

Vibeke Moe Bjørnbekk

Narratives about Jews among Muslims in Norway

Religious Minorities in the North: History, Politics, and Culture



Edited by
Jonathan Adams
Cordelia Heß
Christhard Hoffmann

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Vibeke Moe Bjørnbekk

Narratives about Jews among Muslims in Norway



A qualitative interview study

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1 Introduction

From early Islamic thought to the present, relations between Islam and Judaism have been a topic of interpretation and debate, engaging a range of actors and representing a broad intellectual tradition. The shared scriptural origins of Judaism and Islam and common history of Muslims and Jews have engendered interpretations of the Muslim-Jewish relationship that emphasise religious bonds and shared experiences, but also portrayals that seek to define the one in contradistinction to the other. In recent years, the Arab-Israeli conflict has become an important frame of reference in the public discourse regarding this relationship, a discourse that frequently includes antithetically structured narratives. Debates have also arisen in relation to antisemitic incidents in Europe, with an important focus on anti-Jewish attitudes among Muslims. The focus reflects a common perception in Europe that virulent antisemitism today is primarily associated with Muslims.¹ Refugee movements from the Middle East and North Africa have contributed to debates on “imported antisemitism,” based on reports about high levels of antisemitism in these areas.² Singling out “Muslims” and immigrant minorities as the main “contemporary antisemites” may be a way to externalize difficult and uncomfortable issues.³ Numerous examples of cross-communal contact and expressions of solidarity between Muslims and Jews have not changed this tendency towards polarised interpretations.⁴ One notable exception from the Norwegian context can be found in

1 See, e.g., Sveinung Sandberg et al., *Unge muslimske stemmer. Om tro og ekstremisme* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2018); Daniel J. Schroeter, “Islamic Anti-Semitism in Historical Discourse,” *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018).

2 David Feldman, ed., *Antisemitism and Immigration in Western Europe Today. Is there a connection? Findings and recommendations from a five-nation study* (Berlin/London: Stiftung EVZ & Pears Institute, University of London, 2018).

3 Esra Özyürek, “Export-Import Theory and the Racialization of Anti-Semitism: Turkish- and Arab-Only Prevention Programs in Germany,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 58, no. 1 (2016).

4 See, e.g., Ben Gidley and Nasar Meer, “Communities and Identity: Continuity and Change,” in *The Routledge Handbook on Muslim-Jewish Relations*, ed. Josef Meri (New York: Routledge, 2016); Reuven Firestone, “Jewish-Muslim Dialogue,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Akbar Ahmed and Edward Kessler, “Constructive dialogue: A Muslim and Jewish perspective on dialogue between Islam and Judaism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations* ed. Josef Meri (New York: Routledge, 2016). In the Norwegian context, a search for the terms “Muslim*” and “Jew*” in the *Retriever* database and the national and regional newspapers *Aftenposten*, *Dagsavisen*, *Dagbladet*, *Klassekampen*, *VG*, *Bergens Tidende*, and *Stavanger Aftenblad* for the period 2005–2015 makes this tendency clear. Debates were sparked following the shots fired at the synagogue in Oslo (2006); anti-Israel demonstrations related to the Gaza conflict (which also included antisemitic expressions)

connection to the “ring of peace” that was formed around the synagogue in Oslo in February 2015. The initiative came from the Muslim community and was a response to the terrorist attack against the Grand Synagogue in Copenhagen a few days earlier. The event received extensive media coverage both in Norway and internationally, and represented an exception to the dominant image of Muslims as hostile towards Jews. In Norway, there has also been extensive debate about Islamic and Jewish religious practices, most notably the practice of male circumcision. This debate contributes to narratives that underline similarities in the religious practices of the minorities rather than differences and conflict, even though the practices have been heavily criticised.

The aim of this study is to explore narratives about Jews among self-identified Muslims in contemporary Norway. Based on data from qualitative individual interviews, various narratives are identified and discussed. The subject relates to the study of Muslim-Jewish relations within a number of disciplines. The material is analyzed in light of trends identified in research on Islam and Muslims in Europe, Muslim-Jewish relations and religious identities, as well as the cultural and religious affiliation between Islam and Judaism. The study draws on research on historical and contemporary constructions of “the Jew,” specifically Islamic notions of Jews, anti-Judaism, and European antisemitism.⁵ Guiding the analysis is the supposition that the narratives are shaped by – and shape – the position and self-identification of the interviewees as minorities in Norway. The analysis draws on insights established by bodies of scholarship concerned with identity processes among Muslims in contemporary Europe. Furthermore, narratives about Jews are perceived as part of broader cultural and societal references, reflecting how members of minority and majority communities share common experiences and narratives.

Norway has a relatively strong tradition of interfaith dialogue, including fora for dialogue between the Muslim and the Jewish communities.⁶ However, little research has been conducted on the relationship between Muslims and Jews. Two recent surveys indicate similar experiences, solidarity, and perceptions of shared

(2009); antisemitic incidents in Malmö and in relation to Salafi organisations in Norway (2012); and finally, following the attacks against *Charlie Hebdo* and the kosher supermarket in Paris and the antisemitic attack against the synagogue in Copenhagen (2015).

⁵ *Anti-Judaism*, defined as religiously based opposition towards Judaism and Jews as adherents of Judaism; see, e.g., Gavin I Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 57. I use the term in the broad sense to refer to religiously based arguments against Jews and notions derived from Christian or Islamic scriptures and traditions.

⁶ Oddbjørn Leirvik, “Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue,” *Tidskrift for Islamforskning* 8, no. 1 (2014).

interests in terms of fighting against prejudice and discrimination.⁷ However, the results also showed relatively widespread prejudice in terms of classical antisemitic stereotypes about Jews among the Muslim respondents, particularly related to Jewish influence and power.⁸ The results mirrored findings from other European surveys.⁹ There is a need for in-depth investigation into the context of these attitudes in Norway. Furthermore, with the previous focus being on antisemitic attitudes, investigations into the broader range of Muslim-Jewish relations have been missing. The present study is an attempt to fill this gap, by seeking to explore narratives about Jews beyond a mere identification of stereotypes or anti-Jewish sentiments, and by placing the narratives within a cultural and societal framework of Muslim-Jewish relations in contemporary Norway.

The overall context in which the narratives are analyzed is the interviewees' perceptions of the relationship between Muslims and Jews as minorities in Norway. The study thus starts from the assumption that the narratives may include a diversity of notions as well as being internally ambivalent and polyphonic. This open approach was appropriate given the lack of previous research. Furthermore, a strict distinction between "positive" and "negative" narratives seems difficult to maintain. The complexity and ambiguity of what is perceived as "Jewish" is an inherent part of constructions of Jews, and can be identified in Islamic traditions as well as in secular European culture. Even in cases where one might distinguish between positive and negative constructions, diverse views may coexist and represent sources of mutual influence.

In the exploration of narratives, this study looks at how religion constitutes a frame of reference. The question relates to the fact that Muslims and Jews are

7 Vibeke Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022: Population Survey, Minority Survey and Youth Study* (Oslo: The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, 2023); Christhard Hoffmann and Vibeke Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017: Population Survey and Minority Study* (Oslo: Norwegian Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, 2017).

8 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 33; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 34–36. See also, Werner Bergmann, "How Do Jews and Muslims in Norway Perceive Each Other? Between Prejudice and the Willingness to Cooperate," in *The Shifting Boundaries of Prejudice: Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Norway*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann and Vibeke Moe (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 2020).

9 Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2015* (2015); Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2019* (2019); Henrik Bachner and Pieter Bevelander, *Antisemitism i Sverige: En jämförelse av attityder och föreställningar 2005 och 2020* (Stockholm: The Living History Forum, 2020); Günther Jikeli, *Antisemitic Attitudes among Muslims in Europe: A Survey Review*, ISGAP Occasional Paper Series (May 2015).

religious minorities in Norway. Perceptions of both Islam and Judaism, the individual religiosity and religious self-identification of the interviewees are discussed. I examine references to religious myths and theological traditions in the narratives, asking how these are interpreted and negotiated, and how they reflect constructions of community and religious identification among the interviewees, including identification with different Islamic denominations and with Jews as adherents of Judaism. An underlying assumption, however, is that the influence of religion is not limited to personal beliefs, but can be relevant also in secular contexts and among people without a strong religious identity.

Another thematical focus is on global imaginaries and perceptions of Muslim-Jewish relations on an international level. Specifically, the analysis investigates how the narratives relate to established discourses on the Arab-Israeli conflict and to constructions of Jews and Muslims in these discourses. It traces global imaginaries of the Muslim community (*umma*) and Jewish power in the narratives, asking how these imaginaries relate to other constructions of community and to perceptions of the situations of Jews and Muslims on a local level. The analysis explores how the narratives describe societal power structures as open or hidden, including references to conspiracy theories.

The study also looks into how the narratives relate to the interviewees' own experiences as minorities in Norway. The analysis explores interpretations of identities and processes of belonging connected to the immigrant background of the interviewees, including experiences of anti-Muslim attitudes and of imposed images of "the Muslim." I ask how the concept of victimhood constitutes a theme in the narratives, reflecting aspects of both the self-identifications of the interviewees and their perceptions of Jews. I discuss these matters with a view to the claim that "Muslims are the new Jews"; that is, that Muslims have replaced Jews as the central victims of discrimination, stereotypisation, and othering in Europe. Related to this topic are also identifications between Muslims and Jews based on how the two minorities share common experiences in terms of victimisation. The study shows how the narratives include both negotiations with and resistance to a broader discourse where Muslims are associated with antisemitism.

Lastly, the study explores views on the reasons for negative attitudes towards Jews and Muslims, asking how interviewees interpret antisemitism and Islamophobia as contemporary problems, including perceptions of shared features and differences between the attitudes. The analysis discusses interviewees' experiences of negative attitudes and interpretations of these experiences, including reflections on different forms of derogatory discourse. I investigate the ways in which these experiences provide a frame of reference for explanations of antisemitic attitudes and the understanding of how Jews and Muslims share analogous struggles as minorities in Europe.

Following these analytical approaches, the study provides insight into how narratives about Jews reflect constructions of Muslim identities in contemporary Norway. In accordance with the theoretical approach of the study, “identity” is understood as a socio-cultural construction, emphasising a non-essentialist approach and the social and dynamic character of identity constructions. The narratives are thus seen as reflecting the discursive context of the interviews, presented as encounters with this context, sometimes constituting counter-narratives. A much-discussed topic in research on antisemitism among Muslims has been whether it is warranted to talk about a particular “Muslim antisemitism.” By analysing the various ways narratives about Jews refer to interpretations of Muslim identities, the study also explores the relevance of this concept.

A main contribution of this study lies in the attempt to develop a typology of narratives through the identification of different narrative patterns in the accounts of the interviewees, and to thereby offer insight into the multifacetedness of narratives about Jews and Judaism among Muslims in Norway.

Following this introductory chapter, chapter two explores cultural constructions of Jews in a historical and contemporary perspective, and Muslim-Jewish relations in Europe today. The first part focuses on perceptions of Jews and Judaism as they can be traced in Islamic sources and traditions and in interpretations of the shared history of Muslims and Jews in the first centuries of Islam. Contemporary perceptions of Jews are discussed in the second part of this chapter, including a review and discussion of attitudinal surveys conducted in Europe and different attempts to explain antisemitism among Muslims. This chapter also looks at research on cultural constructions of Jews and other minorities, focusing on the Norwegian context and tracing central features in these constructions, exploring the function they have had in Norwegian society.

Chapter three provides an overview of the history of the Muslim minority and Islamic religious organisation in Norway. The chapter also includes a section on attitudes towards Muslims and experiences of discrimination among Norwegian Muslims. Following this, chapter four presents the history and religious organisation of Jews in Norway. While the focus of the study is on narrative constructions of Jews, thus not necessarily relating to actual Jews, the historical experiences and current situations of both minorities contribute to the overall context of the analysis. Indeed, in their narratives interviewees often made references to Jewish history in Europe and to the situation of Jews and Muslims as minorities in Norway.

Chapter five introduces some central elements of narrative theory and symbolic constructivism, which guide the analysis. In addition to theories and concepts presented in this chapter, the analysis makes use of theory in connection with the interpretation of specific interview excerpts. The focus of the study is otherwise empirical.

Chapter six presents the composition of the sample and recruitment methods used in the study. The chapter also includes a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative interviews and ethical considerations related to the subject matter. A list of the interviewees, description of the interview guide, and procedures related to the coding and analysis of the data can be found in the appendix. As a qualitative study, the aim of this book is not to provide a representative presentation of the views of Norwegian Muslims, but to gather in-depth insight through the exploration of meaning in the narratives.

Chapters seven to eleven present the analysis of the empirical material. In chapter seven, I discuss references to religious myths and concepts in the narratives, exploring how the narratives express views of religious community and –boundaries. The chapter concerns views on the relation between Islam and Judaism and of Muslims and Jews as adherents of these religions. In chapter eight, I discuss perceptions of power and societal influence in the narratives, and explore how interviewees perceived current societal and political developments and the driving forces in these developments. Chapter nine concerns perceptions of victimhood in narratives about Jews. A central aspect of interviewees' recollections of Jewish history was related to knowledge of historical and contemporary discrimination and persecution of Jews. The chapter explores this history in relation to the interviewees' own experiences and perceptions of the situation of Muslims in Europe. Chapters ten and eleven explore interpretations of antisemitism and Islamophobia as contemporary problems, focusing on explanations of negative attitudes (in chapter ten) and interpretations of different forms of discriminatory discourse (in chapter eleven). Based on commonalities and recurring themes in the material, the analyses identify a set of core narratives. Finally, the conclusion summarises the findings, places these in relation to earlier research and suggests a typology of the core narratives identified in the analyses.

2 Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations

Explorations of Muslim narratives about Jews touch upon a vast field of research concerned with Muslim-Jewish relations. Interdisciplinary enquiries incorporate a broad spectrum of themes and approaches, from cultural, historical, and religious studies to interfaith dialogue, research on prejudice, and the Middle East conflict.¹⁰ This chapter presents an overview of relevant research and current knowledge, with a focus on historical and contemporary constructions of Jews and Judaism among Muslims in Europe and within Islamic traditions. Muslim-Jewish relations have predominantly been the subject of investigations within the

10 See, e.g., Mehnaz M. Afridi, *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017); Ednan Aslan and Margaret Rausch, eds., *Jewish-Muslim Relations: Historical and Contemporary Interactions and Exchanges* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019); Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross* (Princeton University Press, 2015); David M. Freidenreich and Miriam Goldstein, eds., *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Martin Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House. A History of Jews in Muslim Lands* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); Sander L. Gilman, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Collaboration and Conflict in the Age of Diaspora* (Hong Kong University Press, 2014); S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs, Their Contacts Through the Ages* (New York: Schocken, 1964); Norman Golb, ed., *Judeo-Arabic Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); Robert C. Gregg, *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (Oxford University Press, 2015); Yehoshafat Harkabi, "Contemporary Arab Anti-Semitism: its Causes and Roots," in *The Persisting Question: Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Antisemitism* ed. Helen Fein (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987); Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Arab attitudes to Israel* (Routledge, 2017); Klaus Holz, *Die Gegenwart des Antisemitismus: Islamische, demokratische und antizionistische Judenfeindschaft* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2012); Ethan B. Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North African to France* (Harvard University Press, 2015); Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton University Press, 1992); Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton University Press, 1984); Moshe Ma'oz, ed., *Muslim Attitudes to Jews and Israel: The Ambivalences of Rejection, Antagonism, Tolerance and Co-operation* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011); Josef Meri, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*, (New York: Routledge, 2016); Ronald L. Nettle, ed., *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations* vol. 1 (Oxford: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993); Ronald L. Nettle and Suha Taji-Farouki, eds., *Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998); David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York, London: WW Norton & Company, 2013); Tudor Parfitt, ed., *Israel and Ishmael: Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations* (London: Curzon, 2000); F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam* (Princeton, London: Princeton University Press, 2018); Uri Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur'an: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-image*, vol. 17 (Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, 1999); Norman A. Stillmann, *Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979); Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

study of religion, Jewish Studies and Islamic Studies. Though the subjects are profoundly interrelated, the term “Muslim-Jewish relations” indicates that the focus of the study is from an Islamic Studies perspective, while “Jewish-Muslim relations” rather suggests a Jewish Studies perspective.¹¹ While previously focused on philological and historical studies, since the 1980s research on Islam and Muslims in Europe has increasingly focused on contemporary issues, non-institutionalized aspects of religion, and Islam as “lived religion.”¹² The study of Islam in Norway, as in Denmark and Sweden, is of an even later date, having developed in the 1990s, with the topic gradually receiving more scholarly attention as a consequence of the increasing presence of Muslims in Scandinavia.¹³ Gradually in recent decades, Muslim-Jewish relations have emerged as a scholarly field of inquiry, including both

11 Meri, *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*, 2.

12 Nathal M. Dessing et al., eds., *Everyday lived Islam in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2.

13 Susanne Olsson and Simon Sorgenfrei, “Islam and Islamic Studies in Scandinavia,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 12–13. See, e.g., Signe Aarvik, “‘Spiritualized Islam’: Reconfigurations of Islamic Dogma Among Young Non-Organized Muslims in Norway,” *Islam & Christian Muslim Relations* 32, no. 1 (2020); Thor Halfdan Aase, “Punjabi practices of migration: Punjabi life projects in Pakistan and Norway” (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 1992); N. Abdellaoui et al., *Beretninger fra en muslimsk barnehage i Norge* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2011); Sindre Bangstad and Olav Elgvin, “Norway,” in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 7 (2016); Marianne Bøe, “Halal-dating som ungdomskultur. Forhandlinger om ekteskaps- og samlivspraksiser blant norsk ungdom med muslimsk bakgrunn,” *Prismet* 1–2 (2017); Marianne Hafnor Bøe, *Feminisme i islam* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 2019); Cora Alexa Døving, “Norsk-pakistanske begravelseritualer: en migrasjonsstudie” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2005); Cora Alexa Døving and Berit Torbjørnsrud, *Religiøse ledere* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2012); Olav Elgvin, “Between a rock and a hard place: the Islamic Council of Norway and the challenge of representing Islam in Europe” (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 2020); Olav Elgvin, “Ideas Do Matter: Politics and The Islamic Tradition Among Muslim Religious Leaders in Norway,” *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 26, no. 2 (2013); Margaretha A. van Es, “Norwegian Muslim Women, Diffused Islamic Feminism and the Politics of Belonging,” *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 29, no. 2 (2016); Bushra Ishaq, Lars Østby, and Asbjørn Johannessen, “Muslim religiosity and health outcomes: A cross-sectional study among Muslims in Norway,” *SSM – Population Health* 15 (2021); Christine M. Jacobsen, *Tilhørighetens mange former. Unge muslimer i Norge* (Oslo: Unipax, 2002); Christine M. Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Christine M. Jacobsen, “Norway,” in *Islam in the Nordic and Baltic Countries*, ed. Göran Larsson (London, New York: Routledge, 2009); Leirvik, “Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue,” Oddbjørn Leirvik, “Christianity and Islam in Norway: Politics of Religion and Interfaith Dialogue,” *Canadian Diversity* 4, no. 3 (2005); Marius Linge and Sindre Bangstad, *Salafisme i Norge: historien om Islam Net og Profetens Ummah* (Oslo: Minotenk / Frekk forlag, 2020); Ulrika Mårtensson, “Hate Speech and Dialogue in Norway: Muslims ‘Speak Back,’” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 2 (2014); Line Nyhagen Preddeli, “Interpreting Gender in Islam: A Case Study of Immigrant Muslim Women in Oslo, Norway,” *Gender & Society* 18, no. 4 (2004); Sandberg et al., *Unge muslimske stemmer*; Kari Vogt, *Islam på norsk. moskeer og islamske organisasjoner i Norge* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2008).

scholarly publications and university programmes.¹⁴ Since the 1980s and 1990s, the field of interfaith relations has increasingly come to comprise social scientific and historical methods; the study of Muslim-Jewish relations has also included more integrative and multidisciplinary approaches.¹⁵ This combined approach reflects how political and religious motivations are deeply entangled in the history of Muslim-Jewish (and Christian) relations and conflicts; and how the political context has influenced the religious imagination and vice versa.¹⁶

Research on antisemitism in Europe has a long history and was already being carried out in the 19th and early 20th centuries.¹⁷ However, prejudice and discrimi-

14 See, e.g., Nettler and Taji-Farouki, eds., *Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics*; Meri, *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*. See also, Lena Salaymeh, “Between Scholarship and Polemic in Judeo-Islamic Studies,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, no. 3 (2013). One example of such an initiative is the Woolf Institute in Cambridge, which started as the Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations and later expanded to include the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations. In 2010, the centres merged under the designation Woolf Institute (<https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/>). Another example is the “Islamic and Jewish Hermeneutics as Cultural Criticism,” research project related to the Working Group on Modernity and Islam at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, which was active in the period 1996–2006. In 1996, The Holocaust Resource Center was founded at Manhattan College in New York to promote Catholic-Jewish relations. The centre expanded its mission in 2011 and was renamed The Holocaust, Genocide and Interfaith Education Center. According to its website, the Center aims to promote Jewish-Catholic-Muslim dialogue and collaboration, as urged in 1965 by the Vatican’s *Nostra Aetate* and seconded in subsequent Papal actions and declarations (<https://hgimanhattan.com/>). The Cambridge Inter-Faith Program at Cambridge University was founded in 2002. According to its website, its aim is to bring the resources of the Faculty of Divinity, and more generally of the University of Cambridge, to bear on questions about the relationship between Jews, Christians, and Muslims (<https://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/aboutus>). Yet another example of an academic institution devoted to Muslim-Jewish relations was the previous Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement at the University of Southern California’s Center for Religion and Civic Culture. A detailed overview of publications dealing with Jewish-Muslim relations is provided in Yousef Meri, “Jewish-Muslim Relations,” *Oxford Bibliographies in Islamic Studies*, June 30, 2014, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0075.xml?rskey=H5vZgO&result=2&q=jewish-muslim+relations#firstMatch>. The journals *Intertwined Worlds*, founded by Yousef Meri (<https://intertwinedworlds.wordpress.com/>), and *Mashal/Mathal: Journal of Judaic and Islamic Multidisciplinary Studies* seem to have been discontinued.

15 Meri, *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*, 3. See, e.g., Aslan and Rausch, *Jewish-Muslim Relations: Historical and Contemporary Interactions and Exchanges*.

16 See also Marianne Moyaert, “Making Space for the Other. From Religious Ideology to Narrative Hospitality,” in *Antisemitism, Islamophobia and Interreligious Hermeneutics- Ways of Seeing the Religious Other*, ed. Emma O’Donnell Polyakov (Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2018), 30.

17 Hans-Joachim Hahn and Olaf Kistenmacher, eds., *Beschreibungsversuche der Judenfeindschaft: zur Geschichte der Antisemitismusforschung vor 1944* (Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2015).

nation became prominent as concepts in the social sciences only in the 1920s.¹⁸ The systematic study of antisemitism developed after the Holocaust, in particular from the 1980s on.¹⁹ There has also been a gradual shift in the methodological focus from a social psychological perspective to one based in the cultural sciences.²⁰ Internationally, research on antisemitism today represents a well-established and interdisciplinary academic field. There has been an increased scholarly focus in recent years on attitudes towards Jews within the European Muslim population. In Norway, research on representations of Jews and on antisemitism developed relatively late, coming into its own in the 2000s, and historical studies have dominated the field.²¹ Only in the last decade has contemporary antisemitism become a topic of research, with important contributions being the population surveys conducted

18 John Duckitt, “Historical overview,” in *The Sage Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*, ed. John F. Dovidio et al. (London: SAGE, 2010).

19 I use the term “Holocaust” in the following because this is how the genocide of the Jews during World War II is most commonly referred to in the Norwegian context today, including by the interviewees in the present study. The term derives from the Greek word *holokauston*, a translation of the Hebrew word ‘*olah*, meaning a burnt sacrifice offered in its entirety to God. In the case of the genocide of the European Jews, the term refers to the burning of bodies in the crematoria or open fires of the Nazi camps. The reference to a religious act in the context of genocide may be seen as problematic and some instead prefer to use the Hebrew term “Shoah,” meaning “catastrophe.” Mehnaz M. Afridi (who uses “Shoah” precisely due to the religious connotation of “Holocaust”) discusses the term in the first chapter of her book *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes*, 2–26.

20 Jan Weyand, *Historische Wissenssoziologie des modernen Antisemitismus: Genese und Typologie einer Wissensformation am Beispiel des deutschsprachigen Diskurses* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016), 24–43.

21 See, e.g., Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Hess, eds., *Antisemitism in the North: History and State of Research* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020); Madelen Marie Brovold, “Jødiske motiver i norsk litteratur cirka 1800–1970” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2020); Synne Corell, *Krigens etertid: okkupasjonshistorien i norske historiebøker* (Oslo: Spartakus, 2010); Trond Berg Eriksen, Håkon Harket, and Einhart Lorenz, *Jødehat: antisemittismens historie fra antikken til i dag* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2009); Håkon Harket, *Paragrafen: Eidsvoll 1814* (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 2014); Christhard Hoffmann, ed., *The Exclusion of Jews in the Norwegian Constitution of 1814: Origins – Contexts – Consequences* (Berlin: Metropol, 2016); Per Ole Johansen, *Oss selv nærmest. Norge og jødene 1914–1943* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1984); Per Ole Johansen, ed., *På siden av rettsoppgjøret* (Oslo: Unipub, 2006); Lars Lien, “. . . pressen kann kun skrive ondt om jøderne’ Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norsk dags- og vittighetspresse 1905–1925” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2016); Kjetil Braut Simonsen, *I skyggen av Holocaust. Antisemittisme i norsk historie 1945–2023* (Oslo: Humanist forlag, 2023); Andreas Snildal, “An Anti-semitic Slaughter Law?: The Origins of the Norwegian Prohibition of Jewish Religious Slaughter C. 1890–1930” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2014); Øystein Sørensen and Kjetil Braut Simonsen, eds., *Historie og moral: nazismen, jødene og hjemmefronten* (Oslo: Dreyer, 2020); Frode Ulvund, “Grundlovens Taushed’. Høgsterett og religionsfridomen mellom Grunnlova og dissentarlova,” *Teologisk tidsskrift* 4 (2014). A contemporary and integrative approach is presented in Christhard Hoffmann and Vibeke Moe, eds.,

by The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies in 2011, 2017, and 2022, and a synthesis from 2023 by Kjetil B. Simonsen.²² In 2017 and 2022, the surveys included Muslim samples, which are of special interest for the present study.

2.1 Jews and Judaism in Islamic Traditions

An important backdrop for the present study is the multifaceted image of “the Jew” provided by the broad Islamic traditions and the corresponding potential for diverse interpretations of meaning that these traditions offer. The relationship between Jews and Muslims is a result of centuries of religious traditions, interpretations, and practices, shaped by evolving social and historical contexts and characterised by both conflict and peaceful coexistence. In this context, the significance attributed to religious sources is highly individual and interpretations vary greatly. As noted by Jeffrey Kripal, for the vast majority, religious life is perhaps as much about ignoring scriptural texts or individual convictions as it is about following them.²³ This study concerns the views of the interviewees, not “what Islam says” about Jews. Accordingly, it explores references to Jews and Judaism in Islamic traditions (and “Islam” as a discourse and practice among Muslims) in the narratives of the interviewees, focusing on individual interpretations and understandings of religious sources and traditions. Nevertheless, insofar as interviewees referred to Islamic conceptions of Jews and Judaism during the interviews, a closer look at Islamic traditions seems in order. References to Islamic images of Jews were made when interviewees explained their views on Judaism, Islam, and intra-religious relations, and when they talked about the relationship between Muslims and Jews. This chapter thus provides background information to some of the references in the interview material, including references to some central common features between Judaism and Islam, to Jews in Islamic sources, and to the long history of Muslim-Jewish religious relations.

The meaning of “tradition,” and even more so, the relation between religious tradition, individual religiosity, and religious authority, is not obvious.²⁴ The term

The Shifting Boundaries of Prejudice: Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Norway (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 2020).

²² The report from the first survey, released in 2012, was published under the centre’s previous (English) name, Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities (CHM). A recent work has analysed antisemitism on the political left: Torkel Brekke, *Ingen er uskyldig: antisemitisme på venstresiden* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2023).

²³ Jeffrey Kripal, ed., *Comparing Religions* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley, 2014), 14.

²⁴ See also, Frank Peter, “Individualization and religious authority in Western European Islam,” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 17, no. 1 (2006).

itself comes from *traditio*, which in turn is derived from the verb *tradere* (*trans* and *dare*), meaning to deliver or hand over.²⁵ Tradition has a temporal aspect, constituting features and practices shared over time.²⁶ However, traditions are not solely continuities, but develop over time. As a discourse and practice among Muslims, Islam is a complex simultaneously consisting of continuities, cultural specificities, and individual approaches of believers. Exploring the tension between local expressions (culture) and shared features, John R. Bowen suggests that for many Muslim believers, “Islam lies between the particular and the shared, and between the creative and the imposed.”²⁷

From its earliest phase, Islam included both a self-reflective and comparative view of other belief systems and practices, particularly Judaism and Christianity. Although Islam, like other religions according to the self-conception of their adherents, occupies a privileged position, a central point with respect to the relation to Judaism is that the Islamic revelation recognises both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants. The Qur’an asks of Muslims to uphold the truth conveyed in the revelations of Judaism and Christianity.²⁸ Furthermore, the earlier scriptures function as evidence for the divine origin of the new scripture.²⁹ Some verses in the Qur’an have been interpreted as decidedly interreligious, describing the presence of diverse beliefs as part of a divine plan.³⁰ However, tendencies asserting theological exclusivity have been present in Islam as in Judaism and Christianity. Though acknowledging the divine origin of the Hebrew Bible, the Qur’an also contains an ambivalent position regarding the extent of authority granted the scripture, including passages that restrict its relevance to the Jews.³¹ Passages in the Qur’an underline the difference between believers and non-believers or pagans

25 James Alexander, “A Systematic Theory of Tradition,” *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 10, no. 1 (2016): 2.

26 Alexander (2016) describes *tradition* as having three elements—continuity, canon (written tradition), and core (i.e., a relation to truth). While continuity is a necessary element of all traditions, some, in addition to continuity, include a canon. Furthermore, a third type of tradition includes both a canon and a core (pp. 10–26). The Islamic tradition is an example of this third kind, having continuity, a written canon, and a core, in the sense of a notion of divine truth.

27 John R. Bowen, *A New Anthropology of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 8.

28 See the Qur’an, 2:135–136 and 2:285. Walid A. Saleh, “The Hebrew Bible in Islam,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: Cambridge Companions to Religion*, ed. S. Chapman & M. Sweeney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

29 Saleh, “The Hebrew Bible in Islam,” 407.

30 See the Qur’an, 5:69 and, almost identical, 2:62. Ednan Aslan, “The Jews of the Qur’an,” in *Jewish-Muslim Relations*, ed. Aslan Ednan and Margaret Rausch (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019); Massimo Campanini, *The Qur’an: the basics* (New York Routledge, 2016); Kripal, *Comparing Religions*.

31 Saleh, “The Hebrew Bible in Islam,” 412.

(or polytheists, *mushrikun*), displaying negative views and even appeals to violence.³² Muslim approaches to Judaism encompass views that range from a universalist emphasis on a profound unity between all religions despite doctrinal differences, to religious exclusivism. This complexity was also present in the narratives of the interviewees in the present study.

Through the spread of Islam in the Middle East and North Africa from the 7th century onwards, Jewish communities became subject to Islamic rule. Muslim-Jewish relations alternated between periods of peace and freedom for the Jews and periods of instability. The concept of *dhimmi* refers to protected religious minorities that lived under Islamic rule, and determined relations with Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and others. The term itself can be translated as “treaty party” or “protected non-Muslim.”³³ In addition to granting protection, the *dhimmi* status subjected the communities to special taxes and other regulations and social disabilities, and in certain periods, oppression and even persecution. The status also exempted the communities from some of the laws that applied to the Muslims. *Tolerance*, in the sense of regulated coexistence, hence, did not imply *equality*. Rather, the status signified a hierarchy of political position. With reference to the historical practice of the *dhimmi* status, Yehoshafat Harkabi has described the tolerance of Islam towards Jews as “founded on discrimination.”³⁴ However, the practice of conquerors entering into protocol agreements with surrendering groups predates Islam.³⁵ One might add that interpreting this history from the perspective of a modern concept of religious freedom and equality would be an anachronism. Other discussions of Jewish life under Islamic rule have pointed out that while the Jewish minority never obtained the same level of emancipation and acceptance as in late 19th-century Europe, they also never experienced persecution equal to that in Europe.³⁶

32 See, e.g., the Qur’an 9:5 and 9:123. Many of these passages are similar to passages in the Torah concerning non-believers or pagans. Kripal, *Comparing Religions*, 29. As is perhaps particularly common with the surahs that mention violence, the meaning is debated. With regard to the Qur’an 9:5, commentators have pointed out that the following verse (9:6) offers refuge for those among the pagans who seek it.

33 Salaymeh, “Between Scholarship and Polemic in Judeo-Islamic Studies,” 411.

34 Harkabi, “Contemporary Arab Anti-Semitism: its Causes and Roots,” 413.

35 Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2012).

36 See, e.g., Gilbert, *In Ishmael’s House. A History of Jews in Muslim Lands*; Harkabi, “Contemporary Arab Anti-Semitism: its Causes and Roots.”; Behruz Davletov and Tahir Abbas, “Narrating Antisemitism in Historical and Contemporary Turkey,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Hess (New York, London: Routledge, 2018).

2.1.1 Shared Features, Continuations, and Dissimilarities

Elements of the religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity as well as Arabic features are apparent in the Qur'an and in Islamic traditions. The question of the nature and extent of this cultural and religious influence and intellectual exchange has given rise to a large number of scholarly publications. Scholars define different stages of development in the interreligious exchange between Judaism and Islam, sometimes distinguishing between a first period beginning in the seventh century, when Judaism left a decisive mark on the new Islamic religion, and a second period from the eighth/ninth to the twelfth centuries, when Islam flourished and in turn influenced Jewish culture.³⁷ However, the profound interconnectedness and inherently hybridical character of culture may suggest that assumptions of religions as separate entities, implicit in notions of one religion's "influence" on the other, are difficult to maintain. Furthermore, and perhaps particularly relevant to descriptions of the early centuries of Islam, referring to "Jews" and "Muslims" as two distinct categories of analysis may obscure the historical reality of hybrid identities and the multidimensional (or fluid) character of religious identity (both historically and currently). In her book *Intertwined Worlds*, which analyzes the Muslim medieval approach to the Hebrew Bible, Hava Lazarus-Yafeh notes: "It has been said that the Near East resembles a palimpsest, layer upon layer, tradition upon tradition, intertwined to the extent that one cannot really grasp the one without the other, certainly not the later without the earlier, but often also not the earlier without considering the shapes it took later."³⁸ Different conceptualisations have attempted to address the complexity of cultural manifestations and interreligious relations in the first centuries of Islam. In the first of his three-volume work on the historical development of Islamic civilisation, Marshall G. S. Hodgson suggested a new term, "Islamicate," to refer to the "social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims."³⁹ Shlomo D. Goitein's concept of "creative symbiosis" has been important in the historical study of Jewish-Muslim relations. According to Goitein, this "symbiosis" defined a particularly prolific period in the history of Judaism: "Never has Judaism encountered such a close and fruitful symbiosis as that with the medieval

³⁷ Goitein, *Jews and Arabs, Their Contacts Through the Ages*; Menahem Mansoor, "Islam and Judaism: Encounters in Medieval Times," *Hebrew Studies* 26, no. 1 (1985): 104–105.

³⁸ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 4. Lazarus-Yafeh is referring to E. A. Speiser and M. Greenberg.

³⁹ Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization: The Classical Age of Islam*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 59.

civilization of Arab Islam.”⁴⁰ Influential scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Georges Vajda later embraced the characterisation of this period – which included significant Jewish thinkers such as Saadia Gaon (d. 942), Juda Halevi (d. 1141), and Maimonides (d. 1204) – as a form of symbiosis. Steven M. Wasserstrom rethinks the anatomy of “symbiosis” as it appears in the historiography of early Muslim-Jewish relations.⁴¹ At the core of his conceptualisation lies the idea that the symbiosis expresses a form of mutual self-definition, where “the ‘other’ – whether as myth or as history, image or enemy, precursor or opponent – had its uses.”⁴² Notions of “the Jew” through the ages, thus, emerge as a symbolic device for thinking about Islam and Muslim identity.

One way in which the significance of Jews and Judaism (and Christianity) within Islam is evident, is in how the Qur’an speaks not only to Muslims, but also directly to Jewish and Christian communities, and in how “The children of Israel” (*Banu Isra’iil*) and “The people of the Book” (*Ahl al-kitab*) are important concepts.⁴³ Approximately ten per cent of the verses (*ayat*) in the Qur’an may be seen as responses to questions and actions related to Jews.⁴⁴ Islam also shares many of the prophets of the earlier Abrahamic traditions; 25 prophets are mentioned in the Qur’an in total, including those not found in the Hebrew Bible. The most prominent prophet in Judaism, Moses, is also considered among the most central prophets in Islam, a category that also includes Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Jesus, in addition to Muhammad – and a large number of others.⁴⁵ More than two dozen narratives featuring the same characters are shared (with some modifications) between the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Qur’an.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the story of Pharaoh’s confrontation with Moses is referenced more than any other narrative in the Qur’an.⁴⁷ However, in terms of narrative structure, the difference between the Qur’an and the previous scriptures of the Abrahamic religions is striking. The Qur’an consists of 114 chapters – or *surahs* – and more than 6,000 verses (*ayat*). The text is organised (largely) according to the length of the *surahs* (starting with the longest), not “chronologically” or in a linear way, unlike the Torah and the Gospels. The *surahs* can be classified as “Meccan” and “Medinan,” according to where

40 Goitein, *Jews and Arabs, Their Contacts Through the Ages*, 130.

41 Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*.

42 Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, 42.

43 See, e.g., the Qur’an 2:40, 2:47, 2:62, 2:122, 3:65–67, 3:71, 3:78, 5:47.

44 Aslan, “The Jews of the Qur’an,” 18.

45 Campanini, *The Qur’an: the basics*, 59.

46 Gregg, *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, xiii.

47 Jeffrey R. Halverson, Jr. Goodall, H.L., and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 28.

Muhammad received the revelations. The Meccan surahs are considered the earlier chapters, revealed before the migration of Muhammad and his followers to Medina (Yathrib) in the year 622. The Qur'an generally provides little narrative content, and a good knowledge of Jewish and Christian narratives is required in order to understand many references and stories in the holy book of Islam. To construct narratives from the non-linear fragments of the Qur'an, one must rely on a wide range of exegetical materials and supplemental sources, including *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegeses) and *hadith* (traditions relating to the life and sayings of Muhammad). Furthermore, the doctrine of abrogation (*naskh*) – i.e., the cancelling of one verse by another, generally the earlier by the later – has influenced interpretations of the Qur'an. The principle can be traced to several verses within the Qur'an itself, particularly 2:106, where the exchange of verses is mentioned explicitly.⁴⁸ Islamic exegetes disagree on which and how many (if any) of the verses should be considered abrogated.⁴⁹

In addition to the shared content of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish revelations, there are similarities in the Islamic and Jewish traditional understanding of the scriptures – as the written word of God revealed through a divinely chosen prophet – and in similar exegetical approaches.⁵⁰ Both Judaism and Islam are sometimes referred to as “religions of law” and have common traits such as certain dietary laws and laws of ritual purity.⁵¹ The doctrinal affinities between Judaism and Islam may be taken to suggest that the origins of differences between adherents of the two religions should be primarily sought elsewhere, e.g. in historical rather than

48 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 35. See also the Qur'an 16:101.

49 The issue may impact the understanding of Islam's relations with other religions, since different Qur'anic verses refer explicitly to other religions and beliefs. According to Campanini, “most exegetes hold that 3:85 (‘whoever chooses [a religion] different than Islam, it will not be accepted’) abrogates 2:62 (‘those who believe, whether they be Jews, Christians or Sabians . . . have their reward in our Lord’), but some have argued that both verses are ‘solid.’” Campanini, *The Qur'an: the basics*, 82. Both verses are slightly abbreviated in Campanini's quotation.

50 See, e.g., Shari L. Lowin and Nevin Reda, “Scripture and Exegesis: Torah and Qur'an in Historical Retrospective,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*.

51 Obviously, similarities between religions and cultures may occur without it being the result of influence of one upon the other. Societal developments and practicalities may suggest similar answers to communities' needs and problems. In the case of shared features in Judaism and Islam, Mansoor mentions similar rules of ritual cleansing before prayer (water, or if necessary, sand) as an example of practices that may be perceived as a sign of Jewish influence on Islam. However, the custom is common in many religions and may be rooted in the external conditions under which both religions were born (i.e., the desert) rather than in doctrinal influences. Mansoor, “Islam and Judaism: Encounters in Medieval Times,” 111.

religious matters.⁵² Lazarus-Yafeh also comments on these similarities, relating the shared traits to the fact that Muslim polemics against Judaism are comparatively less abundant than those against Christianity.⁵³ Nevertheless, a long history of religious polemics between adherents of Judaism and Islam can be identified in the sources, including the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an challenges the Jews to submit to Islam and accept the prophecy of Muhammad.⁵⁴ One example of confrontation relates to the divine unity or the "oneness" of God (*tawhid*), perhaps the most central concept of Islam. Though usually perceived to be a common feature among the Abrahamic religions, the concept of monotheism has also contributed to constructions of difference between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Muslims traditionally emphasise that Islamic monotheism is a more radical monotheism than that of Christianity, which includes the concept of the Trinity.⁵⁵ As in Jewish polemics against Christianity, the argument that Christians are not proper monotheists has often been put forth in Islamic polemics.⁵⁶ To a lesser extent, this charge has also been made against the Jews, and some Qur'anic verses accuse Jews of a kind of polytheism.⁵⁷

The spread of Islam led to an increased interest in other religions that could be encountered within and beyond the boundaries of the Islamic empire. Muslim authors from the earliest centuries showed considerable interest in Judaism. Camilla Adang notes that these authors accorded Judaism a place among the great cultures of their time, and demonstrate that the Islamic treatment of the Jewish religion was not always polemical, rather, descriptions of Judaism, its scriptures, and its beliefs were generally courteous and fair.⁵⁸ The rise of Islam also posed a challenge to the earlier monotheistic religions in the region, each of which claimed possession

52 As suggested by Mansoor, "Islam and Judaism: Encounters in Medieval Times," 105.

53 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 6.

54 Aslan, "The Jews of the Qur'an," 17. See also Saleh, "The Hebrew Bible in Islam."

55 The Qur'an describes Jesus (*Isa*) as the Messiah (*al-Masih*) and messenger (*rasul*, a prophet to whom scripture is revealed) of God. However, he is not considered the son of God; thus, the concept of incarnation in the Christian sense is rejected. See Cyril Glassé, "New Encyclopedia of Islam: A Revised Edition of the Concise Encyclopedia of Islam," (California: Altamira, 2002), 240. See also the Qur'an 4:171, 9:30–31, and 112.

56 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 52.

57 See particularly 9:30, which accuses Jews of worshiping Uzayr (Ezra), and 9:31. Aslan, "The Jews of the Qur'an," 28–29.

58 Adang notes that some of the main voices among them, al-Ya'qubi (d. approx. 292/905), al-Maqdisi (d. after 355/966), al-Masudi (d. 345/956), and al-Biruni (d. 442/1050–51), all appear to have been Shiites, suggesting that what she claims is "the widely held view that Shi'ites are less tolerant towards the Jews than Sunnites" needs reconsideration. Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 252–53. Similarly, pointing to a stream of scholarship within early Jewish-Muslim relations that recognises an affinity between Shiites and Jews, Wasserstrom notes that major Islamic scholars such as Shlomo D. Goitein and Ignaz Goldziher

of the ultimate truth. In this sense, the context that shaped the relationship between early Islam and Judaism bore similarities to the context that shaped relations between early Christianity and Judaism, a central question being how to appropriate the prophetic claims of Judaism while simultaneously defining the new religion in distinction to this heritage. Debates centred on topics such as the authenticity of Muhammad's prophetic claims, whether his mission was mentioned in the Torah, allegations of falsification and corruption of Jewish and Christian scriptures, and the abrogation of pre-Qur'anic laws.⁵⁹ Reactions from adherents of other religions to the question of the authenticity of Muhammad's mission gave rise to a field of literature concerned with "proofs of prophethood."⁶⁰

2.1.2 Early Debates and Proofs of Prophethood

Camilla Adang suggests that the passages in the Qur'an stating Muhammad is mentioned in the Torah reflect the theological challenge Islam represented to the other monotheistic religions from the earliest period, and how Jews of Medina demanded evidence of Muhammad's divine mission.⁶¹ She also points to different perceptions of Judaism and Christianity, where the theological difference with Christianity was viewed by Muslims as greater than that with Judaism.⁶² In a longer historical perspective, Bernard Lewis sees indications that Christian *dhimmi*s were more liable to be subject to suspicion than Jews were, relating this to the fact that for centuries Christendom was the major external enemy of Islam.⁶³

Among the arguments raised by both Christians and Jews against Islam, questioning the status of Muhammad as prophet, was that the advent of Muhammad was not mentioned in earlier scriptures. The Islamic prophet was also criticised for not having performed any miracles. Adang explores how Muslim writers met these demands for confirmation. According to her, they did so by producing a considerable number of testimonies about Muhammad, simultaneously displaying their views on

neglected the possibility of a "Judeo-Shi'ite symbiosis." Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, 93.

