 'rationalising', some engaged in internal dialogue, fighting feelings of fear and insecurity using alternative beliefs or reasoning much like strategies in CBT (Beck, 1963; Roscoe & Taylor, 2023; Sheffield et al., 2024). Some described a degree of emotional detachment or 'compartmentalisation' as coping strategies (Barton, 2026; Suiza, 2025), temporarily pushing thoughts and feelings away in the short term in order to cope in the current climate.

Strengths and Limitations

Sampling was a strength in this study, with the current research aimed for a spread of ages and denominations of the British Jewish population, albeit a smaller sized sample. In placing no age limit, the current research captured experiences of the British Jewish population from across the lifespan including those who would have lived through the times of the holocaust, as well as those who may well be in their very early adulthood. The richness of data this provided was also bolstered by sampling of a several denominations of Judaism who may very well have very different cultures, levels of Jewish religious observation and thus diverse experiences in the current UK climate.

Further, my position as an insider researcher provided an element of linguistic sensibility facilitating rapport building (Berger, 2015) in the interview process, and thus, production of detailed experiences. Methodologically this served as a strength in Reflexive TA, with Braun and Clarke (2019), pointing out themes and stories in RTA do not exist separately from the researcher, but are indeed generated by the researcher who brings their values, skills and training into this process. As an insider, this shifted what could be construed as a weakness or bias in some analytical approaches, as a strength (Braun & Clarke, 2019), RTA allowing for openness around researcher position and reflexivity and the importance of this in shaping the data.

RTA also allowed for capture of nuanced, in-depth experiences where much research on British Jewish experience post October 7th has been survey data, which whilst providing a fairly diverse set of views across a group, does not allow for nuance in accounts. RTA allowed for both a more varied sample a*s well* as pulling apart data and accounts to provide a more nuanced, helpful analysis of the experience of this group in the current climate.

However, the demographic questionnaire utilised in this investigation did not gather data on participants' ethnicity, including whether or not they were Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahi or other. Again, this is unfortunate, both because more could perhaps have been said in relation to the aforementioned literature concerning the assimilation of Ashkenazi Jews and the 'Whitewashing of Jews' (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024; Hibel et al., 2025), and because the voices of those Sephardic or Mizrahi Jews who experience racism as well as antisemitism should not have been overlooked.

More generally, intersectionality could perhaps have been foregrounded to a greater extent. For instance, this study did not distinguish sexual orientation even though Avidor and Gutman (2026) have flagged the specific difficulties encountered by LGBT+ Jews who often feel marginalised, not fitting neatly into either Jewish circles or left-leaning progressive circles. With research pointing to adverse mental health outcomes for those possessing intersectional identities (Collins-Anderson et al., 2022; Hempeler et al., 2024; Swann et al., 2024), as well as limitations in their use of psychological services (Hempeler et al., 2024; Rhead et al., 2022), it would have been helpful to provide psychological practitioners with recommendations based on the in-depth experiences of those intersectional British Jews.

Suggestions for Further Research

There are a number of fruitful avenues for future research, firstly, as mentioned, the current study did not distinguish ethnicity or sexual orientation of British Jews during data collection. This is key in the context of assumptions about Jewish privilege (Getzoff Testa et al., 2024) and the danger of marginalisation of intersectional Jewish identities in light of these. Pertinent, may be studies similar to that of the current study with a specific focus on those intersectional Jews who it cannot be argued benefit in any way from a degree or 'White privilege'. Indeed, they may still experience extreme levels of antisemitism with a likelihood of other forms of discrimination and disadvantage in tandem.

In the context of the social justice positioning of Counselling Psychology, amplification of these voices based on findings in the current study may be of particular relevance. Whilst Jews represent just a fraction of the world's population, Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews represent a fraction of Jews, making this group an extremely small minority. With respect to those LGBTQ+ Jews, findings from Avidor and Gutman, (2026) for instance outline the struggle of LGBTQ+ Jews in Canada. These Jews struggle to fit into left-wing progressive

spaces, feeling unsupported, *as well as* not fitting in with some Jewish circles, these experienced as not progressive enough. Both these groups may well benefit from research exploring the subjective experience of these groups.

Further, as yet, the concept of 'Political Homelessness' as it relates to British Jews in this study appears relatively novel, so that it may well be important to understand further the manifestation of this specifically for Jews. Where institutional trust is low for British Jews (Boyd, 2025; Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025), it may be worth exploring what this specifically means for this groups sense of belonging in the UK at the moment, particularly in the context of rising British Jewish desire to emigrate to Israel currently (Campaign Against Antisemitism, 2025).