59 See, e.g., Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*; Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*; Gordon Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'an* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

60 For more on the development of this literature, see, e.g., Ahmad S. Azmi, "The Development of Dalail Nubuwwa Literature: an Emblem of Interreligious Dialogue in Early Islam," *The Social Sciences* 13 no. 5 (2018); Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 139–91.

61 Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 139.

62 Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 139–40.

63 Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, 60.

the relationship between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The author of the first substantial collection of testimonies about Muhammad's mission was Ibn Rabban.⁶⁴ Almost half of Rabban's *Kitab al-din wa'l-dawla* (The Book of Religion and Empire) from around 855 is concerned with how biblical passages, most notably verses from Isaiah and other parts of the Hebrew Bible, could be taken to refer to the Prophet Muhammad and his mission.⁶⁵ The argument that the Torah had been falsified and thus could not be relied upon may seem to conflict with attempts to extract references to Muhammad from the same source. Different attempts by early Muslim writers to prove the veracity of Muhammad's mission thus display some ambivalence.⁶⁶

2.1.3 The Doctrine of *Tahrif* – Accusations of Scriptural Tampering

A central concept in both Christianity and Islam is the theology of supersession, also called replacement theology or fulfilment theology; i.e., the communities' belief that they fulfil God's previous revelations to other communities. Though recognising the prophets of both Judaism and Christianity as well as the authenticity of earlier revelations, the Islamic version of this theology asserts that God's revelation to Muhammad is the final and complete truth. Furthermore, the Islamic doctrine of *tahrif*, prominent both in classical and modern exegesis, teaches that the scriptures of the earlier Abrahamic religions have either been corrupted, misinterpreted, or lost in the history of Judaism and Christianity. Early Muslim authors and later exegetes reproached Jews and Christians for lacking respect for their religions and accused them of having tampered with their holy writings.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibn Rabban, whose father was a Christian, was devoted to the task of convincing non-Muslims of the truthfulness of Muhammad's mission. Adang refers to Khalil Samir, who shows that Ibn Rabban was originally a Nestorian. See, Khalil Samir, "La réponse 'al-Safi Ibn al-'Assal a la réfutation des chrétiens de 'Ali al-Tabari," *Parole de l'Orient* 11 (1983).

⁶⁵ The full title of Rabban's book is *Kitab al-din wa'l-dawla fi ithbat nubuwwat al-nabi Muhammad, salla' llahu 'alayhi wa-sallam*, or "The Book of Religion and Empire on the Confirmation of the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad, God bless him and grant him salvation." Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 27.

⁶⁶ Besides searching through the Torah, Muslim writers also referred to the content of the Qur'an to defend the claims to prophethood. Adang mentions how writers like Ibn Rabban and al-Tabari argued that the Qur'an, considering both its contents and its stylistic perfection, was a miracle and indication of prophetic authenticity. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 141, 59, 68–70. With reference to Ibn Rabban, *Din wa-Dawla* and to al-Tabari, *Tafsir* I.

⁶⁷ Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 223–48; Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'an*; and John Toland, Henry Laurens, and Gilles Veinstein, *Europe and the Islamic world: A history* (Princeton University Press, 2012), 97–99.

As will be discussed further below, the accusation is common even today and has relevance for contemporary Muslim-Jewish relations.

Accusations of some form of scriptural falsification or misrepresentation are directed against both Christians and Jews, or the “People of the Book,” in the Qur’an, though the criticism is more often aimed at the Jews, or certain wrongdoers among the Jews, not the Christians.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the “tampering verses” (i.e., the verses that contain the verbal form of *taḥrīf* / *yuharrifuna*) are exclusively aimed at the Jews.⁶⁹ The Qur’anic elements function as explanations of contradictions between the earlier Scriptures and the Qur’an and serve to establish that the coming of Muhammad and rise of Islam had been predicted in uncorrupted versions of the Jewish and Christian scriptures.⁷⁰ Adang points to how the Jewish denial of the Qur’anic statement that Muhammad was mentioned in the Torah may have given rise to the accusation that Jews had deliberately misrepresented the word of God.⁷¹ In an effort to base arguments on a critical reading of the holy writings, Muslim writers such as Ibn Rabban al-Tabari (d. approx. 251/865) and Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064) studied the Torah and the Gospels in detail. The early Islamic exegetes expressed views on the pre-Quranic scriptures that ranged from strong accusations of falsifications to evaluations of the Torah as authentic, though abrogated by the new revelation to the Islamic prophet.⁷² Thus, the level and content of the accusations against the Jews have varied greatly throughout history and can be broadly categorised as either con-

68 Gabriel Said Reynolds, “On the Qur’anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (*taḥrīf*) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 2 (2010): 194.

69 The notion of some form of scriptural corruption is present in the Qur’anic verses mentioning Jewish dishonesty and alterations to the word of God. The “tampering verses” include surahs 2:75–79, 4:46, 5:13, and 5:41. Other parts of the Qur’an accuse Jews of confounding truth with falsehood (2:42, 3:71), concealing the truth (3:187, 2:146), hiding passages in the Book (6:91), substituting words (2:59, 7:162), twisting their tongues when reciting the Book (3:78), or combine different accusations (2:42, 3:71, 4:46) Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*. Other surahs refer to how prior revelations have been concealed (e.g., 2:140, 2:159, 2:174, 5:15) and forgotten (7:53, 7:165, and 5:14, referring to the Christians). Reynolds includes an analysis of these.

70 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 19–20.

71 Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 223.

72 Among the early Muslim writers, the term “*taḥrīf*” in some cases suggested inadvertent errors rather than deliberate alterations in the process of translating the words of Moses, Adang mentions Al-Bāqillāni (d. 403/1013). Others had more confidence in the Torah than in the Christian sources due to the translations the latter made from the original. Al-Biruni, a contemporary of Ibn Hazm, argued that the process of translation from the original Hebrew of the Jewish scripture to the Syriac texts of the Christians had altered the meaning of the words. The alterations were described as deliberate, Adang notes. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 235.

veying claims of distortions of the biblical *text* (*taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*) or distortions of the *sense* of the text (*taḥrīf al-ma'āna*).⁷³

In the 11th century, Ibn Hazm further developed the accusations of scriptural corruption. A polemical agenda is clear in his writings on Judaism, and his work is often highlighted among the early exegetes as particularly negative in its judgement of the Jews.⁷⁴ The most important of Ibn Hazm's polemical arguments against the Jews was the claim that they had tampered with the Torah. His *Kitāb al-fīṣal* (in the tract *Izhār*) contains his most elaborate accusations on this issue. In contrast to the milder criticism related to misinterpretation (*taḥrīf al-ma'nā*), Ibn Hazm claimed the texts themselves had been changed (*taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*) and were no longer valid. Ibn Hazm's analysis of the five books of Moses points, among other things, to discrepancies, contradictions, inaccuracies, and blasphemous elements in the texts (anthropomorphisms of God, idolatry, etc.).⁷⁵ The attacks may be understood, at least to some degree, as serving a rhetorical function. Adang notes that a more nuanced impression of Ibn Hazm's approach to Jews can be derived from looking beyond his polemical works, specifically to the legal decisions regarding *dhimmis* in his *Al-Muhalla*, which allow various possibilities for Muslims and *dhimmis* to interact socially.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Ibn Hazm's polemical works have earned the Andalusian author a reputation of disrespecting Judaism, even of antisemitism. Ibn Hazm is mentioned several times in Léon Poliakov's comprehensive work on the history of antisemitism.⁷⁷

Disputes that revolve around accusations of falsification or corruption of scripture are not unique to Islam. Scholars have shown charges of falsification to

73 Walid A. Saleh identifies four different positions taken by medieval scholars regarding the character of the falsification. One position claimed the whole Torah was falsified and nothing of its original divine form was left. A second position suggested the falsification concerned most but not all of the content. A third position claimed only a small part had been falsified, while the fourth maintained the Torah was divine and that only the interpretations were corrupted. Saleh, "The Hebrew Bible in Islam," 413–14.

74 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*; Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*; Haggai Mazuz, "Ibn Ḥazm and Midrash," *Journal of Semitic Studies* LXII, no. 1 (2017).

75 Léon Poliakov compares Ibn Hazm's compilation of contradictions in the Bible to the catalogue Voltaire created centuries later. Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, trans. Richard Howard, 4 vols. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003 [1961]), 42.

76 Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 253–55.

77 However, the references are not unequivocally critical, rather they are often accompanied by approving remarks with regard to Ibn Hazm's biblical knowledge. See Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*.

be part of a popular polemical theme circulating among other religious communities at the time of – and prior to – the rise of Islam, including Jewish-Christian polemics, and in intra-Muslim polemics concerning the status of the Qur’an between Shiite and Sunni scholars in the early centuries of Islam.⁷⁸ However, the topic seems to have become particularly significant with the advent of Islam. Furthermore, the writings against Judaism in the early centuries of Islam are not just a sign of interreligious disputes, but perhaps equally important, they are evidence of ongoing theological debates among Muslims and of the developing Islamic self-identity.⁷⁹ The scepticism of Muslim writers and polemicists regarding the authenticity of earlier scriptures did not prevent them from citing passages from those same scriptures in support of the Islamic revelation, as Christians had done with the Hebrew Bible. Jewish scriptures enjoyed a prestigious position despite accusations of falsifications, and one way to lend authority to religious narratives was to attribute them to the Torah.⁸⁰

78 See, e.g., Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*; Joseph Eliash, “The Šīite Qur’ān: A Reconsideration of Goldziher’s Interpretation,” *Arabica* 16, no. 1 (1969); Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur’an*; Hossein Modarresi, “Early Debates on the Integrity of the Qur’ān: A Brief Survey,” *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993); Ethan Kohlberg and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, eds., *Revelation and Falsification: The Kitāb al-Qira’at of Ahmed b. Muhammad al-Sayyari* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); William St. Claire Tisdall, “Shi’ah additions to the Koran,” *The Muslim World* 3, no. 3 (1913).

79 Accordingly, a significant contribution, such as the work of Ibn Hazm on the abrogation of Mosaic law and the inauthenticity of the Torah, may be interpreted, as suggested by Adang, as aiming not primarily or solely at convincing Jews that their scripture is antiquated but at reminding fellow Muslims that the only valid law is the Islamic sharia based on the Qur’an, the prophetic traditions, and the *ijma* (general consensus). Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 221. An example of how the arguments were addressed to fellow Muslims can be found in the writings of al-Maqdisi: “I have explained all this to you, so that you will not be discouraged when they say that Muhammad is not mentioned in the Torah.” See *Kitāb al-bad’ wa’ l-ta’rikh* [The Book of Creation and History] V, 30 (33), as cited in Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 234.

80 Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur’an*, 16. See also Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*; Mansoor, “Islam and Judaism: Encounters in Medieval Times.” In the material analyzed by Adang, there are also indications that discrepancies in Jewish scriptures were explained as the result of difficulties experienced by the Jews. Adang shows how al-Biruni provided what appears to be a defence of alleged (Jewish) alterations of religious chronology by pointing to how such experiences may have made it difficult to preserve parts of the texts. Describing chronological discrepancies between the Jewish scriptures after the Torah and the *Seder Olam Rabbah*, al-Biruni wrote, “It cannot be thought strange that you should find [chronological] discrepancies with people who have several times suffered so much from captivity and war as the Jews. It is quite natural that they were distracted by other matters from preserving their historical traditions, more particularly at times of such distress [. . .].”

Gordon Nickel explores how the doctrine of corruption of pre-Qur'anic scriptures developed from implying that the meaning had been misinterpreted to the more serious accusation of textual alterations.⁸¹ He attempts to show that the doctrine of *textual* distortion was not originally a Qur'anic notion and notes that "exegetes from the formative period of Qur'anic commentary did not in the first instance understand the words of the Qur'an to mean that Jews and Christians had falsified their scriptures."⁸² Rather, Nickel argues that it emerged at a later stage and remained largely undeveloped until the time of al-Tabari in the 9th–10th centuries, though still not resembling the full-fledged doctrine conveyed in the polemics of Ibn Hazm.⁸³ The majority of the early Muslim writers in Adang's study also subscribed to a mild interpretation of the Qur'anic accusations about tampering with the Torah, the dominant claim among early Muslim authorities such as Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), Ibn Rabban (d. approx. 251/865), and al-Masudi (d. 345/956) being that the tampering was related to Jews (and Christians) having *misinterpreted* or in some way *misrepresented* the content of the revelation, without accusing them of deliberate *textual* distortion.⁸⁴ With the massive commentary work of al-Tabari, the accusation of corruption acquired a more prominent position.⁸⁵ His *Tafsir* records the views of preceding generations of commentators, and suggests that the two understandings of *tahrif* – misinterpretation and textual distortion – existed side-by-side.⁸⁶

In a discussion of whether the dominant understanding of *tahrif* among the pre-modern exegetes was in meaning or wording, Ryan Schaffner criticises the dichotomy outlined by some scholars between a supposed early charge of *tahrif al-ma'nā* (misinterpretation) and a later charge of *tahrif al-naṣṣ* (textual corruption).⁸⁷ Similarly, Martin Accad suggests that as late as the 14th century, the "hardened approach"

Al-Biruni, *Athar*, 78; *Chronology*, 90, as cited in Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 236–37.

81 Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'an*.

82 Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'an*, 13. Nickel's analysis is based on readings of the commentaries of Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d. 150/767) and al-Tabari (d. 310/923).

83 Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'an*, 163.

84 Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 223–48, –51. The writers included in Adang's study are Ibn Rabban (d. approx. 244/855), Ibn Qutayba (b. 213/828), al-Ya'qubi (d. approx. 292/905), al-Tabari (d. 310/923), al-Mas'udi (d. 345/956), al-Maqdisi (d. approx. 355/966), al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013), al-Biruni (d. approx. 442/1050–1051), and Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064).

85 Abu Dja'far Muhammad ibn Djarir al-Tabari's work *Jami al-bayan an ta'wil ay al-Qur'an*, commonly referred to as *Tafsir* [Explanation], is one of the most influential commentaries on the Qur'an.

86 Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 223.

87 Ryan Schaffner, "The Bible through a Qur'anic Filter: Scripture Falsification in 8th- and 9th Century Muslim Disputational Literature" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2016).

of *tahrif al-naṣṣ* was still not the only possible approach to thinking about the Judeo-Christian scriptures.⁸⁸ According to Nickel, the two forms of accusation appear to have continued on their parallel tracks for more than half a millennium, until the mid-19th century, when the accusation of the *tahrif al-naṣṣ* “took a kind of quantum leap through the controversy between Indian Muslim scholars and European Christian missionaries in the India of the British Raj.”⁸⁹ There have also been significant voices defending the Torah in the modern period. Saleh refers to Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–98), whose biblical commentary confirmed “the integrity of the text of the Hebrew Bible, insisting on its prophetic origins and rejecting the common understanding of the notion of *tahrif* (‘falsification’).”⁹⁰

Scholars continue to debate interpretations of the “tampering verses” and the nature of the alleged corruption. Some argue along the lines of “milder forms” of corruption.⁹¹ In an analysis of the verses that refer to some form of misrepresentation, Gabriel S. Reynolds concludes that the Qur’an is principally concerned with *misuse* of scripture: “In none of these examples does the Qur’an insist that passages in the Bible have been rewritten or that books of the Bible have been destroyed and replaced by false scripture. Instead, the Qur’an argues that the revelation has been ignored, misread, forgotten or hidden.”⁹² Similarly, Abdullah Saeed suggests that the disparaging remarks are concerned with (limited to) the “People of the Book” and their actions, and that corruption merely in terms of interpretation does not affect the actual scriptures.⁹³ Others maintain that the majority view among scholars today is that textual corruption of the Jewish and

88 “Theological Deadlocks in the Muslim-Christian Exegetical Discourse of the Medieval Orient,” in *Exegetical Crossroads: Understanding Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Pre-Modern Orient*, ed. Georges Tamer et al. (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 247.

89 Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur’an*, 24.

90 Saleh, “The Hebrew Bible in Islam,” 422.

91 E.g., Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters*, vol. 1 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); Reynolds, “On the Qur’anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (*tahrif*) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic.”; John Burton, “The Corruption of the Scriptures,” *Occasional papers of the school of Abbasid studies* 4 (1994).

92 Reynolds, “On the Qur’anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (*tahrif*) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic,” 193. The Qur’an 2:75, 4:46, 5:13, and 5:41. Reynolds criticises the analysis put forward by Ignaz Goldziher in his article “Ueber muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitâb” from 1878 (*Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 32, no. 2, 341–387). With reference to 5:47, Reynolds also maintains that the Qur’an speaks in support of the Gospel and also assumes that the Christian revelation is still at hand today, and that it seems to echo elements of Christian-Jewish polemics; for example, in 4:156, 5:110, and 61:6. Reynolds, “On the Qur’anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (*tahrif*) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic,” 195–200.

93 Abdullah Saeed, “The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scripture,” *The Muslim World* 92, no. 3–4 (2002): 429–35.

Christian scriptures is a Qur'anic notion and that it goes beyond mere corruption of meaning or other "lesser" forms of tampering.⁹⁴ Moreover, the position that no uncorrupted scriptures remain is perhaps most widely held among Muslims today, as suggested by Saeed, who points to a discrepancy between the modern understanding and that of some major figures of classic *tafsir*.⁹⁵ Similarly, Accad claims, "If you are a Muslim living in the twenty-first century, you take for granted that the scriptures of Jews and Christians have been corrupted (*hurri-fat*)."⁹⁶ Nickel also underlines the continued relevance of the discussion, stating, "The Islamic doctrine of corruption is a common topic of interfaith conversation wherever in the world Muslims meet with Christians and Jews today."⁹⁷ Many interviewees in the current study mentioned that accusations of falsification of scripture were often levelled at Jews by Muslims.

2.1.4 Portrayals of Jews in the Qur'an and Hadith

Representations of Jews within Islamic sources, such as in the Qur'an and hadith, are diverse and multifaceted. Descriptions may appear contradictory, by including parts that on the one hand recognise Jewish chosenness and offer salvation through the Torah, and others that accuse Jews of treachery, (textual) corruption, and the killing of prophets. Portrayals can be seen as conveying ethical lessons or as aiming at preventing misconduct, and are sometimes described as less malicious than images of Jews found in traditional Christian anti-Judaism.⁹⁸ However, the most preva-

94 Walid A. Saleh, "Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'an," *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 28, no. 1 (2016): 102.

95 Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scripture," 419. In addition to al-Tabari, Saeed's study includes the interpretations of Abu 'Abdullah al-Qurtubi (d. 1273), Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), and (the much later) Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966).

96 Martin Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible: The Story of the Islamic Usage of Tahrif," *Theological Review* 24, no. 2 (2003): 67.

97 Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'an*, 1.

98 Ulvi Karagedik, "The Jews and the Hadith: A Contemporary Attempt at a Hermeneutic Interpretation," in *Jewish-Muslim Relations: Historical and Contemporary Interactions and Exchanges*, ed. Ednan Aslan and Margaret Rausch (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 45. As an example of a hadith that contains praise of Jews, Ulvi Karagedik refers to Sahih *Muslim* 2780, which mentions how the sins have been erased from the Children of Israel. He finds another positive (or not solely negative) description in Sahih *al-Bukhari* 3467 ("The Prophet said, 'While a dog was going round a well and was about to die of thirst, an Israeli prostitute saw it and took off her shoe and watered it. So Allah forgave her because of that good deed.'). An example of a complex (or perhaps neutral) description with a moral lesson is Sahih *Muslim* 2964, where three men among the Children of Israel are tested and one of the three passes the test by offering to help (an angel

lent impression seems to be critical, perhaps bearing witness to historical tensions between Jews and Muslims and a need for consolidation among the *umma*.⁹⁹

Perhaps in accordance with the complexity of the material, investigations into representations of Jews in the Islamic religious texts and tradition have been pursued from a variety of approaches. Some underline negative images and religiously based discrimination against Jews, others focus on notions of religious kinship and tolerance, while still others find themselves somewhere in between. References to Jews as either *Banu Isra'il* (Children of Israel) or *al-Yahud* (the Jews) have been seen as indicative of differences in attitude, with a positive context more typical in the former case and a negative in the latter.¹⁰⁰ The Qur'an also refers to Jewish scholars, legal experts, and leaders in an honorary way.¹⁰¹ A negative connotation is related to the Qur'anic phrase "al-dhillah wa-al-maskana" ("humiliation and wretchedness"), which according to Harkabi frequently is used in Islamic references to Jews.¹⁰² Whether positive or negative, when addressing or referring to Jews, descriptions in the Qur'an generally take a collective form. As noted by Farid Esack, "When individual differences are pointed out, it is usually on the basis of most Jews straying from the straight path and a select few remaining faithful."¹⁰³ However, due to these exceptions, the condemnation does not necessarily appear universal or eternal.¹⁰⁴ Among both classical and modern

disguised as) a poor helpless man. See also Jonathan Judaken, "So What's New? Rethinking the 'New Antisemitism' in a Global Age," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 4–5 (2008): 541.

99 This point is made by, among others, Esther Webman, "From the Damascus Blood Libel to the 'Arab Spring': The Evolution of Arab Antisemitism," *Antisemitism Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017); Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*; Suha Taji-Farouki, "A Contemporary Construction of the Jews in the Qur'an: A Review of Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi's *Banu Isra'il fi al-Qur'an wa al-Sunna* and Afif Abd al-Fattah Tabbara's *Al-yahud fi al-Qur'an*," in *Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics*, ed. Ronald L. Nettler and Suha Taji-Farouki (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998); Armin Pfahl-Traughber, "Antisemitismus als Import?," *Tribüne* 45 (2006).

100 Farid Esack, "The Portrayal of Jews and the Possibilities for Their Salvation in the Qur'an," in: *Between Heaven and Hell*, ed. Mohammad Hassan Khalil (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

101 As *Aḥbar* or *Rabbāniyyūn*. Aslan, "The Jews of the Qur'an," 19.

102 Harkabi, "Contemporary Arab Anti-Semitism: its Causes and Roots," 414–15; a discussion of this phrase is also found in Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*. 95. See the Qur'an 2:61. See also the Qur'an 3:112 and 42:45.

103 Esack, "The Portrayal of Jews and the Possibilities for Their Salvation in the Qur'an," 7.

104 Nuances are expressed even in relation to some of the most critical parts, such as the infamous "pigs and apes" verses, where God appears to punish Jews by turning them into pigs and apes. The harsh dismissal of those who violate the Sabbath is followed by exceptions for the righteous among them (see the Qur'an 2:64–65, 5:57–60, and 7:166). The Qur'an thus often charges the sinners among the Jews, not Jews (or Christians) as such, one could argue. See Esack, "The Portrayal of Jews and the Possibilities for Their Salvation in the Qur'an.," see also Gudrun Krämer, "Anti-Semitism in the Muslim World. A Critical Review," *Die Welt des Islams* 46, no. 3 (2006): 270.

exegetes, some have maintained that negative portrayals are concerned with describing and criticising inner qualities, such as obstinacy or betrayal, not Jews or Christians as people.¹⁰⁵

The Meccan surahs bear similarities to Jewish and Christian lore and are usually seen as less polemical against contemporary Judaism, though conveying a critical view of the ancient Israelites' opposition to earlier prophets. The difference between the Meccan and Medinan surahs may be interpreted as reflecting Muhammad's personal meetings with Jews. While he according to tradition met individual Jews in and around Mecca, his migration to Medina in 622 led to encounters with powerful Jewish tribes.¹⁰⁶ The migration (the *Hijra*) represented the beginning of Muhammad's position as political and military leader. Though significant numbers of Jews seem to have recognised the Qur'an and the new prophet, Jews also challenged Muhammad politically and did not accept his claims to prophethood.¹⁰⁷ Muhammad fought the Jews militarily; within a few years of the migration, he had conquered the Jewish tribes of Arabia and adaptations to Judaism were reversed. "This rapidly shifting situation necessarily provoked a rich variety of Jewish responses," Wasserstrom suggests.¹⁰⁸ In the Islamic tradition, the narrative of the Battle of Khaybar is a well-known reference where the central theme is Jewish deceit. The narrative describes how a small army led by Muhammad fought and conquered Jewish tribes who had betrayed the alliance known as the Constitution of Medina.¹⁰⁹

105 See, e.g., Hakan Çoruh, "Friendship between Muslims and the People of the Book in the Qur'an with special reference to Q 5.51," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 23, no. 4 (2012).

106 This difference is discussed in Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 110–139. See also Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House. A History of Jews in Muslim Lands*.

107 Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, 51. See also Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 15. The Qur'an 2:89 relates the Jewish rejection of the Islamic revelation. A special case was the Jewish Isawiyya sect, followers of Abu 'Isa al-Isbahani, who acknowledged the mission of Muhammad (and Jesus), while denying that his scripture had abrogated the Torah, as claimed by the Muslims. The sect was not an ephemeral aberration; rather, it spread throughout the "Islamicate" world and survived at least 300 years, possibly up to 500 years. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, 89. Adang examines some of the arguments put forward both by Muslim writers, such as al-Baqillani, and by Jewish writers, such as the Karaite al-Qirqisani, against the Isawiyya. See, Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 180–182, 202–203.

108 Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, 51.

109 For an analysis of this story, see Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 67–80. Sahih *al-Bukhari* 4249 and 4428 describe how Muhammad thought the Jews of Khaybar had poisoned him and that he could have died. Karagedik, "The Jews and the Hadith: A Contemporary Attempt at a Hermeneutic Interpretation," 38.

Hostile descriptions of Jews such as those found in the hadith may be seen as primarily reflecting early Muslims' perceptions of Jews and Jewish tribes from the time of Muhammad, not as a rejection of Judaism, although "political tensions quickly became religious."¹¹⁰ Lazarus-Yafeh notes, "According to Ibn Hazm, early Muslim victories over the Jewish tribes in Arabia also constitute a clear historical proof of God's wish to abrogate Judaism."¹¹¹ David Nirenberg argues that the prophetic material presented in the Qur'an and in the stories about the Prophet Muhammad's life become mutually intelligible through the creation of a "narrative of confrontation" between the prophecy and its adversaries, who are often given a "Jewish" face.¹¹² He nevertheless identifies certain notable differences between the traditional material on Muhammad's life and teachings and the Qur'an concerning the representation of Jews, pointing particularly to how the traditional material is concerned with Islamic sovereignty and political manifestations of that sovereignty. By presenting the political aspirations of Islam through stories of Jewish opposition, the traditional material of the hadith is tenser and more violent in its descriptions than the Qur'an (and thus offers a more forceful reference for current anti-Jewish agitation).

The question of the relation between the Qur'an and the political and social environments at the time, between text and context, may seem closely connected to the theological question of the origin of the Qur'an itself. Islamic approaches to the Qur'an today include methods that highlight contextualisation and historicisation, but also methods such as the one professed by the reformist Salafi (Salafiyya) movement, which emphasise the sacred nature of the text and the moment of revelation, thus reducing its historical flexibility.¹¹³ While major exegetical trends in Islam express an awareness of the cultural distance between the modern world and the time of the revelations, the central idea of Salafism is that the most authentic expression of Islam can be found in the early generation of Muslims (the Salaf) who were closest in time and proximity to the Prophet Muhammad. A notion of the Qur'an and hadith that emphasises the historical contexts of the narratives (and thus implicitly the absence of a universal and eternal condemnation of Jews) may contribute to less polemical interpretations of the multifaceted – and, in part, strongly negative –

¹¹⁰ As argued by Karagedik, "The Jews and the Hadith: A Contemporary Attempt at a Hermeneutic Interpretation," 39.

¹¹¹ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 37.

¹¹² Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, 164.

¹¹³ A discussion of these approaches can be found in, e.g., Massimo Campanini, *The Qur'an: Modern Muslim Interpretations*, trans. Caroline Higgitt (New York: Routledge, 2013). See also, Campanini, *The Qur'an: the basics*, 102.

descriptions of Jews.¹¹⁴ However, from a traditional Islamic perspective, references to the historicity of the Qur'an may be seen as putting its sacred nature in danger.¹¹⁵ The different reassessments of the *Isra'iliyyat* literature may further illustrate the complex history of Muslim-Jewish intellectual traditions.

2.1.5 Islamic Approaches to the *Isra'iliyyat* Literature

The *Isra'iliyyat* literature usually refers to early texts attributed by Muslim scholars to Jewish sources, though the term may also refer to “foreign elements,” i.e., narratives derived from other religions, such as Christianity or Zoroastrianism. The presence of *Isra'iliyyat* constitutes an example of the traditional Islamic-Jewish cultural interaction and symbiosis, which, in the words of Ronald L. Nettler, “[i]mplicitly overrode the built-in monotheistic exclusivism on both sides.”¹¹⁶ Classical Islam in its Sunni traditions allowed large amounts of *Isra'iliyyat* material to be absorbed within the Islamic “canonical” textual tradition.¹¹⁷ In contrast to most pre-modern *tafsir*, modern Islamic thought has sometimes considered the *Isra'iliyyat* material as suspicious, alien, and even subversive. This repudiation of the *Isra'iliyyat* is part of a broader tendency to reject the use of extra-Qur'anic texts to interpret the Qur'an.¹¹⁸ A conception that gave rise to this reassessment of the *Isra'iliyyat* was the modern idea that Islam is a “religion of reason.” The new rationalist approach was inspired by the European Enlightenment and claimed there could not be any contradiction between modern science and the Holy Scriptures. While the understanding of the *Isra'iliyyat* literature among early Muslim scholars seemed to underline a continuity and interconnection between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,

114 See, e.g., Afridi, *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes*; Aslan, “The Jews of the Qur'an.”; Esack, “The Portrayal of Jews and the Possibilities for Their Salvation in the Qur'an.”

115 Campanini, *The Qur'an: the basics*, 124.

116 Ronald L. Nettler, “Early Islam, Modern Islam and Judaism: The *Isra'iliyyat* in Modern Islamic Thought,” in *Muslim-Jewish Encounters Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics*, 3.

117 Scholars often refer to legends about the prophets, Qisas al-anbiya, as a subcategory within the *Isra'iliyyat*. See, e.g., Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 8–11, 13–15. In addition to *tafsir* and the hadith, Qisas al-anbiya' also became ingredients in historical writings. Adang notes that historical accounts of Muhammad's life often began with a discussion of his precursors among the Israelite prophets. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 15.

118 An intention that has not always been followed; Hugh S. Galford shows how Sayyid Qutb, despite his negative views on the *Isra'iliyyat* literature, indirectly makes use of the material by referring to information that only occurs there and not in the Qur'an. Hugh S Galford, “Sayyid Qutb and the Qur'anic Story of Joseph: A Commentary for Today,” in *Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Intellectual Traditions & Modern Politics*, 49.

this modern “rationalist” shift involved identifying a trend of “irrationality” in the *Isra’iliyyat*.¹¹⁹ The new perception understood the fantastic *Isra’iliyyat* stories as deliberate attempts to mislead, as evidence of conspiracies and deceit and anti-Islamic sentiments directed against Arab-Islamic conquerors. This change developed in several stages; an early progenitor of this form of *tafsir* was historian Ismail ibn Kathir (d. 1373). Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), his disciple Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1935), and Mahmoud Abu Rayya (d. 1970) are some of the central advocates of later “rationalist” views.¹²⁰ In the book *Adwa’ al al-sunna al-muhammadiyya* (Lights on Muhammad’s Sunna) from 1958, Egyptian religious scholar Abu Rayya criticised the hadith, claiming many supposedly authentic parts were in fact Jewish lore attributed to Muhammad.¹²¹ Jonathan Brown shows how Abu Rayya argued that “only the Qur’an, reason and unquestionably reliable and massively transmitted hadiths” were originally meant to constitute the basis of Islam.¹²²

Nettler suggests that the negative focus on *Isra’iliyyat* initially was intra-Islamic and thus reflected internal Islamic reform and a broader endeavour to reconsider Islamic thought in a modern context rather than primarily a concern with “Jewish” matters. References to Jews are made in an abstract, intellectual, but increasingly engaged way, he notes.¹²³ However, later developments, particularly through the work of Abu Rayya, moved the understanding in a direction that essentialized Jews and promoted an image with relevance for external, contemporary affairs. From the modern Islamic quest for the *essential Islam* thus emerged the idea of the *essential Jew*, beyond any historicising and moderating categories. Islamist thinkers have probably been the most significant contributors to similar essentialist notions of Jews.¹²⁴

119 An analysis of this shift can be found in Nettler, “Early Islam, Modern Islam and Judaism: The *Isra’iliyyat* in Modern Islamic Thought,” 5.

120 Nettler and Taji-Farouki, *Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics*; see also Campanini, *The Qur’an: the basics*.

121 Jonathan Brown, “Scripture in the modern Muslim world: the Quran and Hadith,” in *Islam in the Modern World*, ed. Jeffrey T. Kenney and Ebrahim Moosa (New York: Routledge, 2014).

122 Brown, “Scripture in the modern Muslim world: the Quran and Hadith,” 21.

123 Nettler, “Early Islam, Modern Islam and Judaism: The *Isra’iliyyat* in Modern Islamic Thought,” 11.

124 An important voice being the influential Islamist ideologue Sayyid Qutb. Though displaying some degree of equivocation regarding the *Isra’iliyyat*, Qutb’s works *Our Struggle with the Jews* (early 1950s) and *Milestones* (1964) convey clearly negative and conspiratorial portrayals of Jews and the West as anti-Islamic. Claims about Jewish monotheism—or rather, the repudiation of such—are contained in his commentary on the Qur’an. Qutb outlines a distinctly negative development and historical decline with respect to monotheistic beliefs, from the time of the early Jews (*Banu Isra’id*), who first spread the belief, to contemporary Zionists, who allegedly work to eradicate all traces of monotheism. Galford, “Sayyid Qutb and the Qur’anic Story of Joseph: A Commentary for Today,” 50, 60. Evin Ismail centers antisemitism and its interconnected anti-Shiism at the core of

2.1.6 New Contexts for Interpretations of Muslim-Jewish Relations

Interpretations relating portrayals of Jews in the Qur'an and hadith to understandings of the Arab-Israeli conflict represent recent exchanges between text and context.¹²⁵ Gudrun Krämer notes that developments including the rise of Zionism, the establishment of the State of Israel, and its repeated victories over Arab ("Muslim") armies in the twentieth century, "changed the frame of reference for Muslim authors writing with the explicit aim of presenting the Islamic position on Judaism and the Jews."¹²⁶ Where traditional exegesis, as we have seen, included diverse approaches to the investigation of "Jews" and "Jewish elements" in Islam, including thorough textual analysis and source criticism in the study of the *Isra'iliyyat*, the Arab-Israeli conflict has fed into readings that focus on the solely negative aspects and reinforce essentialising tendencies. Another tendency in contemporary anti-Jewish polemics is that references frequently combine traditional religious sources and non-Islamic Western authors and texts, including references to well-known European antisemitic sources.¹²⁷ Some of the texts that have been significant in this development are also texts that since the Holocaust have lost credibility and find themselves outside of mainstream discourse in Europe. Examples include Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and the 20th-century forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, both of which are widely distributed in the Middle East and are significant references for Islamist antisemitism.¹²⁸ As Olivier Roy has pointed out, the antisemitism of Islamic radical movements today in many cases has more in common with secular European antisemitism than with traditional Islamic anti-Judaism.¹²⁹

Islamist ideology and use of violence. Evin Ismail, "The Antisemitic Origins of Islamist Violence: A Study of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic State" (PhD diss., Uppsala University, 2022).

125 See, e.g., Taji-Farouki, "A Contemporary Construction of the Jews in the Qur'an: A Review of Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi's *Banu Isra'il fi al-Qur'an wa al-Sunna* and ' Afif' Abd al-Fattah Tabbara's *Al-yahud fi al-Qur'an*."

126 Krämer, "Anti-Semitism in the Muslim World. A Critical Review," 267–68.

127 For example, Egyptian Islamic scholar Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi's references range from Karl Marx (*On the Jewish Question*) to the works of Arnold Toynbee, Golda Meir, Chaim Weizman, and Adolf Hitler (*Mein Kampf*); 'Afif 'Abd al-Fattah Tabbara cites *Mein Kampf*, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Israel Wolfson's *History of the Jews in the Arab World*, and Will Durant's *The Story of Civilization*. Taji-Farouki, "A Contemporary Construction of the Jews in the Qur'an: A Review of Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi's *Banu Isra'il fi al-Qur'an wa al-Sunna* and ' Afif' Abd al-Fattah Tabbara's *Al-yahud fi al-Qur'an*," 19.

128 Afridi, *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes*, 155; Esther Webman, "Arab Antisemitic Discourse: Importation, Internalisation, and Recycling," in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism*, 165.

129 Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), 49.

Central features of Christian anti-Judaism and modern European antisemitism entered the Middle East in several stages through contact with Europe. Esther Webman describes how manifestations of ideological hostility toward Jews were the products of modernity, appearing already in the nineteenth century – before the emergence of Zionism – as a result of increasing European political and cultural penetration of the Middle East.¹³⁰ One example of this ideological influx is the accusation of ritual murder, or the myth of the blood libel, a frequent anti-Jewish charge in the European Middle Ages.¹³¹ This antisemitic canard was introduced to the region from Europe in the 19th century, promoted by European missionaries and foreign diplomats.¹³²

2.2 Contemporary Manifestations of Antisemitism among Muslims

Contemporary perceptions of Jews and antisemitic attitudes among Muslims have become an increasingly significant subject of research and debate in Europe in the last decades. Public discourse on these issues presumably has an impact on individuals and may affect relations between the minorities. Interviewees in the current study often commented on these debates, and investigations into antisemitism among European Muslims provide a backdrop for the present study. Sur-

130 Webman, “From the Damascus Blood Libel to the ‘Arab Spring’: The Evolution of Arab Antisemitism,” 160.

131 The blood libel accuses Jews of murdering Christians in order to use their blood in ritual ceremonies. The accusation was particularly widespread in the Middle Ages and has historically been a cause of persecution of Jews in many European countries. The first known example of the accusation occurred in Norwich, England, in 1144, when the death of a young boy named William was attributed to the Jewish community. The accusation has reappeared numerous times through the centuries, including in the Middle East. See, e.g., Webman, “From the Damascus Blood Libel to the ‘Arab Spring’: The Evolution of Arab Antisemitism.” The best-known example in modern times is probably what is known as the Damascus Affair, when in 1840 more than a dozen members of the Jewish community in Damascus were arrested, accused of having killed Padre Tommaso, a Roman Catholic monk. Tommaso had visited the Jewish quarter of Damascus the day of his disappearance and rumours about ritual murder began to spread in the city’s Christian quarters. Four people were tortured to death by the Egyptian authorities during the process, which had widespread repercussions. Jonathan Frankel, “‘Ritual Murder’ in the Modern Era: The Damascus Affair of 1840,” *Jewish Social Studies* 3, no. 2 (1997).

132 Krämer, “Anti-Semitism in the Muslim World. A Critical Review,” 255; Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 194–95. Christians also made the first Arabic translations of the *Protocols*, the first attested publication being in a Catholic journal in Jerusalem in 1926. Krämer, “Anti-Semitism in the Muslim World. A Critical Review,” 257.

veys on attitudes towards Jews among Muslims have been conducted in many countries, though there is still a lack of representative and comparative studies. Quantitative surveys provide general overviews of the complex field of Muslim-Jewish relations and attitudes in contemporary Europe. The following chapter presents some trends within this research and discusses some difficulties related to survey methods and the measuring of complex phenomena such as attitudes.

Antisemitic constructions can be divided into different analytical categories, depending on the characteristics and scope of the ideas in question. In his work on the definition of antisemitism, Gavin Langmuir distinguishes between perceptions that are “chimeric” – i.e., that have no connection to the real world – and others that can be regarded as “xenophobic” or also more “realistic,” either by virtue of being generalisations stemming from individuals’ actions or by being based on actual situations and observations of a group’s features.¹³³ According to Langmuir’s terminology, xenophobic perceptions are assertions that contain some “kernel of truth” but suppress differences within the group and include perceptions of an extrinsic threat as their driving force. “The subject of a xenophobic assertion is not the out-group; it is a felt social menace,” he states.¹³⁴ Langmuir reserves his use of the term “antisemitism” to chimeric perceptions of Jews, such as the belief that Jews committed ritual murder of Christian children and the myth of Jewish world domination. His reasoning for this is that these are specifically anti-Jewish perceptions, whereas xenophobic perceptions of Jews are not essentially different from hostile perceptions of other groups. His definition thus excludes ideas that arguably have had significant impact in the history of antisemitism, such as canards related to Jewish international capitalism. The definition is also narrower than definitions often employed in research on antisemitism, where the focus is on parallels between antisemitism and racism, or correlations between different forms of group-focused enmity.¹³⁵ In what follows, I will mainly rely on Helen Fein’s definition of antisemitism, which underlines how antisemitism can be understood as a “latent structure of hostile beliefs,” manifested in different forms, in cultural expressions, in prejudice and attitudes among people, and in actions, sometimes including violent acts.¹³⁶ However, Lang-

133 Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, 311–352.

134 Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, 330.

135 See, e.g., Andreas Zick, Beate Küpper, and Andreas Hövermann, *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination: A European Report* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2011).

136 Fein’s definition reads: “[Antisemitism is] a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs towards Jews as a collectivity, manifested in individuals as attitudes, and in culture as myth, ideology, folklore and imagery, and in actions—social or legal discrimination, political mobilization against the Jews, and collective or state violence—which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace, or destroy Jews as Jews.” Helen Fein, ed., *The Persisting Question: Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Antisemitism*, 67.

muir's categorisation is fruitful for highlighting nuances between different types of perceptions and for investigating their function or motivation. This distinction may also be applied to studies of Islamophobic ideology. Similarly to constructions of "Jews," constructions of "Muslims" may constitute expressions of predominantly abstract – though no less threatening – images or may refer to perceptions of concrete societal threats. Similarities and differences between antisemitism and Islamophobia, as well as between Jewish and Muslim experiences, have increasingly become a subject of research in Norway in recent years and constitute one of the central topics of the current study.

2.2.1 Surveys on Antisemitism among Muslims

Findings from population surveys have revealed widespread antisemitic prejudice among Muslim respondents in Europe compared with the general population.¹³⁷ The Norwegian surveys measured the prevalence of prejudice by asking respondents to share their opinion of a list of statements expressing stereotypical notions commonly found in the history of European antisemitism, including statements on Jewish power, particularism, and economic influence.¹³⁸ Results from 2022 showed

¹³⁷ Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2015*; Bachner and Bevelander, *Antisemitism i Sverige: En jämförelse av attityder och föreställningar 2005 och 2020*; Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*; Jikeli, *Antisemitic Attitudes among Muslims in Europe: A Survey Review*; Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2019*; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*. The report by Jikeli includes data from the Pew Research Center and the Anti-Defamation League and other cross-country surveys in Europe in addition to several national surveys. A comprehensive survey on antisemitism in France is discussed in detail (Reynié, 2014). See also a cross-country study conducted in 2016/2017 in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom: Feldman, *Antisemitism and Immigration in Western Europe Today. Is there a connection? Findings and recommendations from a five-nation study*. A British population survey conducted in 2016/2017: Daniel L. Staetsky, *Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain. A study of attitudes towards Jews and Israel*, (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2017); Staetsky, *Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain. A study of attitudes towards Jews and Israel*. The Swedish population surveys conducted in 2005 and 2003/2009 (youth surveys): Henrik Bachner and Jonas Ring, *Antisemitiska attityder och föreställningar i Sverige*, Forum för levande historia (Stockholm, 2006); Pieter Bevelander and Mikael Hjerm, "The Religious Affiliation and Anti-Semitism of Secondary School age Swedish Youths: an Analysis of Survey Data from 2003 and 2009," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 15 (2015).

¹³⁸ The six statements included in the antisemitism index were: "Jews consider themselves to be better than others," "Jews have too much influence on the global economy," "World Jewry is working behind the scenes to promote their own interests," "Jews have always caused problems in the countries they live in," "Jews have enriched themselves at the expense of others," and "Jews largely have themselves to blame for being persecuted."

that the Muslim respondents supported the stereotypical statements three times as often as the general population (26,8% with a high score compared with 9.3%, respectively).¹³⁹ Prejudice in the general population had decreased since 2011 (from an average of 12.1%), reflecting a broader tendency in Western Europe.¹⁴⁰ A slight decrease in prejudice was also measured in the Muslim sample between 2017 and 2022.¹⁴¹ The Muslim samples consisted of self-identified Muslims aged between 18 and 75, of immigrant background (immigrants and Norwegian-born citizens with immigrant parents) with a minimum of five years' residence in Norway.¹⁴² The surveys were the first on antisemitism in Norway to include separate Muslim samples. The surveys also included immigrant respondents who did not identify as Muslim. These respondents constituted a separate sample (termed "others") in the analyses. Results showed a significant difference between respondents in the two samples, with markedly more prevalent negative attitudes among the respondents who identified as Muslim.¹⁴³ The composition of both samples was highly diverse in terms of country background and religiosity, and presumably in terms of other factors, such as their reasons for immigrating to Norway. These factors may have had a bearing on the results.

The anti-hate organisation Anti-Defamation League has conducted comparative surveys on antisemitism among Muslims in Europe, documenting widespread negative attitudes among Muslims. Results from 2014 showed that an average of 24% of the general population in Western Europe had high scores on the antisemitism index compared with an average of 55% in the Western European Muslim oversample one year later.¹⁴⁴ Acceptance of antisemitic stereotypes was also substantially

139 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 41–42.

140 See also ADL, *Global 100 Survey 2015*; Pew Research Center, *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Half or more in all European Countries Surveyed have a Favorable View of Jews* (2019); Bachner and Bevelander, *Antisemitism i Sverige: En jämförelse av attityder och föreställningar 2005 och 2020*; Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2017* (2017).

141 Results in 2017 showed 28,9 with a high score among the Muslims in 2017. Results were stable between 2017 and 2022 in the general population. In 2017, 8,3% in the general population had high scores on prejudice. Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 46. See also, Bergmann, "How Do Jews and Muslims in Norway Perceive Each Other? Between Prejudice and the Willingness to Cooperate."

142 N=586 in 2017 and 821 in 2022. The countries of origin were Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Iran, Kosovo, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Somalia, and Turkey.

143 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 46–49; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 41–44.

144 Measured by the percentage of respondents supporting at least six out of eleven antisemitic stereotypes. Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2014* (2014), 6; Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2015*, 43. The figures for Western Europe provided the following scores on the antisemitism index: in the UK, 54% high score among Muslims, 12% among the national sample; in Germany, 56% among Muslims, 16% in the national sample; in France, 49% among Muslims, 17% in

more common among the Muslim sample than among the national populations in the 2019 update.¹⁴⁵ However, the update also found that prejudice among Muslims had decreased significantly in five of the six countries surveyed – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain (results remained the same in the UK).

Both the ADL surveys and other comparative surveys have also shown that negative attitudes towards Jews are widespread in countries with a Muslim majority and that figures are especially high in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁴⁶ While the average level of antisemitism among Muslim respondents in the Middle East and North Africa was 74% and the average for Christians was 64%, levels in Europe were significantly lower in both groups.¹⁴⁷ These findings may indicate that region is more important than religious affiliation in determining antisemitic prejudice, with differences between regions being more pronounced than differences between respondents of various religious affiliations. Still, the two Muslim countries Indonesia and Malaysia also have relatively high scores on antisemitism, suggesting that factors such as religious affiliation or cultural orientation do have an impact on the development of attitudes.¹⁴⁸ As shown above, this is also indicated in the Norwegian surveys. Other European studies have found significant differences between Christian and Muslim respondents.¹⁴⁹

Widespread antisemitism in countries outside of Europe may suggest a problem related to the “importation” of such attitudes to European countries through immigration. A study commissioned by the German EVZ-foundation (Erinnerung, Verantwortung and Zukunft) in 2018 investigated the possible connection between immigration, particularly from the Middle East and North Africa, and antisemitism in five Western European countries.¹⁵⁰ The country reports confirmed

the national sample; in Belgium, 68% in the Muslim sample, 21% in the national sample; in Italy, 56% versus 29%; in Spain, 62% versus 29% (for details on the method, see Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2015*, 3–4).

145 See Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2019*. <https://global100.adl.org/about/2019/>.

146 See, e.g., Pew, *Pew Global Attitudes Project: The Great Divide – How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other* (2006). <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2006/06/22/the-great-divide-how-westerners-and-muslims-view-each-other/>; Pew Research Center, *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Unfavorable Views of Jews and Muslims on the Increase in Europe* (2008), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2008/09/17/chapter-1-views-of-religious-groups/>.

147 ADL, *Global 100 Survey 2014*, 9.

148 With 48 and 61% respectively, compared with an average of 22% in Asia.

149 See, e.g., Ruud Koopmans, “Religious fundamentalism and hostility against out-groups: A comparison of Muslims and Christians in Western Europe,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015).

150 Feldman, *Antisemitism and Immigration in Western Europe Today. Is there a connection? Findings and recommendations from a five-nation study*. The five countries surveyed were Belgium,

disproportionately high levels of antisemitic attitudes among Muslim minorities but showed no significant connection between recent immigration and the extent or character of antisemitism in Western European countries.¹⁵¹

Surveys also point to some differences with regard to support for specific perceptions among the Muslim population compared with the general population. In the Norwegian surveys, the Muslim samples scored particularly high on perceptions of Jewish power but had similar scores as the general population with respect to perceptions of Jewish responsibility for antisemitism.¹⁵² The latter may be seen as an indication of shared minority experiences between Jews and Muslims and a subsequent understanding and recognition of mechanisms whereby minorities are seen as the reason for negative attitudes. The surveys conducted by the Anti-Defamation League point to a similar pattern and some regional differences concerning distribution of support for stereotypical statements. Statements concerning Jewish power (either financial or connected to the media or global affairs) had almost equally high levels of support among Muslims in Western Europe as in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁵³ This was not the case with statements about “Jewish” characteristics and responsibility for antisemitism. For example, statements claiming Jews think they are better than others or that the reason for negative attitudes is to be found in the way Jews behave, were supported significantly more often among Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa (in 2014) than among Western European Muslims (in 2015).¹⁵⁴

France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The study was conducted in 2016/2017, led by the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, Birkbeck, University of London.

151 Feldman, *Antisemitism and Immigration in Western Europe Today. Is there a connection? Findings and recommendations from a five-nation study*, 22–23.

152 30% of respondents in the Muslim sample in 2022 supported the statement “World Jewry is working behind the scenes to promote Jewish interests” (compared with 14% of the general population) and 43% supported that “Jews have far too much influence on the global economy” (again compared with 14% of the general population). Conversely, the proportion that rejected these ideas was significantly smaller among the Muslims than among the general population. At the same time, the two statements “Jews have always caused problems in the countries in which they live” and “Jews largely have themselves to blame for being persecuted” were supported by 17% and 12% in the Muslim sample respectively, compared with 10% and 8% in the general population. Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 34–37. The same tendency was found in 2017. Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 32–33.

153 The statement “Jews have too much power in international financial markets” was supported by 70% of Western European Muslims and 72% of Muslim respondents in MENA (Middle East and North Africa). For the statement “Jews have too much control over the global media,” figures were 59% for Western European Muslims and 68% for Muslims in MENA. The statement “Jews have too much control over global affairs” received support from 59% of Muslims in Western Europe and 68% in MENA. Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2015*, 41.

154 Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2015*, 41.

Attitudes towards Jews are also reflected in views on the Holocaust, Holocaust commemoration, and Holocaust education. Again, survey results point to some regional differences. In the surveys from the Anti-Defamation League, the only statement where levels of support were higher among Muslims in Europe than in the Middle East and North Africa was one claiming Jews talk too much about the Holocaust.¹⁵⁵ Muslim respondents in Europe were more aware of the Holocaust as a historical fact and much less prone to Holocaust denial, although levels related to denial were significantly higher than among the general population.¹⁵⁶ Low levels of explicit Holocaust denial and support for the importance of Holocaust education have been found both among the general population and among Muslims in national European studies.¹⁵⁷ When discussing antisemitism in the Middle East or among immigrants from the Middle East, it is important to consider differences related to the historical impact of the Holocaust, which in Europe rendered public expressions of antisemitism taboo after 1945. A desire for social acceptance may lead respondents to give inaccurate answers to questions dealing with sensitive issues (this is known as social-desirability bias). Differences in the measured incidence of antisemitic attitudes may to some extent result from this fact.

The strength of quantitative surveys is, among other things, the possibility to provide (relatively) objective and replicable measures of a phenomenon and to reach generalized conclusions. Quantitative analysis also assesses causality by measuring correlations between variables. However, quantitative studies have some notable limitations when it comes to dealing with complex matters such as the formation and social contexts of attitudes. The ostracism of antisemitic expressions and the strong norm of anti-antisemitism in post-Holocaust European society makes measuring antisemitic prejudice particularly difficult.¹⁵⁸ Social sanctions against antisemitism have influenced both theoretical concepts and explanations within antisemitism

155 57% of Western European Muslims and 30% in MENA responded “probably true” to the statement “Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust.” Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2015*, 41.

156 Among Muslims in Europe, 25% had never heard of the Holocaust, compared with 59% in MENA, and 31% among European Muslims scored high on Holocaust denial compared with 64% in MENA. Figures in the national samples (general population) were below 10% in all six countries polled except Spain, where results showed 14%. Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2015*, 43, 45.

157 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 35; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 39; Dominique Reynié, *L’antisémitisme dans l’opinion publique française: nouveaux éclairages* (Fondation pour l’innovation politique, 2014).

158 See, e.g., Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, “Kommunikationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung. Theoretische Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 38, no. 2 (1986).

research, but have only partially affected methodological considerations, such as how to obtain valid measures of antisemitic attitudes.¹⁵⁹ Ambiguity may also be engendered by the very nature of attitudes, which can be more or less (un)conscious. Respondents may be uncertain of their views or not used to reflecting upon them to the extent that a questionnaire demands. In addition to the subject matter, the distribution of responses to a specific question will depend on the wording and the response options provided.¹⁶⁰ More valid measures of complex phenomena that cannot be captured by a single question may be obtained by the use of indices, combining questions with related content; still, it is difficult to avoid some degree of arbitrariness in the process of analysis.¹⁶¹ Methodological problems also relate to how surveys use different scales and survey questions, making comparison difficult. Furthermore, and importantly in the present context, methodological challenges and choices made in terms of research design may affect results in general population surveys and Muslim minority surveys differently. One example is the antisemitism index in the surveys conducted by the Anti-Defamation League, where as many as five of the eleven statements are concerned with the issue of Jewish power and international influence. Instead of being a list of different stereotypical notions, these five statements thus essentially measure the same stereotype.¹⁶² This may have caused the level of respondents with a high score on the index to be over-assessed (with more

159 Heiko Beyer and Ivar Krumpal, “The Communication Latency of Antisemitic Attitudes: An Experimental Study,” in *Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Charles Asher Small (Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff: (2013), 83.

160 Howard Schuman and Stanley Presser, *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys: Experiments on Question Form, Wording, and Context* (New York: Academic Press, 1981).

161 Ottar Hellevik specifically mentions the decision of where to draw the line when sub-indices are dichotomised. Ottar Hellevik, “Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Norway: A Survey Analysis of Prevalence, Trends and Possible Causes of Negative Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims,” in *The Shifting Boundaries of Prejudice: Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Norway*, 118. Some level of subjective interpretation and evaluation is required at other stages of the analysis as well; for example, related to which statements and how many are included in the indices. For a further discussion of arbitrariness related to quantitative measures of antisemitism. See Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, *Anti-Semitism in Germany: The Post-Nazi Epoch Since 1945*, trans. Belinda Cooper and Allison Brown (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1997), 326–37, Appendix 1.

162 This point was made by Werner Bergmann in the Norwegian report from 2017. Hoffmann and Moe, eds, *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 104. The eleven statements in the ADL Global 100 surveys are: 1. “Jews are more loyal to Israel than to [this country/to the countries they live in]”; 2. “Jews have too much power in international financial markets”; 3. “Jews have too much control over global affairs”; 4. “Jews think they are better than other people”; 5. “Jews have too much control over the global media”; 6. “Jews are responsible for most of the world’s wars”; 7. “Jews have too much power in the business world”; 8. “Jews don’t care what happens to anyone but their own kind”; 9. “People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave”; 10. “Jews have too much control over the United States government”; 11. “Jews still talk too much about what happened to

respondents supporting six or more statements). Considering that precisely the stereotypes about Jewish power were most prevalent among Muslims, the bias related to the contents may have caused particular problems for these results, causing high levels of antisemitism to be measured. At least with respect to findings among the general population, the pattern in the material still seems to apply; findings from the Anti-Defamation League surveys have proven to be stable over time and to match findings from other surveys.

Another issue that may require special consideration concerns attitudinal dimensions. Research on attitudes often divides attitudes analytically into three dimensions.¹⁶³ What is termed the *affective* dimension concerns emotions, such as sympathy, antipathy, or hatred. The *conative* or *behavioural* dimension measures preparedness to act in a certain way or the extent to which someone likes or dislikes the idea of contact with members of certain groups; the conative dimension is typically measured by examining the degree of social distance.¹⁶⁴ The *cognitive* dimension concerns prejudice in the form of perceptions, notions, and images, including stereotypes. The three dimensions are to some extent independent of each other; for instance, stereotypes are often more widespread than negative feelings and social distance. Furthermore, social distance norms differentiating between “us” and “them” do not necessarily overlap with affective orientations of a group in a uniform or linear manner, though studies have shown a connection between components, with increased social distance being associated with less affective content or increased negative feelings in relationships.¹⁶⁵ A general methodological question is whether surveys represent an adequate measure of attitudes if they rely solely on assessing the prevalence of one attitudinal dimension, e.g., stereotypical views, such as in the surveys conducted by the Anti-Defamation League. Again, this may be particularly problematic when measuring attitudes among Muslims.

them in the Holocaust.” Statements two, three, five, seven and ten all point to notions of Jewish power (as does statement six, possibly). Anti-Defamation League, *Global 100 Survey 2019*.

163 Steven Breckler, “Empirical validation of affect, behavior and cognition as distinct components of attitude,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 47, no. 6 (1984); Nedim Karakayali, “Social Distance and Affective Orientations,” *Sociological Forum* 24, no. 3 (2009).

164 See the Bogardus Social Distance Scale, created by Emory S. Bogardus in 1924. The scale has seven items measuring acceptance of different levels of contact, such as having members of specific groups in one’s family by marriage, in one’s circle of friends, or having them as neighbours. Emory S. Bogardus, “Social Distance and its Origins,” *Journal of Applied Sociology*, no. 9 (1925): 216–26.

165 Karakayali, “Social Distance and Affective Orientations,” 538–39. Some classical studies point to such connections between social distance and affection. See, e.g., Margaret M. Wood, *The Stranger: A Study in Social Relationships* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 9; Emory S. Bogardus, *Sociology* (New York: Macmillan, 1941); Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1964), 11–14.

The Norwegian surveys showed that negative attitudes were distributed differently along the three dimensions in the general population compared with the Muslim sample, demonstrating the importance of a nuanced approach to the study of attitudes. While stereotypical views were significantly more prevalent among Muslim respondents than in the general population, the difference between the samples was marginal in terms of social distance and negative feelings.¹⁶⁶ The findings suggest that antisemitism among Muslims in Norway is manifested primarily in “abstract” notions of Jewish power and influence and not in antipathy or social distance towards actual Jews.

Criminal acts motivated by antisemitism are registered in hate crime statistics. Hate crime statistics in Norway indicate that antisemitic attitudes rarely lead to criminal manifestations; between fifteen and twenty cases have been reported per year since the registration started in 2018.¹⁶⁷ A violent incident occurred in 2006, when shots were fired at the synagogue in Oslo. The Islamist Arfan Bhatti was later convicted of complicity in the crime. Particular concern was caused by the attack committed in Copenhagen by Omar El-Hussein on February 15, 2015. El-Hussein killed a Jewish security guard during an attack against the Great Synagogue. The incident sparked the initiative by Muslim youth to organise a “ring of peace” around the synagogue in Oslo, as mentioned above. The initiative has become a lasting reference in the Norwegian public for how most Muslims are strongly opposed to such violence.

In other European countries, the impression that Muslims generally are more prone to antisemitism has been reinforced by a number of violent attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions committed by Muslim extremists in recent years, some with fatal results.¹⁶⁸ These incidents can be situated within a more general

166 Results for social distance showed 3,9% with high levels in the general population in 2022 (5,9% in 2017) and 5,7% among the Muslims (9,9% in 2017). Dislike of Jews was measured at approximately 5% in both samples in 2022 (same as in 2017 for the Muslim sample, and 6,7% in the general population in 2017). There was, however, a tendency towards more ambivalent attitudes among the Muslims, with respondents expressing *both* sympathy and antipathy. Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 46–50; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 42–43.

167 Nineteen cases were reported in 2022, the same as in 2021. Politidirektoratet og Oslo politidistrikt, *Hatkriminalitet i Norge 2022* (Oslo: Politidirektoratet og Oslo politidistrikt, 2022), 28–30.

168 Violent antisemitic attacks have been particularly visible in France. One of these incidents was the murder of Ilan Halimi on February 13, 2006. Halimi died after having been attacked and abducted south of Paris by a group of young Muslim immigrants. Another incident took place on March 19, 2012, when Mohamed Merah, a French citizen of Algerian decent, killed a schoolteacher and three pupils outside a Jewish primary school in Toulouse. The attacks happened after a series of shootings that killed three soldiers in the days before. Merah later claimed to be

trend of rising antisemitic incidents since the turn of the millenium; there have also been several violent antisemitic attacks committed by right-wing extremists in Europe and in the United States.¹⁶⁹

European surveys conducted among Jewish respondents by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) have identified a relatively large number of perpetrators of serious antisemitic incidents as “someone with Muslim extremist views.”¹⁷⁰ Other categories of perpetrators often mentioned in the reports are someone the victim is not able to describe, people with left-wing political views, young people (including schoolchildren), work colleagues, and people with right-wing political views.¹⁷¹ However, there are methodological problems

on a mission from al-Qaeda. On May 24, 2014, three people were killed and one fatally wounded outside the Jewish museum in Brussels. The police later arrested Mehdi Nemmouche for the attacks; Nemmouche was a French citizen of Algerian decent who had spent one year fighting with ISIS in Syria. On January 9, 2015, the French jihadist Ahmedy Coulibaly killed four people in a kosher supermarket in Paris. The killings were connected to the attack on the magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris two days earlier. Sarah Halimi, a Jew, was killed in her apartment outside Paris in 2017. The attacker allegedly shouted “Allahu akbar” during the attack, and claimed he had killed the “Shaitan” (Satan) afterward, which cemented the public perception of the attack as motivated by antisemitism. However, the nature of the attack was debated for some time after the incident prior to being reclassified as antisemitic in 2018. “Murder of Jewish woman in Paris reclassified as antisemitic attack,” *The Telegraph*, February 28, 2018 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/02/28/murder-jewish-woman-paris-reclassified-anti-semitic-attack/>. An 85-year-old woman named Mireille Knoll was killed in her apartment in Paris in 2018. Again, one of the two suspects allegedly yelled “Allahu akbar” as they committed the crime. The killing was recognised as an antisemitic hate crime. Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience (CAP), *Report on Antisemitism: France 2019* (Paris: Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, 2019), accessed February 2, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Religion/Submissions/CAP.pdf>.

169 Jikeli, *Antisemitic Attitudes among Muslims in Europe: A Survey Review*; FRA, *Antisemitism: Overview of antisemitic incidents recorded in the European Union 2011–2021* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022); ADL Center on Extremism, “Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022”, last modified March 23, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2022>.

170 FRA, *Discrimination and hate crime against Jews in EU Member States: experiences and perceptions of antisemitism* (Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014), 47; FRA, *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism: Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU* (Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018), 53; see also FRA, *Young Jewish Europeans: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism* (Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019), 28.

171 The surveys included a list of sixteen possible categories for each type of crime. In 2013, 27% of respondents answered that the most serious crimes were committed by a person with “Muslim extremist views,” 22% answered they were committed by someone with “left-wing political views,” and 19% by someone with “right-wing political views” FRA, *Discrimination and hate crime against*

related to identifying perpetrators. As perpetrators are often unknown to their victims, identification often has to rely on external markers. While the ethnic appearance of a perpetrator may be possible to register, it is not evidence of the person's religious affiliation (for example, as Muslim).¹⁷² Another general problem related to hate crime statistics concerns reporting. It is usually assumed that not all incidents are reported and that more incidents are likely to be reported in periods when awareness is high, making it difficult to assess both the volume and nature of the crimes, including trends of development.¹⁷³ While attitudes are measured in terms of prevalence, the number of incidents may increase or decrease unrelated to this prevalence, for example due to increased activity among extremists. Generalized references to hate crime statistics or "antisemitism" in the media may obscure significant differences between the various ways in which antisemitism manifests itself. As pointed out by Günther Jikeli, a distinction should also be made between the planned and extremely violent attacks committed by jihadists (or other perpetrators, such as right-wing extremists) and street aggressions that are more or less spontaneous.¹⁷⁴

A recurrent question related to hate crimes is how incidents should be understood, what should be defined as "antisemitic," and what should not. Interpretations depend both on the victim and on the person registering the incident. The question of intent (or motivation) behind the act is central to definitions of hate crime (and is also relevant when discussing other expressions of antisemitism). On the one hand, an antisemitic expression is antisemitic regardless of the intention behind it, but on the other, latent antisemitism may find new forms of expression, not all of which are manifestly antisemitic. The various definitions and

Jews in EU Member States: experiences and perceptions of antisemitism 47. The second FRA survey among Jews in the EU, conducted in 2018, showed that the most frequently mentioned categories of perpetrators were: "Someone else I cannot describe" (31%), "Someone with an extremist Muslim view" (30%), and "Someone with a left-wing political view" (21%) FRA, *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism: Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*, 53. A follow-up report on the data set was published in 2019, focusing on young people. The analysis showed that the category "Someone with a Muslim extremist view" was the most frequently selected option in the two youngest age groups: 31% among the 16–34 year-old age group and 30% among the 35–59 year-old age group, compared with 25% in the group of respondents above 60 years of age FRA, *Young Jewish Europeans: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism*, 28.

172 For a discussion of these difficulties, see the report by the Community Security Trust in Great Britain from 2016 CST, *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2016*, Community Security Trust (2017), 24–26, Incidents Report 2016.1615560334.pdf (cst.org.uk).

173 See, e.g., FRA, *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism: Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*, 55.

174 Günther Jikeli, "L'antisémitisme en milieu et pays musulmans: débats et travaux autour d'un processus complexe," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 2/3 (2015): 97.

methods for registration have caused problems, particularly when it comes to comparing statistics from different countries in Europe. Besides these difficulties, the question remains how best to explain antisemitism among Muslims. In what ways might the attitudes be connected to a Muslim identity – can they be traced to religious views and interpretations of Islam? Or rather, to socio-economic or demographic circumstances, possibly related to having an immigrant background and experiences of exclusion?

2.2.2 Attempts to Explain Antisemitism among Muslims

Various factors have been emphasised in attempts to explain antisemitic attitudes among Muslims. Analyses of population surveys sometimes point to socio-economic differences as the main explanatory factor.¹⁷⁵ Some general tendencies have been found regarding the distribution of negative attitudes, where antisemitism is often more prevalent among men, older people, and people with lower levels of education. Similar tendencies were found in the Norwegian population surveys and, apart from differences related to age, were also found among Muslim respondents.¹⁷⁶ Other surveys indicate that one has to look beyond demographic and socio-economic variables in order to explain the higher levels of antisemitism among the Muslim population in Europe. While such variables can explain differences within groups, and perhaps attitudinal developments, it is questionable whether they are able to explain differences between Muslims and the general population. Pieter Bevelander and Mikael Hjerm suggest increased anti-Muslim hostility was one of the factors behind the observed increase in antisemitism among Swedish Muslim youth between 2003 and 2009, relating this tendency to the central thesis of group threat theory and how increased marginalisation and discrimination are likely to increase in-group identity and out-group hostility. “[T]he increasing negative Muslim discourse in Europe contributes to a marginalisation of the Muslim population and a strengthening of negative attitudes in the group that already demonstrates the most anti-Semitic tendencies,” the authors note.¹⁷⁷ Based on his review of European surveys, Günther Jikeli, on the other hand, concludes that the results refute

¹⁷⁵ See, e.g., Michael Kohlstruck and Peter Ullrich, *Antisemitismus als Problem und Symbol: Phänomene und Interventionen in Berlin*, (Berlin: Berliner Forum Gewaltprävention, 2015), 86–87.

¹⁷⁶ Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 22, 25. Moe, ed, *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 22, 25. Education levels in the two samples were the same in 2017, and higher among the Muslims in 2022.

¹⁷⁷ Bevelander and Hjerm, “The Religious Affiliation and Anti-Semitism of Secondary School age Swedish Youths: an Analysis of Survey Data from 2003 and 2009,” 2715.

the assumption that antisemitism among Muslims is a reaction to discrimination or suppression.¹⁷⁸

The concept “Muslim antisemitism” may be misleading, seemingly referring to a special kind of antisemitism exclusively found among Muslims or indicating that Muslims are predisposed to antisemitic attitudes. Qualitative interview studies have indicated that ideas about Jews among European Muslims bear similarities with those in the general population, though some perceptions are also connected to a Muslim minority identity. In his study based on interviews with 100 young Muslims in France, the UK, and Germany, Jikeli found four distinct patterns of antisemitic discourse.¹⁷⁹ One of the categories was connected to the interviewees’ Muslim identity or to Islam, while the other three patterns echoed tendencies in the rest of society.¹⁸⁰ However, the categories were overlapping and no clear distinction could be drawn between them in the participants’ arguments. The study also included an exploration of possible factors influencing negative views. Importantly, Jikeli emphasised the multidimensional character of attitudes and that a focus on any single contributing factor would be misleading.¹⁸¹

Explanations of antisemitism among Muslims otherwise often point to the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was also one of the patterns in Jikeli’s study. As a general tendency, there has been an increase in anti-Jewish incidents occurring in periods when the conflict intensifies, and anti-Israel attitudes have been

178 Jikeli, *Antisemitic Attitudes among Muslims in Europe: A Survey Review*, 19. Analysing the prevalence of negative attitudes in Muslim-majority countries, Jikeli concludes in similar ways, describing experiences of discrimination as secondary to the development of antisemitism and pointing to a number of factors: “À supposer qu’elles contribuent à engendrer des positions anti-juives, les expériences de discrimination subies par des musulmans européens n’en constituent qu’un facteur secondaire. Cela transparait non seulement dans l’absence de corrélations dans certains des sondages dont il a été question plus haut, mais aussi dans la comparaison avec d’autres minorités discriminées, ainsi que dans une comparaison internationale entre musulmans de pays européens appliquant des mécanismes d’exclusion différents” Jikeli, “L’antisémitisme en milieux et pays musulmans: débats et travaux autour d’un processus complexe,” 112.

179 Günther Jikeli, “Antisemitism among Young European Muslims,” in *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives*, ed. A.H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013); Günther Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism: Why Young Urban Males Say They Don’t Like Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

180 The three other patterns were “classic” antisemitism (traditional stereotypes about Jews, including conspiracy theories), antisemitism related to Israel, and negative views about Jews without “rationalisation,” meaning negative views where respondents did not provide any explanation: Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism: Why Young Urban Males Say They Don’t Like Jews*, 5–6.

181 Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism: Why Young Urban Males Say They Don’t Like Jews*, 216.

shown to correlate with antisemitic attitudes in Europe.¹⁸² Since the turn of the millennium, some scholars see a global increase in Muslim engagement in the conflict, including hostility towards Israel and Zionism, as well as of anti-Jewish expressions in connection with the conflict, a combination that is sometimes referred to as the “new antisemitism.”¹⁸³ This concept suggests that Israel is perceived as a “collective Jew” and that negative views about Israel caused by the conflict are projected onto Jews as such or that latent antisemitism becomes manifest following a resurgence in the conflict.¹⁸⁴ Criticism of Israel that draws on antisemitic stereotypes about Jews or where Jews are held collectively responsible for Israeli policies can be considered clearly antisemitic. However, the connection to the Arab-Israeli conflict is not straightforward. While criticism of Israel that is similar to criticism of any other state does not qualify as antisemitism in and of itself, no scholarly consensus has been reached with regard to the nature of the relation between anti-Israel atti-

182 Edward H. Kaplan and Charles A. Small, “Anti-Israel Sentiment Predicts Antisemitism in Europe,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 4 (2006).

183 Brian Klug, “Interrogating ‘new anti-Semitism,’” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013); Judaken, “So What’s New? Rethinking the ‘New Antisemitism’ in a Global Age.”; Doron Rabinovici, Ulrich Speck, and Natan Sznaider, *Neuer Antisemitismus?: Eine globale Debatte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004).

184 The relevance of Israel to manifestations of antisemitism is reflected in the examples of the working definition of antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which has been endorsed by several EU states. The definition reads “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.” After four examples of antisemitism that do not mention Israel, the following seven examples explicitly referring to Israel are defined as antisemitic, taking into account their overall context: Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust. Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations. Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination; e.g., by claiming that the existence of the State of Israel is a racist endeavour. Applying double standards by requiring a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation. Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterise Israel or Israelis. Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis. Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>. The definition has been subject to scholarly and political debate due to how the examples that concern criticism of Israel have been implemented and understood. In March 2021, a new definition was proposed as a response to the IHRA definition: The Jerusalem Declaration On Antisemitism <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org>.

tudes, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism.¹⁸⁵ If antisemitic manifestations were solely an effect of mechanisms of political identification, one might argue that this would reduce antisemitism to an epiphenomenon.¹⁸⁶ As in the rest of Europe, the relationship between criticism of Israel and antisemitism is a topic of ongoing debate in Norway. While results from the Norwegian population surveys reveal a certain correlation between anti-Israel attitudes and antisemitism in the general population, a majority of those with pro-Palestinian attitudes did not express (traditional) antisemitic attitudes.¹⁸⁷ The survey from 2022 indicated, however, that attitudes among respondents in the Muslim sample were more influenced by the conflict than were attitudes in the general population.¹⁸⁸

In the case of the Muslim population, it is also a question of whether – or to what extent – a shared Muslim identity can explain an engagement in the conflict. Some scholars emphasise intra-Islamic developments and globalisation more than influence from the conflict, though the conflict may be present as a motif in anti-Jewish expressions. Jikeli argues that the conflict is not the source of antisemitism; rather it serves as a pretext for antisemitic mobilisation and attempts to legitimise antisemitic expressions.¹⁸⁹

The relationship between religiosity and prejudice has long been a field of interest within research on attitudes.¹⁹⁰ The Christian repertoire of anti-Judaism has been less important to antisemitic expressions since the end of the 19th century, at

185 See, e.g., Brian Klug, “The Collective Jew: Israel and the New Antisemitism,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 37, no. 2 (2003); Robert Fine, “Fighting with phantoms: a contribution to the debate on antisemitism in Europe,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 5 (2009); David Feldman, “Antizionismus und Antisemitismus in Großbritannien,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 23 (2014).

186 As pointed out by Sylvain Attal, “Aux racines du nouvel antisémitisme,” *Revue internationale et stratégique* 58, no. 2 (2005); see also Henrik Bachner, “Contemporary Antisemitism in Europe and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Connections and Misconceptions,” in *Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Interreligious Hermeneutics*.

187 Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, ed., *Antisemitism in Norway*, 2012, 7; Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 93–95; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 82.

188 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 73–75.

189 “Lorsque l’on s’y intéresse de plus près, il apparaît toutefois très nettement que le conflit israélo-palestinien n’est pas la cause de l’antisémitisme, mais sert plutôt de prétexte à la mobilisation, à l’instrumentalisation émotionnelle et à la légitimation de l’antisémitisme” Jikeli, “L’antisémitisme en milieux et pays musulmans: débats et travaux autour d’un processus complexe,” 104.

190 A significant decrease in the relation between extrinsic religiosity and racism has been found in some of these studies, which historically have focused on the impact of Christian beliefs on prejudice Deborah L. Hall, David C. Matz, and Wendy Wood, “Why Don’t We Practice What We Preach? A Meta-Analytic Review of Religious Racism,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14, no. 1 (2010).

which point what is known as “modern” antisemitism was explicitly defined as non-religious.¹⁹¹ However, there are strong continuities between secular antisemitic constructions and Christian anti-Judaic notions; each functioned as a cultural resource for modern antisemitic images of Jews and also survived as part of the antisemitic repertoire after this point.¹⁹² An example of this continuity and of how criticism of Israel may constitute a platform for anti-Jewish expressions occurred in February 2021, when a radio host on the Norwegian national broadcaster NRK commented on the vaccination programme against the Coronavirus in Israel. Referring to Israelis as the “Chosen People of God” and as merciless and vengeful child-killers, the commentator drew on elements found in traditional anti-Judaism.¹⁹³ The comments sparked a heated debate and a large number of complaints to the Broadcasting Council (Kringkastingrådet), which upon consideration concluded that the broadcast had contained antisemitic elements.¹⁹⁴

The investigation of the relation between religious affiliation and prejudice involves examining the impact of different religious dimensions (see also chapter 7.1). While subscribing to doctrinal beliefs and religious salience (defined as the relative importance of religion in someone’s life) have been shown in some studies to reduce prejudice, religious particularism (i.e., the idea that one’s own religion represents the only truth) seems to have the opposite effect and hence to

191 See Wilhelm Marr, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum. Vom nicht-confessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet* (Bern: Rudolph Costenoble, 1879). Translated to English, the title of Marr’s pamphlet is *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism, From a Non-Confessional Point of View*.

192 Furthermore, secular antisemitism may be found within Christian religious groups, a notable example in present-day Europe is the Polish Catholic radio station, *Radio Maryja*, which has been found to convey expressions of Holocaust denial, support for conspiracy theories related to 9/11, and classical stereotypes about Jews, among other things. Anti-Defamation League, *Poland: Democracy and the Challenge of Extremism* (2006), 17–19. Jikeli suggests that there are signs indicating that religion has renewed relevance as a source of antisemitism. Günther Jikeli, “Is Religion Coming Back as a Source for Antisemitic Views?,” *Religions* 11, no. 5 (2020).

193 See, e.g., Vebjørn Selbekk, “Dehumaniserende antisemittisme fra NRK [Dehumanizing antisemitism from NRK],” *Dagen*, Februar 3 2021, <https://www.dagen.no/okategoriserade/dehumaniserende-antisemittisme-fra-nrk/>. The content was later edited by the broadcaster, and the parts perceived as antisemitic were removed. Another example from the Norwegian context is the portrayal of Jews in an op-ed by Jostein Gaarder, “Guds utvalgte folk” [God’s chosen people] in the newspaper *Aftenposten* in 2006, which drew on anti-Judaic notions and sparked a major debate on where to draw the line between anti-Israel statements and antisemitism. See Claudia Lenz and Theodor Vestavik Geelmuyden, “The Gaarder Debate Revisited: Drawing the Demarcation Line between Legitimate and Illegitimate Criticism of Israel,” in *The Shifting Boundaries of Prejudice: Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Norway*.

194 Espen Alnes, “Kringkastingrådet med krass kritikk mot Israel-tirade [The Broadcasting Council delivers harsh criticism of Israel tirade],” *NRK*, February 11 2021, <https://www.nrk.no/kultur/israel-tirade-pa-nrk-p13-blir-behandla-i-kringkastingradet-1.15368947>.

increase prejudice, including antisemitism.¹⁹⁵ A survey conducted in Western Europe by the Pew Research Center found that self-described Christians were more likely than non-affiliated respondents to harbour prejudice against both religious minorities and immigrants, regardless of level of observance.¹⁹⁶ The analysis described a strong association between Christian *identity* and nationalist attitudes, as well as negative views about religious minorities and immigration, and a weaker association between religious *commitment* and these views.¹⁹⁷ This was true even when controlling for factors such as education, gender, political ideology, and personal economic situation; however, this tendency was less clear among Norwegian respondents.¹⁹⁸ The Norwegian surveys on antisemitism indicate that in the general population, negative attitudes towards Jews are less prevalent among people who consider religion to be very important in their lives.¹⁹⁹

In his 1966 article on prejudice and religion, Gordon Allport declared that there is something about religion that “makes for prejudice” and something about it that “unmakes prejudice,” thereby underlining the complexity of the matter.²⁰⁰ Allport suggested that a chief reason for why religion becomes the focus of prejudice is that it often stands for more than just faith – it is the pivot of the cultural tradition of a group. Intolerance and the possibility of prejudice can, however, be seen as an inherent part of a form of religiosity that claims absolute and final possession of “the Truth.” Obviously, the connection between attitudes and religion may also be looked at from another perspective, as attitudes towards religious people. Jews, for instance, may experience prejudice based on their affiliation with Judaism. A recent Norwegian survey showed that respondents in the general population held negative views towards religious people, particularly towards religious

195 Peer Scheepers, Merove Gijsberts, and Evelyn Hello, “Religiosity and prejudice against ethnic minorities in Europe: Cross-national tests on a controversial relationship,” *Review of Religious Research* (2002).

196 Referred to in the report as the nationalist, anti-immigrant, and anti-minority (NIM) scale. Pew Research Center, *Being Christian in Western Europe (2018)*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2018/05/Being-Christian-in-Western-Europe-FOR-WEB1.pdf>.

197 Pew Research Center, *Being Christian in Western Europe*, 30–31. The authors noted that this finding held “regardless of whether religious commitment among Christians is measured through church attendance alone, or using a scale that combines attendance with three other measures: belief in God, frequency of prayer and importance of religion in a person’s life.”

198 Pew Research Center, *Being Christian in Western Europe*, 77.

199 Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, ed., *Antisemitism in Norway? The Attitudes of the Norwegian Population towards Jews and Other Minorities*, 62; Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 102; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 81–82.

200 Gordon W Allport, “The Religious Context of Prejudice,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5, no. 3 (1966): 447.

Muslims.²⁰¹ The results suggested interreligious diversity, level of religiosity, and religious affiliation all have an impact on attitudes.

Research on antisemitism among Muslims in Europe has paid comparatively little attention to intra-Muslim and intra-Islamic diversity and the impact that affiliation with different religious denominations may have on perceptions of Jews. However, results indicate that interpretations of Islam are relevant, with antisemitic attitudes being particularly prevalent among believing and practising Muslims and correlating with authoritarian, fundamentalist interpretations of Islam.²⁰² Jikeli also emphasises the significance of individual interpretations of Islamic sources in his analysis of anti-Jewish attitudes among Muslims in Europe and in Muslim-majority countries, underlining how individuals use religious sources to justify negative views.²⁰³ Surveys conducted in Norway have found no clear pattern when it comes to the connection between religiosity and attitudes towards Jews among Muslims. Results from the 2017 survey suggested a negative impact, with Muslims who answered that religious rules were of “no importance” in their lives scoring comparatively lower on the antisemitism scale than those who practised their faith more conscientiously.²⁰⁴ However, the survey did not include any thorough investigation of the matter. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDI) conducted a survey in 2013 that included an immigrant sample of people from ten different countries. Results showed that scepticism towards religious people varied between respondents according to country background and depended on the religion in

201 Jan Paul Brekke, Audun Fladmoe, and Dag Wollebæk, *Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold i Norge* vol. 8, Integreringsbarometeret 2020, (Oslo: Institutt for samfunnsforskning, 2020), 103–04.

202 Jikeli, *Antisemitic Attitudes among Muslims in Europe: A Survey Review*; see also Staetsky, *Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain. A study of attitudes towards Jews and Israel*, 64. To define religious fundamentalism, Jikeli refers to Koopman’s report from 2015 and the definition offered by Altemeyer: “The belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by the forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity.” Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger, “Authoritarianism, Religious Fundamentalism, Quest, and Prejudice,” *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 2, no. 2 (1992): 118. As cited in Koopmans, “Religious fundamentalism and hostility against outgroups: A comparison of Muslims and Christians in Western Europe.”

203 “Si des sources islamiques servent à justifier des positions antijuives, il s’agit d’interprétations dont sont davantage responsables des individus que l’islam’ en tant que tel.” Jikeli, “L’antisémitisme en milieu et pays musulmans: débats et travaux autour d’un processus complexe,” 110.

204 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 101.

question.²⁰⁵ Increasing religiosity was connected to less negative views about Jews among respondents whose background was from countries with a Christian majority. This was less so with respondents from Muslim-majority countries, except for respondents from Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁰⁶

Surveys in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Sweden have investigated correlations between level of religiosity, fundamentalism, and attitudes towards Jews. In the French Fondapol survey, respondents who identified as being of “Muslim origin” were significantly less prejudiced than those who identified as “Muslim believers.”²⁰⁷ In addition, religious practice seemed to be important, with the most widespread negative attitudes found among respondents who identified as “practising Muslim believers.” However, all three groups were more prejudiced than the general population.²⁰⁸ Other surveys have revealed similar patterns, although strong religiosity has had a weaker correlation with prejudice in some surveys.²⁰⁹

While these studies provide valuable insight into some general tendencies, there are difficulties related to measuring complex issues, such as religion and attitudes, by means of quantitative surveys, again making it important to treat results cautiously. A general problem concerns conceptual vagueness, which may lead respondents to interpret questions differently, creating ambiguity in the analysis. This may be particularly difficult when dealing with a topic such as religiosity and personal faith. Although the origins of antisemitic views among Muslims cannot be reduced to a shared “Muslim identity” or religious beliefs, both religious beliefs and interpretations of Muslim identities may influence perceptions of Jews. It may be less a question of either an “Islamic” or “Muslim” antisem-

205 Respondents from Muslim-majority countries generally had less prevalent negative views about Jews than respondents from other countries. This result differs, as we have seen, from findings in other mappings, including the Norwegian surveys on antisemitism. Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDi), *Integreringsbarometeret 2013/2014 Innvandring og integrering – holdninger og erfaringer blant personer med innvandrerbakgrunn*, Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet (2014). However, the IMDI survey had some methodological weaknesses precisely concerning the impact of religion and religiosity. One problem was that it did not specify the religious affiliation of the respondents but only assumed an affiliation based on country of origin. This may be problematic; as we have seen, the Norwegian surveys from 2017 and 2022 showed marked differences in terms of the level of antisemitism related to whether or not respondents from the immigrant samples identified as Muslim. Hoffmann and Moe, eds, *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 46–49; Moe, ed, *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 41–44.

206 Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDi), *Integreringsbarometeret 2013/2014*, 62–63.

207 Reynié, *L'antisémitisme dans l'opinion publique française: nouveaux éclairages*.

208 Reynié, *L'antisémitisme dans l'opinion publique française: nouveaux éclairages*, 21–22.

209 See, e.g., Koopmans, “Religious fundamentalism and hostility against out-groups: A comparison of Muslims and Christians in Western Europe.”

itism, and more a question of combinations of *antisemitisms*, or perhaps of an “Islamized antisemitism.”²¹⁰ The present study contributes to this discussion by exploring how interviewees’ interpretations of Islam and Muslim identity are reflected in their narratives about Jews, and how these narratives include patterns related to a broader cultural tradition that includes the changing faces and continuities of European secular antisemitism.

2.3 Continuities and Change in Cultural Constructions of “the Jew”

Research on cultural constructions of “the Jew” in Norway has shown strong similarities with the broader European ideological heritage and continuities between historical and contemporary constructions. At the same time, antisemitic representations of Jews have been constructed in response to specific societal and political developments in Norway. These tendencies form a discursive background to the analysis in the present study. This chapter looks at some relevant findings from previous research.

While earlier studies of perceptions of “the Jew” in Norway focused on individual historical actors, the first systematic attempts to analyze antisemitic expressions in the Norwegian majority society, including central societal institutions and public discourse, gained traction only in the last two decades.²¹¹ Christhard Hoffmann points to how, influenced by the *linguistic turn* and cultural studies, historical research has increasingly explored the semantics of antisemitism as a “cultural code.”²¹² A central finding in several studies concerns how discursive constructions of Jews and Judaism have related to nation-building processes historically. While representations of Jews in the pre-1945 era show continuities with transnational currents in Europe, and as such were not distinctly *Norwegian* constructions, scholars have pointed to how the images have nevertheless been formed in contrast to a

210 Michael Kiefer, “Islamischer, islamistischer oder islamisierter Antisemitismus?,” *Welt des Islams* 46, no. 3 (2006).

211 Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Norwegian antisemitism after 1945: Current knowledge,” in *Antisemitism in the North: History and State of Research*; Christhard Hoffmann, “A Marginal Phenomenon? Historical Research on Antisemitism in Norway, 1814–1945,” in *Antisemitism in the North: History and State of Research*.

212 Hoffmann, “A Marginal Phenomenon? Historical Research on Antisemitism in Norway, 1814–1945,” 165. An early initiative to study cultural expressions of antisemitism in the Norwegian public sphere was carried out in 2008 by the research project “The Cultural Construction of the ‘Jew’ in the Norwegian Public from 1814 to 1940,” at the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies.

Norwegian national identity.²¹³ In significant debates and conflicts in Norwegian society, discursive constructions of “the Jew” served an important function as a counter-image in the formation of a national identity, although opposition to Jews was not a central theme.²¹⁴

The discourse that constructed “Jews” as a societal threat in the decades after 1814, the year of the adoption of the Norwegian Constitution, had similarities with how other religious minorities were portrayed. Frode Ulvund has analyzed the legal and discursive context of Norwegian society’s exclusion of Jews, Jesuits, and Mormons, demonstrating how arguments were rooted in notions of religious otherness and constituted expressions of religious nationalism.²¹⁵ Ulvund shows how descriptions of Jews, Jesuits, and Mormons defined them as external enemies of the nation who were foreign to Norwegian society and a political danger, defining them antithetically as “anti-citizens.” These discursive constructions led to exclusionary practices, prohibiting Jews and Jesuits from entering the country and Mormons from practising their religion (regarding the prohibition of Jews from entering Norway, see also chapter four in this book).