With this research, and other literature pointing to the experience of exclusion of Jews in DEI and inclusion, an updated systematic review on DEI policies across multiple institutions across the UK (e.g. NHS and Universities) may help to provide further evidence for this exclusion in the current climate. This may be useful to investigate not only in the UK but in other countries with denser Jewish populations such as the US, Canada, and Australia, as well as European countries such as France.

Indeed, the current research focused on British Jews, however, antisemitism is rising globally (Anti-Defamation League, 2025), with literature demonstrating this in many other Western countries (Grayson & Rubin, 2025; Ginsberg, 2024; Mendes, 2026) and non-Western countries. Given that the Jewish diaspora resides in various countries across the globe, some in much smaller numbers than that in the UK (where they therefore represent an even smaller minority) research looking at the experiences across the diaspora may well be useful.

Clinical Implications

The present research has wide implications for clinicians working with Jewish clients, as well as recommendations for how Counselling Psychologists can advocate for British Jews in the current climate. Firstly, British Jewish identity would be more usefully approached as diverse and intersectional rather than monolithic, with careful exploration of how denomination, ethnicity, relationship to Israel, and other identities shape may client' experiences and sense of self over time (Feldman et al., 2025). Furthermore, clinicians may find it helpful to normalise experiences of minority stress, hypervigilance, and threat monitoring within the current climate, whilst recognising the potential impact of traumatic invalidation on British

Jewish clients (Bar-Halpern & Wolfman, 2025). It would also be prudent to sensitively explore issues surrounding Jewish visibility, concealment, and self-censorship, recognising these at times as adaptive strategies in response to rising antisemitism rather than framing these as solely avoidant behaviours, which may be received as invalidating.

In terms of formulation, therapists working with British Jews may benefit from incorporating minority stress processes (Meyer, 2003). This may include expectations of rejection and institutional mistrust, whilst also considering the potential role of intergenerational trauma, collective trauma in client perceptions of the world, as well as acculturative stress in client's sense of their identity and place in the world. With regards to Israel and Zionism, a careful approach to discussions surrounding Israel, Zionism, and October 7th is essential, with avoidance of assumptions, and therapists led by clients' own relationships to these topics, remaining mindful of the emotionally charged nature of language and discourse.

Finally given the role of online environments in exacerbating distress for this group, collaborative exploration of social media use, news exposure, and strategies for managing overwhelm may also be clinically beneficial. This could include for example limiting social media triggers such as avoiding 'doom scrolling' before bedtime or using the 'not interested' button on apps to reduce the level of content pushed to one's feed.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to explore what it is like for British Jews to navigate rising antisemitism in the United Kingdom today. Key findings were that British Jews are indeed experiencing increased antisemitism both online (social media and other media outlets) as well as in real life (friends, workplaces and other institutions in the UK). This has influenced British Jewish trust in institutions, compounding British Jews feelings of a lack of safety, and belonging in the context of record levels of antisemitism. Evidence in this study points to British Jews as experiencing minority stress, issues with acculturative stress, as well as activation of intergenerational trauma as result of October 7th as well as responses to this both in the UK and globally fuelled by Jewish Collective Trauma. Clear, was that much difficulty arose from issues of blurring of antisemitism and anti-Zionism, British Jews experiencing this as compounding problems associated with rising antisemitism in the UK.

Misrepresentation of Judaism as a minority identity, and perceived exclusion from conversations around Jewish minority status proved distressing for participants in this study,

many of whom experienced a degree of ‘political homelessness’. Participants felt unsupported by either end of the political spectrum, representing a change in the last five to ten years. British Jews in this study felt increasingly hypervigilant, and more inclined to hide their Jewishness, many feeling unable to share their Jewish identity with friends and colleagues, or indeed discuss any support for Israel or Zionism, the latter driven by fears of being deemed a ‘bad Jew’. Jewish identity it appears, from this investigation is increasingly experienced as a concealable stigmatised identity.

Shared trauma was a driver of British Jewish difficulty in the current climate, with historical oppression, most notably the Holocaust compounding British Jewish sensitivity in the current climate, many scared of a potential repeat Holocaust. Finally, evidence in this study appeared to show all of the above were producing aversive mental health impacts for the British Jewish Community currently, who are feeling increasingly scared, anxious, paranoid and depressed, the United Kingdom it seems, experienced by British Jews in the current climate as an unpredictable environment for British Jews.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Figure List

Figure 1: Final Thematic Map

Appendix: Submission Guidelines for Qualitative Research in Psychology

Preparing Your Paper

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