Findings from research on representations of Jews in Norwegian mainstream media and the comic press include some examples of how notions of the “Norwegian” provided a background to images of Jews in the inter-war period, concretised when caricatures portrayed “the Jew” in conflict with “Norwegian” standards or with a Norwegian person.²¹⁶ Generally, the “Jewishness” in the caricatures refers both to physical and mental features known from classic antisemitic stereotypes, such as greediness and powerfulness. The Jew as national counter-image was largely a synonym for “the foreign” or the “non-Norwegian.” The underlying claim that Jews are foreign, powerful, and dangerous is a typical feature of the European anti-Jewish heritage, according to which, anything that was perceived (or constructed) as

213 Lien, “. . . pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøderne’ Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norsk dags- og vittighetspresse 1905–1925”; Ingjerd Veiden Brakstad, “Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norske vittighetsblader ca. 1916–1926,” in *Forestillinger om jøder – aspekter ved konstruksjonen av en minoritet 1814–1940*, ed. Vibeke Moe and Øivind Kopperud (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Snildal, “An Anti-semitic Slaughter Law?”

214 Lien, “. . . pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøderne’ Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norsk dags- og vittighetspresse 1905–1925,” 375.

215 Frode Ulvund, *Religious Otherness and National Identity in Scandinavia, c. 1790–1960: The Construction of Jews, Mormons, and Jesuits as Anti-Citizens and Enemies of Society*, trans. Adam King (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 18.

216 Brakstad, “Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norske vittighetsblader ca. 1916–1926,” 109. “Comic press” (*vittighetsblader*) refers to a genre that combined political satire, cartoons, jokes, and essays. In the period between 1870 and 1950 there were more than 150 different magazines of this type in Norway.

“Jewish” represented unwanted or feared societal developments and a threat to the established order. Depending on the speaker, opposition to “Jews” before 1945 could be targeting highly diverse phenomena such as capitalism, liberalism, or communism. The corresponding image of “the Jew” included classic antisemitic figures, such as the Jewish “capitalist” or “Bolshevik,” and thus comprised polarised notions.²¹⁷

The difference between perceptions of Jews and actual Jews, or between “Jews” and Jews, implies that antisemitism is perhaps best defined, as suggested by Brian Klug, not by an attitude towards Jews, but by their definition as “Jews,” i.e., as “hostility towards Jews as ‘Jews’.”²¹⁸ The tendency to create a distinction between abstract “Jews” and “real life Jews” is another characteristic of antisemitic ideology that can be found in the Norwegian context. While the imaginary “Jew” has been the target, or manifestation, of anti-Jewish hatred, references to actual Jews in Norwegian society have been rare and most commonly functioned as exceptions to these negative images.²¹⁹ In this respect, debates that arose in connection with the religious practices of the Jewish minority constitute an exception, in that they relate more directly to the minority itself. Debates about Jewish religious slaughter (kosher slaughter, or shechita) have occurred in several phases in Norwegian history. The demand for a prohibition against kosher slaughter was first raised in the 1890s and was repeated a number of times until it was finally passed by the parliament in 1929.²²⁰ The arguments against this form of slaughter were influenced by antisemitic and animal protection discourses and portrayed Jews as exceptionally cruel towards animals.²²¹ Andreas Snildal remarks that in contrast to other examples of anti-Jewish discourse, the arguments explicitly targeted the contemporary Norwegian Jewish minority and not “Jews” as an abstract, external threat.²²² The debates were significant contributions to the total corpus of anti-Jewish rhetoric in the Nor-

217 See, e.g., Vibeke Moe and Øivind Kopperud, eds., *Forestillinger om jøder – aspekter ved konstruksjonen av en minoritet 1814–1940* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011), 5.

218 Klug, “The Collective Jew: Israel and the New Antisemitism,” 123–24.

219 Lien, “. . . pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøderne’ Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norsk dags- og vittighetspresse 1905–1925,” 369–72. Kjetil Simonsen has shown that this is also typical of the antisemitism of Norwegian far-right movements: “As an abstract ideological construction, far-right antisemitism in Norway has no basis in ‘objective’ conflicts between the majority and the minority. It has been a tool for orientation, equipping history and politics with coherence and meaning. Not least, antisemitism serves as a tool for ideological integration, binding the different elements of the enemy image together as a unit.” Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Antisemitism on the Norwegian Far-Right, 1967–2018,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 45, no. 5 (2020): 654–55.

220 Einhart Lorenz, “Vi har ikke invitert jødene hit til landet’—norske syn på jødene i et langtidsperspektiv,” in *Forestillinger om jøder. Aspekter ved konstruksjonen av en minoritet*.

221 Snildal, “An Anti-semitic Slaughter Law?”

222 Snildal, “An Anti-semitic Slaughter Law?,” 311.

wegian public sphere and thus constitute an important caveat to the claim that Norwegian antisemitism at the time was largely directed against external “Jews.” This may be understood as a consequence of the debate being concerned with Norwegian legislation and of the minority’s actions in Norway being directly relevant. Nonetheless, the focus on the actual Jewish minority demonstrated the possibility of a more radical anti-Jewish discourse. By portraying the rituals as incompatible with “Norwegian” sentiments and religious feelings, the debate effectively established an opposition between the “ritual” and the “human,” Snildal notes.²²³ Kosher slaughter is still prohibited in Norway, as in other Nordic countries.²²⁴

A study on representations of Judaism and the Jewish minority in the contemporary Norwegian press revealed similarities between the current discourse on Jewish religious practice and the debate around the ban on kosher slaughter in 1929.²²⁵ In both cases, arguments against the slaughter method framed it as existing in contrast to the ideals of the European Enlightenment and as a breach of civilised society.²²⁶ Again, the “foreignness” of the Jewish religion is central in the debates, which also referred to the practice of circumcision, effectively contrasting the rituals to “Norwegian” customs as well as “Western civilisation.”²²⁷ Joy Davidsen shows how the Norwegian debate on circumcision in 2014–2020 contributed in similar ways to the othering of Jews, based in part on a children’s rights discourse and on dichotomous views on secularism and religion related to Enlightenment ideals.²²⁸ Overt antisemitic expressions were found in the comment sections, which included portrayals of Jews as intentionally violent against children.²²⁹ A common feature, both historically and today, is that Jewish religious practices in the debates connote something ar-

223 Snildal, “An Anti-semitic Slaughter Law?,” 312–13.

224 In Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden the animal must be stunned before slaughter, effectively making kosher slaughter impossible. Cordelia Hess, “Nordic Otherness: Research on Antisemitism in the Nordic Countries in an International Perspective,” in *Antisemitism in the North: History and State of Research*, 4. Halal slaughter is conducted with stunning in Norway and is therefore legal.

225 Cora Alexa Døving, “Jews in the News—Representations of Judaism and the Jewish Minority in the Norwegian Contemporary Press,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 15, no. 1 (2016).

226 Brian Klug has shown how the debate about kosher and halal slaughter in the UK in the 1980s included similar ideas, the practices being described as “anachronistic” and “barbaric,” and as something “enlightened Muslims and Jews” had abandoned. Brian Klug, “Overkill: The Polemic against Ritual Slaughter,” *The Jewish Quarterly* 34 (1989): 40.

227 Døving, “Jews in the News. Representations of Judaism and the Jewish Minority in the Norwegian Contemporary Press,” 7.

228 Joy Davidsen, “‘Forhistoriske overgrep mot småbarn’. Omskjæringsdebatten i norske avismedier og andregjøring av jøder” (Master’s diss., University of Oslo, 2021), 98–99.

229 Davidsen, “‘Forhistoriske overgrep mot småbarn’ Omskjæringsdebatten i norske avismedier og andregjøring av jøder,” 72–73.

chaic, in contrast to the notion of Jews as bearers of modernity, which is perhaps more prevalent in recent history. The ancient history of Judaism fulfills a double function, Cora Alexa Døving notes, sometimes suggesting authenticity, at other times something outdated.²³⁰ Similar to the historical portrayals, the connotations of the concepts “Jew” and “Judaism” thus include multifaceted and often polarised notions. Furthermore, a connection to the Muslim minority is evident in many of the debates. The recurrent debates on circumcision in particular have come to include the Muslim minority, effectively demonstrating shared features of Jewish and Islamic religious practices. Døving suggests that the debates have also shown the potential for a broader interfaith alliance in that Christian voices have defended the right of Jews and Muslims to practise their religion.²³¹

Parallel to the presence of historical continuities, the post-World War II period represents, in different ways, a shift in terms of manifestations of antisemitism. Following the delegitimation of antisemitism in the wake of the Holocaust, explicit antisemitism and traditional stereotypes largely disappeared from the Western public arena, though the phenomenon persisted in other forms. In his work on antisemitism in Sweden after 1945, which focuses on the relation between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, Henrik Bachner describes how the norm of anti-antisemitism made openly antisemitic expressions increasingly rare in the public spheres of Western Europe’s democracies in the first decades after World War II.²³² “Antisemitism and racist attitudes and ideas became taboo,” he notes.²³³ Consequently, manifestations of antisemitism in the first decades of the post-war period was limited to the private sphere and marginal extremist groups of neo-Nazis; beyond which, it was characterised by a tendency towards “coding” – i.e., the use of other terms or symbols instead of direct references to Jews or overt antisemitic stereotypes. To describe the new “latent” form of antisemitism, Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, drawing on Luhmann (1984), developed the concept of “communication latency” (*Kommunikationslatenz*) of antisemitism in the 1980s.²³⁴ Boundaries of communication were gradually established by way of scandals and conflicts. In the public sphere, antisemitism has been

230 Cora Alexa Døving, “Jødedom i pressen. Historiens grep om samtiden,” in *Religion i pressen*, ed. Cora Alexa Døving and Siv-Ellen Kraft (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2013), 199.

231 Døving, “Jødedom i pressen. Historiens grep om samtiden,” 186–87.

232 Henrik Bachner, *Återkomsten: Antisemitism i Sverige efter 1945* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2004).

233 Bachner, *Återkomsten: Antisemitism i Sverige efter 1945*, 15. My translation.

234 Bergmann and Erb, “Kommunikationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung. Theoretische Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der BR Deutschland.” The concept signifies a social latency, not a psychological one in the sense of attitudes being unconscious. This form of antisemitism was researched in West-Germany, i.e. in a special tension between official Philosemitism and traditional antisemitism.

thematized (or scandalized) in situations where the boundaries of the acceptable have been perceived to have been violated.

As indicated above, antisemitic expressions after World War II have found new frames of reference in Israel and the history of the Holocaust.²³⁵ However, in both cases the antisemitic constructions still draw on culturally embedded notions of Jews, and as such only to a limited extent represent something new in terms of content. Holocaust denial emerged immediately after the war. Norwegian far-right milieus and Nazi veterans expressed Holocaust denial in Norway during the 1950s and 1960s, at which point denialist discourse was adopted by a new generation of right-wing extremists. Subsequently, it has been a recurrent theme among neo-Nazis up to the present.²³⁶ In the Norwegian collective memory, antisemitism was long considered a phenomenon primarily located on these fringes of the political landscape. After 1945, a patriotic memory culture thus defined antisemitism as “un-Norwegian” and as associated with German Nazi occupiers and Norwegian quislings, though there were also self-critical voices in the press and a public debate on how antisemitism in Norway should be interpreted.²³⁷ Christhard Hoffmann has described a fading consensus about the definition of antisemitism in the Norwegian public sphere in the post-Holocaust period, with reference to debates on Holocaust denial and neo-Nazism on the one hand and criticism of Israel on the other.²³⁸ While in 1960

Weyand discusses the impact the concept has had on research on antisemitism. Jan Weyand, “Das Konzept der Kommunikationslatenz und der Fortschritt in der soziologischen Antisemitismusforschung,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 26 (2017).

235 See also Trond Berg Eriksen, Håkon Harket and Einhart Lorenz, *Jødehat: Antisemittismens historie fra antikken til i dag*, (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2009), 579; Juliane Wetzel, “Antisemitism and Holocaust Remembrance,” in *Perceptions of the Holocaust in Europe and Muslim Communities* ed. Günther Jikeli and Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013).

236 Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Holocaustbenektelse i Folk og Land (8. mai), 1948–1975: En diskurs tar form,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 98, no. 1 (2019); Simonsen, “Norwegian antisemitism after 1945: Current knowledge,” 182–83.

237 Hoffmann, “A Marginal Phenomenon? Historical Research on Antisemitism in Norway, 1814–1945,” 155. Accordingly, Kjetil B. Simonsen describes how the approach had both a descriptive and a normative dimension. In some cases, antisemitism was one-sidedly identified with the German occupation forces and the Norwegian National Socialist party, Nasjonal Samling; in other cases, it was acknowledged as part of Norwegian history. The context determined whether antisemitic attitudes were defined as “un-Norwegian” or as a shameful part of the nation’s history (p. 243). In light of the horrors of the Holocaust, Norwegian national identity was redefined as anti-antisemitic. Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “[. . .] De krasseste utslagene av de samfunnsmessige understrømningene som truer sivilisasjonen.’ Diskursen om jødene og antisemittismen etter 1945,” in *Historie og moral: Nazismen, jødene og hjemmefronten*, 243.

238 Christhard Hoffmann, “A Fading Consensus: Public Debates on Antisemitism in Norway, 1960 vs. 1983”, 26.

the reaction to neo-Nazism and Holocaust denial was unanimous condemnation, two decades later no consensus could be reached as to where the line between legitimate anti-Israel statements and illegitimate (antisemitic) statements should be drawn.

The emergence of new communication technology has provided new platforms for expressions of antisemitism in recent years, a development that represents a modification of the relative absence (or communication latency) of such expressions in the public sphere and traditional media. Studies have pointed to how new digital platforms may contribute both to new forms of antisemitism (e.g., in imagery or “memes”) and to facilitating the spread of antisemitic ideas to new audiences.²³⁹ The development of new forms of anti-Jewish expressions has contributed to a situation where the question of definition has become a central matter in the study of antisemitism.²⁴⁰

2.4 Community and Boundaries: Functions of *the Other*

The analytical approach of the present study draws on the body of research on prejudice where stereotyping and group constructions are understood as a twofold process, and the construction of *the others* is part of the creation of *us*. Attributing qualities to *others* can be viewed as a mechanism that governs what is accepted among *us*, and which serves as a marker of one’s own position.²⁴¹ The aim of examining the narratives in the current study is not limited to identifying binary oppositions, however, but endeavours to understand the narratives as interpretations and negotiations that may challenge rigid notions of “boundaries,” viewing them as

239 Zannettou Finkelstein, S., B. Bradlyn, and J. Blackburn, “A Quantitative Approach to Understanding Online Antisemitism,” *Proceedings of the International AAI Conference on Web and Social Media* 14, no. 1 (2020); Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, *Medieanalyse av antisemittisme i dag: rapport på oppdrag for Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet* (Oslo: Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, 2016); Jan Paul Brekke, Audun Beyer, and Bernard Enjolras, *Antisemittisme på nett og i sosiale medier i Norge: kjennetegn, avsendere og motvirkning* (Oslo: Institutt for Samfunnsforskning, 2019).

240 Kenneth L. Marcus, *The Definition of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

241 See, e.g., John F. Dovidio et al., *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*; Gordon Willard Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*; R.S. Wistrich, ed., *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999). The significance of values for constructions of community has been explored in research on prejudice, stereotyping, and group constructions, suggesting that prejudice may be a response to threatened group values and reflect an effort to protect and defend these values or specific worldviews.

flexible and open to potentially multidimensional interpretations.²⁴² In the present study, this complex also includes reflections on how narratives about Jews relate to interpretations of the relationship between the Muslim minority and the majority society, and the role they play within the Muslim community.

As discussed above, scholars have emphasised different aspects of cultural constructions of “the Jew,” such as the long historical continuity and the flexibility of the images, which provide the ability to adapt to contemporary issues. The present study emphasises a combination of long-term historical continuities and contemporary adaptations (discontinuities) in ideas about Jews.²⁴³ Herein lies an understanding of constructions of “the Jew” as culturally transmitted beliefs whose contemporary expressions bear elements of a longer history. By looking at the connection to a broader cultural and ideological heritage, the study explores new and old elements in the symbolic constructions of “the Jew” and different frames of reference that can be identified in the narratives. By engaging with a wide range of narratives, the study is an investigation of diverse concepts for understanding and interpreting the world, not limited to the cultural heritage of antisemitic ideas and not dependent on the presence of living Jews or (practised) Judaism. The latter point reflects the insight from research on antisemitism that the presence of Jews is secondary (or even irrelevant) for the development of anti-Jewish ideas. Rather than references to actual Jews, narratives about Jews and Judaism are thus understood as categories for interpreting the world.

2.5 Summing up

To summarise, this chapter has discussed cultural, historical, and contemporary constructions of Jews in the European context, including a number of surveys pointing to prevalent negative attitudes towards Jews among Muslims and some possible reasons for such attitudes. Among other things, attempts to explain negative views have pointed to interpretations of Muslim identity and religiosity as significant factors, and to how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict represents a context for antisemitic mobilisation among Muslims. A multifaceted source of influence may

²⁴² See, e.g., Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Marek Jakoubek, eds., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries Today: a Legacy of Fifty Years* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

²⁴³ Robert Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Hess, eds., *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*; Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism*; Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*; Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York: Pantheon, 1991).

be found in perceptions of Jews in Islamic religious traditions, including both references to close bonds between Judaism and Islam (and Jews and Muslims) and negative portrayals of Jews. At the same time, research suggests parallels between the ways Jews are perceived in the general populations in Europe and among European Muslims today. Importantly, most Muslims in Europe do not have negative attitudes towards Jews, and the claim that there exists a necessary connection between a Muslim identity and antisemitism is both mistaken and essentialising. The discussion has revealed a need for more research on how different contexts influence attitudes towards Jews among Muslims – not merely ideological influences leading to negative perceptions but also how Muslims defend non-essentialising perceptions of Jews and positive Muslim-Jewish connections. This study aims to fill this gap.

The discussion of previous research makes it possible to formulate the aims of the present study more clearly: A central aim is to explore different contexts for narratives about Jews, asking, how do the narratives relate to cultural constructions of Jews found in European history? How are current developments in which Israeli policies and the history of the Holocaust have become significant frames of reference in notions of Jews, reflected in the narratives? Discursive constructions expressing religious nationalism historically defined Jews and other minorities as religious “others” in Norway. This study looks into contemporary constructions from the perspective of another religious minority. It explores references to the interviewees’ positionality, experiences, and identity as members of a religious minority. How is the relationship between Judaism and Islam described? Do the narratives relate to universalist perspectives that include Jews and Muslims within the same imagined communities, or to notions of symbolic boundaries and religious otherness? How are different interpretations of Muslim religious identity reflected in the narratives? How do interviewees perceive portrayals of Jews in Islamic sources, such as the Qur’an and hadith? While historical and contemporary research suggests a close connection between images of “Jews” and national identity constructions in Norway and internationally, the exploration of such notions from a minority perspective has largely been a neglected field of research. Living in Norway as members of a religious minority where most have immigrant backgrounds, Muslims are subject to prejudice from the majority population. Exploring the significance of a minority perspective in narratives about Jews entails asking how experiences of discrimination are reflected. Furthermore, any exploration of antisemitic perceptions of Jews in today’s Europe has to take the specific rules of communication (i.e., communication latency and the norm of anti-antisemitism) into account. A question for the present study is how Muslims in Norway perceive these communicative boundaries. How do interviewees describe the present situation of Muslims and Jews and current dis-

course on Muslim-Jewish relations? How is the European history of the victimisation of Jews reflected in the narratives, and how does this history relate to the interviewees' own experiences of prejudice and discrimination? Exploring interviewees' perceptions of antisemitism and Islamophobia as historical and contemporary problems in society, the analysis also asks if their narratives convey a sense of common experiences and solidarity, or if they describe the experiences of Jews and Muslims as different or even conflicting.

3 Muslims in Norway: History, Organisation, and Religiosity

Interviewees in the present study are self-identified Muslims from Sunni, Shiite, and Ahmadi communities in Norway. The following chapter presents a brief history of Muslims in Norway, Islamic organisation, and religiosity. The last sections present findings from research on attitudes towards Muslims in Norway and developments in contemporary identity formations among Muslims.

Islam is the second largest religion in Norway, its adherents representing approximately 3.5% of the total population. Norwegian Muslims form a heterogeneous group in terms of country backgrounds, religiosity, and religious traditions. However, a majority of the population can be traced back to either immigrant workers from the 1970s or refugees and asylum seekers from the 1980s on.²⁴⁴ Converts constitute only a small percentage of the total Muslim population, consisting of an estimated 3,000 individuals.²⁴⁵ The national backgrounds of the Norwegian Muslim population are predominantly Somali, Pakistani, Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan, Bosnia-Herzegovinian, Iranian, and Turkish.²⁴⁶ The number of immigrants and children of immigrants from countries with Muslim majorities is highest in the Oslo area, amounting to an estimated thirteen per cent of the population.²⁴⁷ However, as categorisation based on countries of origin is an inaccurate measure of the number of people identifying as “Muslims,” population figures are only estimations. Approximately eight per cent of the total population in Oslo are members of a Muslim organisation.²⁴⁸ The population distribution in certain areas implies that some public schools have a majority of Muslim pupils, most living in the eastern or central areas of the city.

The migration of Muslims to Norway followed a pattern that has similarities with how migration processes developed in other Western European countries,

244 Leirvik, “Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue.”

245 Christine M. Jacobsen and Oddbjørn Leirvik, “Norway,” *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 2 (2010); Lars Østby and Anne Berit Dalgard, “4 prosent muslimer i Norge?,” *Samfunnspeilet* 4 (2017). To a certain extent, there is also conversion from Islam. Among immigrants from Muslim-majority countries who were raised Muslim, 89% still identified as Muslim in a survey from 2016, 11% answered that they no longer had a religion, and 1% had converted to another religion. Statistics Norway, November 22, 2017, <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/4-prosent-muslimer-i-norge-329115?tabell=329718>.

246 Østby and Dalgard, “4 prosent muslimer i Norge?” <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/4-prosent-muslimer-i-norge>.

247 Østby and Dalgard, “4 prosent muslimer i Norge?” <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/4-prosent-muslimer-i-norge>.

248 Leirvik, “Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue,” 138.

though it started comparatively late.²⁴⁹ There are also important similarities between Norway and the other Scandinavian countries regarding patterns of immigration and political strategies of integration.²⁵⁰ The early Muslim presence in Norway, as in Denmark and Sweden, was related to Ahmadi missionaries in the 1950s. In the following decade, the first Muslims who established themselves in Norway were male immigrant workers from Pakistan, Turkey, and Morocco, who arrived in the late 1960s. The Pakistanis constituted the largest group and came mostly from the rural Punjab area.

Like many Western European countries, Norway introduced a ban on labour immigration in the 1970s (1975). However, family reunification and later refugees and immigrants have contributed to a steady growth in the Muslim population. In contrast to individual migration, *chain migration*, characteristic of Pakistani immigration to Norway, contributes to close networks and the maintenance of cultural traditions.²⁵¹ After the initial phase of labour immigration, the presence of women and children and a view to permanent residence in Norway contributed to increased contact with the larger society and led to the establishment of institutions that could take care of the minority's interests, such as the right to organise, build mosques, and conduct religious education.²⁵² The number of registered members of Muslim organisations has increased significantly in recent years. The numbers doubled between 2006 and 2016; according to Statistics Norway, as of August 2023 there were 182,607 members.²⁵³ This increase reflects the growth of the Muslim population but is also encouraged by the Norwegian system for financial support to religious institutions, which is based on the number of members and thus promotes member-based organisational structures.²⁵⁴ In contrast to the early phases of labour immigration, when workers arrived with the intention to return to their home countries, this development also reflects a stage where Islam has become an established religion and a permanent part of Norwegian society. There is also an

249 Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*, 15.

250 Olsson and Sorgenfrei, "Islam and Islamic Studies in Scandinavia." <https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-658?rskey=LI9kYN&result=3>

251 Cora Alexa Døving, "A Growing Consensus? A History of Public debates on Islamophobia in Norway," in *The Shifting Boundaries of Prejudice: Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Norway*, 76–107.

252 Jacobsen, *Tilhørighetens mange former. Unge muslimer i Norge*, 10–11.

253 Statistics Norway, "Trus- og livssynssamfunn utanfor Den norske kyrkja", August 2, 2023 <https://www.ssb.no/kultur-og-fritid/religion-og-livssyn/statistikk/trus-og-livssynssamfunn-utanfor-den-norske-kyrkja>.

254 Leirvik, "Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue," 143; Olsson and Sorgenfrei, "Islam and Islamic Studies in Scandinavia," 6.

unknown, though presumed significant, number of Muslims in Norway who are not members of a religious organisation.²⁵⁵

Surveys among immigrants and self-identified Muslims in recent years indicate that religion is an important part of the lives of Muslims in Norway, but also that religious practice varies significantly. In the survey conducted by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies in 2017, 77% of Muslim respondents stated religion was “very important” or “fairly important,” compared with 40% of the general population and 64% of Jewish respondents.²⁵⁶ When asked about religious practice, 65% of Muslim respondents stated it was “very important” or “fairly important” to follow religious rules.²⁵⁷ Surveys have also shown, however, that while 25% of Muslim immigrants in Norway answer that they attend religious meetings every week, a higher number (36%) say they never attend such meetings.²⁵⁸ The level of religiosity expressed by Muslims in Norway also varies significantly according to country of origin. Somalis, Pakistanis, and Turks most commonly express that religion is important. They also attend religious meetings more frequently, while Bosnians and Iranians are at the other end of the scale.²⁵⁹

The Norwegian Muslim community includes numerous religious movements comprising different religious orientations and interpretative traditions. However, the majority can be situated within the broad category of Sunni Islam (around 85%). Most prayer locations are not purpose-built mosques but buildings that have been converted from other kinds of use.

The whole spectrum of Pakistani (Barelwi, Deobandi, etc.) and Turkish Islamic traditions (Süleymanli, Diyanet, Milli Görüş) are established in Norway.²⁶⁰ The Barelwi movement has a particularly strong presence among Muslims of Pakistani background. Furthermore, Bosnians and Albanians have their own mosques, while African and Arab mosques tend to have a more international composition.²⁶¹ There

255 Østby and Dalgard, “4 prosent muslimer i Norge?” <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/4-prosent-muslimer-i-norge>.

256 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 89.

257 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 103. The tendency concerning the importance of religion were similar to results in a survey from the Institute for Social Research three years earlier.

258 Anders Barstad, “Er religiøse innvandrere mindre integrert?,” in *SSB Analyse* (August 5, 2019, 2019).

259 Anette Walstad Enes, “Religion,” in *Levekår blant norskfødte med innvandrerforeldre i Norge 2016*, ed. Anne Berit Dalgard (Oslo, Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway, 2018), 67–68, 70–71; Kristian Rose Tronstad, “Religion,” in *Levekår blant innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006*, ed. Svein Blom and Kristin Henriksen (Oslo, Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway, 2008).

260 Christine M. Jacobsen and Oddbjørn Leirvik, “Norway,” *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 3 (2011), 488.

261 Jacobsen, “Norway,” 20–21.

are Muslim congregations in all Norwegian counties. Approximately half of the mosques are situated in Oslo or in the surrounding county. The largest mosques in Oslo, in terms of registered members, are the Islamic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina; the Albanian Islamic Cultural Centre; the three Sufi-oriented mosques Central Jamaat-e Ahl-e Sunnat, World Islamic Mission, and Minhaj-ul-Qur'an; the Turkish Islamic Union; the Moroccan Faith Community; the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat; the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC); the Rabita Mosque (Al-Rabita al-Islamiyya fi Nurwij); and the Somali Tawfiq Islamic Centre.

There has been a development in the last decades towards an increased number of organisations that are not specifically defined by national background, language, or doctrinal line. From the 1990s, new organisations were established that recruited beyond such boundaries and had national ambitions.²⁶² This tendency reflects internal developments and new patterns of identification driven by migration and globalisation (see also chapter 3.2). Examples of such organisations include the Muslim Student Society (Muslimsk Studentsamfunn), the Muslim Youth of Norway (Norges Muslimske Ungdom), the Islamic Women's Group (Islamsk Kvinnegruppe Norge), and the two umbrella organisations Islamic Council Norway (Islamsk Råd Norge) and the Muslim Dialogue Network (Muslimsk Dialognettverk).²⁶³ Bergen Mosque (Bergen moské) and the Muslim Society in Trondheim (Det Muslimske Samfunnet i Trondheim) are also examples of this unifying organisational trend, based in the second and third largest cities in Norway.

Established religious authorities find themselves challenged in many Western societies and Muslim-majority countries. There is an ongoing debate within research on Islam in Europe as to whether the observed "individualisation" of religion is primarily related to the decline of religious authority or whether it is rather a symptom of a structural amplification of authority.²⁶⁴ Sveinung Sandberg et al. point out that the formation of youth organisations that transcend traditional religious and ethnic boundaries is an example of how authorities multiply.²⁶⁵ These new institutions constitute an important addition to traditional sources of religious authority, though both mosques and religious upbringing within the family are still important.²⁶⁶

262 See, e.g., Jacobsen, "Norway," 20–21; Vogt, *Islam på norsk. moskeer og islamske organisasjoner i Norge*, 214; Leirvik, "Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue," 140.

263 The Islamic Women's Group was active in the period 1991–2005.

264 See, e.g., Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Peter, "Individualization and religious authority in Western European Islam."

265 Sandberg et al., *Unge muslimske stemmer*.

266 Sandberg et al., *Unge muslimske stemmer*, 90–91.

The establishment of the two youth organisations Muslim Student Society and Muslim Youth of Norway in the 1990s was the Norwegian manifestation of a broader European trend, as a new generation of Muslims born in Europe sought increased visibility and participation. Christine M. Jacobsen notes that the initiatives were driven by a desire to engage in religious issues and promote knowledge of Islam, both among the younger generation of fellow Muslims and in Norwegian society.²⁶⁷ Despite the diversity of their members, the broader discursive field in which both the Muslim Student Society and Muslim Youth of Norway developed were significantly influenced by various revivalist movements and the circulation of *da'wa* literature promoting a return to the Qur'an and the Sunna in matters of jurisprudence and politics.²⁶⁸ Jacobsen describes how a major influence on the members of the youth organisations came from the close affinity with the Rabita mosque, which held ideas similar to those of the Muslim Brotherhood. Several of the interviewees in the present study were members of the Muslim Student Society at the time of their interview (see chapter 6.3).

Islamist movements such as the Jamaat-i islami (Pakistan), the Milli Görüş (Turkey), and the Muslim Brotherhood are represented in Norway, both by affiliated organisations and individual followers. Organised Salafism is a relatively new phenomenon in Norway. It has come to the public's attention primarily through the Salafi extremist (jihadist) group The Prophet's Ummah (Profetens Ummah), which was established in 2012 but collapsed in 2016 after the defeat of ISIS, and the youth organisation Islam Net, established in 2008 at Oslo University College.²⁶⁹ The establishment of Islam Net coincided with a conservative trend among Norwegian Muslim youth.²⁷⁰ Again, the organisation represented an alternative to the ethnically based and culturally diverse mosques of the older generation, asserting a vision of a global Islam and a willingness to engage in a more outspoken public defence of Islam and action against anti-Muslim discourse. The organisation's approach to these issues has sometimes been confrontational, triggering negative reactions and public debate.²⁷¹ The organisation's views about non-Muslims and sexual minori-

267 Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*, 54–59.

268 Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*, 64.

269 Linge and Bangstad, *Salafisme i Norge: historien om Islam Net og Profetens Ummah*, 95.

270 Ellen Reiss, *Søstre: Hvordan unge muslimske kvinner skaper sin egen frihet* (Oslo: Frekk forlag, 2011); Sindre Bangstad and Marius Linge, "IslamNet–puritansk salafisme i Norge," *Kirke og kultur* 117, no. 3 (2013); Linge and Bangstad, *Salafisme i Norge: historien om Islam Net og Profetens Ummah*.

271 The annual "Peace Conference Scandinavia," organised by Islam Net, has been criticised in the media for having included several controversial speakers in its programme see, e.g., Lars Akerhaug, "Kontroversiell imam fjernet fra studentseminar [Controversial Imam removed from student seminar]," *Verdens Gang*, March 6 2009, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/ojwng/kontroversiell-imam-fjernet-fra-studentseminar>; Espen Eide, "Fjernet kontroversiell imam [Contro-

ties, and its practice of gender segregation during meetings, have all caused controversy. Related to these controversies and despite Islam Net's claims to a universal form of Islam, the organisation has been accused of causing polarisation among Muslims.²⁷² The promotion of an ultra-conservative understanding of Islam is phrased in terms that exclude other interpretations, in strong contrast to the religious pluralism that exists among Norwegian Muslims.

The Shiite community in Norway was established by immigrants from Pakistan and members are still predominantly of Pakistani origin. The first Shiite community in Norway was established in the 1970s, with the first mosque opening in 1975. Since the 1990s, the Shiites in Norway have included persons from a broad range of national backgrounds in addition to Pakistan, including Iraq, Lebanon, and other Middle Eastern countries, Iran, and Afghanistan. An estimated fifteen per cent of Norwegian Muslims have a Shiite background.²⁷³ The number of Shiite centres (mosques) in Norway has been increasing along with the population growth; in 2012, there were twelve registered in the Oslo area.²⁷⁴ Overall, the Shiite community

versial imam removed],” *TV2*, March 6 2009, <https://www.tv2.no/a/2609639/>. In 2009, Islam Net had for a second time (the first time was in May 2008) invited Imam Sakandar Zulqarnain Madni, who had allegedly claimed that the United States was behind the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in 2001. In 2016, Islam Net also caused controversy after having invited American imam Siraj Wahhaj to speak at the conference see, e.g., Olga Stokke and Andreas Slettholm, “Islam Net inviterte meget omstridt imam [Islam Net invited very controversial imam],” *Aftenposten*, April 24 2016, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/RxzAJ/islam-net-inviterete-meget-omstridt-imam>.

272 Hilde Arnesen, “Linda Noor anklager Islam Net for krigsretorikk [Linda Noor accuses Islam Net of using war rhetoric],” *Dagsavisen*, August 8, 2016 <https://www.dagsavisen.no/nyheter/innenriks/2016/08/09/linda-noor-anklager-islam-net-for-krigsretorikk/>; Tarjei Kramviken et al., “Islam Net oppfordrer til verbal jihad mot muslimske samfunnsdebattanter [Islam Net calls for verbal jihad against Muslim public debaters],” *Aftenposten*, August 8, 2016 <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/OzndA/islam-net-oppforder-til-verbal-jihad-mot-muslimske-samfunnsdebattante>. The articles referred to a YouTube video from 2016 where the Islam Net leader Fahad Qureshi called on supporters to take up the pen in a “verbal jihad” against liberal Norwegian Muslims participating in current debates, a battle in which he claimed the “definition of Islam” was at stake. See also Ali Chisti, “Kampen om islams sjel [The battle of Islam’s soul],” *Verdens Gang*, July 30, 2016, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/meninger/i/Kwq8e/kampen-om-islams-sjel/>; Ali Chisti, “Islam Net har ikke monopol på islam [Islam Net does not have monopoly on Islam],” August 2, 2016, <https://www.vl.no/meninger/verdidebatt/2016/08/02/islam-net-har-ikke-monopol-pa-islam/>.

273 Just as Shiites account for an estimated 10–13% of Muslims internationally. Pew Research Institute, *The Future Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010–2030* (Forum on Religion & Public Life 2011), 153.

274 Kari Vogt, “Ikke prester, men lærde’: Shia-muslimske ledere i Norge” in *Religiøse ledere: Makt og avmakt i norske trossamfunn*, ed. Cora Alexa Døving and Berit Torbjørnsrud (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2012), 49–50.

in Norway reflects the diversity that this branch of Islam has internationally, both in terms of religious rituals, ideology, ethnicity, and language.

Internationally, the relationship between Shiites and Sunnis has been shaped by periods of conflict and of peace.²⁷⁵ According to Marius Linge, polemical discourse between Shiites and Sunnis in Norway is voiced by a few activists, it has primarily been found online and does not represent a significant phenomenon.²⁷⁶ A qualitative study from 2018 also found that sectarian differences between Sunni and Shiite Muslims were not a significant issue among young Muslims in Norway.²⁷⁷ The idea that “we are all Muslims” was prevalent, and the interviewees emphasised the global Muslim community or *umma*.²⁷⁸ Both Sunnis and Shiites are represented in the umbrella organisation *Muslimsk Dialognettverk*.

The Islamic Council Norway was established in 1993 and represents 57 different organisations.²⁷⁹ Among the Council’s objectives, as described on its website, is to work for dialogue between Muslims and the rest of Norwegian society and to contribute to the development of a Norwegian-Muslim identity. The Islamic Council was a co-founder of the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities (STL), in which all major religious communities in Norway are represented. The Islamic Council has been a notable voice in public debates since its establishment, particularly around different aspects of Islamic practice, inter-religious dialogue, and other topics relevant to the Norwegian Muslim minority, though the Council’s

275 Anti-Shiism has been prevalent, especially in Saudi Arabia, with state-initiated discrimination against Shiites existing from the time of the establishment of the first Saudi state in 1744. Marius Linge, “Sunnite-Shiite Polemics in Norway,” *Fleks. Scandinavian Journal of Intercultural Theory and Practice* 3 (2016); Guido Steinberg, “The Wahhabiyya and Shi’ism, from 1744/45 to 2008,” in *The Sunna and Shi’a in History: Division and Ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. Ofra Bengio and Meir Litvak (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011). Doctrinal differences between Shiites and Sunnis were originally connected to a dispute following Prophet Muhammad’s death in 632 about his successor, which led to the formation of Shia and Sunni Islam as the main Islamic denominations. Current Sunni-Shiite polemics and polarisation are nurtured by the political situation in the Middle East. The Iranian revolution (1979), the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), and more recently, the wars in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq made the sectarian difference a tool for political and strategic purposes, fuelling tensions between Shiites and Sunnis internationally.

276 Linge, “Sunnite-Shiite Polemics in Norway,” 3. Representatives of the two Salafi organisations *Islam Net* and *The Prophet’s Ummah* have spoken against Sufis and Shiites, *The Prophet’s Ummah* having expressed markedly more intolerant views, see Linge and Bangstad, *Salafisme i Norge*, 91–92.

277 Sandberg et al., *Unge muslimske stemmer*.

278 Sandberg et al., *Unge muslimske stemmer*, 109–12.

279 According to the Council’s webpage, *Islamsk Råd Norge* (IRN), <https://irn.no/om-oss/hvem-vi-er/>.

work has not proceeded without some tension.²⁸⁰ The number of member organisations has decreased in recent years due to controversies related to the Council's work and some of the board members.²⁸¹ The organisations that left the Council established a new umbrella organisation in 2017 under the name *Muslimsk Dialognettverk* (Muslim Dialogue Network).

The Islamic Council withdrew its membership from the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in 2017. Following the withdrawal, both the Ahmadiyya community, which was never a member of the Islamic Council, and the new Muslim Dialogue Network obtained status as observers and, later, members in the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities. It was reported that it was resistance from the Islamic Council that had previously prevented the Ahmadis from becoming members.²⁸² Commenting on the new membership, the Muslim Dialogue Network stated that they have nothing against interfaith dialogue with the Ahmadis, though they are not seen as Muslims.

The think tank and civil society organisation *Minotenk*, founded in 2010, is another notable voice in public discourse on Islam in Norway. *Minotenk* works to promote knowledge and dialogue between the Muslim minority and the majority society; it is engaged in a range of activities, including publishing and courses in entrepreneurship.²⁸³ *Minotenk* has also been an important interlocutor for the gov-

280 Elgvin, "Between a rock and a hard place : the Islamic Council of Norway and the challenge of representing Islam in Europe." See also Bangstad and Elgvin, "Norway," *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 7 (2016), 448.

281 The Council has been the object of negative public attention on different occasions. One incident occurred in February 2009, when the Council was asked to distance itself from statements made by the leader of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who in a television broadcast on Aljazeera had claimed the Holocaust was a divine punishment for the Jews, see, e.g., Halvor Tjønn, "Muslimsk leder hyller Holocaust [Muslim leader praises the Holocaust]," *Aftenposten*, 15.02. 2009. The Islamic Council Norway later issued a press release, stating that it was unacceptable to praise the Holocaust. See "Islamsk Råd tar avstand fra jødeuttalelser" [Islamic Council distances itself from statements about Jews], *Verdens Gang*, February 16, 2009. Another heated debate was sparked in 2017, after the Council hired a woman who wears niqab to work in the office responsible for public networking and communication. The decision was heavily criticised in the media and was contested both within the broader Norwegian Muslim community and by members of the Council, see, e.g., Per Annar Holm and Lene Li Dragland, "Islamsk Råd fikk statlig støtte til brobygging og dialog. Ansatte medarbeider med niqab [Islamic Council received public funding to promote communication and dialogue. Hired employee with niqab]," *Aftenposten*, March 28, 2017. After this period of conflict, several member organisations decided to leave the Council, and the Department of Culture cut off its public funding.

282 Claudio Castello, "Ahmadiyya- og sunni-muslimere i dialog [Ahmadi and Sunni Muslims in dialogue]," *Utrop*, March 5, 2018.

283 *Minotenk* (website), <https://minotenk.no/om-oss/>.

ernment in counter-radicalisation work.²⁸⁴ Other organisations include the secular non-governmental organisation LIM, which stands for *likestilling, integrering, mangfold* (equality, integration, diversity). LIM was established in 2010 by secular Muslims with the aim to act as a counterweight to religious-conservative Muslim voices in the public sphere and to thus contribute to a more diverse discourse on immigration and integration.²⁸⁵ The non-profit organisation Salam works to promote the rights and inclusion of LGBT+ members of the Muslim community.²⁸⁶

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat is a reform movement in Islam, founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) in 1889 in India (Punjab). The Ahmadi community was the first Muslim community established in Norway, as early as 1957. Similar to the Shiite community, it was established by immigrants from Pakistan and members are still predominantly of Pakistani origin. Following immigration from Pakistan in the 1970s, the number of Ahmadis in Norway increased, and the community opened its first mosque in 1980. Approximately 1,700 Ahmadis live in Norway (2023), most of them in the central eastern regions.²⁸⁷

The Ahmadis experience structural discrimination, persecution, and oppression in countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, and are generally not accepted as Muslims by the Muslim (Sunni or Shiite) majority. The theological controversy mainly concerns the status of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, which is considered a violation of the Islamic belief that Muhammad was the last of the prophets.²⁸⁸

Violent sectarian attacks against Ahmadis have been rare in Europe, but in March 2016, a shopkeeper in Scotland was killed in an attack motivated by anti-Ahmadi views.²⁸⁹ The incident caused concern within the Norwegian Ahmadi

284 Bangstad and Elgvin, “Norway,” 448.

285 LIM Likestilling Integrering og Mangfold (website), <https://www.limnett.no/eng>.

286 Frivillig.no (website), <https://frivillig.no/salam-norge>.

287 Figures from *Store Norske Leksikon*, “ahmadiyya”, <https://snl.no/ahmadiyya>.

288 See, e.g., Ali Qadir, “When Heterodoxy Becomes Heresy: Using Bourdieu’s Concept of Doxa to Describe State-Sanctioned Exclusion in Pakistan,” *Sociology of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2015). In Pakistan in 1984, President Zia-ul-Haq promulgated an ordinance that declared Ahmadi religious activities a criminal offence. Through this law, the Ahmadis are prohibited from practising their religion; for example, by using Islamic symbols, distributing Islamic literature, or calling their house of worship a “mosque.” An important part of the historical context for the persecution in Pakistan was the political climate following the establishment of the republic, the first anti-Ahmadiyya riots breaking out only six years after independence, in 1953. The majority Muslim community in Pakistan considers Ahmadis heretical, and a September 6, 1974, amendment explicitly deprives Ahmadis of their identity as Muslims. *Breach of Faith: Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Bangladesh* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2005), 15.

289 See, e.g., Severin Carrell, “Man who murdered Glasgow shopkeeper Asad Shah in sectarian attack jailed,” *The Guardian*, August 9, 2016.

community. In Norway, there was an attack on July 14, 1985, when a bomb exploded by the Ahmadi Nor mosque in Oslo.²⁹⁰ However, the attacker was identified as a member of the neo-Nazi party Nasjonalt folkeparti and the attack has been perceived as racist and anti-immigrant rather than anti-Ahmadi.²⁹¹ More recently (2008–2009), individuals with connections to Islam Net have been involved in incidents of harassment against employers of Ahmadi background at the University College in Oslo.²⁹²

3.1 Attitudes Towards Muslims in Norway

Public discourse and attitudes towards Muslims are an important part of the context of this study. Norwegian Muslims encounter different forms of prejudice. Surveys have shown considerable social distance towards Muslims, widespread (27%) Islamophobic attitudes, and scepticism towards “people of the Muslim faith” in the general population.²⁹³ The population is also much more sceptical towards Muslims with a “strong faith” (70%) than towards Muslims of “moderate faith” (34%).²⁹⁴ Again, complex attitudes like Islamophobia are difficult to measure; nevertheless, findings have been consistent over time and prejudice against Muslims has been

290 A 38-year-old woman suffered shock and injuries from smoke inhalation. The community’s new mosque is situated in Furuset in the northeast of Oslo. This mosque has security fences.

291 An article in the *Aftenposten* newspaper described how, prior to the attack, the bomber had sent a letter to the leader of the party, in which he announced that he wanted to “bomb every immigrant worker away from Norway” “Siktete er medlem av Nasjonalt Folkeparti [Attacker is member of Nasjonalt Folkeparti],” *Aftenposten*, June 19, 1985. There were new references made to the attack in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on July 22, 2011. This time, the attack was presented as one in a series of attacks in Norway, underlining that July 22 was not the first time that Norway had experienced terror, see e.g., Claudio Castello, “Norge mistet uskylden før 22. Juli [Norway lost its innocence before July 22],” *Utop*, August 22, 2011; Pål Vegard Hagesæther, “Oslos glemte grusomheter [Oslo’s forgotten horrors],” *Aftenposten*, October 10, 2011; see also Jacob A. Ravndal, “Fra landsvvik til “trollterror”–utviklingen i det norske høyreekstreme trusselbildet fra 1945 til 2019,” *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 37, no. 4 (2020).

292 Bangstad and Linge, “IslamNet–puritansk salafisme i Norge.”

293 Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, ed., *Antisemitism in Norway*; Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*; Brekke, Fladmoe, and Wollebæk, *Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold i Norge* 8. Scepticism towards people of the Muslim faith was found among 47% of respondents in 2018 and 45% in 2020, see p. 103.

294 Brekke, Fladmoe, and Wollebæk, *Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold i Norge* 8, 104. However, what people associated with these categories remains somewhat unclear. Notions of people being “very religious” could be related to perceptions of personal faith, belief in specific doctrines, or level of observance in terms of practice, for example.

confirmed in several studies. In 2008, for the first time, Norway was urged to take action against Islamophobia. The report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated that it, “strongly recommends that the Norwegian authorities monitor the situation as concerns Islamophobia in Norway and take swift action to counter any such manifestations as necessary.”²⁹⁵ Survey results indicate a decrease in negative attitudes the last decade.²⁹⁶ Attitudes towards immigration have also become gradually more positive over time in Norway.²⁹⁷

A recurrent question in the public debate, regarding attitudes towards both Muslims and Jews, has been the definition of the terms used to address these attitudes. The term “Islamophobia” was popularised by the report *Islamophobia: A Challenge to Us All*, by the Runnymede Trust in 1997.²⁹⁸ The term has been debated and has never been properly established in the Norwegian public debate.²⁹⁹ Critics have pointed to a perceived confusion between (legitimate) criticism of Islam and (illegitimate) criticism of Muslims, as well as to how the suffix “phobia” seems to suggest psychological reactions.³⁰⁰ Drawing on the UN definition of racism, the short definition provided by the Runnymede Trust in its updated report from 2017 states, “Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism”.³⁰¹ I use the terms “Islamophobia,” “anti-Muslim racism,” and “anti-Muslim attitudes” interchangeably in this study, to signify “widespread prejudice, acts and practices that attack, exclude

295 ECRI, *Report on Norway (Fourth Monitoring Cycle) Adopted on 20 June 2008* (Council of Europe: European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 2009), 29; Leirvik, “Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue,” 149.

296 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 51–53.

297 Torkel Brekke and Audun Fladmoe, *Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold i Norge* (Oslo: Institute for Social Research, 2022); Ottar Hellevik and Tale Hellevik, “Utviklingen i synet på innvandrere og innvandring i Norge,” *Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning* 58, no. 3 (2017); Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 59–65.

298 Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, (London: The Runnymede Trust, 1997).

299 Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 77.

300 The new report from the Runnymede Trust acknowledges these difficulties, while pointing out that social phenomena are often defined by terms that do not correspond to the phenomenon in a literal way, using “antisemitism” as an example. Farah Elahi and Omar Khan, *Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all* (London: The Runnymede Trust, 2017), 7. In Norway (e.g., in the 2017 and 2022 population surveys), the term “Islamophobia” is often replaced by “anti-Muslim hostility” (“muslimfiendtlighet”). The English translations of the reports have used “Islamophobia.”

301 Elahi and Khan, *Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all*, 7. The report also provides a more elaborate definition: “Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life” (Elahi & Khan, 2017, p. 7).

or discriminate against people on the ground that they are – or are assumed to be – Muslim.”³⁰²

Negative views about Muslims are not a new phenomenon arising from Muslim immigration to Europe; however, given that European Muslims are mostly immigrants, Islamophobia in Europe does overlap with other forms of discrimination, including xenophobia.³⁰³ Surveys from Norway have pointed to difficulties connected to integration and living conditions within sections of the immigrant population in Norway. Immigrants have relatively low incomes compared with the general population and are more likely to experience discrimination at work and in connection to hiring processes; this is particularly so for immigrants from Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan.³⁰⁴ A survey conducted in 2012 showed that applications with “foreign” names reduced the likelihood of receiving invitations to job interviews by 24%.³⁰⁵ Immigrants are also less likely to own a home and more likely to experience poor housing conditions.³⁰⁶ The situation improves with time of residence; however, this improvement is less pronounced for immigrants from Somalia and Iraq.³⁰⁷ Experiences of discrimination by public institutions are not very common in Norway; relatively few of the Muslim respondents in the 2017 and 2022 population surveys reported having experienced such discrimination, though the numbers had increased (from 15% to 22%, respectively). The results also showed that experiences of social exclusion and othering were common and had increased. One third (33%) of the Muslim respondents reported they sometimes avoided showing their religious affiliation for fear of negative attitudes in 2022, compared to 26% in 2017. In 2022,

302 Døving, “Muslims are . . .” Contextualising Survey Answers,” 258.

303 Jocelyne Cesari, “Islamophobia in the West: A Comparison between Europe and the United States,” in *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century*, ed. John Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.

304 Signe Vrålstad and Kjersti Stabell Wiggen, *Levekår blant innvandrere i Norge 2016* (Oslo/Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway, 2017), 162–64, 209.

305 Arnfinn H. Midtbøen and Jon C. Rogstad, *Diskriminerings omfang og årsaker. Etniske minoriteters tilgang til arbeidslivet* (Oslo: Institute for Social Research, 2012), 78. The study also found that the discriminatory effect was much larger for men than for women; the reduction of the likelihood of receiving an invitation to job interviews was 37% for the men (applications with male names) compared with 16% for the women (Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012, 81).

306 Among sections of the Muslim immigrant population, reduced rates of home ownership may be related to religious norms, particularly the ban against charging or paying interest on money. For a Norwegian study on this issue, see Torkel Brekke, “Halal Money: Financial Inclusion and Demand for Islamic Banking in Norway,” *Research & Politics* 5, no. 1 (2018).

307 Vrålstad and Wiggen, *Levekår blant innvandrere i Norge 2016*, 57–69.

43% said they “often or sometimes” had been made to feel that they did not belong in Norwegian society, while one in three answered the same in 2017.³⁰⁸

While the prevalence of discrimination against – and negative attitudes towards – Muslims has been documented in Europe over the last decades,³⁰⁹ the Norwegian population survey from 2017 was the first thorough investigation of Norwegian attitudes towards Muslims. The results showed that one third of the population (34.1%) had marked prejudice against Muslims. Stereotypical views of Muslims remain prevalent in Norway, but results from the latest survey show a slight decrease: 30.7% of respondents held marked prejudices against Muslims in 2022.³¹⁰ Similar to prejudice against Jews, this was measured by asking respondents to express their opinion on a series of statements expressing stereotypes about Muslims commonly found in Islamophobic rhetoric, including claims that Muslims are more violent, pose a threat to Norwegian culture, and are unwilling or unable to integrate into Norwegian society. Almost half of respondents agreed with the statement “Muslims largely have themselves to blame for the increase in anti-Muslim harassment,” 40% agreed with the statement “Muslims do not want to integrate into Norwegian society,” and 33% agreed with the statement “Muslims pose a threat to Norwegian culture.”³¹¹ One quarter of the population also supported a statement expressing the central belief of the so-called Eurabia theory, which holds that Muslims are involved in a conspiracy to take over Europe.³¹² Furthermore, a relatively large proportion of respondents expressed negative feelings and social distance towards Muslims. The combined index for Islamophobia, which included measures for three dimensions of attitudes (prejudice, social distance, and antipathy), found a high score among 20% of the population in 2022.³¹³

308 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 73–74; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 102–04.

309 See, e.g., European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001* (Luxembourg: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2004); Eines Bayrakli and Farid Hafez, eds., *European Islamophobia Report* (Istanbul: SETA, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, 2015–2019); FRA, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Muslims – Selected findings* (Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017); FRA, *Data in Focus Report – Muslims* (Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009). See also the database, accessible from the FRA, that provides an overview of hate crimes, hate speech, and discrimination against Muslims in the EU from 2012 to 2019: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/databases/anti-muslim-hatred/>.

310 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 51–52.

311 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 47–48.

312 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 48.

313 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 51–53.

Further analysis of data from the population surveys highlighted expressions of strong antipathy in the respondents' answers to open-ended questions, providing additional context to negative attitudes towards Muslims. An analysis of the material from 2017 suggested that the population did not perceive there to be a social sanction against expressions of Islamophobia the way it did expressions of traditional (biological) racism.³¹⁴ Anti-Muslim discourse in Norway nevertheless includes elements that are characteristic of racist arguments, such as a hierarchy of groups, essentialisation, and discrimination. In terms of recognising Islamophobia as a problem, findings from the population surveys instead indicate a lack of awareness of what constitutes Islamophobic expressions. In this respect, Islamophobia – anti-Muslim racism – is not subject to a “communication latency”³¹⁵ like that which regulates antisemitic expressions in post-Holocaust Europe. Muslim respondents in both surveys also reported a negative trend of a perceived increase in negative attitudes in the Norwegian population.³¹⁶ Based on the prevalence of anti-Muslim attitudes found in the general population, one of the recommendations in 2017 was to develop an action plan against Islamophobia.³¹⁷ Three years later, in September 2020, the government launched a plan to address discrimination and hatred against Muslims.³¹⁸

The population surveys showed that negative attitudes towards Muslims were significantly less prevalent among respondents in the Jewish sample than in the general population.³¹⁹ Jewish respondents may have recognised the prejudice in some of the statements based on the similarity to well-known accusations from the history of antisemitism, such as the statement that claims the minority is to blame for being persecuted. As mentioned above (chapter 2.2.1), a similar tendency was found among Muslim respondents, where support for the corresponding statement blaming Jews for antisemitic persecution was also relatively low.³²⁰

314 Cora Alexa Døving, “‘Muslims are . . .’ Contextualising Survey Answers,” in *The Shifting Boundaries of Prejudice: Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Norway*, 254–273.

315 Bergmann and Erb, “Kommunikationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung.”

316 However, the proportion of respondents that saw a negative development had decreased slightly in 2022 (from 63% to 57%). Moe, ed, *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 56.

317 An action plan against Islamophobia was also recommended by the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman (LDO) and the Minotenk think tank Minotenk, *Muslimfiendtlige holdninger i Norge, en kunnskapsgjennomgang* (Oslo: Minotenk, 2018).

318 Ministry of Culture, *Action plan to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims: 2020–2023* (Oslo, 2020).

319 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 60–61; Moe, *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 44–53.

320 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 34; Moe, *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 36.

Less prevalent negative attitudes among the Jews may also be related to a particularly high level of education in the Jewish samples.³²¹

The media constitutes an important frame of reference and contributes to the construction and spread of stereotypical images of minorities.³²² Following the terrorist attacks against the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, antagonistic portrayals of Muslims proliferated in the Norwegian media.³²³ However, the depiction of Muslims as a threat to Western civilisation was already prevalent a decade earlier, in relation to the Rushdie affair in 1989. The Rushdie affair – i.e., the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 and the massive public response this elicited – was described as a formative event by the Runnymede Trust in 1997, an event that has “moulded the way Muslims and non-Muslims see each other.”³²⁴ Revolving around the question of freedom of speech, the debate about *The Satanic Verses* in Norway led to a persistent public discussion on freedom of speech versus “Muslim values.”³²⁵ The terrorist attacks against the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 is perhaps a more common reference among Norwegian Muslims today when commenting on the impact of the media and experiences of discrimination.³²⁶ Thijl Sunier describes how the attacks marked a turning point for European integration policies. Central features of this change include a stronger focus on Muslims as the basic targets of integration policies, an emphasis on security issues, and a focus on national culture.³²⁷ The process of “domesticating” Muslims simultaneously raises

321 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 23; Moe, *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 23.

322 Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz and Michelle Ortiz, “Race, Ethnicity, and the Media,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Media Psychology*, ed. Karen E. Dill, Oxford Library of Psychology (Oxford University Press, 2013).

323 Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 84–85. See also European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*.

324 Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, 1997), 27. Rushdie was accused of blasphemy and his book was banned in several countries. In 1989, the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa against the author and anyone helping to distribute the book. There was held a demonstration of ca. 3000 Muslims in Oslo against “Satan Rushdie”, 25 February 1989.

325 Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 83. In 1993, Rushdie's Norwegian publisher William Nygaard was shot and seriously injured outside his home. The incident was condemned in public statements from Islamic organisations. See “Sunnimuslimer: Vi dreper ingen” [Sunni Muslims: we kill no one], *Aftenposten*, October 12, 1993, as cited in Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 84.

326 See, e.g., Vibeke Moe and Cora Alexa Døving, eds., *Diskrimineringserfaringer blant muslimer i Norge* (Oslo: HL-senteret / Likestillingssenteret KUN, 2022).

327 Thijl Sunier, “Domesticating Islam: Exploring Academic Knowledge Production on Islam and Muslims in European Societies,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 6 (2014).

the question of loyalty to the nation state.³²⁸ Discursive constructions of Muslims as threats to the nation include perceptions of Muslims as disloyal members of society, in many ways similar to historical constructions of Jews and other minorities in Europe, including Norway.³²⁹ The anti-Muslim discourse has thus increasingly come to include notions of conspiracies and myths of subversion. The “Muslim” in Islamophobic discourse is constructed as the negative opposite of the Norwegian self-image, opposed to a more or less defined set of “Norwegian” values, such as gender equality, democracy, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech.³³⁰ Problems related to Islamophobia and other forms of racism have been highlighted extensively in the Norwegian media, specifically in regard to the Black Lives Matter movement. Debate has also been spurred in relation to public meetings organised by the SIAN (Stop the Islamisation of Norway) group, which have included provocations such as the burning of the Qur’an. Døving points to a growing consensus in Norway concerning Islamophobia as a phenomenon and increased awareness that anti-Muslim attitudes represent a problem that needs to be addressed.³³¹

The image of Islam and Muslims presented in Norwegian public discourse seems to have become more nuanced in recent years, an important contributing factor being that debates include Muslim voices more frequently.³³² There has also been an increased focus on discrimination and prejudice against Muslims. A turning point in the media focus in Norway can be found in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on July 22, 2011, when the right-wing extremist Anders Behring

328 Sunier suggests that the process of “domestication” not only implies a shift in the strategies and practices of statecraft but also a reconfirmation of the “vertical topography of power,” constituting a device in the symbolic reproduction of European nation states. Sunier, “Domesticating Islam: Exploring Academic Knowledge Production on Islam and Muslims in European Societies,” 1141.

329 Ivan Kalmar and Tariq Ramadan, “Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Historical and Contemporary Connections and Parallels,” in *Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*, 352, 360–61. A major difference between the enemy constructions is nevertheless that the image of the Muslim as a threat, in contrast to the image of the Jew, could include references to home-grown terrorist attacks from Muslim citizens, for example in Britain (London 7 July 2005), or France.

and For historical representations of religious minorities in Norway, see Ulvund, *Religious Otherness and National Identity in Scandinavia*. See also chapter 2.3.

330 Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*. Analyses of the public debate on integration and Muslims in the Scandinavian countries have shown how Muslims are portrayed in opposition to perceptions of Scandinavian national cultures. Johan Cato, “När Islam Blev Svenskt: Föreställningar Om Islam och Muslimer i Svensk Offentlig Politik 1975–2010” (PhD diss., Lund University, 2012).

331 Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 76.

332 Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 80.

Breivik killed 77 people. Motivated by the belief that a Muslim takeover was occurring in Europe with the assistance of treasonous “cultural Marxists,” Breivik attacked the youth organisation of the Norwegian Labour Party (Worker’s Youth League) and the Oslo government quarter. The attack led to a focus on the relatively recent upsurge in online right-wing extremism and the nature of the connection between online activity and violence.³³³ Furthermore, the ideological landscape of the terrorist included antisemitic ideas, showing the interconnection between anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish ideologies in certain currents of right-wing extremism.³³⁴

Another terrorist attack by a right-wing extremist in Norway took place on August 10, 2019, when 21-year-old Philip Manshaus murdered his Chinese-born stepsister and subsequently attacked and attempted to kill worshippers in Al-Noor Islamic Centre near Oslo. According to the report by ECRI, the perpetrator believed that “Europe is under attack from people of ethnic origin other than his own” and that “the white race is on the brink of extinction.”³³⁵ During his trial, it was reported that Manshaus also expressed clearly antisemitic views.³³⁶

Parallel to a broader tendency in Western Europe, there has been a development in Norwegian public discourse where debates on immigration and multiculturalism have focused increasingly on religion, specifically on Muslims and Islam. What had been thought of as the “immigrant other” or “foreign workers” thus became the “Muslim.”³³⁷ The understanding of Islamophobia as a specific phenomenon distinct from xenophobia is linked to this development in Norway.³³⁸ This understanding has also encouraged analogies to other forms of prejudice, such as antisemitism. The change in focus from “immigrant” to “Muslim” that oc-

333 See, e.g., Jacob A. Ravndal, “Anders Behring Breiviks bruk av Internett og sosiale medier,” in *Forebygging av radikaliserings og voldelig ekstremisme på internett*, ed. Sunde. I.M. (Oslo: Politi-høgskolen, 2013); Ravndal, “Fra landsvvik til “trollterror”—utviklingen i det norske høyreekstreme trusselbildet fra 1945 til 2019.”; Tore Bjørgo, ed., *Høyreekstremisme i Norge Utviklingstrekk, konspirasjonsteorier og forebyggingsstrategier* (Oslo: Politi-høgskolen, 2018).

334 See, e.g., Døving, “Jødedom i pressen. Historiens grep om samtiden,” 198–99.

335 ECRI, *Report on Norway (Sixth Monitoring Cycle) Adopted on 4 December 2020* (Council of Europe: European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 2021), 23–24.

336 See Anders Brekke et al., “Manshaus slo i bordet da han fortalte om drapet på stesøsteren [Manshaus hit the table when he told about the murder of his step-sister],” *NRK*, May 8, 2020.

337 Stefano Allievi, “How the Immigrant has Become Muslim: Public Debates on Islam in Europe,” *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 21, no. 2 (2005); Ferruh Yilmaz, *How the Workers became Muslims: Immigration, Culture, and Hegemonic Transformation in Europe* (University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2016); Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*.

338 Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 77.

curred in Norway in the 1990s accompanied a change in the associations linked to the prejudiced ideas. While the image of the “immigrant” was typically associated with poverty and non-organisation, the image of the “Muslim” carried with it a sense of political power and potential danger.³³⁹ Some of the interviewees in the present study referred to this development, pointing to how the negative focus on “Muslims” and “Islam” was a burden for them.

The public debate related to the Rushdie affair has been described as the first time that prejudice against *Muslims* rather than against *immigrants* (or, more specifically, Pakistanis) appeared in the media.³⁴⁰ However, the process whereby immigrants, North Africans, and Pakistanis became “Muslims” was not just a question of labelling; it was a two-way process that also involved Muslim agency and active participation in identity construction and community building. The Rushdie affair was crucial for the self-understanding of Muslims *as Muslims* in Europe (and not just as foreign workers/immigrants). An increasing number of young Norwegians began to identify publicly as “Muslims.”³⁴¹ This development also reflects the fact that Muslims were no longer (primarily or solely) immigrants but were born and raised in Norway. Theoretical developments concerning contemporary negotiations and (re)definitions of Muslim identities provide a context for exploring constructions of community among interviewees in the present project.

3.2 Constructions of Identity among Muslims in Contemporary Europe

Exploring contemporary Muslim redefinitions of Islam, Olivier Roy underlines a detachment of religion from culture: “What is new in the current wave of globalisation is that the making of Muslim minorities is carried out through a process of deculturation in which none of the previous cultural markers is retained.”³⁴² What Roy terms the deterritorialisation of Islam is a process whereby Islam is gradually less attributed to specific geographical areas and societies and Muslim identity is reinvented without reference to a common cultural or linguistic heritage. The deterritorialisation of Islam leads to “a quest for definition,” and the

339 Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 82.

340 Døving, “A Growing Consensus,” 83. See also: Yilmaz, *How the Workers became Muslims*.

341 Christian Stokke, “A Multicultural Society in the Making. How Norwegian Muslims challenge a white nation” (PhD diss, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2012), 7; Cora Alexa Døving and Siv-Ellen Kraft, *Religion i pressen* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2013), 11.

342 Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 108.

Muslim community must be thought of in imaginary terms, Roy suggests.³⁴³ The new ethnic and religious borders “work in minds, attitudes and discourses” and are “more vocal than territorial, but all the more eagerly endorsed and defended because they have to be invented, and because they remain fragile and transitory.”³⁴⁴ This process has primarily been associated with the younger generation of Muslims who is born in Europe. A general tendency has been identified in the way this generation looks beyond ethnic religious traditions and communities in their pursuit of Islam. As we have seen, this has also been apparent in Norway. As noted by Jocelyne Cesari, the point here is not that Islam has become a world religion: “In fact, Islam was a global religion from the very beginning, as seen in the concept of the *Ummah*, the community of believers that brings together not only all Muslims currently living on earth, but also all past and future generations.”³⁴⁵ Rather, this globalized Islam involves a renegotiation of the meaning of both “Islam” and “Muslim identity.” Jacobsen points to how, in the first decade of the new millennium, young Muslims in Norway were redefining – “reinventing” – Islam and their relation to the majority society.³⁴⁶ Partly encouraged by the development of new communication technology, these young Muslims renegotiated the relationship between generations and between genders and supported a stronger identification with the *umma*.³⁴⁷ This effort towards “unification” and a global Muslim community simultaneously supported the quest to forge a common identity as Norwegian Muslims. The disconnection of the link between “ethnicity” and Islam allows a Muslim identity to be combined with a new identity as Norwegian Muslims. Jacobsen notes, “Processes of globalization engender ‘global imaginaries’ of the Islamic *umma* but such global belonging does not replace imaginaries related to other spatial configurations such as Europe, Norway or ‘back home’.”³⁴⁸ In other words, the process of globalisation did not eliminate national identity, but stimulated the development of new “local” and new “global” identities.³⁴⁹

343 Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 20.

344 Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 20.

345 Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*, 91. See also John R. Bowen, “Beyond Migration: Islam as a Transnational Public Space,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, no. 5 (2004).

346 Jacobsen, *Tilhørighetens mange former. Unge muslimer i Norge*; Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*.

347 See also Steven Vertovec, “Diaspora, transnationalism and Islam: sites of change and modes of research,” *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and across Europe*, Leiden, Brill (2003).

348 Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*, 156.

349 This is not limited to a minority identity. Nathalie Clayer has explored how the adaptation of Islam to Europe and the construction of a “European Islam” in discourse and action has emerged

Researchers have pointed to a development whereby Muslims in Europe increasingly view the religious community as an identity group, expressing identity politics and “politics of recognition” and emphasising a distinction between “them” and “us.”³⁵⁰ “In a context where Islam is cast as ‘the otherness’ of Europe, a Muslim identity may be recast as an alternative identity for youngsters in search of a reactive identity,” Roy suggests.³⁵¹ Jacobsen points to how a mobilisation of Muslim identity in the political space of European nation states demonstrates that migration and globalisation also can motivate a focus on identity and borders.³⁵² The construction of Muslim identity in contemporary Europe thus also takes place in tension with a majority narrative of the “Muslim,” and a call to respect “Islamic values” is articulated at a time when these values are under attack; hence the “Islam” of these constructions may have little to do with the religiosity of the persons involved. Young Muslims’ move towards Islam was interpreted as “social rebellion” against the majority society.³⁵³ Peter Mandaville underlines the fluid character of these identity processes, pointing to how, for example, Muslims who in most situations are more inclined to secularism, under some circumstances may turn to Islam as a language of social protest, defying facile categorisations of “secular” or “religious.”³⁵⁴

The current study investigates how the narratives place “the Jew” in relation to formulations of Muslim identities, asking whether they contain globalized imaginaries of “the Muslim” and how they relate to spatial configurations such as Norway, Europe, “the West,” or countries of origin. Furthermore, the study explores how the narratives relate to interviewees’ experiences as immigrants in Norway in terms of imposed identities. The interpretation of experiences may support, deconstruct, or

historically in Albania, a majority Muslim country, where it is linked to trends of reform and notions of “the West,” “Western civilisation,” and “modernity,” among other things. Nathalie Clayer, “Adapting Islam To Europe: The Albanian Example,” in *Islam und Muslime in (Südost)Europa im Kontext von Transformation und EU-Erweiterung*, ed. Christian Voss and Jordanka Telbizova-Sack, (Berlin/Munich: Otto Sagner, 2010), 53. For more on processes of adaptation in Islam, see also: John R. Bowen, *A New Anthropology of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 156–173.

350 Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*; Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*. Roy underlines that this is not exclusive to Islam in the West, rather it is a common feature of both Muslims and Christians. Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 35.

351 Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 45. See also Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*.

352 Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*, 156.

353 Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*, 78.

354 Peter Mandaville, “Muslim Youth in Europe,” in *Islam, Europe’s Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 220.

resist the moral authority and injunctions of public discourses and dominant narratives. I explore how symbolic constructions of community in the narratives can be seen as negotiations, deconstructions, or identifications with perceptions of national narratives in Norwegian society. Emerging from the narratives are different configurations of Muslim communities. Carefully avoiding a perspective where overlapping or liminal identities and subcultures are understood as deviations from a norm of cultural unity and homogeneity, the analysis will not attempt to categorise the diverse identities of the interviewees in terms of “liberal” or “conservative” or other categories often used to describe Muslims. Rather, the study attempts to discern patterns in which narratives about Jews express the various ways interviewees negotiate identities, including how references to national identities, Islamic denominations, generational affiliation, etc. are made relevant in symbolic constructions of community.

4 Jews in Norway: History, Organisation, and Religiosity

The Jewish minority is one of Norway's five national minorities.³⁵⁵ The history of the minority in Norway is approximately 150 years old – shorter than in most European countries. There are several explanations for the brevity of this history, one of them being Norway's geographical position at the periphery of Jewish life in Europe, but an important factor is also to be found in the exclusionary tradition that until 1851 prevented Jews from entering the country. Norwegian history includes few examples of the kind of political or institutionalized antisemitism historically found in other European countries. A notable exception being under German occupation during World War II, when the Norwegian parliamentary system was suppressed and the Norwegian National Socialist party *Nasjonal Samling* was the only political party tolerated by the occupiers.

Nevertheless, anti-Jewish beliefs have, historically as well as today, affected Norwegian society, both on the level of public authorities and the state bureaucracy and on the level of popular attitudes. An important example is the inclusion of Article two in the Norwegian Constitution of 1814, which prohibited Jews from entering the country.³⁵⁶ At first glance, the article seems something of a paradox, apparently contradicting the fundamental ethos of one of Europe's most liberal constitutions at the time. Accordingly, historians have presented the article as inadvertent, a foreign element originating from intolerant provisions in the preceding law or in prejudices held by the peasant representatives at the assembly. This perspective has been refuted by Håkon Harket.³⁵⁷ The inclusion of the paragraph, he argues, was in fact the result of a long process, which included preparatory work involving some of the country's foremost intellectuals and members of the Constitutional Committee at Eidsvoll. Christian and anti-Judaic traditions played a role in debates about the article; however, the justification for the provision was political and secular, rather than religious. Harket shows how the article, contrary to what had been assumed, was deeply rooted in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which also inspired the rest of the Norwegian constitution. Beliefs that religious Jews were unable to become good citizens due to their loyalty to Mosaic Law and an inclination to form a "state within the state" were central to the argument.

³⁵⁵ The other four are Kvens/Norwegian Finns, Forest Finns, Roma and Romani people/Tater. In addition, the Sami have status as Indigenous people.

³⁵⁶ The clause also included a ban on monastic orders and prohibited Jesuits from entering the country.

³⁵⁷ Harket, *Paragrafen: Eidsvoll 1814*.

The notion that Jews formed a “state within the state” is an antisemitic trope related to the political emancipation of Jews at the time.³⁵⁸ The accusation also relates to the notion of Jews being the chosen people.³⁵⁹ Following a process that started in the 1830s, the constitutional article was abandoned and Jews were admitted entry to Norway as of 1851.³⁶⁰ Before this, individuals required special permission to be allowed entry.³⁶¹

The Jewish Community in Oslo was established in 1892, with 100 registered members. Not many Jewish immigrants settled in Norway during the first years after the repeal of the clause from 1814. It was not until the first two decades of the twentieth century that the scope of Jewish immigration reached any notable

358 See, e.g., Ulvund, *Religious Otherness and National Identity in Scandinavia*, 37–54. Ulvund describes how the accusation was also used against other minorities and was common more than a century before the French Revolution. While the German Baron Jakob von Bielfeld was the first to define the expression “state within the state” (in 1760), French texts as early as the 17th century described Huguenots, Jansenists, and Jesuits as “état dans l’Etat.” Jacob Katz, “A State Within the State, the History of an anti-Semitic Slogan,” in Jacob Katz, *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History* (Farnborough: Gregg International Publishers 1972), 58; Ulvund, *Religious Otherness and National Identity in Scandinavia*, 45. Harket’s analysis of the factors behind the 1814 Norwegian prohibition against Jews focuses on the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s use of the term and on debates about Jewish emancipation throughout Europe at the time. Harket, *Paragrafen: Eidsvoll 1814*, 201–10.

359 Ulvund, *Religious Otherness and National Identity in Scandinavia*, 64, 69.

360 Monastic orders were admitted from 1897 and Jesuits from 1956.

361 Special permission to enter the realm was granted individuals and specific groups by the king starting in the 17th century. According to Oscar Mendelsohn, the first letter of safe conduct from a Norwegian-Danish king was given by King Christian IV in 1619 to Albert Dionis, a Portuguese Jew from Hamburg. In the following years, further protection was granted other Jews settling in Glückstadt. From 1630 on, all Portuguese Jews settling in Glückstadt were granted permission to travel in Denmark-Norway, and from 1641 the protection was extended to German Jews, the so-called *Schutzjuden* from Altona. In 1651, King Fredrick III introduced a ban against Jews travelling in the realm without a letter of safe conduct (*leidebrev*). Exceptions were subsequently made for Portuguese Jews, see Oscar Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år*, vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 12–13. The decree was confirmed in 1687 by King Christian V’s Norwegian Code, Article 1, which stated: “No Jew may enter this Realm or solicit work here without a letter of safe conduct issued by the King. A fine of one thousand riksdaler will be imposed on anyone who is apprehended and found to lack the prescribed letter of safe conduct” [Ingen Jøde maa sig her i Riget indbegive, eller sig finde lade, uden Kongens særdelis Lejdebreve under tusinde Rixdalers Straf af hver Person, som uden forskrefven Lejdebreve betrædis] (Third book, Chapter 22: *On Jews and Travellers*). Though Jewish admission to the realm had been restricted earlier, the clause in the 1814 Constitution thus constituted a new level of exclusion. The clause was strictly enforced until the 1830s, when individuals with special permission were admitted once again. See Frode Ulvund, *Fridomens grenser. Handhevinga av den norske “jødeparagrafen”* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2014). From the 1830s, Sephardic Jews as a group were exempt from the ban.

level, with numbers increasing from 642 to 1,457.³⁶² This population increase was part of a larger wave of Jewish immigration to Western Europe and the United States at the time. This migration was primarily the result of manifestations of antisemitism in the form of anti-Jewish laws, discrimination, as well as pogroms in Russia and the Baltic region. The majority of the Jews who came to Norway in this period were Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi families from Eastern Europe, particularly from the areas that today comprise Lithuania and northeast Poland. The 1910 census reveals a variety of professions among the Jewish immigrants, including carpenters, dentists, and teachers. However, most Jews in the early 1900s were peddlers, shopkeepers, and artisans. According to Marta Gjernes, two thirds of Jews in Oslo and almost nine out of ten Jews outside of Oslo worked as merchants at the time.³⁶³

Norwegian-Jewish history also includes public expressions of antisemitism during the inter-war years and the active role played by the Norwegian police in deporting Jews during World War II. As indirect evidence of the presence of antisemitic attitudes in Norwegian society, in 1923 the Norwegian Zionist Society (*Norsk Zionistforening*) established a committee to struggle against antisemitism.³⁶⁴ The Jewish minority's reaction to expressions of antisemitism at the time has yet to be systematically researched, but the establishment of the committee shows that members actively sought to counter anti-Jewish attitudes in society. Individuals within the Jewish community also took stands against antisemitism, two examples being lawsuits against the antisemitic magazine *Nationalt tidsskrift* in 1927. The Hauge-sund merchant Moritz Rabinowitz was one of the plaintiffs; during the trial, Rabinowitz criticised Norwegian authorities for not having stopped the editor of the magazine, Mikal Sylten, from engaging in antisemitic harassment. Both cases ended with Sylten being convicted of defamation.³⁶⁵ Historians have described how the minority otherwise generally adopted a strategy of quiet integration into Norwegian society, according to the maxim that making oneself noticed – for instance, by raising one's voice against negative attitudes – would only make matters worse.³⁶⁶

362 Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år*, vol 1, 529.

363 Marta Gjernes, "Jødar i Kristiania: dei fyrste innvandarane si geografiske og sosioøkonomiske plassering i samfunnet frå 1851 til 1942" (Master's thesis University of Oslo, 2002).

364 Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år*, vol. 1, 520; Bjarte Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge. Registrering, deportasjon, tilintetgjørelse* (Oslo: Dreyer, 2017), 78.

365 Kristine Bjørndal-Lien and Kjetil Braut Simonsen, "Integrasjon og tradisjon. Den jødiske minoriteten i Norge frem til 1940," in *SEGL: Katolsk årsskrift for religion og samfunn*, ed. Peder K. Solberg (Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2020); Kristin Brattelid, "Mikal Sylten: Et antisemittisk livsprosjekt." (Master's thesis University of Oslo, 2004), 82–92.

366 Gjernes, "Jødar i Kristiania"; Vibeke Kieding Banik, "En jøde for en jøde? Integrasjon av jødiske flyktninger etter andre verdenskrig," in *Utenfor det etablerte. Aspekter ved Einhart Lor-*

Gjernes has described how the strategy included some degree of social control so as not to provoke negative attitudes.³⁶⁷ According to historian Bjarte Bruland, the integration of Jews into Norwegian society was a one-sided process, largely without societal or institutional influences.³⁶⁸

The Jewish population in Norway has always been relatively small, and the Holocaust was devastating. Before the outbreak of World War II, around 2,000 Jews lived in the country.³⁶⁹ To date, this most likely represents the highest population in the history of Norwegian Jews. In 1942 and 1943, 773 Jews were deported from Norway to Auschwitz-Birkenau. More than 1,000 Jews fled to Sweden, many aided by resistance networks.³⁷⁰ Approximately one third of the total Jewish population was killed; only 35 of those deported survived.³⁷¹ In 1946, the census identified only 559 Jews living in the country.³⁷²

With no official statistics available, the current number of Jews in Norway is unknown, but it is estimated to be around 1,500. Roughly half this number are members of the Jewish communities; the largest being in Oslo, followed by that in Trondheim. A total of 755 people were listed as members in 2023, amounting to 0.1% of the total number of people belonging to religious and life stance communities outside the Church of Norway.³⁷³ Only the synagogue in Oslo has its own rabbi. There are also small Jewish populations in the cities of Bergen and Stavanger.

Although the early Jewish population was not homogeneous, the population in modern-day Norway is more complex in terms of ethnic background, degree of re-

enz' forskning, ed. Øivind Kopperud, Vibeke Moe, and Vibeke Kieding Banik (Oslo: HL-senteret, 2011).

367 Gjernes, "Jødar i Kristiania," 233.

368 Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 29–31.

369 Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 28.

370 Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 365–66. According to Bruland, 1,216 people fled from Norway due to anti-Jewish measures. Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 470.

371 Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 365.

372 Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år* vol. 2. After the war, Norway received almost 400 Jewish displaced persons. The refugees arrived in May 1947, first to camps in Halden, but soon most established in the Oslo area. However, Norwegian society managed to provide for the needs of the refugees to only a very small extent. There was a housing shortage at the time, and living conditions for the refugees were poor. Banik, "En jøde for en jøde? Integrasjon av jødiske flyktninger etter andre verdenskrig." Most of the Jewish refugees who arrived after the war left Norway following the establishment of Israel in 1948. Synne Corell, "Vårt lille plaster på krigens sår": Norges mottak av jødiske 'displaced persons' og arbeidere mellom 1946 og 1950" (Master's diss., University of Oslo, 2000), 176–78.

373 Statistics Norway, "Trus- og livssynssamfunn utanfor Den norske kyrkja," June 5, 2023, Trus- og livssynssamfunn utanfor Den norske kyrkja – SSB.

ligiosity, and traditional observance. The rabbi of the Oslo Jewish community is orthodox, and the regular ceremonies and practices are conducted in accordance with Orthodox Judaism. However, a short description on the Oslo community's webpage underlines the diversity among the members and the broad spectrum of religious practice.³⁷⁴ In a study of Jewish identity and faith communities in Denmark, anthropologist Andrew Buckser describes the contemporary Jewish community of Denmark as a seeming contradiction, in that it “combines a manifest institutional integrity with an equally evident fragmentation among its members.”³⁷⁵ This may also serve as a description of the community in Norway. Research has revealed considerable differences in views on a range of issues, some of which deal precisely with institutional fellowship.³⁷⁶ This applies not only to matters such as ritual rules, degree of religiosity, and the limits of their jurisdiction, but also to views on what constitutes the central characteristics of Jewish identity. The diversity of the Jewish minority is also reflected in views on Zionism, which have gone through several stages over the years. In the first issue of the periodical published by the Norwegian Zionist Society, Norwegian Jews' attitude towards Zionism was described as distant and even hostile.³⁷⁷ Today, the congregation in Oslo self-identifies as Zionist and the majority of its members displays a sense of having a strong bond with Israel, though some of its policies are contested.³⁷⁸

There are several religious branches of Judaism in Norway. A small ultra-orthodox community has been established in Oslo by an emissary from the *Chabad-Lubavitch* organisation in New York.³⁷⁹ The Reform movement has also established itself in Oslo. Reform Judaism has several subgroups, one of which is Jewish Renewal, from which a Norwegian female rabbi has graduated. The Society for Progressive Judaism in Norway (Foreningen Progressiv Jødedom i Norge) was another subgroup of Reform Judaism that was active in Oslo until recently. The group had no rabbi, but served as a social and cultural meeting place. With its house of assembly and synagogue, the Jewish Community in Oslo represents a central institution

374 Det Mosaiske Trossamfund, “Om Det Mosaiske Trossamfund,” accessed February 1, 2024, <https://www.dmt.oslo.no/om-dmt/>.

375 Andrew Buckser, *After the Rescue: Jewish Identity and Community in Contemporary Denmark* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 4.

376 Døving and Moe, *Det som er jødisk*, 32.

377 Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år*, vol. 2, 525.

378 Vibeke Kieding Banik, “Solidaritet og tilhørighet. Norske jøders forhold til Israel 1945–1975” (PhD diss., Universitetet i Oslo, 2009); Døving and Moe, *Det som er jødisk*; Hoffmann and Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 36–39; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 67–71.

379 Nora Stene, “Autoritet og autoritetens grenser. Den ortodokse rabbineren som religiøs leder i Det Mosaiske Trossamfund,” in *Religiøse ledere*, 148.

for non-religious Jews as well, and the buildings serve both as religious and social meeting places. The different aspects of belonging among Norwegian Jews have been described as ethnic, cultural, and social.³⁸⁰ Celebrations of holidays and rites of passage in the synagogue are generally regarded as important.³⁸¹ Some aspects of observance that are highlighted are religious instruction, the celebration of bar and bat mitzvah, and the observance of holy days such as Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, and Pesach.³⁸²

The presence of a relatively large Muslim minority has contributed to the establishment of a multicultural discourse in Norway, which also includes other religious minorities. This development has had an impact on the situation of the Jewish minority, as the discourse provides a language for arguing for cultural rights without referring to specific religious identities.³⁸³ Both the Muslim minority and, in contrast to its historical practice, the Jewish minority, have a strong presence as minorities in contemporary Norwegian public debates, fighting against general prejudice, racism, and antisemitism, and for minority rights.

380 Stene, "Autoritet og autoritetens grenser," 147.

381 Døving and Moe, *Det som er jødisk*, 32.

382 Døving and Moe, *Det som er jødisk*, 32.

383 Døving and Moe, *Det som er jødisk*, 62–63.

5 Conceptualisations of the Narrative

The point of departure for this study is the idea that human beings are storytellers.³⁸⁴ I conceive of “narratives” as limited and (chronologically) organised entities that describe phenomena and events and create causal connections. In other words, a central characteristic of narratives according to this conception is that they are structured; i.e., they have a “plot”.³⁸⁵ The use of narratives is a way of organising, interpreting, and making sense of the world. On this matter, the study is inspired by Roland Barthes’ distinction between *narratives* and *copies of events*, in that the narrative “ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted.”³⁸⁶ The central function of storytelling is therefore to create meaning. Following this perspective, narratives are meaningful and constructive descriptions rather than neutral or objective ones. The analytical approach of the study is based on the premise that the interpretation and production of meaning that takes place in the narratives are a form of self-representation and are linked to the identity construction of the interviewees.³⁸⁷ Furthermore, it implies that narratives relate to a social and cultural context and to fields of knowledge in terms of established discourses; i.e., they draw on shared frames of reference and vocabularies.³⁸⁸

Analytically, we can define different levels of narratives. While “story” is typically used as a synonym for “narrative” in everyday language, narrative theory has developed a more precise vocabulary. Halverson et al. distinguish between *stories*, *narratives*, and *master narratives*, defining narratives as “a coherent system of stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form” and master narratives as “a transhistorical narrative that is deeply imbedded in a particular culture.”³⁸⁹ There is a connection between individuals’ formulations

384 Walter R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*, ed. Carroll C. Arnold, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Donald E Polkinghorne, *Narrative knowing and the human sciences* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).

385 Polkinghorne, *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*, 36. The definition of a narrative as an entity that has a plot can be traced back to Aristotle and his writings on the elements of the tragedy in *Poetics* from around 335 BC.

386 Roland Barthes, “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” in *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. Vol. 1. *Major issues in narrative theory*, ed. Mieke Bal (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 86.

387 See also Jerome S. Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, MA., London: Harvard University Press, 1986).

388 Lois Presser, “The Narratives of Offenders,” *Theoretical Criminology* 13, no. 2 (2009).

389 Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 23–24.

of personal narratives and this culturally embedded repertoire. According to Donald E. Polkinghorne, “Personal stories are always some version of the general cultural stock of stories about how life proceeds.”³⁹⁰ Narratives are not necessarily fully formulated. References to culturally embedded narratives may form part of accounts in the form of *narrative abbreviations*; i.e., short and fragmented expressions that still contain a whole course of events.³⁹¹ The use of such abbreviations suggests that the listener is familiar with the narratives and that further explanations are unnecessary. The narratives are invoked by means of symbols or headlines (such as “9/11”). Being well known to the audience, such references may be seen as particularly effective in communicating analogies, to make assertions of similarities between the culturally transmitted narrative and current situations or personal experiences.

Narratives express and create identity on both the individual and collective level. Rita Sørly and Bodil H. Blix discuss how master narratives as collective representations contribute to the construction and upholding of categories, creating symbolic boundaries between social actors.³⁹² Individuals recount these narratives and participate in their gradual reshaping and creation of new communities. Master narratives are resources, but as noted by Arthur Frank, they may also constitute a constraint in the sense that they define belonging and construct groups.³⁹³

The following analysis explores different levels of narratives, including how narratives about Jews relate to personal experiences, specific current or past events, and the significance of culturally embedded (master) narratives. However, borders between different levels of narratives may be less clear, and these distinctions should be understood as an analytical tool, rather than a designation of distinct phenomena. The focus of the present study is not on identifying and distinguishing between forms of narratives, but rather on exploring narratives as they are expressed in the (re)formulations of the interviewees. These reformulations may draw on cul-

390 Polkinghorne, *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*, 107.

391 Jürgen Straub, ed., *Identity and Historical Consciousness* (New York / Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), 123.

392 Rita Sørly and Bodil H. Blix, eds., *Fortelling og forskning: narrativ teori og metode i tverrfaglig perspektiv* (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk, 2017), 48. See also Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, “The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002). Other terms used are cultural narratives, see: Jefferson A. Singer, “Narrative Identity and Meaning Making Across the Adult Life Span,” *Journal of Personality* 72, no. 3 (2004).; public narratives, see Margaret R. Somers, “The Narrative Construction of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach,” *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994); and dominant stories, see: Edward M. Bruner, “Ethnography as Narrative,” in *Memory, Identity, Community: The Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences*, ed. Lewis P. Hinchmann and Sandra K. Hinchmann (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

393 Arthur W. Frank, “Practicing Dialogical Narrative Analysis,” in *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*, ed. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012).

turally embedded narratives – for example, from the Islamic tradition – to a greater or lesser extent and more or less explicitly. The analysis leads to the identification of different narrative patterns, suggesting a typology of narratives.

Cultural narratives make use of symbols. Halverson et al. point to how the symbolic nature of narratives and their interpretation may lead to contradictions, “Cultural narratives and powerful tribal or national interpretations of them are constructed out of symbols, particularly in the form of language. Symbols are necessarily ambiguous and subject to local interpretations for meaning.”³⁹⁴ Taking into account the ambiguity of symbols, the following analysis explores this symbolic nature of narratives. The approach is informed by the symbolic constructivism of Anthony Cohen, who in turn draws on theories of community construction and boundaries in the tradition of Fredrik Barth.³⁹⁵ Cohen describes how communities make use of symbolic frameworks in a process of self-identification and interpretation of the communities’ boundaries. The symbolically constructed community provides meaning and identity to its members. Working from Barth, Cohen points to how boundary construction is related to social interaction on some level, stating, “Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished.”³⁹⁶ The “community” thus implies both similarity and difference, what members of a group perceive as having in common as well as what distinguishes them from members of other groups. The symbolic repertoire of the community constitutes and gives reality to the community’s boundaries in a process that “transforms the reality of difference into the appearance of similarity.”³⁹⁷ Cohen points out that to emphasise the symbolic character of community boundaries is simultaneously to suggest that they imply different meanings to different people and that boundaries perceived by some may be imperceptible to others. In other words, the sharing of symbols does not necessarily imply the sharing of meaning. While symbols are shared, their meaning is not. Rather, symbols entail a capacity to make meaning and are marked by the particular experiences of the individual.

I treat “the Jew” in the narratives of the interviewees as a symbol in the Cohenian sense; accordingly, I explore how the narratives can be seen to reflect a repertoire of meaning through which boundaries between symbolically constructed, imagined

394 Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 17.

395 Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, ed. Peter Hamilton (London and New York: Routledge, 2015); Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Oslo / Bergen / Trondheim: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).

396 Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 12.

397 Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 21.

communities are expressed.³⁹⁸ The versatility of Cohen's symbols is a crucial point in this context, as it explains how people use shared and common symbols in varying ways, based on their different and even opposing views. Seeing this versatility as a central feature of the symbolic "Jew," the present study thus investigates polyphony and ambivalence in the narratives.

The exploration of the "symbolic construction" of community takes as its starting point the diverse potential meanings of Jews and Jewish history in the narratives, asking how they relate to the experiences of the interviewees as Muslims, immigrants, and members of a religious minority in Norway. The analysis explores different configurations of community, including perceptions of shared experiences, solidarity, and identification with Jews, or boundary-constructing narratives of difference.

³⁹⁸ "Imagined communities," see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York: Verso, 1983). The concept refers to nations as socially constructed, highlighting that communities are creations of collective imagination and shared identity.

6 Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology of the study, beginning by a discussion of strengths and weaknesses related to qualitative interviews. Following this is a description of the sample and recruitment process. The last part of the chapter concerns ethical considerations related to research involving minorities and sensitive questions. Descriptions of the interview guide, proceedings related to coding and analysis, and a list of the interviewees can be found in the appendix (chapter thirteen).

6.1 Qualitative Interviews: Strengths and Limitations Related to the Subject Matter

Investigating complex issues such as identity processes, group relations, and religiosity is a difficult task. The study's aim of exploring a variety of narratives, reflecting a range of views connected to the subject matter, is closely connected to the choice of method. Research data collected by means of qualitative interviews allows for differentiated approaches, where interviewees can elaborate on their views and express multi-layered sentiments and changes of opinion during the course of the interview. However, there are both methodological difficulties and challenges related to the subject matter that require consideration.

As discussed above, one problem relates to the interviewees' self-regulation due to social norms. Bias due to social norms is a known factor from quantitative research on sensitive issues. According to Tourangeau, a question is sensitive "when it asks for a socially undesirable answer, when it asks, in effect, that the respondent admits he or she has violated a social norm".³⁹⁹ Social desirability bias may lead to underreporting of socially undesirable characteristics, such as anti-Jewish attitudes, but also to systematic emphasis of socially desirable ones.⁴⁰⁰ Some level of self-regulation can also be expected in qualitative interviews, for example when the is-

399 Roger Tourangeau and Ting Yan, "Sensitive questions in surveys," *Psychological Bulletin* 133, no. 5 (2007): 860.

400 Bergmann and Erb found that antisemitism in the context of population surveys was nevertheless reported truthfully among respondents who perceived the topic "Jew" to be sensitive. Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, "Mir ist das Thema Juden irgendwie unangenehm'. Kommunikationslatenz und die Wahrnehmung des Meinungsklimas im Fall des Antisemitismus," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 43, no. 3 (1991). This conclusion has been discussed by Heiko Beyer and Ivar Krumpal, who claimed that both the topic "Jew" and attitudes towards Jews may be perceived as sensitive, and showed how interviewees were more likely to reveal

sues in question include different forms of racism or group-focused enmity, such as antisemitism.⁴⁰¹ As will be demonstrated below, the interviewees in the present study displayed both strong engagement and varied attitudes, including explicitly negative views. They may nevertheless have adjusted their responses in accordance with social norms and based on their perception of the interview situation, reducing the expression of overtly negative views or reducing their intensity, or accentuating positive views.

Qualitative methodology and the social constructivist tradition place emphasis on how the interview situation is complex in nature and how the data ought not to be interpreted as direct renderings of a reality outside of the interview situation. The central point is that qualitative data are influenced by the contexts in which the interviews took place.

Following the idea of the “active interview,” as described by Holstein and Gubrium, all interviews are “reality-constructing, meaning making, occasions, whether recognised as such or not.”⁴⁰² Given that the interviewees’ accounts are social phenomena, in the sense that they are shaped and formulated in a social environment and in interaction with others, interviews provide access to ideas and notions as they are expressed as part of social interaction. In this sense, what is expressed during the interview can be regarded as a result of the interview itself.

Interviews in the present study were analyzed according to narrative methodology.⁴⁰³ Narrative methodology in similar ways suggests an interrelational approach to the exchange between researcher and participants. According to Stefinee Pinnegar and J. Gary Daynes, “[t]o use narrative as methodology and explore narrative as the phenomenon of interest, researchers must come to embrace a relational understanding of the roles and interactions of the researcher and the researched.”⁴⁰⁴ This approach implies a notion of the narrative as something that is created in and

antisemitic attitudes in social settings where such attitudes were expressed. Beyer and Krumpal, “The Communication Latency of Antisemitic Attitudes: An Experimental Study.”

401 An analysis of the syndrome of group-focused enmity (GFE) can be found in Zick, Küpper, and Hövermann, *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination: A European Report* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011. and Andreas Zick et al., “The Syndrome of Group-Focused Enmity: The Interrelation of Prejudices Tested with Multiple Cross-Sectional and Panel Data,” *Journal of Social Issues* 64, no. 2 (2008).

402 James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, *The Active Interview*, Qualitative Research Methods, (Thousand Oaks, CA, London, New Dehli: Sage Publications 1995), 4.

403 D. Jean Clandinin, ed., *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007).

404 Stefinee Pinnegar and J. Gary Daynes, “Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative,” in *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, ed. Jean D. Clandinin (Thousand Oakes: SAGE Publications, 2007), 15.

through the interview (“co-construction”), in contrast to a perception of the narrative as existing “prior” to the interview.⁴⁰⁵ These insights have guided the analysis in the present study.

Following this, the interviews are not seen as giving a picture of the thoughts of the interviewees as they can be imagined to exist on a deeper level and prior to the interview, but as social and temporal constructions in relation to the researcher (interviewer). Thus, answers provided by the interviewees may have been different with other interviewers and at a different time. Furthermore, the conclusions presented in this study should not be understood as representing final “truths,” but as interpretations of the material and as subjective, in the sense that they are dependent on the researcher’s “prejudices” (prejudgements) and interpretative horizon. I nevertheless regard aspects of the narratives as reflecting cultural and social realities outside the interview situation; for example, in terms of references to master narratives.

6.2 The Sample

The study’s aim of exploring a variety of perspectives made it useful that the composition of interviewees reflect a wide distribution of background variables, such as age, national background, education level, religiosity, and religious denomination. The sampling followed a path that took this broad focus into consideration, known as maximum variation sampling or heterogeneous sampling. Accordingly, the sample has not been selected to match criteria of representativeness and should not be interpreted as constituting a basis for general conclusions concerning Muslims in Norway.

Thirty-two persons were interviewed between June 2015 and June 2017. Among these were twenty-one Sunnis (nine women and twelve men), six Shiites (one woman and five men), and five Ahmadis (two women and three men). The youngest interviewee was eighteen and the oldest in his seventies, while most interviewees were in their twenties (eighteen people) and thirties/forties (nine people). Education varied, ranging from upper secondary school to master’s level. Most interviewees had jobs, either full-time or part-time. Almost half of the interviewees were students at the time of the interview, many combining study with work.

⁴⁰⁵ Sørly and Blix, *Fortelling og forskning: narrativ teori og metode i tverrfaglig perspektiv*, 73–77.

The majority of the interviewees (twenty persons) were not born in Norway, and most interviewees had parents who were born outside of Norway. The interviewees had different national backgrounds mirroring the composition of the general Muslim community in Norway, with a majority having a Pakistani or a Somali background. Other countries of origin included Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Macedonia, Morocco, Tunisia, and Norway. Most interviewees expressed strong ties to their parents' countries of origin even if they themselves were born in Norway or if they had lived most of their lives in Norway. All interviewees lived in Oslo or the surrounding county at the time of the interview, but their backgrounds included most parts of the country through education, previous residence, and upbringing.

The names and exact age of the interviewees have been altered in the text in order to protect anonymity, though their gender and generational affiliation are preserved.

6.3 Recruitment

The interviewees were mainly recruited by contacting mosques and groups connected to the mosques, such as women's groups, as well as through different social meeting places for Muslims in Oslo. In addition, the project was advertised outside the prayer room at Blindern university campus, which resulted in interviews with students who all identified themselves as Sunnis and were members of the Muslim Student Society. Interviewees from the Ahmadi community were primarily recruited through the Baitun Nasr mosque in Oslo. Some of the participants were also recruited through other interviewees, through what is known as the snowball-method. Consequently, these interviewees were acquainted with other participants. In addition to the interviews, useful information was often gleaned during meetings and discussions that took place before or after the interviews.

The participants received information about the project in advance of the interviews, including information about anonymity and confidentiality.⁴⁰⁶ The research topics were also described in the information letter but only in general terms. The term "antisemitism" was not mentioned, to avoid leading the discussion in a specific direction.

I was lucky to have the help of a research assistant during the recruitment process and data collection. The recruitment process benefitted from contacts he

⁴⁰⁶ The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) approved the research project and the information letter before the initiation of the project.

had previously established during fieldwork in connection with his master's thesis. Furthermore, the assistant's own Muslim identity, his personal knowledge and understanding of Muslim life in Norway and various Islamic religious practices facilitated access to interviewees. It is also possible that the fact that he was a man made contact with some of the interviewees easier. Furthermore, his minority identity and immigrant background contributed to discussions on majority-minority relations and experiences connected to being Muslim in Norway in a different way than what was possible for me, as a non-Muslim member of the Norwegian ethnic majority. However, I also shared important identities, experiences, and references with the interviewees – for example, as a woman, as a mother, by having an affiliation with the University of Oslo, or by living in Eastern Norway.

Developing high levels of rapport and a reliable research environment before entering the arena is recommended by Robert S. Weiss for interviews concerned with “difficult questions.”⁴⁰⁷ In order to reduce contextual effects, different measures were taken to secure such environments with the interviewees. Interviews were typically conducted in the home or working place of the interviewee, at the university campus or other preferred places, such as cafés. My impression was that the interviews generally had an atmosphere that allowed for an open discussion of difficult subjects. Still, the material collected by the research assistant tends to contain more negative descriptions of Jews than the material I collected. There may be several reasons for this difference. Perhaps it can be put down to interviewer effect and the aforementioned differences in background between the interviewers. However, perhaps equally likely, it may be a result of differences in recruitment patterns or background variables of the interviewees. Some of these contacts were established among young male Muslims with a certain affinity towards radical ideological positions. The ideological views in the social network of these interviewees may have contributed to the views expressed.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Robert S. Weiss, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 76.

⁴⁰⁸ Perhaps also the fact that most of the assistant's interviewees were men. As previously mentioned, results from the Norwegian surveys on attitudes towards Jews found negative views to be more prevalent among men, both in the general population and in the Muslim samples. Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 101–102; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 83.

6.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards for research are regulated by law in Norway.⁴⁰⁹ Special consideration should be given when the research involves minorities and is concerned with religion or ethnicity, whether related to the participants' own identity or third parties. Research guidelines require that the participants' integrity be safeguarded, both during the research and when results are presented, and that researchers be careful when applying categories or concepts that may give grounds for "unreasonable generalisation that in practice may lead to stigmatisation of specific social groups."⁴¹⁰

Negative and stereotypical views about Muslims are prevalent in Norwegian society, as discussed in chapter 3.1. Research that aims at establishing how "Muslims" think may contribute to one-dimensional and essentialising constructions of Muslims. Furthermore, research that aims to explore notions about Jews may involuntarily stimulate similarly stereotypical and essentialist views about Jews. The present study is particularly sensitive in relation to these aspects. The exploration of a multitude of meanings and layers of identification in the narratives is a way to avoid contributing to any essentialized notions of Muslims or Jews. However, even analyses that focus on multi-layered meanings may, by virtue of manifesting a relation between the researcher and the "researched," be seen as inevitably reinstating an asymmetrical relation of subject and object. Narrative theory addresses this issue by focusing on narratives as co-constructed.

A particular difficulty is related to the use of concepts. On the one hand, an important function in cognitive processes concerns reducing complexity in order to promote comprehension in daily life. Categorisation is an inherent part of human understanding and concepts are necessary in order to write and conduct research. Concepts such as "Muslims," "Jews," "minority," "majority," and "immigrants" are central elements in the present study. While concepts reflect and shape our social reality, they may also obscure differences or create false boundaries.⁴¹¹ One example is the relation between the two concepts "minority" and "majority." While often

409 See Kunnskapsdepartementet, "Lov om organisering av forskningsetisk arbeid," ed. Kunnskapsdepartementet (Lovdata, LOV-2017-04-28-23 2017), <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2017-04-28-23>.

410 My translation. See: Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité samfunnsvitenskap og humaniora (NESH), *Forskningsetiske retningslinjer for samfunnsvitenskap, humaniora, juss og teologi* (Oslo: Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for samfunnsvitenskap og humaniora 2016), 12–22. Ethical guidelines involve the whole research process, including recruitment procedures, interview conduct, data storage, and presentation of findings.

411 As discussed by Adorno, the conceptual nature of our language implies that by definition it cannot grasp that which is beyond the concept (the "nonidentical" / das Nichtidentische). Theodor W. Adorno, *Estetisk teori*, trans. Arild Linneberg (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2004 [1970]). The concept is discussed throughout the book. See, e.g., "[. . .] i den empiriske virkeligheten blir subjektets identitet

presented as opposites, it seems clear that both concepts frequently overlap in real life. Someone who is member of a “minority” in one sense – for example, as a Muslim – may be part of a “majority” in another – for example, as a “Norwegian.” To some extent, such precisions may still reflect ideal constructions; in the present study, even interviewees who were born in Norway often used “Norwegian” to describe “ethnic” Norwegians, as distinct from themselves, or they would describe themselves as “Norwegians” at one point in the interview and not at another.⁴¹² Concepts are thus constantly shaped by, and shape, our understanding of phenomena, in sometimes contradictory, ambivalent, or shifting ways. Instead of representing an analytical problem, these shifts in meaning are one of the central focuses of the present study, which can be placed within a social constructivist theoretical framework.⁴¹³ A social constructivist framework distinguishes between the concepts of objective phenomena, i.e., phenomena as they (can be imagined to) exist independently of our perception of them, and subjective phenomena, i.e., phenomena as they exist according to perceptions and beliefs – as they are constructed in the minds of individuals. By focusing on concepts of phenomena as constructed this study is primarily interested in the interviewees’ understandings, without inquiring as to the validity of their perceptions and interpretations. Furthermore, by underlining the social component of this process, I wish to emphasise the intersubjective element of these constructions. The study thus explores how beliefs and perceptions that emerge in a social context contribute to processes of belonging and identification of individuals as members of communities. In other words, the approach is informed by the way in which the interviewees are active participants in the construction of their social reality. A non-essentialist and constructivist approach guides the exploration of central concepts – for instance, “religion,” “Judaism,” and “Islam” – highlighting the diverse meanings attributed to these by the interviewees. Correspondingly, the use of concepts such as “Muslim” or “Muslim community” should be understood to imply internally diverse, historically contingent, imagined, and negotiated collectivities.

med voldelige midler påtvunget alle gjenstander, som dermed mister identiteten. Estetisk identitet skal bistå det ikke-identiske som identitetstvangen i realiteten undertrykker,” 17.

412 Challenges may also emerge with disputed concepts. In the present study, one example is the use of the concept “Muslim” in relation to members of the Ahmadiyya movement. Most (but not all) interviewees were reluctant to accept Ahmadis as Muslims, while the Ahmadis themselves had a strong Muslim identity. The participants’ self-identification is maintained in the analysis.

413 Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966).

7 Religious Beliefs and Concepts in Narratives about Jews

This chapter explores references to religious beliefs and concepts in narratives about Jews, relating to views on Islam and Judaism, and relations between Muslims and Jews as adherents of these religions. The analysis explores how the interviewees' religiosity, their knowledge and interpretation of religious myths, and their understanding of tradition act together in the narratives. One level of analysis explores the religiosity and religious self-identification of the interviewees, including identification with different Islamic denominations and notions of sectarian differences between Sunnis, Shiites, and Ahmadis. Another level explores references to a broader historical and cultural framework of representations of Jews and Judaism. Of special interest are references to Islamic representations of Jews and the religious relationship between Judaism and Islam, but the chapter also touches on references to Christian traditions and the Christian anti-Judaic heritage. I ask how interviewees frame and contextualize such references.

The interviewees were highly diverse in terms of religious identity and belonging. I have intentionally not categorised individuals in accordance with the many labels of different "Islams" (e.g., "liberal," "conservative," etc.) that are commonly applied. To some extent, such labels are constructions and may seem artificial in real life meetings or may even suggest deviance from a norm. I have instead focused on individual experiences and descriptions of religiosity and how these are related to perceptions of Jews. However, it seems clear that these views are likely to be influenced by a broader context of Muslim identity constructions, such as the process termed the "minoritisation" of Islam, whereby Muslims in the West are experiencing a situation as a religious minority in Europe.⁴¹⁴

The individualisation of Islam has been increasingly thematised within studies of religion in recent years.⁴¹⁵ Scholars have described a process of fragmentation of religious dogma and an emphasis on individual views concerning which parts of Islam are most important. Furthermore, religious individualisation implies that traditional institutions seem to be losing authority and mosques become less important to the religious practice of Muslims in Europe. The tendency to actively search for religious identity can be identified as a more general feature of Islam in the West and as a consequence of the need "explicitly to formulate what Islam means to the

⁴¹⁴ Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 19.

⁴¹⁵ See, e.g., Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*; Peter, "Individualization and religious authority in Western European Islam." See also chapter 3.2.

individual [. . .] when meaning is no longer sustained by social authority.”⁴¹⁶ As formulated by Olivier Roy, “globalized Islam” implies a change in terms of the religiosity of its members, meaning theological debates give way to personal expressions of faith. This chapter explores interviewees’ personal expressions of faith in relation to narratives about Jews. Much in line with Roy’s conceptualisations regarding Muslims in the West, Oddbjørn Leirvik has described a tendency of generational difference in Norway, between the Islamic traditions of the first generation and the – globalized or reconstructed – Islam of the second generation.⁴¹⁷ Where the former emphasises the totality of inherited cultural conventions and religious beliefs, the second generation more typically redefines the relation between culture and religion in order to articulate an Islamic identity that is both universal and amenable to re-contextualisation.⁴¹⁸ Some of the interviewees in the present study expressed views in line with this broader tendency of “a quest for definition,” thus actively reinventing what being a Muslim meant to them.⁴¹⁹ A question explored here is how narratives referred to what can be termed a diasporic dimension in the interviewees’ identity, and how perceptions of belonging related to and influenced their religiosity and relations with other religious people.

The idea that neither religious communities nor the majority society ought to decide the content of the faith, or interfere with how people practise their religion, can be interpreted as a sign of secularisation. The meaning of secularisation is a topic of scholarly debate and can refer to several different processes, such as the gradual increase in the distinction between a secular sphere and religious institutions and norms, the confinement of religion to a private sphere, or the decrease in religious belief and practice. The separation of religion from the other spheres of social life implies that religious revival can be perfectly compatible with growing secularisation.⁴²⁰ The following analysis explores signs of secularisation in the narratives, in the sense of emerging individual approaches to religion and confinement of religion to a private sphere. Furthermore, the analysis explores this individuality in interviewees’ understanding of the relationship between Muslims and Jews as well as between Islam and Judaism. This study also relates to how interviewees viewed the impact of traditional institutions, such as mosques, on their religious life, and more recent forms of organised religiosity, such as youth organisations that recruit across national, linguistic, and (traditional) doctrinal boundaries.

⁴¹⁶ Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 24.

⁴¹⁷ Leirvik, “Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue.” See also, Sandberg et al., *Unge muslimske stemmer*; Jacobsen, *Islamic traditions and Muslim youth in Norway*.

⁴¹⁸ Leirvik, “Muslims in Norway: Value Discourse and Interreligious Dialogue,” 139.

⁴¹⁹ Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 20. See also chapter 3.2.

⁴²⁰ Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 334.

The first part of the chapter explores how interviewees describe their own religiosity compared with that of their parents and peers. How do the interviewees describe their relation to Islam and their religiosity? Do they perceive any generational differences compared with the religiosity and religious practice of their parents? The second section explores perceptions of Jews as adherents of Judaism and, subsequently, their connection to Islam and Muslims. How did interviewees refer to the religious bonds between Islam and Judaism, and in what ways did they interpret current Muslim-Jewish relations in light of these bonds? Following this, two sections explore narratives of religious evolution, asking how interviewees related to the perception of Islam as the final and most authentic expression of revealed truth. How did interviewees describe earlier revelations and scriptures, and did the narratives include ideas of scriptural tampering similar to the doctrine of *tahrīf*? The fifth section explores perceptions of sectarian differences among Muslims and expressions of such differences in narratives about Jews. I ask how the symbolically constructed “Jew” occurs in the narratives as a way of referring to (imposed) religious otherness. The last section of the chapter explores references to Judaism as old or ancient and the position of Jews related to this status. This last section examines how the concept of chosenness seemed to move narratives about Jews from a predominantly religious interpretative framework to a secular one, through references to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

7.1 Religiosity – “First and Foremost Muslim”

“Religiosity” is a difficult concept to define, and scholarly definitions refer to a number of dimensions, such as spirituality, religious practice, and belief. The understanding of religion or religiosity as having multiple dimensions was developed in theories of religion from the early 1900s.⁴²¹ Within the sociology of religion, Charles Y. Glock’s five-dimensional framework has been influential.⁴²² Others have adapted

⁴²¹ Lisa D. Pearce, George M. Hayward, and Jessica A. Pearlman, “Measuring Five Dimensions of Religiosity Across Adolescence,” *Review of Religious Research* 59 (2017): 369.

⁴²² Charles Y. Glock, “On the Study of Religious Commitment,” *Religious Education* 57, no. 4 (1962). Glock’s approach includes an *experiential* dimension, describing religious feeling or subjective religious experience; an *ideological* dimension, related to beliefs; a *ritualistic* dimension, which concerns religious practices; an *intellectual* dimension, which concerns knowledge about basic tenets and religious scriptures; and last, a *consequential* dimension, which according to Glock includes the secular effects of the previous four dimensions; e.g., attitudes and social behaviour. Glock, “On the Study of Religious Commitment,” 98–99.

Glock’s list to include new dimensions or have defined the dimensions differently.⁴²³ In the analysis of the interviewees’ descriptions of their own religiosity and of their views on religion and religiosity among others, several aspects appeared relevant. Drawing on the model presented in Pearce et al., which focuses on some of the most commonly proposed dimensions, these included references to certain basic beliefs, to religious orthodoxy in terms of notions of definite rights or wrongs, references to different forms of religious practice (external or personal), and to religious salience – i.e., to the place in the interviewees’ hierarchy of identities that religion held.⁴²⁴

Interviewees in the current project described what Islam meant to them and the different ways that their religiosity was manifested and had an impact in their daily lives. Religious practice varied greatly; however, this did not necessarily affect the sense of belonging to Islam and the importance of an Islamic religious identity. This was true both for those who were recruited through mosques and for those who were recruited at the university campus and via other channels. While the understanding of what it meant to be “religious” differed, even interviewees who did not describe a high level of religious observance sometimes identified as “above average” religious. “It is definitely an important part of my identity, that I am Muslim and practising, too,”⁴²⁵ said Ubah (interviewee no. 14), a young Sunni with a Somali background. Her comment was typical of the interviewees in the study. When defining their own religiosity compared with others, some of the younger participants also described themselves as more religious than their parents. The impact of religion on everyday life was explained in relation to a certain practice and knowledge of how to behave. Ali (interviewee no. 32) said, “The concept ‘religious’ describes someone who knows his faith well enough to know exactly what to do and

423 See, e.g., Jean-Guy Vaillancourt, “From Five to Ten Dimensions of Religion: Charles Y. Glock’s Dimensions of Religiosity Revisited,” *Australian Religion Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (2008); Gordon W. Allport, *The Individual and His Religion* (New York: MacMillan, 1950); Gordon W. Allport and Michael Ross, “Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 5, no. 4 (1967).

424 Pearce, Hayward, and Pearlman, “Measuring Five Dimensions of Religiosity Across Adolescence,” 369–71. Pearce et al. draw on the theories developed by Allport, Glock, James and Lenski, among others. See Allport, *The Individual and His Religion*; Glock, “On the Study of Religious Commitment.”; William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London/New York: Routledge, 2008 [1902]); Gerhard Emmanuel Lenski, *The Religious Factor: A Sociological Study of Religion’s Impact on Politics, Economics, and Family Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961).

425 “Ja, det er definitivt en viktig del av min identitet, det at jeg er muslim og er praktiserende i tillegg.” The quotations have been edited in order to enhance readability while carefully preserving the tone of the original transcription. All translations from Norwegian to English are my own.

what not to do.”⁴²⁶ Some described their religiosity and Islam as a religion as something that involved all aspects of life. Farzan (interviewee no. 30), who expressed a strong religious identity, stated, “It is basically all-encompassing in my everyday life, it concerns everything, from how I go to the toilet to how I eat, how I behave towards other people and at work.”⁴²⁷ Interviewees also expressed a sense of religion as something private, suggesting they considered the interpretation of religious duties to be a matter between God and the believer. For some, keeping religion within a private sphere seemed to be motivated by a wish to maintain a low profile and avoid negative reactions. Farzan explained that he preferred to pray at home, because he did not want to attract attention to himself or to “impose” his religion on others. Similarly, Mahmud (interviewee no. 31) expressed that he thought of religion as “something private, that you are not supposed to impose on people.”⁴²⁸ Praying at home and in “suitable” places seemed important, both for his understanding of religion and for the image he wanted to present of himself publicly, claiming that someone seeing him pray in public might think he was not “capable” of praying at home or that he was “an Islamist.” Mahmud’s reluctance to expose his religiosity in this way seemed motivated by what he perceived as a widespread negative image of Muslims: “[S]omeone may think, ‘look at him, he is praying, he is a Muslim’ and things like that. I do not like to impose that image on anyone.”⁴²⁹ Praying at home was otherwise most common among the female interviewees, while the men more often prayed in mosques, particularly on Fridays. The connection to mosques was typically pragmatic – interviewees explained that they did not belong to one particular mosque but rather went to different mosques according to what was most practical, closest to home or to their place of work, where friends would go, or where they perceived the “best” imam to be.

The religious awakening that some interviewees described was sometimes explained with reference to personal convictions or the influence of friends. Nighat (interviewee no. 9), a young Sunni who was also a business student, provided a typical example. She said, “I have friends who are religious, and this has had a positive impact on me.”⁴³⁰ Nighat was born and raised in Oslo, but both of

426 “Begrepet ‘religiøs’ beskriver en som kjenner sin tro godt nok til å vite hva man må gjøre, hva man ikke må gjøre.”

427 “Det er egentlig altomfattende i hverdagen, alt fra hvordan jeg går på do til hvordan jeg spiser, til hvordan jeg oppfører meg mot andre mennesker og er på jobb.”

428 “Jeg tenker på selve religionen at det skal være en privatsak og at man ikke skal tvinge det synet på folk.”

429 “Noen tenker kanskje, ‘se på ham, han ber, han er muslim,’ og sånt. Jeg liker ikke å sette det bildet på folk.”

430 “Men jeg har litt venner som er troende religiøse, og det har hatt en positiv påvirkning på meg.”

her parents had a Pakistani background. She described her sense of religion as somewhat different, stronger and less culturally rooted than that of her parents. She connected this difference to her upbringing in Norway. She said, “They are religious too, but they have a cultural touch to it. I do not have that, since I am not from . . . Being born here in Norway, I have another version of it. I have more interest in religion than my parents do.”⁴³¹ While Nighat described her parents as religious, she gave the impression that the stronger cultural connection made their religiosity less salient than her own.

Bushra (interviewee no. 7), who was Sunni, grew up in Bergen with two parents of Pakistani origin. She also described her religiosity as different from that of her parents. She explained how she was both more prone to observe religious rules and to openly express her religiosity (by wearing a hijab). As an example of differences in practice, she explained that while she herself usually kept prayer time, her mother would rather pray when it was convenient: “I try to pray when it is time, no matter where I am. [. . .] Five times a day. Mom is more like, if she is at work she will wait until she gets home.”⁴³² Bushra also pointed to the fact that her mother had only started wearing a hijab in recent years, whereas she herself had begun during childhood, in fourth grade. She linked this development to the great change that followed the family’s move to Norway and the difference between living as part of a majority community and as a religious minority:

Min mor brukte liksom ikke hijab da hun var på min alder. Det skjedde ganske mye seinere, for i Pakistan er det veldig blandet. Du trenger liksom ikke å bruke det. Alle rundt deg er muslimer, så det er ikke noen fasit på hva en muslim er, men her så blir du mye mer obs på det, at du er muslim, og at du nesten må oppføre deg som en muslim.

[My mother did not wear a hijab when she was my age. It happened later, since in Pakistan, it is very mixed. You do not have to use it. Everyone around you is Muslim, so there is no key to what a Muslim is, but here you become much more aware of it, that you are Muslim, and you almost have to act like a Muslim.]

For Bushra, wearing a hijab became a way to express that she was Muslim, and perhaps more importantly, it became a way of exploring – determining – what a “Muslim” was. While this seemed to be less important in Pakistan, where “everyone” is Muslim, it was necessary in Norwegian secular (Christian) society. Similar to the case of Nighat (interviewee no. 9), cited above, it seems Bushra’s religious

431 “De er religiøse de også, men de har på en måte et kulturelt preg på det. Jeg har ikke det, fordi jeg ikke er fra . . . altså, jeg er jo født her i Norge, så jeg har en annen versjon av det. Jeg har litt mer interesse for religion enn mine foreldre har.”

432 “Jeg prøver liksom å be når det er tid, uansett hvor jeg er. [. . .] Fem ganger om dagen. Mamma er liksom, hvis hun er ute på jobb, så venter hun til hun er kommet hjem med å be.”

identity had emerged partly as a response to a non-Muslim environment and a minority position. This situation had made her more aware of her religiosity and seemed to have encouraged her to actively define what it meant for her to be a Muslim. In a sense, being a “Muslim” was not only expressed but was also created through the awareness that the experience had stimulated. Other interviewees gave similar descriptions of religious identity emerging in response to experiences of difference. Religious markers, such as the hijab, were common; almost all the female interviewees wore hijabs, while none of the male interviewees wore “religious” clothes.

Hassan (interviewee no. 5), a Shiite from Oslo, grew up in Lebanon and moved to Norway as an adult. He seemed to interpret differences in religious practice between himself and his parents as primarily related to practical circumstances and personal interests. However, the experience of being part of a minority subsequent to his emigration from Lebanon influenced his religious life in many ways. When he was growing up in Lebanon, the civil war at the time made it difficult for his parents to sustain a life where religion had a prominent place:

Det [var] borgerkrig i Libanon på den tiden, så min far var bare opptatt av å beskytte oss, skaffe oss mat og så videre. Og min mor var hjemme og passet på oss, så de var ikke av den typen som gikk i moskeen for å oppsøke kunnskap om islam. Tvert imot, det var jeg som lærte dem ting de ikke visste.

[There [was] a civil war in Lebanon at the time, and my father was only concerned with protecting us, feeding us, and so on. My mother was at home looking after us. They were not of the sort who went to the mosque to seek knowledge about Islam. On the contrary, I was the one who taught them things they did not know.]

Without going into any detail on the matter, Hassan’s description of his parents’ religious life stood in contrast to the way he described his own religiosity. He explained how he had been interested in Islam and religious questions from early childhood and how religion still constituted a central element of his life today. Unlike his parents, Hassan had the opportunity to pursue this interest and devote his time to religious studies.

Moving to Norway increased Hassan’s religious consciousness. In Lebanon, he had lived close to a Christian community and had many Christian friends, but religious questions were rarely discussed. As he began his new life in Norway and started to work and make contacts in his new surroundings, he experienced how religion became a central topic in discussions. Along with numerous debates about the Middle East, he was often questioned about religion and Islam. This encouraged him to pursue further religious studies. While Hassan described this first period of living in Norway, in the 1980s, as difficult, with Muslims being a small minority, these years nevertheless proved important as they served to de-

velop his religious identity. Hassan said, “I read the Bible several times. I think I read it thirteen or fourteen times. Then I had discussions with priests and vicars and Christian friends and so on. At the same time, I read a lot about Islam since I had to find counter-arguments.”⁴³³ The encounter with a predominantly Christian environment and the experience of religious difference thus sparked in Hassan a deeper engagement with Islam. His focus on “counter-arguments” seems to imply that he was defending positions as a Muslim and that the conversations served to develop his knowledge of differences between Islam and Christianity, indirectly reinforcing both his Muslim identity and his sense of religious boundaries. His reaction can also be related to a logic of revelatory chronology, where Islam is perceived as possessing the final truth in a series of revelations. In a “dialogue” with earlier revelations through biblical studies, Hassan explored the truth of Islam.

Bashir (interviewee no. 8), a young Sunni of Pakistani origin, had also experienced how greater knowledge and religious studies could affect his own religious identity. Bashir described a childhood without much emphasis on religion within the family. “Dad prayed from time to time,” he said.⁴³⁴ Religion and religious practice were a part of everyday life but without being “explicit” in terms of rules or obligations and without strong significance. “It was more of a tradition or culture, than faith.”⁴³⁵ However, things changed when Bashir moved to northern Norway and started studying Comparative Religion at university. The academic introduction to certain concepts increased his awareness of his own situation and religious feelings:

Det var liksom helt frem til 2009, da jeg flyttet til [Nord-Norge] og begynte å studere, fordi i religionshistorien eller –vitenskapen har du begrepet “diaspora.” Du kjenner sikkert til det. Hva som skjer med religiøsiteten, blant annet. Det omhandler jo store grupper, men jeg tenkte: Jeg er sikkert en diaspora-gruppe, jeg også, i min egen gruppe. Det var først da jeg begynte å praktisere.

[That was until 2009, when I moved to [northern Norway] and started studying, because in Religious Studies you have the concept “diaspora.” You probably know about it. It concerns what happens to religiosity, among other things. It concerns large groups, but I thought, “I am probably a diaspora group too, in my own group.” It was only then that I started to practise.]

Bashir’s understanding of himself as a “diaspora group” was closely related to his moving to another part of Norway, away from the habitual religion of his parents’ house. Being on his own, and thus having to make a conscious decision regarding

433 “Jeg leste Bibelen flere ganger. Jeg tror jeg leste den tretten–fjorten ganger. Og så hadde jeg diskusjoner med prester og sogneprester og kristne venner og så videre. Og samtidig leste jeg veldig mye om islam, for jeg måtte motargumentere ting.”

434 “Pappa ba i ny og ne.”

435 “Det var mer sånn tradisjon eller kultur enn selve troen.”

Islam's place in his life, he decided to engage. Furthermore, the secular, academic, and non-normative study of religion at university provided a vocabulary and theoretical framework through which he analyzed his own situation, and this contributed to his becoming a practising Muslim. Since this experience, Islam had become increasingly important to Bashir. At the time of the interview, he described Islam as the most important part of his life, "It was difficult at first, but then gradually . . . now I feel that Islam is the most important part of my life. No matter what I try, no matter what I do, I try to do it in light of Islam."⁴³⁶ Bashir's strong religiosity did not preclude close relations with people who did not share this aspect of his life. His closest friends were non-Muslim, and Bashir described this in positive terms and as an opportunity to learn more: "It is almost an advantage, you get to learn more about each other."⁴³⁷

Bashir also emphasised the importance of religious freedom in Norway, which facilitated leading a religious life and contributed to positive relations with the rest of Norwegian society. Bashir was a member of the Muslim Student Society at the University of Oslo, and he contrasted the situation of religious freedom in Norway to that in other countries, including Muslim countries. As an example, he told a story from when he had had a visitor from France:

Alt er tilrettelagt [i Norge]. På universitetet har du liksom bønnenrom, du har halal-mat. Jeg husker en konvertitt fra Frankrike som var utvekslingsstudent. Jeg skulle bare vise rundt på universitetet. Og da jeg viste ham bønnenrommet, begynte han nesten å gråte: 'I Frankrike må vi gjemme oss på taket for å be. Hvis vi blir tatt, kan vi bli kastet ut.'

[In Norway] everything is adjusted. At university, you have prayer rooms; you have halal food. I remember a convert from France who was an exchange student. I showed him around the campus. When I showed him the prayer room, he almost started crying, saying: "In France we have to hide on the roof to pray. If we get caught, we can get expelled."]

This quote suggests that not only feelings of religious difference but also of acceptance and freedom in Norway – here opposed to the ideal of *laïcité* in France – encouraged deeper religious engagement.

Interviewees underlined the benefits of living in a society with freedom of religion and the different ways Norwegian society facilitated religious practice (such as by providing prayer rooms at the university). However, reflections concerning society's views on religion – particularly regarding Islam – sometimes exposed how maintaining and displaying a Muslim religious identity could be a

⁴³⁶ "Det var et slit i starten, men så begynte jeg liksom gradvis . . . Nå tenker jeg at islam er det viktigste i livet mitt. Jeg ser at uansett hva jeg prøver på, uansett hva jeg gjør, prøver jeg å gjøre det i lys av islam."

⁴³⁷ "Det er nesten bare en fordel, for da lærer man mer om hverandre."

reaction to negative experiences; for instance, regarding interviewees’ immigrant background and processes related to belonging. Muslim identities among the interviewees combined a multitude of levels and emerged somewhere between “nations” and “territories,” sometimes perceived as closely related to a “Norwegian” identity and sometimes not. Reflections on living in Norway with a Muslim identity sometimes demonstrated a strong sense of ambivalence.

Jamel (interviewee no. 22) commented on a feeling of instability and ambivalence. He had a Norwegian-Tunisian background and mentioned how many with similar backgrounds or “dual nationalities” experienced a form of cultural conflict. Jamel’s own way of dealing with this instability involved both his self-identification as Muslim and his participation in society:

De fleste med dobbel nasjonalitet har på en måte et identitetsproblem, siden de er fra to nasjoner. Veldig ofte så føler man en “kulturkrasj” og sliter med å stabilisere seg selv. Men det er der jeg har funnet stabiliteten i islam, med det gode islam. Det man virkelig må fokusere på, ydmykheten, respekten, forståelsen. Hva det egentlig er å være en del av samfunnet. Hva det egentlig er. Det er derfor jeg kategoriserer meg selv som muslim, først og fremst.

[Most people who have a dual nationality have a kind of identity problem due to their origin in two different nations. Very often, you have a sense of “culture clash” and have trouble stabilising yourself. That is when I find stability in Islam, in the good Islam. [This is] what one really has to focus on – humility, respect, and understanding. What it really means to be part of the society. What it really means. That is why I first and foremost categorise myself as Muslim.]

In Jamel’s description of his religiosity, Islam constitutes an anchor within his identity – one that is more stable than nationality. His description also focuses on elements that are essential to his pursuit of becoming a part of society. This concept of “good” Islam seems to go beyond relations with any actual nation, including the Norwegian. Instead of providing a bridge between nations and cultural differences, “Islam” in this conception seems to dissolve the very notion of national boundaries while leading to a deeper understanding of what participating in a society means. Jamel described his identity as comprised of several layers, where having a Tunisian background was the most superficial of the different elements and his Muslim religiosity the most profound. He explained, “I am a Norwegian Muslim; that is what I am. I have a Tunisian background, but I am a Norwegian Muslim, since I believe in God and my religion is Islam. I do not really want to . . . if I would go even deeper than that, I am solely Muslim.”⁴³⁸ Jamel’s

⁴³⁸ “Jeg er en norsk muslim, det er det jeg er. Jeg har bakgrunn som tunisier, jeg er tunisier, men jeg er en norsk muslim, fordi jeg tror på Gud og religionen min er islam. Så jeg er en norsk muslim. Jeg vil egentlig ikke, hvis du skal gå enda dypere enn det også, så er jeg bare muslim.”

descriptions, echoing central aspects of “globalized Islam,” show how “good Islam” to Jamel is a source of both personal identification and stability in a fragmented situation, transcending nationalities while simultaneously constituting a path to societal belonging.⁴³⁹

7.2 Narratives about Jews as Religious “Cousins”

How did interviewees in the present study describe the relationship between Judaism and Islam? Were tolerant views about other religions part of their religious identity? The close relationship between Judaism and Islam and shared history of Muslims and Jews was a central feature in the interviewees’ comments when asked about relations with other religious minorities in Norway. Accordingly, an initial association in references to Jews was Judaism, with typical statements being “they are people of the Jewish religion,” or “they are the People of the Book.” This tendency may be interpreted as indicative of the significance religion had among the interviewees, or perhaps of how the “People of the Book” is a prominent concept in Islam, well known among Muslims (though not only as a reference to Jews). Some referred to passages in the Qur’an that mention respect for other religions to explain their own positive perception of Jews. The interviewees thus expressed a sense of respect for Jews as religious people and simultaneously underlined the affiliation between Islam and Judaism and between Islam and other religions in general. Some also mentioned Christians when explaining about the People of the Book, or in other ways talked about the close connection between these three monotheistic religions.

Rashida (interviewee no. 10), a young Sunni woman, is a typical example. When asked about her first associations to the word “Jew,” she answered, “Monotheists,” and then, “The People of the Book.” I asked her if “Jew” was a predominantly religious concept to her; “Yes, yes,” she confirmed.⁴⁴⁰ Rashida explained that she had learned about this in school but that her own family was also an important source of information. She said:

Vi har snakket om det hjemme også, at vi tror på samme gud, at de tror på én gud, at vi har samme opprinnelse, religiøse opprinnelse, på grunn av at de er bokens folk. [. . .] De tre

⁴³⁹ Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*.

⁴⁴⁰ “Monoteister.”

—*Har du noe mer?*

“Bokens folk.”

—*Så det er i stor grad et religiøst begrep for deg, “jøde”?*

“Ja. Ja.”

store verdensreligionene har samme kilde. Men jeg kan ikke så veldig mye mer om det religiøse, da. Jeg vet bare at de tror på én gud, og at deres gudstro er nesten identisk med vår.

[We talked about this at home as well, that we believe in the same god, and that they believe in God, that we have the same origin, the same religious origin because they are the People of the Book. [. . .] The three world religions have the same source. However, I do not know very much about the religious part. I just know that they believe in one god and that their belief in God is almost identical to ours.]

Rashida’s central perception of Jews was based on their religious status, their belief in God, and monotheism. Furthermore, it seemed an important aspect of these traits was that they were shared: Rashida repeatedly described a close connection between Muslims, Jews, and Christians due to their common religious heritage and status as “People of the Book.”

Rashida emphasised having a broad social network and friends from several religions besides Islam, including several Hindus and Buddhists. A belief in something divine seemed to provide a common ground and source of understanding in the friendship, Rashida said:

Som muslim kan jeg på en måte identifisere meg med alle som tror på det samme, eller Gud, da, som det jeg gjør. Det er det samme med hinduer. Jeg har mange venner som er hinduer, mange, mange. Vi har sikkert mye til felles, vi også, fordi de tror jo på noe guddommelig, de og, men det er noe spesielt med de som tror på én gud. Jeg kjenner ingen jøder, men [. . .]. Jeg [føler] liksom litt nærmere tilknytning til dem, kanskje, enn det jeg ville gjort med en hindu, når det kommer til det religiøse.

[As a Muslim I can identify with everyone who believes in the same – in God, as I do. It is the same with Hindus, I have many friends who are Hindu, many, many. In a way, we probably have a lot in common too, because they believe in something divine, too. However, it is something special with those who believe in one god. I do not know any Jews, but [. . .] In a way, I feel a closer connection to them than to a Hindu, when it comes to the religious part.]

Sharing a religious belief was important for Rashida’s connection to other people, though she felt a special connection and closeness to people who shared a monotheistic view similar to that in Islam. Rashida did not have any close Jewish friends (but had had a few acquaintances in the past). However, knowledge of the shared monotheistic origin of Islam and Judaism provided what appeared to be a possibility for a connection. The interview with Rashida thus showed how knowledge of shared religious beliefs could support positive views and a sense of profound community, regardless of having little or no personal contact with Jews.

Yasmin (interviewee no. 16), a Sunni with a Pakistani background, expressed similar views. I met Yasmin in a mosque in Oslo during Ramadan, a period she described as religiously inspiring. The interview started with her explaining about her many responsibilities at the mosque; she was an active member of the

community. Underlining the religious relationship between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, she explained that, “Christians are the People of the Book. We believe that Islam, Judaism, and Christianity build on the same principles. Islam is just the latest of the religions. We have more in common than what divides us.”⁴⁴¹

The narratives reflected inclusive and tolerant views and the conviction that respect for other religions constitutes an inherent part of Islam. Some interviewees also explicitly mentioned respect for non-religious people in this context. A typical example was from the interview with Farid (interviewee no. 21), a young Sunni in his 30s. Farid’s background was from Albania, but he moved to Norway as a child. Farid said, “I am a person who is always nice to people, whether they are believers or non-believers, whether they are Buddhists, Jews, non-Muslims, atheists, or whatever.”⁴⁴² Perhaps Farid’s wish to emphasise good relations was a response to a perception in Norwegian society that Muslims are very critical towards “non-believers” or “atheists.” Other interviewees also mentioned “atheists” as one category among others when explaining their views towards non-Muslims and underlining positive relations. Some mentioned actively initiating conversations in order to understand an “atheist” point of view and to counter “misunderstandings” about Islam or religion as such. In this way, having good relations with atheists seemed to be a way to signal an open attitude in general.

Using similar words to Farid, Fatimah (interviewee no. 1), a young Shiite woman, expressed how religious affiliation was irrelevant to her relations with others, the essential point being that “we are all humans.” Fatimah had explained her view to some Jewish classmates who had been reluctant to tell her about their Jewish identity, “You do not have any reason to be afraid to tell me that you are Jewish; I see you as equal, you are Jewish and I am Muslim, so what? We are humans and we love each other.”⁴⁴³ What lay behind her classmates’ hesitation was fear of negative attitudes. It was important for Fatimah to express how she did not have any negative views about Jews (see also 9.2).

Knowledge of internal Islamic diversity sometimes seemed to pave the way to an open attitude towards other beliefs and religious diversity. Yusuf (interviewee no. 17) mentioned atheists when talking about religion being a private

441 “Kristne er jo bokfolk. Vi mener at islam, jødedommen og kristendom bygger på de samme prinsipper. Islam er bare den seneste utviklingen av de religionene. Vi har mer til felles enn vi har ulikheter.”

442 “Jeg er en person som alltid er hyggelig mot folk, uansett om de er troende eller ikke-troende, om de er buddhister, jøder, ikke-muslimere, ateister eller hva de måtte være.”

443 “Dere har ingen grunn i verden til å være redde for å si til meg at dere er jøder, fordi jeg ser på dere som like mye verdt som meg . . . ja, du er jøde, og jeg er muslim, hva så? Vi er begge mennesker, og vi er glad i hverandre.”

matter, underlining that diversity is ok and that there are differences within Islam as well. However, he also seemed to view atheists as less tolerant, due to their perception of religion as irrational. Yusuf said:

Mitt inntrykk at religiøse mennesker er flinkere til å respektere andre, andres tro, enn ateister. Det føler jeg i hvert fall. Når jeg snakker med kristne, så sier de bare ‘ok, vi tror på sånn og sånn’, og da går det an å prate sammen. Mens med ateister så er det sånn, de jeg har snakket med, gir inntrykk av at de ser på seg selv som litt over alle oss andre, for det de tror på, det er på en måte fakta og vitenskap, mens det vi tror på, er julenissen. Det er en sånn holdning. Ikke alle, men en sånn type respektløshet, det føler jeg ofte kommer fra ateister mot religiøse. Men for meg spiller ikke det noen rolle om folk tror eller ikke, eller hva de tror på, sånne ting, så lenge de ikke angriper min tro.

[My impression is that religious people are better at respecting other beliefs than atheists. That is what I feel, anyway. When I talk to Christians, they say like “ok, we believe this and this;” it is possible to talk. While atheists, the ones I have spoken to, they give the impression that they are a bit above the rest of us, that what they believe are facts and science, while we believe in Santa Claus. That kind of attitude. Not always, but I feel this kind of disrespect often comes from atheists towards people who are religious. To me, it does not matter whether people believe or not, or what they believe in, as long as they do not attack my beliefs.]

While adherents of other religions could listen to each other and learn about different beliefs without judgement, the atheists Yusuf had talked with had left him with a sense of lacking respect. According to this narrative, a religious worldview seemed to entail tolerance, including towards Jews and regardless of differences in belief.

Respect and tolerance towards other people was also highlighted without interviewees tying it to religious views. Sivar’s (interviewee no. 27) background was from Kurdistan/Iraq. He described an ideal of coexistence and respect for others as something he had brought with him from his hometown:

[I] den byen jeg kommer fra, i Kurdistan, har vi jøder, zardashti, som er de som tror på ild, og muslimer. Vi er flest muslimer, selvsølgelig. Det er majoriteten, og de andre er minoriteter, men det er veldig variert. Så der jeg kommer fra, er det helt forbudt å gjøre forskjell. Og det har jeg vokst opp med.

[In] the town where I come from, in Kurdistan, we have Jews, Zardashti [Zoroastrians], who are those who believe in fire, and Muslims. We are mostly Muslims, of course. That is the majority, the others are minorities, but it is very, very diverse. So where I come from, it is completely forbidden to treat people differently. That is what I grew up with.]

Sivar was one of the few interviewees who described himself as less religious, pointing to how in his eyes being religious was connected to following certain rules of conduct, such as praying five times a day or refraining from partying and drinking, and other things that are considered *haram*. Perhaps in line with how religion was less important to Sivar, his primary associations to “Jew” were not

religious, but rather to the word “Jew” as a term of abuse (see also chapter eleven). Nevertheless, the diversity that supported tolerance in his Kurdish hometown had made a lasting impression on Sivar.

Some interviewees distinguished between a tolerant and inclusive Islam on the one hand, and intolerant, exclusive views on the other, directly or indirectly defining the latter as misinterpretations of Islam. Anti-Jewish sentiments were typically not related to the Islamic religion but sometimes to “Muslims.” In cases where interviewees referred to negative descriptions of Jews in the Qur’an or hadith, they usually described such passages as historically contingent, related to conflicts between Muhammad and Jewish tribes in the time of the Prophet. Interviewees thus distinguished between antisemitism in terms of generalized negative views about Jews as such, and descriptions in Islamic sources. Some also referred to the historical situation of Jews under Islamic rule, describing it as relatively peaceful and safe. The interview with Ubah (interviewee no. 14) provides an example of this distinction. Following a discussion about the attacks against a kosher supermarket in Paris in January 2015 and possible explanations of anti-semitism among the Muslim minority, Ubah asserted that the origin of the negative attitudes could not be Islam:

– *Så det finnes ikke noe grunnlag i islam for å mislike jøder?*

Nei, det gjør det ikke, men man har jo historien, for eksempel om en krigsperiode hvor jødene som bodde i samme by som Profeten – fred være med ham – gikk imot ham. Så vi har jo den historien der, om at det har vært problemer mellom muslimer og jøder på den tiden, men de bodde i samme by, og da var det jo muslimer som var majoriteten. Altså, jødene fikk beskyttelse av muslimene mot andre arabere som angrep fra alle hold. Sånn har det også vært i løpet av historien, for eksempel da jødene nesten ble jaktet ned her i Europa, så dro de til Det osmanske riket, som en slags “safe haven.” Men [det har] definitivt vært sånn at muslimer har brukt islam som bevis for å kunne mislike jødene, men det kommer ikke fra islam selv.

[– *So there is no basis in Islam for disliking Jews?*

No, there is not, but you have the history, for example about a period of war when the Jews who lived in the same city as the Prophet – Peace Be Upon Him – went against Him. We do have that history, about there being problems between Muslims and Jews at that time, but they lived in the same city and Muslims were the majority. I mean, the Muslims protected the Jews against other Arabs, who attacked from all quarters. This is also how it has been throughout history; for example, when the Jews were almost hunted down here in Europe, they left for the Ottoman Empire as a kind of “safe haven.” Muslims definitely have used Islam as a rationale for disliking Jews, but it does not originate from Islam.]

According to Ubah, the negative portrayals of Jews in Islamic traditions are due to historical conflicts; they should not be understood as being related to the religion itself and cannot be used to justify anti-Jewish attitudes today. The story about

problems between the Prophet and Jews may be a reference to narratives of how Muhammad and his troops fought and conquered the Jewish tribes around Medina. However, by situating the narratives in time and place (to the city where Muhammad lived) and by referring to examples of historical coexistence, Ubah cuts off any continuity between the incidents related in the religious tradition and attitudes today, defending Islam against accusations of being inherently or principally anti-Jewish.

Interviewees also pointed to stories from the Islamic tradition about how Muhammad defended Jews and spoke against those who expressed negative views. Omar (interviewee no. 11) was Sunni, in his early 20s, and expressed strong religious feelings. He referred to passages in the Qur’an and Islamic traditions throughout the interview to explain how Muslims and Jews are closely connected in terms of religion, and to make clear his own positive attitude towards Jews. One of the stories Omar told was about a Jewish wife of the Prophet, presumably a reference to Safiyya bint Huyayy. According to Islamic tradition, Safiyya was the daughter of the chief of the Banu Nadir tribe; she was taken prisoner after the Battle of Khaybar and was later married to Muhammad.

Omar talked about how Muhammad had defended his wife when other women spoke ill of her with reference to her Jewish descent. Omar said:

Det som da skjedde, var at profeten Muhammed sa noe genialt. Han sa: “Hvis noen kaller deg ‘datter av en jøde,’ da sier du bare at ‘ja, faren min er Aron, onkelen min er Moses, og mannen min er Muhammed. Hva er negativt med det?” Så, når hun sa det til de andre kvinnene og de andre som kalte henne for “datter av en jøde,” så ble de på en måte stille, da. Da ble de helt stille. Og det er noe som viser at det har aldri vært noe i islam som sier at man skal være negativ mot jødene.

[What then happened was that the Prophet Muhammad said something brilliant. He said, “If anyone calls you ‘daughter of a Jew,’ you just say that, ‘yes, my father is Aaron, my uncle is Moses, and my husband is Muhammad. What is wrong with that?” So, when she told this to the other women and the others who had called her “daughter of a Jew,” they became silent. They became completely silent. This shows that there has never been anything in Islam that says you are supposed to be negative towards the Jews.]

In Omar’s interpretation, this well-known passage becomes a symbol of the positive relationship between Islam and Judaism, and between Muslims and Jews. Muhammad’s defence of his wife and reaction against the behaviour of the other women serves as an example to Omar, guiding his own behaviour. In contrast to the stories about the conflict between Jewish tribes and Muhammad in Medina, referred to by Ubah, the story of Safiyya is not perceived as historically contingent, but rather as a lasting example of good conduct.

Omar seemed to regard contemporary negative attitudes towards Jews as a primarily political matter, deriving from the conflict in the Middle East, or as his-

torical, related to a “Judeo-Christian past” and separate from the history of Islam. “Apart from the Middle East, a lot derives from a Christian and ‘Judeo-Christian past,’ it’s a thing of the past,” he said.⁴⁴⁴ Like Ubah, Omar referred to long periods of peaceful coexistence in the history of Jews and Muslims in Europe to corroborate this view of anti-Jewish aspects as foreign to Islam. Interviewees’ accounts of this Muslim-Jewish history of peaceful coexistence typically referred to the life and example of the Prophet Muhammad, the Ottoman Empire, and al-Andalus during the Umayyad dynasty.

Bashir (interviewee no. 8) referred to anti-Jewish sentiments among some Muslims, stating clearly that there was no basis in Islam for such views:

En del muslimer tenker jo at jøder skal vi hate fordi vi er muslimer, men det stemmer ikke i det hele tatt. Jøder er kanskje det folkeslaget som er mest omtalt i Koranen, både på godt og vondt, og de blir også kalt “bokens folk.” Og det er flere beretninger, altså hadith-beretninger, som omtaler jøder og forholdet mellom muslimene på den tiden og jødene, hvordan de fungerte sammen og samarbeidet og sånt. Mens nå er det mye mer politisk, på grunn av Israel-Palestina-konflikten. Så tror jeg mange på en eller annen måte har greid å mikse de to, hva islam sier om jøder og hvordan situasjonen er, og da tror jeg den politiske delen har tatt overhånd over det islam sier, da. [. . .] Du kan møte imamer som kanskje også har samme holdning til det, da, og du kan møte imamer som kanskje er mye mer oppegående og sier at det er kanskje mellom en jøde og en sionist, det er to forskjellige ting.

[Some Muslims think that we are supposed to hate Jews because we are Muslims, but that is not at all correct. Jews are perhaps the people that are most often mentioned in the Qur’an, for better or worse, and they are called the “People of the Book.” Several hadith mention Jews and the relation between Muslims and Jews, how they worked together and cooperated, and so forth. However, today it is a lot about politics due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I think many somehow have managed to mix things up, what Islam says about Jews and how the situation is, and I think the political side has come to predominate over what Islam says. [. . .] You can find imams who have that attitude as well, and you can find imams who know more and say that there is a difference between a Jew and a Zionist, that they are two different things.]

According to Bashir, Islam constitutes a source of positive relations between Muslims and Jews. The notion that Muslims are supposed to hate Jews because they are Muslim is completely wrong and an impression deriving from contemporary political issues, he claimed. Interestingly, Bashir also referred to a more complex portrayal in the hadith (“for better or worse”), but this did not affect his view that there is no basis for hatred against Jews in the Islamic religion. Bashir did not interpret the negative descriptions in the hadith as suggesting any lasting nega-

⁴⁴⁴ “Hvis man ser bort fra Midtøsten, så kommer mye fra kristen og ‘Judeo-Christian past,’ liksom, fortid.”

tive relation. On the contrary, the problems were partly due to how “politics” had become the predominant perspective in Muslim-Jewish relations.

Another proponent of the view that tolerant and inclusive relations with Jews are consistent with a correct interpretation of Islam was Nighat (interviewee no. 9). She described religion as a very important part of her life and underlined that in her opinion Islam is fundamentally liberal towards other religions. Commenting on attitudes towards religious minorities, she said, “The pure Islam is not supposed to have any hateful opinions, prejudices, or thoughts against other minorities, whether it is Jews, Christians, Ahmadis, or whatever.”⁴⁴⁵ Nighat’s mentioning of a “pure” Islam seems to signal that some interpretations of “Islam” are tainted or impure, perhaps even false. In effect, Nighat distinguished between her own understanding of Islam and other interpretations that were negative towards other religions. The comment seems to suggest a minority perspective, calling members of other religions “other minorities.” It came as a kind of “conclusion” at the very end of the interview, perhaps inspired by the previous conversation, where attitudes towards minorities was one of the topics. The general impression from the interview with Nighat was that an open and inclusive understanding of Islam, which included respect for Jews and adherents of other religions, was a cornerstone of her Muslim identity. This attitude also influenced her approach to life in Norwegian society. She explained that, in her view, as a Muslim you were supposed to participate in the society in which you live, and that for her, the Norwegian and Muslim identities fit closely together.

Another example of an interviewee who distinguished between a “correct,” inclusive Islam on the one hand, and “misinterpretations” expressing intolerant views on the other, was Parveen (interviewee no. 6), a young Ahmadi woman. Commenting on the relationship between Islam and non-Muslims, she stated, “Some Muslims think Islam says that ‘all those who are not Muslim, especially Jews and Christians, they don’t deserve this and that,’ and that’s completely mistaken, it says no such thing in the Qur’an.”⁴⁴⁶ This comment is an example of how the question of “what is Islam?” constituted an underlying premise for many of the arguments put forth in the interviews. Furthermore, both Nighat and Parveen’s answers expressed not only their interpretations of Islam and Islam’s relation to Jews, but also their understanding of Islam’s views about Christians and other non-Muslims. Consequently, these comments gave an indication of how the interviewees situated themselves in relation to Norwegian society more generally.

445 “Det rene islam, det skal egentlig ikke ha noen hatske meninger, fordommer eller tanker om andre minoriteter, om det så er jøder, kristne, ahmadiyyaer eller hva det nå enn er.”

446 “Det er noen muslimer som mener islam sier at ‘Nei, alle som ikke er muslimer, da spesielt jøder og kristne, de fortjener ikke det og det og det’. Og det er jo helt feil. Det står jo ingen steder i Koranen.”

7.3 Perceptions of Religious Evolution

Interviewees who emphasised the bond between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam typically described this relationship as founded in both theological kinship and in the related histories of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim adherents. However, for some, the long historical and religious development from Judaism to Islam also implied that the Jewish religion had lost its relevance, as indicated in the interview with Tanveer (interviewee no. 2).

Tanveer was from the Ahmadi community, and his perspective on Islam's relation to other religions was influenced by the arrival and central position of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement. Tanveer explained the belief that Ahmad was in fact the Messiah for all religions and the *Mahdi* for Muslims. This narrative seemed to perceive Islam in its Ahmadi form as encompassing and fulfilling all prior religions – and thus, to some extent, as rendering them obsolete:

Grunnleggeren er Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, som hevdet at “jeg er Messias for kristne og muslimer, jeg er den rettledende imam – imam Mahdi – for muslimer, jeg er Messias for jøder også,” fordi de venter, de har ennå ikke akseptert den første Messias, men vi sier at den andre også har kommet. Det er forskjellen. Så han er Messias for jøder, han er Krishna for hinduister, han er Buddha for buddhistene.

[The founder [of the Ahmadiyya movement] is Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed, “I am the Messiah for Christians and Muslims; I am the right leading imam – Imam Mahdi – for Muslims, I am the Messiah to Jews as well,” because they are waiting, they have not yet accepted the first Messiah, but we say the second also has come. That is the difference. So he is the Messiah to the Jews, he is Krishna for the Hindus, he is Buddha for the Buddhists.]

Tanveer repeated later in the interview: “*Jew* . . . what can I say? They are still waiting for the first Messiah.”⁴⁴⁷ According to Tanveer's perception, Jews as a religious people seemed to have stagnated at an earlier stage by failing to recognise the Messiah when he arrived. Apparently, this was a central aspect of the way in which he perceived Jews. On the one hand, Tanveer established a narrative whereby Islam, by definition and by virtue of the Ahmadiyya movement and the coming of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, seemed to encompass every other religion, insisting on the universality of its message; on the other hand, however, his description signified a differentiation from other religions. The structure of this narrative is one of increasing insight. Adherents of other religions, including the Jews, are as of yet unaware of the arrival of the Messiah, although he is in fact their saviour too. Insight into the particular role of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad established a distinction between the Ahmadis and other

447 “*Jøde* – hva skal jeg si. De venter ennå på den første Messias.”

religious people, including other Muslims. Nevertheless, similar to the other Ahmadi interviewees, Tanveer had a strong Muslim identity. He seemed to perceive the possibility of Islam encompassing prior religions as allowing for a particularly inclusive attitude, to the point that this defined Muslim identity: “I cannot be a Muslim if I deny Jesus, Moses, Abraham, or Krishna and Buddha. However, a Christian can be a Christian while denying Muhammad as a prophet. A Jew can be a Jew while denying Jesus and Muhammad, Krishna and Buddha.”⁴⁴⁸ In the words of Tanveer, Islam is a “universal” religion that accepts everyone.

Bushra (interviewee no. 7) also started by pointing to the common heritage and religious relationship between Jews and Muslims, but following this, her description included a perception of Judaism (and Christianity) as no longer true:

[Jøder] er bokens folk, liksom, vi har liksom felles stamfar, og islam er på en måte, hva heter det, en revisjon av jødedommen. [. . .] Jødedommen var den ekte troen når jødedommen hadde sin tid. Og så kom Jesus, og så var kristendommen den ekte troen, og når Muhammed kom, så er det islam som er den ekte troen.

[The Jews] are People of the Book, we sort of have a common ancestor and Islam is in a way . . . how to put it . . . a revision of Judaism. [. . .] Judaism was the true faith when Judaism had its time. Then came Jesus, and so Christianity was the true faith, and then when Muhammad came, it is sort of Islam that is the true faith.]

Through the course of time and the arrival of new messengers from God, the other religions’ access to divine truth seemed to have been lost. While the connection between the three monotheistic religions is a structuring principle in this historical development, Bushra’s narrative differentiates Islam from the earlier religions by describing the latter as past historical stages, in similar ways as in the interview with Tanveer. The narratives reflect central notions in the Islamic (and Christian) theology of supersession.

Descriptions of Islam’s relation to Judaism and Christianity sometimes incorporated notions of scriptures having been falsified by believers tampering with the content of the revelations, implying a view of earlier revelations as (otherwise) original and eternal truths. The interview with Yasmin (interviewee no. 16) was one example of this; her narrative included perceptions that seemed to draw on the Islamic doctrine of *tahrīf*, in which Jews and Christians are seen as being responsible for some sort of corruption of the scriptures.

⁴⁴⁸ “Jeg kan ikke være muslim hvis jeg benekter for Jesus, Moses, Abraham eller Krishna og Buddha. Men en kristen kan være kristen hvis han benekter at Muhammed ikke er hans profet. En jøde kan være jøde hvis han benekter Jesus og Muhammed, Krishna og Buddha.”

As mentioned above (chapter 7.2), Yasmin conveyed a perception of a profound relationship between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. However, expanding on her views, Yasmin also referred to passages in the Qur'an describing how Jews had tampered with the content of their scriptures. Yasmin's primary association when asked about Jews was "People of the Book":

"Bokens folk," fordi vi har jo sånne korankurs her i menigheten, og vi har begynt på det første og det største kapitlet, eller suraen, i Koranen, og det handler om jøder. Og jeg har fortolkning av suraen og historien bak, og da lærer vi at Guds beste folk var egentlig jøder, for de var jo de utvalgte, de fikk absolutt alt det beste fra Gud, men de gikk bort fra den veien. De endret bøkene sine, og overholdt ikke de reglene som var pålagt dem.

["People of the Book," because, you know, we have Qur'an classes here in the congregation and we have studied the first and longest chapter in the Qur'an, and it is about Jews. I [teach] interpretation of the surah and the story behind it, and there we learn that God's best people were actually the Jews, because they were the chosen ones and they got all the best from God, but they strayed away from that path. They changed their books and they did not follow the rules that they were required to follow.]

The narrative suggests that Yasmin's perception of Jews had an important basis in religious sources, particularly in descriptions in the Qur'an. Furthermore, the references to the Islamic sources provided a complex image, reflecting both deep respect and criticism related to perceptions of Jews having altered the scriptures and left the path originally provided to them in the revelations. Yasmin also referred to what she described as the central aspect of the alterations of Jewish scriptures – namely, the parts that pertained to the coming of Muhammad. The Jews had not recognised the Islamic prophet and had removed the parts proclaiming his arrival:

Det står i Koranen at de endret bøkene sine, og det gjelder i hvert fall den delen hvor de fikk en åpenbaring om at det skulle komme en profet som skulle være den siste, og hans tegn på, hva slags tegn det skulle være når hans tid var kommet, og han skulle bli født og sånn. Så de jødiske lærde visste det, men de erkjente det ikke.

[It says in the Qur'an that they altered their scriptures, at least the parts where they received the revelation about the coming of the last prophet and the sign that would indicate that his time had come, where he would be born and so forth. So the Jewish scholars knew, but they did not acknowledge.]

Yasmin's narrative referred to Jews having deliberately removed mentions of the Islamic prophet from the scriptures prior to Muhammad's arrival. Her narrative seemed critical of these actions but placed them clearly in the past and within a religious context. Yasmin did not suggest that these negative actions were relevant to her ideas about Jews today or to Jews as fellow citizens in Norway. Com-

menting on Muslim-Jewish relations in Norway today, she mentioned a remark by the Norwegian Muslim politician Abid Raja: “I remember Abid Raja said that antisemitism was practically a part of the upbringing [among Pakistani immigrants], but I have not noticed any of that.”⁴⁴⁹ Several times during the interview, and immediately following the discussion above, Yasmin returned to how a central point in her religiosity was the individual focus, the important question being how she led her life as a Muslim and her relation to Islam, implying that the descriptions of the Jews and their actions were not for her to judge.

The interview with Hassan (interviewee no. 5) also included notions of Jews and Christians having tampered with the scriptures, though he also emphasised their status as “People of the Book” and his respect for the original truth of both the Jewish and Christian religions:

“Bokens folk” kaller vi kristne og jøder. Fordi vi innrømmer at Toraen, altså Det gamle testamentet, og Bibelen ble åpenbart av Gud. Men vi mener at det ikke er akkurat det som gjelder i dag. Begge de to bøkene ble forfalsket på en eller annen måte. For det er en del motsigelser som tyder på at det er noe som ikke stemmer her. Men originalutgaven av Bibelen og Toraen, dette innrømmer vi at ble åpenbart av Gud, både til profeten Moses og profeten Jesus.

[“People of the Book” we call Christians and Jews. Because we admit that the Torah, i.e., the Old Testament, and the Bible were revealed by God. However, we believe that it is not exactly what applies today. Both books were somehow falsified. For there are some contradictions suggesting something is not quite right. Nevertheless, the original version of the Bible and Torah, these, we admit, were revealed by God, both to the prophet Moses and the prophet Jesus.]

By claiming that the Bible and the Torah in their present versions have been falsified, Hassan seemed to imply that Christians and Jews had become religiously misled. The narrative thus outlines a religious boundary separating Muslims from Jews (and Christians) today, though the close relationship and mutual theological heritage constitute the origin of the relationship and still have significance as the true relation between the religions. Though expressing a notion of scriptural falsification, the narrative bears witness to the shared divine truth of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which prior to Muhammad was revealed to Moses and Jesus.

Hassan received an Islamic religious education in Lebanon. Again, the account seems to reflect the theology of supersession. While both Judaism and Christianity are perceived as true religions, this theology teaches that Islam occupies a privileged position by virtue of fulfilling the latest prophecy. The dual char-

⁴⁴⁹ “Jeg husker Abid Raja sa at jødehatet kommer med morsmelken, men det har ikke jeg fått med meg, altså.”

acter of early Christian and Islamic relations towards Jews and Judaism aimed to preserve the prophetic truth and the Jewish position as the receivers of that truth – and to distance themselves from “Judaism.” This simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Judaism is reflected in the patterns of thought from the early years of Christianity and Islam and in arguments about how to interpret prophetic texts in a “world full of competing claims to the truth” as noted by David Nirenberg.⁴⁵⁰ In a similar construction of a “dual character” of Judaism and Christianity, Hassan acknowledges the (previous) truth of the Torah and Christian Bible while asserting that the Islamic revelations contain the latest and most authentic expression of the revealed truth. Though not explicitly blaming Jews and Christians for the falsifications (only claiming that the scriptures “somehow” have been falsified), his description, similar to the one provided by Yasmin, closely resembles the accusations made in the Islamic doctrine of *tahrīf*.

7.4 The New Pharaoh

The idea expressed by some interviewees, that the truths of Judaism were outdated or somehow had been falsified, seemed to be viewed as a theological rather than a social question, and thus as not relevant to the relation between Muslims and Jews today. However, in the interview with Aleena (interviewee no. 4), a religiously framed narrative functioned as a metaphor for contemporary Muslim-Jewish relations. Aleena described a development whereby Judaism had become outdated, initially formulating her view in general terms, echoing Hassan’s description: “Moses came for a certain time and a certain people, while the Qur’an is for all time and for all people.”⁴⁵¹ As she explained her thoughts in further detail, an antagonistic narrative emerged that contrasted Judaism to Islam and Jews to Muslims. In Aleena’s description, Jews had removed themselves from the original path of their religion. She referred to how Judaism was originally connected to Moses and his act of liberation as he freed the Israelites from their oppressors through the exodus from Egypt. However, this liberating force was now lost. Aleena explained her view by use of a metaphor where the Jews of today had become “pharaohs.” She said,

Jødedommen har et veldig sånt strengt lovverk, at “det er lov, det er ikke lov, og det skal straffes med det,” og det er veldig hardt, da. Jeg tenker at det historisk sett har gjort jødene

⁴⁵⁰ Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, 165–77. See also chapter 2.1.

⁴⁵¹ “Moses kom jo for en bestemt tid og til det bestemte folket, mens Koranen er [gyldig] for all tid og for alle mennesker.”

veldig harde, veldig strenge [. . .] Hvis jeg skal bruke [en] veldig billedlig forklaring på dette, så vil jeg si at alle har blitt faraoer i forhold til muslimer. At de har tatt det andre ytterpunktet, på en måte.

[Judaism has a very strict set of laws, [saying] “this is allowed, this is not allowed, this is punished in this manner;” it is very harsh. I believe that this historically has made Jews very harsh, very strict. [. . .] If I were to use a figurative explanation, I would say that they had all become pharaohs in relation to the Muslims. That they have incorporated the other extreme, in a way.]

The reference to Pharaoh, an archetype of oppression in Islamic as well as Jewish and Christian traditions, captures the essence of the religious myth of the pagan and tyrannical ruler of ancient Egypt who opposes God. The myth describes how Pharaoh refused to accept the message of monotheism put forth by Moses. Aleena’s assertion was that while the Jews (Israelites), prior to being released from slavery by Moses, had been subjugated under the Pharaoh in Egypt, they had now themselves become the oppressors. Furthermore, she expressed a perception of Judaism as particularly strict, a characteristic that over time had become a “Jewish” characteristic. Aleena pictured the relation between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as one that had developed through different stages, alternating between strictness and forgiveness:

Jesus kom jo nettopp for å veilede dem i forhold til det andre budskapet, som var å tilgi og vise ydmykhet. Og de av jødene som trodde på Jesus, som skjønnte det, de ble jo kristne. Og så ble det balanse igjen. Men så kommer profeten Muhammed og forklarer læren om når man skal være snill, og når man skal være sterkere og litt hardere. Den balansen kommer med profeten. Så hvis man ser på religion, altså det er historien om hvordan religioner utvikler seg. [. . .] Hvis jeg skulle gi et råd til jødene, så er det å se på den sammenheng. Å huske tilbake til den tiden da de var underkuet, og hva straffen til farao ble. Slik blir straffen til de som underkuer andre på den måten.

[Jesus came precisely to guide them with regard to the second message, which was about forgiveness and humility. The Jews who believed in Jesus, who realized it, they became Christians. Then balance was re-established. But then the Prophet Muhammad comes and explains the doctrine about when to be kind and when to be stronger and a little harder. That balance comes with the Prophet. Therefore, if one looks at religion, that is the story about how religions evolve [. . .]. If I were to give advice to the Jews, then it would be to look at this context. To think back to the time when they were oppressed, and what Pharaoh’s punishment was like. Such will the punishment be for those who oppress others like that.]

The idea of shifting stages throughout the history of religions, where the prophets Jesus and Muhammad have served to re-establish a form of balance, differs from the narrative of increasing insight described above. The reference to Judaism as “strict” has a broad cultural resonance and can be compared to a central notion in Christian anti-Judaism, of the Jewish religion as being legalistic and superseded

by Christianity as a religion of grace. The narrative trajectory in Aleena's account, created by the myth of Pharaoh's persecution of the Israelites, creates an expectancy of divine intervention: God punished Pharaoh for his refusal to accept the revelation conveyed to Moses, while saving Moses and the Israelites. Aleena emphasised Moses's status and ongoing relevance as a model: "They ought to think about what they are doing and what Moses would have said they should do in such a situation. Because now they are not in a situation where they are being oppressed, they are the oppressors."⁴⁵² By following Moses's example, the argument seemed to be that the Jews could get back on the right track.

At first, Aleena did not specify the context in which she felt Jews had been transformed into "pharaohs." By speaking only in general terms, she seemed to indicate that this Jewish supremacy had an obvious reference and was an established fact with no need for further explanation. It seemed clear, however, that Jewish power (in her notion of it) was executed primarily in relation to Muslims and was characteristic of the present situation. The Arab-Israeli conflict in particular is often portrayed in similar ways. Following a direct question about whether she was in fact thinking of the Israeli-Palestinian situation, Aleena confirmed that this was an important factor. After briefly modifying her view in this direction, she nevertheless returned to a generalized description:

Jeg tenker jo først og fremst på Israel og Palestina, men jeg tenker jo også i en større verdenssammenheng, fordi man vet jo at, altså, det jeg har lest i forhold til politikk og sånt, det er jo at jødene har veldig mye makt og har veldig mange posisjoner som betyr veldig mye for hele verden, så det er jo også makt for å underkue andre, ikke bare palestinere, men generelt.

[First and foremost I'm thinking about Israel and Palestine, but [I am referring] also to a larger global context, because it is well known, or, what I have read in relation to politics and stuff is that the Jews have very much power and very many positions of great importance in the world. Therefore, it is also the power to subjugate others, not only Palestinians, but in general.]

By applying the notion of the Jewish Pharaoh to Jews as such, Aleena's narrative thus included an essentialising aspect, moving from a specific, historical reference to perceptions of a "Jewish nature." As she was presenting her views on Jews as the new "pharaohs," Aleena gave the impression that this was something she had thought through prior to the interview. The concept was presented as an established narrative. The quotations are examples of how religious myths may

⁴⁵² "Da bør de tenke seg om hva de egentlig holder på å gjøre, og hva Moses ville ha sagt at de burde gjøre, i denne situasjonen. Fordi nå er ikke de i den situasjonen at det er de som blir undertrykt, det er de som undertrykker."

constitute a basis for interpreting a concrete situation in the present – including secular, political, or social – and also provide tools for constructing essentialized – and polarised – imaginaries of interreligious relations.

Aleena’s narrative makes use of the rhetorical device of inversion, turning the original relationship in the religious myth upside down, though mirroring the content (“Jews” have become “pharaohs”). The notion of the powerful Jew is thus placed within a narrative of radical development, where the whole situation and the characteristics of “the Jew” change.

Aleena underlined that the idea was her own invention, but the narrative pattern expressing an inversion of victim and perpetrator is commonly found in antisemitic narratives.⁴⁵³ The notion that the Jews, once oppressed, have now become the oppressors is perhaps particularly common within anti-Israeli statements where the historical Jewish victims are presented as “Nazis” (see also chapter 9.4). However, the image of the powerful “Jew” is also a central anti-Jewish motif that, both historically and in present examples, occurs without similar references to a prior Jewish victim status or inversion of the position of being oppressed. From ancient times, in Egypt and more prominently in early Christianity, threatening images of powerful Jews and Judaism have been produced. As mentioned above, though less comprehensive, portrayals in Islamic traditions refer to powerful Jewish tribes who fought Muhammad in and around Medina.⁴⁵⁴

It is interesting that Aleena initially seemed to reserve her notion of the Jewish oppressor to the relationship that Jews have with Muslims. The strong association seemed to suggest an analogy, whereby Muslims, in the role of the mythical Israelites, will be emancipated. Aleena’s narrative is also close to a Christian, typological understanding of the Bible, where Moses, like Christ, is regarded as a Messianic figure and a saviour. Halverson et al. describe how the human impulse to organise the world through stories can stimulate perceptions of future situations.⁴⁵⁵ From an understanding of the present, narratives may thus contribute to projections of what is going to take place next. Furthermore, based on these projections, narratives may stimulate different types of action. “[Narratives] create expectations for what is likely to happen and what the audience is expected to do about it,” Halverson et al.

453 For more on the Perpetrator-Victim Inversion (“Täter-Opfer-Umkehr”), see also Holz, *Die Gegenwart des Antisemitismus: Islamische, demokratische und antizionistische Judenfeindschaft*.

454 See, e.g., Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible*, 4–5.

455 Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 15. See also, Jörn Rüsen, “Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reason,” *History and Theory* 26, no. 4 (1987); Jörn Rüsen, “Historical Consciousness: Narrative Structure, Moral Function, and Ontogenetic Development,” in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

note.⁴⁵⁶ Underlining that she in no way wanted to convey hatred towards Jews, Aleena explained that her main concern was how God had punished the Pharaoh, and that she wished to warn the Jews. A question emerging from the narrative concerns the character of the “exodus from Egypt;” how is the emancipation to be understood? Halverson et al. describe how the master narrative of the Pharaoh portrays tyrannical rulers as deserving targets of God’s wrath, and that “the actions of vigilant believers can and should help bring about their downfall.”⁴⁵⁷ The emancipation thus emerges as a result not solely of divine intervention but of active involvement on the part of the true believers. The image of Moses as a liberator has also functioned as an interpretative key among Jews in the modern age. Historian Christhard Hoffmann has described how Jewish thinkers gave meaning to modernity and emancipation by referring to “the Mosaic principle” and professing a vision of gradual liberation. However, this principle was not limited to a perception of Jewish history. Jewish historians and intellectuals perceived the concept as a universal principle, a mark of the modern age and the fulfilment of specific principles and promises.⁴⁵⁸ Hoffmann suggests that these Jewish constructions of history in modern times may be identified as “homemaking myths,” serving to define the rapid changes affecting Jewish life as no longer alienating but as consistent with Jewish traditions and history.⁴⁵⁹ As a reimagination of the “Mosaic principle,” the expected outcome according to the narrative trajectory of Aleena’s account is the emancipation of the Muslims and the restoration of balance and justice.

7.5 Narratives about Jews as the Muslim Other

As we have seen, different Islamic denominations were represented among the interviewees in the present study. Twenty-one identified as Sunnis, six as Shiites, and five as Ahmadis (see chapter 6.1). They held diverse opinions concerning the relationship between these Islamic denominations, but interviewees typically

456 Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 25.

457 Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 185.

458 Christhard Hoffmann, “Constructing Jewish Modernity: Mendelssohn Jubilee Celebrations within German Jewry, 1829–1929,” *Towards Normality? Acculturation and Modern German Jewry*, ed. Rainer Liedtke and David Rechter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Christhard Hoffmann, “Historicizing Emancipation: Jewish Historical Culture And Wissenschaft In Germany, 1912–1938,” in *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness*, ed. Christian Wiese and Andreas Gotzmann (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

459 Hoffmann, “Constructing Jewish Modernity,” 34.

downplayed the significance of sectarian differences between Muslims in Norway. There was also an impression that international examples of sectarian antagonisms were largely rooted in political issues rather than religious differences. Interviewees who were members of the Muslim Student Society mentioned how the society was open to everyone without regard to sectarian boundaries, and that Sunni and Shiite members often prayed together. Sectarian differences also seemed to be of less importance to the self-identity of the interviewees in the present study, who typically mentioned sectarian affiliation only upon being directly asked. This reflects findings from previous studies among Muslim youth in Norway.⁴⁶⁰ However, some narratives included references to intra-Islamic (sectarian) differences. The symbolic “Jew” then served to define fellow Muslims as sectarian Others, or as a designation of the interviewees’ experience of (imposed) religious otherness where perceptions of sectarian differences were described as analogous to a “Jewish” experience. Thus, these narratives did not refer to actual Jews; rather, the labelling of other Muslims as “Jews” was part of an intra-Islamic construction of boundaries. The following discussion explores narratives that relate sectarian differences between Ahmadis and other Muslims to a religious framework, drawing upon religious myths and concepts. Interviewees also discussed (Ahmadi/Shiite/Sunni) sectarian differences without such references, typically in narratives of victimhood. These narratives are explored in chapter 9.2.

One example of how a distinction between “Ahmadis” and “Muslims” was perceived as widespread among Muslims occurred in the interview with Ismail (interviewee no. 12). Ismail said, “Yes, well, we are often compared to Jews when it comes to Muslims, for there is one thing all Muslims agree on, and that is that the Ahmadi Muslims are not Muslims.”⁴⁶¹ Ismail, who was himself affiliated with the Ahmadi community, seemed to imply that both Ahmadis and Jews are regarded as (religious) outsiders. The perception was shared by other interviewees, typically attributed to the status of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad within the Ahmadiyya movement, which was perceived as conflicting with the Islamic view of Muhammad as the “Seal of the Prophets.” Bashir (interviewee no. 8), who was Sunni, mentioned this conflict, agreeing that the status of Ahmad was problematic. However, Bashir rejected labelling Ahmadis as “not Muslims”:

Jeg vil ikke si om de er muslimer eller ikke-muslimer, men det jeg kan si, er at de er – og det er min mening, uten å si at jeg har noe imot dem, for det har jeg ikke – men jeg tenker, som muslimer så tror vi at Koranen er åpenbart fra Gud, og at den er uforanderlig, den er evig,

⁴⁶⁰ Sandberg et al., *Ung muslimske stemmer*; Linge, “Sunnite-Shiite Polemics in Norway.”

⁴⁶¹ “Ja, altså, vi blir ofte sammenlignet med jødene når det gjelder muslimer, for det er én ting alle muslimer er enig i, og det er det at ahmadiyya-muslimer ikke er muslimer.”

og da følger du liksom alt som står der, du kan ikke komme og endre det. Den største forskjellen er, slik jeg har forstått, da, er for eksempel hvor det står at profeten Muhammed er den siste profeten. Men så kommer noen og sier at “nei, vet du hva, det kommer flere profeter etter ham,” for eksempel Ahmad fra India. Da tenker jeg, da har du allerede gått imot Koranen. Jeg vil fortsatt ikke si om de er muslimer eller ikke-muslimer, for det er opp til Gud, men i mine øyne, da, jeg kunne aldri ha gjort noe sånt noe.

[I do not want to determine whether they are Muslim or not, but what I can say, is – and this is my opinion and does not indicate that I have anything against them, because I do not – but I think that as Muslims we believe that the Qur’an is revealed by God and that it is unchangeable, it is eternal; consequently, you follow everything in it, you cannot change it. From what I have understood, the greatest difference [to the views of Ahmadis] is the place where it says that Muhammad is the last prophet. Then, when someone claims, “You know what, there have been other prophets after him,” for example Ahmad from India, I think that it is to go against the Qur’an. I will still not say if they are Muslims or not Muslims, because that is up to God, but in my eyes, I could not have done something like that.]

Bashir seemed to understand the Ahmadi notion of Ahmad to be unacceptable for a Muslim who wants to follow the Qur’an. However, his repeated reluctance to define Ahmadis as non-Muslims was also based in religion. According to this view, only God can decide who is a Muslim and who is not. Bashir’s religious beliefs thus marked a certain distance towards Ahmadis while also upholding the possibility of a shared identity. Furthermore, it seemed important that his personal feelings towards Ahmadis were positive, unaffected by their perception of Ahmad.

Tanveer (interviewee no. 2) received an Islamic religious education in Pakistan. He gave an account of his views in a highly engaged manner, with frequent references to religious myths. One example was the story about how the Prophet Muhammad had foreseen that the followers of Islam would split into 73 different branches and that each would be wrong – except for one, which would be right, presumably a reference to a well-known hadith on intra-Islamic difference.⁴⁶² Tanveer saw this as an account of the Ahmadiyya movement’s place within Islam:

Profet Muhammed på den tida – du spurte meg om jøder – sa at de 72 [retninger i islam] skal lignes med jøder. Hva har jøder gjort? Jøder aksepterte ikke Jesus. Jesus var Messias på denne tida. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad er Messias for vår tid. Jesus kommer med fred. Jøder sier ‘tann for tann, øye for øye, fot for fot’, men Jesus sier ‘gjør fred’, . . . Hvis noen slår deg på

⁴⁶² The relation to the Jews in the hadith is complex. Ulvi Karagedik notes: “In a well-known passage, a Muslim community is prophesied a negative fate similar to that of the Children of Israel. The related hadith contains a positive and a negative aspect of Muslims’ perception of the People of Israel. The fact that the Children of Israel are accused of bad deeds and dissension is to be seen as negative. The positive aspect lies in the fact that the Muslim community faces the same fate, with only a small part being credited with integrity.” Karagedik, “The Jews and the Hadith: A Contemporary Attempt at a Hermeneutic Interpretation,” 44.

[det ene kinnet], snu det andre . . . Mirza Ghulam Ahmad sier 'kjærlighet til alle, ikke hat mot noen'. Han sier: 'Jeg er Messias', og de prøvde å henge ham på korset eller drepe ham, og etter ham, hans tilhengere. Så vi Ahmadiyya-muslimer i dag, vi er i samme situasjon som de kristne var de første 300 år.

[The Prophet Muhammad at that time – you asked me about Jews – said that those 72 [different paths of Islam], they shall resemble the Jews. What have the Jews done? The Jews did not accept Jesus. Jesus was the Messiah of that time. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is the Messiah of ours. Jesus comes with peace. Jews say “An eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, foot for foot,” but Jesus says, “Do peace. If someone hits you [on one side], turn the other cheek.” Mirza Ghulam Ahmad says, “Love for all, hatred for none.” He says, “I am the Messiah,” and they tried to hang him on the cross or kill him, and after him, his followers. So we, the Ahmadis today, are in the same situation as the Christians were for the first 300 years.]

Tanveer's narrative compared the Ahmadis' position in relation to the contemporary Muslim community and the situation of the Christians in the first three centuries after Christ. The image that emerges of Christians, as well as of Ahmadis, is connected both to divine insight and to experiences of persecution. In the same way as those who would not accept Jesus as the Messiah persecuted the first Christians, other Muslims treat the Ahmadis badly today, he argued. Tanveer defined other (non-Ahmadi) Muslims as “Jews:” “[W]e explain that there are two parallel lines and that they are today's Jews – other Muslims – for they too deny the Messiah. The Jews also deny the Messiah, so in that way they resemble each other,”⁴⁶³ he said. The view of Jews presented in the narrative is clearly critical, drawing a similarly negative image of the attitudes and behaviour of other Muslims towards the Ahmadis. The narrative thus marks a boundary, both towards Jews and other Muslims. However, Tanveer also expressed a certain doubt, aware that other Islamic denominations interpret the hadith about the division of the *umma* differently or in their favour. “Everyone says ‘we are the right path’ – how can we know? It is a big question,” he said.⁴⁶⁴

The interview with Tanveer was conducted in the Baitun Nasr mosque; it was the first time I was inside the building. Tanveer received me as a guest, showed me around, and seemed eager to explain the characteristics of the Ahmadiyya movement to an outsider. This context may have contributed to an emphasis on difference – on how the Ahmadis are, or can be perceived as, different from other Muslims. The description also shows how Tanveer's identity as Ahmadi was tightly connected to the act of being peaceful, as conveyed in the motto “Love for all, hatred for none.” The story of Jesus and the Christian religion served as a par-

⁴⁶³ “[V]i forklarer at de to er parallelle linjer, og de er dagens jøder, andre muslimer, for de benekter også Messias. Jødene benektet også Messias, så sånn ligner de hverandre.”

⁴⁶⁴ “I dag sier alle ‘vi er den rette vei’. Hvordan vi kan vite? Det er et stort spørsmål.”

allel in the construction of this identity, where Mirza Ghulam Ahmad emerged as an echo and historical reiteration of Jesus. Several of the Ahmadi interviewees mentioned that peace was a central value in their community, independent of any notion of Jews or other Muslims. However, interviewees sometimes expressed somewhat ambivalent views – one example being Aleena (interviewee no. 4), cited above. Though the image of Jews as the new “Pharaoh” was central to her description, she also stated, “We [the Ahmadis] invite everyone to peace [. . .] this message also goes to the Jews.”⁴⁶⁵

Tanveer’s citing of the *lex talionis* (“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”) is interesting. The passage is found in Exodus (21:23–5) and in the Qur’an (5:45, referring to the Torah).⁴⁶⁶ References to this law have a long history, both in European Christian anti-Judaism as well as in the ideological repertoire of Islamophobia. From this teaching, a Christian polemic developed, contrasting Christianity with Judaism and Islam.⁴⁶⁷ The binary defined the Christian attitude as the polar opposite of the – vengeful and pitiless – attitude of the Jews and the Muslims. Though historically focusing on the relation to Jews and Judaism, the accusation of legalistic cruelty has perhaps more frequently been directed at Muslims in recent times, with reference to the Shari’a.⁴⁶⁸ Tanveer’s narrative repeats this dichotomy, only this time formulated by placing Ahmadi-Islam on the “Christian” side, promoting peace and forgiveness, against the persecution conducted by (the other) adherents of Islam. The narrative seems to contrast with Aleena’s description of religious evolution, where the teaching of Jesus is compared with Muhammad’s “balance” between turning the other cheek and being strong.

According to Tanveer, an important difference between the contemporary Ahmadi-Muslim-relationship and the Jewish-Christian relationship is that Jews and Christians today live in peace, while the Ahmadis and other Muslims do not. Nevertheless, he was optimistic about the future since the expected outcome of the relationship, in accordance with the historical parallel and narrative trajectory, was that peace shall come at last:

Du vet at på den tida, da den første Messias var kommet – Jesus – lagde jødene problemer for de kristne, ja, som de [andre muslimer] lager problemer for oss. Men i dag bor jøder sammen med kristne, i fred. Så det er en ny tid. [. . .] Og på den tida var jøder i majoritet, og hver dag vokste og vokste de kristne. Nå er jøder i minoritet. Det skal skje her også.

⁴⁶⁵ “Vi inviterer jo alle til fred, [. . .]. Så det budskapet er jo også til jødene.”

⁴⁶⁶ The Qur’an 2:178 also includes reference to a form of retaliation.

⁴⁶⁷ See, e.g., Brian Klug, “The Limits of Analogy: Comparing Islamophobia and Antisemitism,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 5 (2014): 452–53.

⁴⁶⁸ As suggested by Kalmar and Ramadan, “Antisemitism and Islamophobia Historical and Contemporary Connections and Parallels,” 360.

[You know, at that time, when the first Messiah came – Jesus – the Jews created problems for the Christians, just as they [other Muslims] create problems for us. However, today the Jews, they live with the Christians in peace. Therefore, it is a new era. [. . .] Moreover, at that time, Jews were the majority, and every day Christians grew and grew. Now Jews are the minority. It will occur here also.]

Tanveer describes a development where the symbolic “Jews” – other Muslims – gradually lose their dominant position in favour of the symbolic “Christians” – the Ahmadis. Again, this can be interpreted as a reference to the hadith about the divisions within the *umma*, which prophesised that the group that follows the right path will enter paradise.

Tanveer’s narrative does not primarily contrast his views to those of followers of other religions (i.e., Jews and Christians) but rather serves as an interpretative tool for understanding the relation to other Muslims, effectively constructing a boundary against them. The narrative of “the Jew” specifically addresses intra-religious differences and the Ahmadi minority position within Islam. Once again, this distinguishes Tanveer’s narrative from that of Aleena (interviewee no. 4) cited above, where the interviewee’s (intra-Muslim) minority identity was not emphasised and Jews occupied an antagonistic position to all Muslims, as contemporary versions of the Pharaoh. The analysis thus demonstrates how the symbolic “Jews” can be filled with different meanings, depending on the point of view of the speaker. However, both interviewees portray “Jews” negatively in relation to their self-identification as Muslims, and both convey a message of an approaching emancipation.

Tanveer alternated between different narratives as his perspective changed. Later in the interview, he described how other Muslims regard Ahmadis. This alternative narrative identified Ahmadis as “agents of Israel” and a subversive force within Islam:

Jeg [har] ikke opplevd [det], men vanlige muslimer, de tror det. Du kan jo spørre, kanskje noen av dem kan si at de er “agents of Israel.” De jobber for Israel, vi jobber for britene, “britiske myndigheter” og sånn, ja, det er konspirasjon[steori] om oss, at de egentlig er “agents” og de fikser dem for å ødelegge islam. De tror at vi ødelegger islam.

[I have not experienced it myself, but Muslims, they believe in it. You can ask, maybe some of them will say that the Ahmadis are “agents of Israel,” they work for Israel, we work for the British, “British government,” etc. – yes, there is a conspiracy [theory] about us, that [we] are really agents, that we work to ruin Islam. They think we ruin Islam.]

This quote displays a polarised vision of the relationship between the Ahmadiyya movement and Islam, where the movement is seen as a destructive religious force, working to undermine Islam. Tanveer suggested that other Muslims generally had a negative view of Ahmadis. This impression seemed to be shared by most interviewees, though they typically did not admit holding such views themselves.

Imran (interviewee no. 15), who was Sunni, suggested that Ahmadis were considered problematic because they appeared to be Muslims but actually were not. Imran was born in Pakistan and both his parents still lived there. He was an active member of the religious community, and he strongly emphasised that all Muslims upheld a boundary against the Ahmadis. He said, “Every Muslim holds that view. Ask them, every one. They will say the same.”⁴⁶⁹ He explained this by pointing to theological differences, specifically the position of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and how Ahmadis were perceived as believing in a prophet after Muhammad. Imran was also one of the few interviewees who claimed there was a (significant) conflict between Shias and Sunnis in Norway. In his view, however, the opposition to the Ahmadis was stronger. Imran explained:

Forði de þástandur at de er muslimer, de brukur de kjennetegnene som muslimer brukur, de kan jo bruke dem her, men ikke i Pakistan og ikke i andre land. De kan jo praktisere sine aktiviteter, men de kan ikke bygge en moské. De kan jo ha salen og senteret og sånn, men de kan ikke symbolisere det bygget som en moské og ha en minaret og sånn. Men de sier at “Nei, vi er like som dere.” Så folk prøver å bevise at de ikke er som oss. Så derfor vil de ikke prate med dem.

[Because they [Ahmadis] claim to be Muslim, they use the symbols all Muslims use, they are allowed to do that here, but not in Pakistan or other countries. They can practise their religion, but they cannot build a mosque. They may have an assembly hall and a centre and such, but they cannot mark it with symbols like a mosque and have a minaret and such. However, they claim that, “We are like you.” Therefore, people try to prove that they are not like us. That is why they do not want to talk to them.]

This quotation points to how an apparent resemblance and obscuring of established boundaries can lead to a stronger emphasis on differences, in order to maintain the image of the (symbolically constructed) Other. The boundaries serve simultaneously to articulate who “we” are and to create distance from the other group. Cohen writes about how different forms of closeness may enhance the need for markers of boundaries, “Our thesis has been that the symbolic expression of community and its boundaries increases in importance as actual geo-social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred or otherwise weakened.”⁴⁷⁰

By raising issues like honesty and betrayal among the interviewees, the portrayal of the Ahmadis shared some similarities with images produced both in Jewish-Islamic polemics and in other intra-religious polemics, such as Catholic portrayals of

⁴⁶⁹ “Det mener alle muslimer. Gå til alle. En og en. Alle vil si det samme.”

⁴⁷⁰ Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 50.

Protestants.⁴⁷¹ The depiction also bears similarities to well-known myths of subversion from anti-Judaic and (secular) antisemitic discourse. The theme of an impostor working to destroy the religion from within has been identified by Halverson et al. (2011) as the “ruse” or “impostor” story form, found in the “1924” master narrative and elsewhere. Based in a perceived conflict between Muslims, Jews, and the West, this narrative tells the story of the fall of the Ottoman Empire being a result of the actions of the “secret Jew” and “British agent” Atatürk.⁴⁷²

The interviews cited above include different narrative interpretations of the connections between “Jews” and Ahmadis. In the first example, Tanveer (interviewee no. 2) identified the Ahmadis with the early Christians, portraying them as persecuted and as having a particular insight into the revealed truth. The role of the historical and biblical persecutor was played by the Jews, paralleled in the description of the relation between contemporary Muslims and the Ahmadis. Another example, from the interview with Imran, portrayed Ahmadis as “Jewish” betrayers. Both narratives describe an anti-Ahmadi sentiment attributed to other Muslims. While Jews in the first account are portrayed as powerful oppressors (and the narrative as such echoes the image of the Jews as “pharaohs”), the other depicts a hidden opponent, a secret agent or enemy within the gates. The two images are thus different, but what they have in common is that *the Jew* becomes a negative symbol of *the Other* – i.e., the Muslim as Other.

The inclination to describe members of other sectarian groups as “Jews” has a long history. Religious interaction between Islam and Judaism in the formative phase of Shiism appears to have produced complex responses within the Muslim community as early as the first centuries of Islam.⁴⁷³ Wasserstrom suggests the “Judeo-Isma’ili” interchange was the most profound and complex of the Jewish-Muslim “symbioses,” to a point where, “[e]ventually, the Sunni opposition characterised the Shi’a as the ‘Jews of our community (*umma*)’.”⁴⁷⁴ As indicated above, the present study included religious narratives expressing both positive self-identifications with “Jews” and narratives with negative characterisations of the Other as “Jew.” While narratives of the religious relationship between Judaism

471 See, e.g., Nettler and Taji-Farouki, *Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics*; Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*.

472 Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 137–48, 194.

473 Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, 93–135.

474 Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, 13. Wasserstrom notes that the construction of “the Jew” on the part of the Shia, and the subsequent construction of the “Jewish” Shiite on the part of the Sunni majority, suggests a subtler symbiosis lying “far beyond any modern (Jewish or Muslim) caricature of inexorable enmity between the two communities.” Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, 13–14.

and Islam portrayed the relation between Muslims and Jews as similarly close, negative and exclusionary labellings of the Other as “Jew” appeared in narratives about intra-Islamic religious differences. In the first case, a positive perception referred to actual Jews, in the latter case, a negative perception of the symbolic “Jew” referred to other Muslims.

7.6 Ancient Judaism and Notions of Jewish Exclusivism

As shown above, some interviewees commented on Judaism’s particular position as the first of the three Abrahamic religions. This position as predecessor was central to the interviewees’ high respect for Judaism and the perception of Jews as religious “cousins.” These narratives described the religious heritage of Judaism as significant. However, in some cases, both the long history of Judaism and the special position consequently assigned to Jews seemed to evoke some ambivalence. An example of this was provided by the interview with Berat (interviewee no. 20).

Religious tolerance seemed to be an important topic for Berat, as he returned to the subject several times. However, he described elements in Judaism as representing a form of religious exclusivism. Berat’s background was from Turkey, and he described how he had often experienced exclusion and prejudice in Norway connected to his immigrant background. He also described a feeling of being an outsider in both countries, not at home anywhere, whether in Norway or in Turkey. He seemed to relate negative experiences primarily to individual characteristics, explaining that “there are good and bad people everywhere, in every society, regardless of religion or background or where you are from. If you are a bad person, you are a bad person.”⁴⁷⁵ When Berat was asked about his views on the “ring of peace,” he emphasised that religion in itself was not the problem behind the antisemitic attack in Copenhagen. By dissolving the connection between “bad people” and a specific background or religious affiliation, Berat explained the incident as related to personal characteristics. He also seemed to seek out different religious views in his personal life, claiming it would strengthen him as a Muslim if he had friends from other religions, that the diversity would be valuable.

The remark about “good people” and “bad people” was almost identical to a later comment, connected to Berat’s primary associations to the word “Jew.” The comment, cited below, emphasised that Jews are similar to other people in terms

⁴⁷⁵ “Jeg vi si at som i alle andre samfunn, så finnes det gode og dårlige mennesker. Det er ikke avhengig av religion eller bakgrunn, eller hvor man er fra. Hvis man er et dårlig menneske, er man et dårlig menneske”.

of “good” and “bad.” Berat, as was often the case, initially referred to Jews primarily as a religious group, or simply as “People of the Book.” However, when he later elaborated on what he understood as a particularly strong Jewish position in society, he described this as a trait deriving from Judaism itself, connecting it to religious intolerance, exclusivism, and the view that one’s own community is superior. Berat referred to a hierarchy of religions deriving from Judaism’s long history. This long history has contributed to the powerful position of the adherents of Judaism, he explained:

Jødedommen [har] en mye lengre historie enn islam og kristendommen. Det er omtrent den første monotheistiske religionen i verden. Det er en del jøder som har dannet en pakt innad for å holde sammen. Og de ekskluderer [andre] mennesker fra å danne familier med for eksempel en jøde og de mener at den jødiske rasen er den utvalgte for skaperens øye. Og dette fører til at de holder veldig tett sammen, som en familie, som en stor familie, og når de opererer sammen så kommer de til et høyere nivå enn små, delte samfunn. Som sagt så er de veldig gode handelsmenn og forretningsfolk. Og dette fører til at de står veldig sterkt økonomisk. Og nå til dags, hvis du har god økonomi, så er du sterk politisk også. Og hvis du er sterk politisk, så har du mulighet til å styre.

[Judaism has a much longer history than Islam and Christianity. It is practically the world’s first monotheistic religion. Some Jews have formed a pact to keep together, they exclude [other] people from establishing families, for example, with Jews, and they believe that the Jewish race is the chosen one in the eyes of the Creator. This leads to them keeping very strongly together, as a family, a big family, and when they operate together, they can arrive at a better position than smaller, divided communities. As mentioned earlier, they are very good with trade, good business people. This leads them to being in a very good position economically. Today, if you are strong economically, you are strong politically, and if you are strong politically, you are in a position to rule.]

The perspective in the narrative is related to Berat’s earlier critical remarks about religious intolerance, but seems to contradict his prior statement that a person’s positive or negative qualities had nothing to do with religion. The description alludes to the concept of Jewish chosenness and draws on stereotypical images of Jews being rich, powerful, and working to promote their own interests. However, the initial qualification – “*some Jews*”⁴⁷⁶ – seems important and consistent with his insistence that you can find “good and bad people in every society.” Berat interpreted negative attitudes as primarily being a result of individual characteristics. At the same time, it is not clear if he had a negative view of (these particular) Jews based on these characteristics; there are traces of admiration, perhaps more than rejection, in his description.

476 My italics.

The interview with Hassan (interviewee no. 5) provides another example of how the religious concept of Jews as “chosen” seemed to evoke ambivalence, associated both with a particular religious position of Jews and with a form of Jewish exclusivism or perceptions of (contemporary) Jewish power. The notion of “the chosen people” was central to some of the discussions with Christians that Hassan described from his first years in Norway. References to the notion were initially linked to criticism of Israel’s conflict with the PLO in Lebanon in 1982, the point being that the fighting seemed wrong considering the Jews’ religious status. “They asked me,” Hassan recalled, “don’t you realize that the people you are fighting against are the chosen people of God?”⁴⁷⁷ The argument was not convincing to Hassan. Without denying the status of the Jews, he defended Lebanon and argued against Israel’s actions by referring to Christian concepts. As previously described, Hassan had committed himself to extensive religious studies during his first years in Norway. He was encouraged in his studies by a desire to produce “counter-arguments” in an environment dominated by Christians; they were thus initially aimed at defending his position as a Muslim. It seems the discussion about the war in Lebanon suggested the use of another rhetorical strategy. Hassan recalled how he had pointed out to the others that, on the contrary, it was they who were overlooking the central message of Christianity. He had answered, “Don’t you realize that Jesus came with justice and love, and that what Israel is doing has nothing to do with justice and nothing to do with love?”⁴⁷⁸ By referring to the teachings of Jesus, Hassan used a “Christian” argument against his Christian opponents, essentially demonstrating that Israel’s behaviour contradicted the teachings of Jesus. The comment may also be taken as an indication of the important position that Jesus occupies within Islam.

Later in the interview, Hassan described how Norwegian UN soldiers came back from the war telling about their experiences in Lebanon, claiming that Jews, judging from their behaviour, could not be “the chosen people” after all. The 1982 Lebanon War is sometimes described as a turning point for public opinion about Israel in Norway, which shifted from a predominantly positive view at the time of the Yom Kippur War (1973) to a primarily critical view in 1982.⁴⁷⁹ In Hassan’s narrative, the soldiers served as witnesses of the actions that had taken place in the war. The discussion of the concept of Jewish chosenness was carried out indirectly, by reference to the UN soldiers’ accounts and the teachings of Jesus. Again, the narrative is characterised by a shift in the position of the Jews, this time from

477 “De sa til meg: ‘Tenker ikke dere over at det dere kjemper mot, det er Guds utvalgte folk?’”

478 “Men så svarte jeg: ‘Tenker ikke dere over at Jesus kom med rettferdighet og kjærlighet? Og det Israel driver med, har ikke noe med rettferdighet og ikke noe med kjærlighet å gjøre?’”

479 Karl Egil Johansen, “*Jødefolket inntar en særstilling*” *Norske holdninger til jødane og staten Israel* (Kristiansand: Portal 2008), 133–36.

one of (prior) selection and chosenness, to one where their status is deemed to be false. The Israelis are acting in a way which is perceived as running counter to the idea that Jews are the chosen people, thus undermining a central tenet of Judaism. By letting the soldiers voice the criticism of the Israelis, Hassan also externalizes it, which lets him take a step back from the argument. However, Hassan clearly stated his views on both Israel and Zionism, leaving no doubt about his critical opinions. Hassan described how his views also affected his relations with the Jewish community in Norway; he was one of very few interviewees who did not support the “ring of peace” outside the synagogue in Oslo, a position he explained by reference to the Jewish congregation’s Zionist views.

The complexity of Hassan’s narrative is apparent as earlier in the interview he emphasised a positive relation between (Shiite) Muslims and Jews. These aspects of the interview with Hassan are typical of how some interviewees initially framed their narratives about Jews positively, based on perceptions of religious bonds, and then at a later stage in the interview other references, particularly to the Arab-Israeli conflict, replaced these positive narratives with narratives that portrayed the Muslim-Jewish relationship as polarised. In Hassan’s case, this shift in the narratives, and the new position that Jews occupied when associated with contemporary politics, was phrased in terms that seemed to reject the religious position of the Jews as stated in the prophecies. Hassan summarised this transformation and subsequent ambivalence: “The Jewish image is religious in our eyes, but then Israel comes into the picture . . .”⁴⁸⁰ The narrative’s move from the claim that “Jews are Muslims’ religious relatives” to “Jews are Israelis” is thus a development that, in its radical version, places Jews outside the central religious concepts of Judaism and Islam, replacing the religious framework that is predominant in the first narrative by a new secular framework.

7.7 Core Narratives about Jews and Religion

This chapter has explored references to religious concepts and myths and to the interviewees’ religiosity in narratives about Jews, focusing on perceptions of the relationship between Islam and Judaism, and between Muslims and Jews as adherents of these religions.

Islam has had a continuous presence in Southern Europe since 711, three centuries before, for example, the Christening of Norway. Pointing to the historical and contemporary interconnectedness of Islam and Europe, Nilüfer Göle deconstructs

480 “Det jødiske bildet er religiøst i våre øyne, men så kommer Israel inn i bildet . . .”

any idea of two distinct civilisations, stating, “The discourse of civilizational difference does not, in spite of its popularity, capture social realities and social imaginaries that are shaped by transgressions of geographic frontiers, by cultural borrowings and hybridity.”⁴⁸¹ Muslims belong to Europe in a variety of ways, “as original inhabitants, citizens of Europe, converts, migrants, or political candidates.”⁴⁸² Nevertheless, researchers have pointed to how the minority situation of Muslims in Europe highlights the question of what it is to be a Muslim. Jonas Otterbeck describes how having a relationship to Islam in a European minority situation implies negotiations and an awareness of oneself and of how one is (or may be) perceived by others: “Making religion and religious belonging an issue almost as acute and central as gender for youth with a Muslim family history, even for those who barely believe in or identify with Islam.”⁴⁸³ The analysis has shown how the interviewees’ narratives in the present study included a variety of understandings of a Muslim minority position and about Muslim-Jewish relations.

The interviewees’ descriptions of their own religiosity in many ways reflect some of the characteristics of “globalized Islam” as described by Roy, including a tendency towards deculturation and redefinition of religion in terms of religious practice and the understanding of what religiosity implies.⁴⁸⁴ The material demonstrates the profound diversity and polyphony inherent in the category “Muslim,” but it also shows how a Muslim identity constitutes a common ground for identification beyond notions of (cultural, national, linguistic, etc.) difference. The diverse – sometimes conflicting – answers to the question of “what is Islam?” constituted an underlying premise to many of the arguments put forth in the interviews, including interpretations of Islam’s relation to other religions. The analysis has thus shown examples of Islamic universalism, in terms of narratives that emphasised Islam’s compatibility with values and norms like tolerance and pluralism, as well as narratives that underline the existence of one single “authentic” understanding of Islam.

A common trait in the narratives was the great importance attached to religion, evident in the frequent self-identification among interviewees of being “more religious than average” and more religious than their parents were. Some sensed a qualitative difference between their own religious views and the religiosity of their parents, identified in the relation (or lack thereof) between Islam and “culture,” as well as in other ways. The importance attached to religion and emphasis on personal religiosity signalled how interviewees wished to be perceived and what they consid-

481 Nilüfer Göle, “Decentering Europe, Recentering Islam,” *New Literary History* 43, no. 4 (2012): 668.

482 Göle, “Decentering Europe, Recentering Islam,” 665.

483 Jonas Otterbeck, “Experiencing Islam: Narratives about Faith,” in *Everyday Lived Islam in Europe*, ed. Nathal M. Dessing et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 128.

484 Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 17–21.

ered important. The finding corresponds with surveys conducted among Muslims in Norway, where respondents have described religion as being important in their lives and where a majority expressed a strong identification with Islam.⁴⁸⁵ Previous research has also found that the younger generation describes itself as being more religious than their non-Muslim peers.⁴⁸⁶ Furthermore, these findings correspond with an international tendency; surveys in four European countries found a considerable stability of religiosity, or even an increase of religiosity, within Muslim immigrant families.⁴⁸⁷ Theoretical considerations within the sociology of religion have provided different explanations for why people become religious.⁴⁸⁸ Göle argues that the reproduction of a common imaginary found among migrant Muslims in Europe not only binds together people from different origins, nations, etc., but also repairs relations among generations, young pious Muslims defending Islam as the religion of their parents.⁴⁸⁹ Islam provides these young Muslims, Göle claims, with a source of resistance to acculturation and an opportunity to bond with their heritage, and hence religion serves as a force of empowerment and a way of repairing the fragile identities and cultural losses of their migrant parents.⁴⁹⁰

When interviewees in the present study commented on the factors behind their own religiosity, they typically referred to religious views as a family heritage and tradition and as part of their upbringing. Answers referred to ethical reflections, describing Islam as providing moral guidance and help for conducting their lives in the “best way,” thus regarding religious tenets as a form of moral compass. Attempts to overcome differences between generations were not mentioned as a motivation, though this may have been an underlying factor. The analysis has indicated that the religiosity of some of the interviewees was part of a reactive identity construction and search for belonging. In some cases where nar-

485 Jon Horgen Friberg, *Assimilering på norsk. Sosial mobilitet og kulturell tilpasning blant ungdom med innvandrerbakgrunn* (Oslo: FAFO, 2016), 52–54; Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDI), *Integreringsbarometeret 2013/2014*, 52–53; Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 102.

486 Friberg, *Assimilering på norsk*, 52.

487 Konstanze Jacob and Frank Kalter, “Intergenerational Change in Religious Salience Among Immigrant Families in Four European Countries,” *International Migration* 51, no. 3 (2013). The analysis of survey data from among young Jewish Europeans similarly found that religiosity and religious practice were very similar to what was found among the older age groups, noting that “if anything, younger Jews are more likely than their elders to observe common Jewish practices.” FRA, *Young Jewish Europeans: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism*, 9.

488 See, e.g., Inger Furseth and Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 112–22.

489 Göle, “Decentering Europe, Recentering Islam.”

490 Göle, “Decentering Europe, Recentering Islam,” 668.

ratives emphasised boundaries between identities, this may have been influenced by the interview situation, with constructions of difference being a way to explain perceptions of identity to an outsider.

The different interpretations of Islam were accompanied by similarly diverse interpretations of Judaism and perceptions of Jews as adherents of the Jewish faith. The analysis shows the impact of Islamic ideas in narratives about Jews, but it also shows how a symbolically constructed “Jew” can exist without reference to actual Jews. While the primary association the interviewees made when asked about Jews was typically religious, connected to Judaism and Islamic concepts, the analysis has also shown how the narratives reflected the identity of the interviewees as religious minorities, and how religiously framed ideas about Jews were subject to individual interpretation and were made relevant through constructions of personal – as well as group – identities.

Perceptions of Islam as an inclusive and tolerant religion with universal relevance were part of narratives about Jews and Judaism that focused on the shared human dignity and common ground of all religions. As we have seen, references to religious myths and concepts in these cases emphasised the bonds between Islam and Judaism and between Muslims and Jews as adherents of these religions, both directly through references to religious sources and indirectly by interviewees’ understanding of Judaism as a precursor to Islam. Initial responses from interviewees emphasised this religious relationship as a framework within which the relationship between Jews and Muslims was interpreted. Some narratives expressed tolerant and inclusive attitudes in general, towards adherents of any religion or non-religious people, including atheists. However, a particular bond was described when interviewees referred to Jews as “People of the Book” or as recipients of the revealed truth of monotheism.

The narratives included references to anti-Judaic notions from Islamic sources, though nothing similar to the demonising motifs found in Christian anti-Judaism (for instance, the blood libel). Anti-Jewish views were typically rejected as un-Islamic or else historicised; i.e., references to negative portrayals in Islamic sources were related to specific historical circumstances rather than being seen as universally applicable. However, the analysis demonstrates how the position of Judaism in relation to Islam also can be perceived quite differently. Narratives that emphasised the connection between Judaism and Islam referred to Jews as People of the Book and close religious “relatives,” while those that focused on Islam’s position as the latest and most authentic expression of the Abrahamic religions sometimes described Judaism (and Jews) as having stagnated at an earlier stage. In these latter cases, Islam was perceived as representing a more advanced stage of religious development than (old or even outdated) Judaism, an understanding similar to the Islamic theology of supersession.

The ancient history of Judaism seemed to evoke ambivalence among some interviewees when related to the concept of Jewish “chosenness,” seen as a self-perception among Jews reflecting religious exclusivism. Contemporary references to Jewish chosenness were sometimes contrasted to the traditional religious concept, indicating that Jews had previously occupied a special position, which had later developed into or was now associated with negative characteristics, such as ruthlessness or self-centredness.

Similar to findings in previous research, interviewees typically downplayed the relevance of sectarianism to relationships between Muslims in Norway. They also described sectarian conflicts internationally as political rather than religious. However, some narratives highlighted sectarian differences and explained intra-Muslim relations using references to “Jews.” The analysis shows how “the Jew” in these cases functioned as a symbol of religious difference. The narratives expressed negative experiences of imposed identity or were themselves examples of negative portrayals of Muslim religious Others. The analysis argued that the religiously framed narratives thus demonstrated the flexibility of the symbolic “Jew,” capable of encompassing both positive self-identification and exclusionary images of the Other.

From this analysis, a set of religiously framed core narratives can be identified. These narratives are closely related and sometimes overlapping. I will call one narrative “Jews are the People of the Book.” This narrative underlines the close religious relationship between Judaism and Islam, and between Jews and Muslims as adherents of these religions, and includes recognition of the shared history of Jews and Muslims since the origins of Islam. The narrative of the People of the Book also emphasises that Islam is an inclusive and tolerant religion, and though the focus is on the common origin of Islam and Judaism – and Christianity – the analysis has shown how interviewees sometimes combined this perspective with an emphasis of traits shared between all religions. This narrative underlines the common value of all people regardless of religious affiliation.

The second narrative I will call “Judaism once contained divine truth but has since been superseded by Islam.” This narrative of supersession focuses on religious development towards greater insight and perceives the religious relation between Jews and Muslims as being defined by this development. The narrative echoes the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Judaism in the early thought of (Christianity and) Islam. Corresponding to the dual character of Judaism in this tradition, this narrative comprises both a perception of Jews as receivers of the prophetic truth and of Judaism as superseded. While having particular insight is an inherent part of any religion’s self-perception, this narrative includes more explicitly boundary-making perceptions of Jews as currently misled, sometimes reflecting central elements of the Islamic doctrine of *tahrīf*. While the narrative “Jews are People of the Book” perceives Jews as Muslims’ religious relatives, the

narrative of supersession emphasises Judaism as something belonging to the past. However, the common ancestry of the two religions is a necessary premise of both narratives and there is a kind of continuity between them.

In its most far-reaching version, the narrative of supersession reaches the limits of a religious interpretative framework, indicating a distinction between *Judaism* as a religion and *Jews* as (secularly defined) people. What emerges instead is a narrative that uses religious concepts but defines Jews as different from their (prior) religiously defined status. I will term this narrative “Jews are the religious Other.” Instead of religious ancestors and receivers of divine truth, this narrative describes Jews in opposition to Muslims and as people who have left the true path of their religion. One context that typically led to this shift of perspective was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. An example of how this narrative can employ a religious framework to define Jews in opposition to Muslims is the narrative of the Jewish Pharaoh. Invoking the religious myth of Moses’s liberation of the Israelites from the Pharaoh, in this narrative the roles are inverted – a situation that was perceived as mirrored in current Muslim-Jewish relations. The narrative of Jews as the religious Other also relates to perceptions of sectarian differences between Muslims. Narratives about Muslim Others as “Jews” did not imply a reference to Judaism or to Jews as adherents of Judaism; rather, they indicated a symbol of religious difference, implying both theological differences and community boundaries. This narrative focuses on perceived antagonisms and intra-religious conflict between Muslim communities, or defined another religious (Muslim) community as non-Muslim. Accordingly, “the Jew” occupies two distinct positions, either as imposed image or as a way to label a religious “Other,” underlining the versatility of the symbolic “Jew.”

8 Narratives about Jewish Power

This chapter explores notions of power in narratives about Jews. The topic emerged in different contexts during the interviews, such as when interviewees talked about Israel or the current situation and ongoing war in Syria. In a broad sense, the chapter explores perceptions of “how society works”; i.e., how different actors influence social and political situations on national and international levels. From the second half of the 19th century, the belief that Jews are responsible for societal developments and movements – such as capitalism, communism, or even modernity itself – have been central to the European anti-Jewish repertoire, conveying an image of Jews as powerful. Behind these ideas, there often lies an element of conspiracy theories, though the notion that Jews are powerful also occurs in less comprehensive forms and without any reference to Jews “working behind the scenes.” As shown in chapter two, stereotypical notions of powerful Jews have some support in Norwegian society today.⁴⁹¹ Interviewees in the present study were familiar with such stereotypes and sometimes referred to them in the interviews, as an inherent part of their narratives or explicitly in rejection of such ideas. They also referred to notions of “Jewish power” as something they had heard that others believed in, thereby signalling a distance from such ideas as something they themselves did not hold to be true. Implicit in this rejection is the premise that the power in question is of a particular kind or that Jews are particularly powerful. The narratives included a variety of references to Jews’ political or societal influence or to Jews as well organised, sometimes reflecting common tropes from stereotyped (antisemitic) portrayals. The analysis explores narratives that describe the world as controlled by some (more or less) unknown force, including conspiracy theories about Jews, and discusses the blurred boundaries between believing in conspiracy theories and pointing at international power constellations or driving forces. Though rejecting a belief in conspiracy theories, the narratives could include hints towards such ideas or express some level of agreement. Indeed, some interviewees conveyed clear-cut belief in conspiracy theories. The narratives also included reflections on the situations of and possibilities open to Jews and Muslims in society and as citizens of Norway, sometimes conveying a sense of (Muslim) powerlessness.

As will be further explored below (chapter nine), there were frequent references in the material to Jews as victims of discrimination and persecution. This did not typically entail descriptions of Jews as weak in the sense of being without power or influence. Rather, victimhood seemed to carry a potential for empowerment when related to Jews. Herein lies a difference in the material between de-

491 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 34–36.

descriptions of Muslims and Jews, where the situation of Muslims was seen as characterised by internal division and lack of organisation – unlike Jews.

The notion that Jews are particularly powerful (or weak) is the result of generalisations and reflect stereotypical views. A characteristic of stereotypical constructions is the way in which they promote a certain perception of reality, wherein elements or experiences that support the stereotype are emphasised and nuances and exceptions are downplayed. Accordingly, notions of Jews as particularly powerful may be “corroborated” by reference to actual powerful individuals, and examples that do not fit the picture are seen as “exceptions that prove the rule.” The symbolic function of “the Jew,” however, allows for contrasting views. The following analysis points to how culturally transmitted imaginaries and abstract notions pertaining to Jews, which include a spectrum of internally diverse notions, act together with perceptions based on real-life situations, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and personal experiences.

The first section of this chapter explores shifting boundaries in descriptions of Israel, Zionists/Zionism, and Jews. The idea of “Jewish power” sometimes seemed to encompass all these concepts. The next section explores how narratives compared the level of – or access to – power between Muslims and Jews: How did support or rejection of the idea of global “Jewish power” influence narratives about Muslim-Jewish relations or the position of Muslims as compared with that of Jews? The last two sections of the chapter examine narratives about hidden powers.

8.1 The Shifting Boundaries between “Israel”, “Zionists”, and “Jews”

Since the first half of the twentieth century, tensions related to the establishment of the State of Israel and the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict have been accompanied by the spread of anti-Jewish stereotypes in the Middle East. However, the tendency had already begun in the 19th century, before the emergence of Zionism, related to increased European political and cultural engagement in the region.⁴⁹² Negative images from different sources have been brought to the fore, including traditional Islamic images of “the Jew” and notions from the secular European antisemitic heritage. The images have been used to exacerbate an already intense conflict and contributed to the Israel-Arab antagonism. Mehnaz M. Afridi describes how political developments entailed a change in the notion of “the Jew” from an orientalist to an

⁴⁹² Webman, “From the Damascus Blood Libel to the ‘Arab Spring’: The Evolution of Arab Antisemitism,” 160. See also chapter 2.1.5.

occidental image in the region.⁴⁹³ Outside the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has also influenced notions where “the Jew” is closely associated with “the West” and focus increasingly on military power. Furthermore, actual political and military powers provide a fertile soil for conspiracy theories.

When discussing notions of Jewish power (either in support or rejection of such ideas), interviewees in the present study typically found a framework in the situation in the Middle East, specifically the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and what they viewed as Israeli brutality against the Palestinians. Some interviewees referred to a global (transnational) influence, in terms of financial or political power, while describing Israel as the hub of this global force. Israel’s power was described as being executed by Israelis, Zionists, or Jews, sometimes with only unclear distinctions between these categories. While a clear distinction between the categories in some cases is difficult to maintain due to actual overlapping identities, an explicit distinction between “Jews” and “Zionists” or “Israelis” did not necessarily preclude a narrative undercurrent where concepts merged.

As discussed in chapter seven, some of the interviewees found grounds to support notions of Jewish power in religious myths, though “the Jews” in these cases were portrayed as in some way having left the original path of Judaism. More typically, references to “Jewish” power were made without mentioning religion, and nuances to the image of the powerful “Jew” were sometimes made by contrasting a notion of Jews as Israelis or Zionists with an image of Jews as religious. Indeed, descriptions sometimes explicitly referred to how Judaism, and Jews as adherents of Judaism, were not associated with power.

The interview with Farid (interviewee no. 21) was unusual in the way it provided an example of Israel being described as a peaceful place, albeit surrounded by conflict. Farid’s comment implied a notion of power as something that made it possible for those who possessed it to distance themselves from ongoing wars and conflict:

I dag da så hører man ikke så mye om jøder. Jeg føler at de har isolert seg godt der de er. Jeg føler at de ikke snakker med noen. Selve staten da, tenker jeg på. Israel. Ingen bråker med dem, de bråker ikke med noen. De er bare uskyldige og bare sitter der og ser på, mens resten av verden kriger. Da tenker jeg sånn, hvorfor er det sånn at ingen plager dem, eller de plager ikke noen.

[Today, you do not hear much about Jews. I feel that they have isolated themselves where they are. I feel that they do not talk to anyone. The state itself is what I am thinking of. Israel. No one argues with them, they do not argue with anyone. They are just innocent and sitting there, watching, while the rest of the world is fighting. Then I wonder why it is like this, no one bothering them, them bothering no one.]

493 Afridi, *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes*, 192.

Though initially referring to “Jews,” Farid quickly specified that he was talking about Israel. His impression of Israel as unengaged in any form of conflict is perhaps surprising, but it is more understandable in light of the heated conflicts in the rest of the region at the time of the interview. Compared with Syria, things were indeed calm in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in Israel at the time. Nevertheless, the quotation indicates that there is more to the picture than just a comparatively peaceful situation. The lack of fighting and perceived isolation of Jews and the State of Israel clearly made Farid suspicious.

When asked to elaborate on his views, Farid related the peaceful situation to possession of power. He referred to things he had heard that others believed, such as how Jews “owned things” in the United States and how Jews have an impact on politics:

– Du sier at du har hørt det, men er dette noe du er enig i, tror du på det?

Begynner kanskje å tro på det når de sier at de har mye makt her og mye makt der i den verdensdelen og så videre, og så videre. Også er det alltid sånn at hvis du har makt så er det ingen som gjør deg noe. Også tenker jeg som jeg sa i stad, ingen kriger med de eller snakker med de. De gjør heller ingenting. Så de er kanskje til å beskytte seg selv da tenker jeg, og da har man jo makt.

[– You say that you have heard this, but is this something you agree with, do you believe it yourself?

Perhaps I am starting to believe it when they say that they have a lot of power here and a lot of power in that part of the world, and so on. It is always the case that if you have a lot of power, nobody is going to bother you. As I just said, nobody is waging war against them or talking to them. They are not doing anything, either. I am thinking, maybe they are protecting themselves; in that case, you have power.]

Farid seems reluctant to support the idea that Jews generally are powerful, only gradually relating the notion of Israel not being involved in conflicts to a notion of a particular Jewish power – gradually “starting to believe it.” From the narrative emerges an image of Israel/Jews as a sealed entity, not engaged in – or marked by – the affairs of the surrounding world, only concerned with their own interests and perhaps protecting themselves. In contrast to the material’s predominant image of Israel as a strong and merciless military power, Farid’s description portrays what seems to be a non-violent form of power, or perhaps a potential for military power that effectively secures peace. However, a more traditional form of power may have preceded the current situation. Farid’s description can be seen as a reimagining of the stereotypical idea of Jewish self-absorption, symbolised by the Jewish state.

Farid’s narrative marks a clear contrast between Israel and the other countries in the region; however, in contrast to other interviewees, as will be discussed further below, Farid did not label these countries as “Muslim.” The narrative is not

explicitly conspiratorial, though it contains hints at hidden agendas. Later, Farid expressed an inclination to believe conspiracy theories when he talked about the attack against the kosher supermarket in Paris in connection to the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in 2015. He suggested that one possible explanation for the attack was that Jews had staged it themselves, in order to get sympathy. Another characteristic of Farid’s narrative was that it constructed Jews as foreign and distant by associating them so closely to the State of Israel (and the United States). At one point in life, Farid did have personal contact with Jews; he mentioned having played football with a Jewish boy as a child. However, that was many years ago, and he had no Jewish friends or acquaintances at the time of the interview. As was typical of the material in this study, references to “Jewish” power, whether notions of abstract forces or specific examples of influential individuals, rarely referred to the Norwegian context. With regard to specific examples, this may in part be due to the fact that the Jewish minority in Norway is very small and the likelihood of interviewees having personal experiences or knowledge of Jewish Norwegians is also comparatively small. However, a distinction between actual (Norwegian) Jews (as “exceptions to the rule”) and a negative abstract notion of “Jews” is typical also in historical constructions of Jews (see chapter 2.3).

While Farid’s account seemed to blur distinctions between “Israel” and “Jews,” some interviewees emphasised the difference. The interview with Halim (interviewee no. 23) provided an example of how “Israel,” “Zionism,” and “Zionists” were associated with power *in distinction from* Jews as adherents of Judaism. The following extract shows that Halim, upon being directly asked, initially agreed with ideas of an expansive and particular “Jewish power;” however, he also insisted that there were certain limits to this power and qualified the image of those who possessed it, quickly nuancing his views and drawing a distinction related to religion. Furthermore, a distinction between “religion” and “power” was made clear through a comparison to the relation between radical Islamists and Islam. Halim said:

Jeg tror ikke bare at det stemmer, det er (ler) ehh, vi får vite at det stemmer med tanke på AIPAC, som er en av de største jødiske lobbyistgruppene i USA, men jeg kategoriserer ikke AIPAC som noe for jødedommen, jeg ser egentlig på det som en sionistgruppe, hvis jeg skal være helt ærlig mot deg. [. . .] Sionismen er flink her til å sette grobunn i forskjellige land, og danne grupperinger basert på den tilhørigheten at “vi er jøder,” og bruker på en måte det som en unnskyldning for å tiltrekke seg folk, men egentlig så er det ikke selve religionen de utfører [. . .]. Det handler egentlig stort sett om “hvordan skal vi få mer makt,” og “hvordan skal vi sette dagsorden i verden.” Det er faktisk ikke en konspirasjonsteori en gang, det er helt og holdent fakta i henhold til hvor mye makt . . . jeg vil ikke engang, det blir feil å si “jøder” hele tiden. Jeg vil heller si “sionismen,” fordi jøder er jo folk som har religionen jødedom, sionister har også jødedom i religionen sin, men de har også den ekstreme, radikale siden, på linje med Islam. Du har noen som er skikkelig radikale, men de følger jo ikke

islam til punkt og prikke. [. . .] Vi ser ikke islam, og vi ser ikke jødedom, men vi ser sionismen og vi ser radikal islamisme.

[I do not just *think* it is like this [laughs], we learn that this is correct [that Jews are powerful] through AIPAC, which is one of the largest Jewish lobbies in the USA. However, I do not categorise the AIPAC as having something to do with Judaism; I see it as a Zionist group, to be honest. [. . .] In fact, Zionism is very good at establishing itself in different countries, creating new groupings based on the sense of belonging, the notion that “we are Jews,” using it as an excuse to attract people, but it is not the religion they are practising [. . .]. It is really about “how should we go about gaining more power” and “how can we set the agenda of the world.” It is not even a conspiracy theory; it is a simple fact in terms of the power . . . I will not even say “the Jews,” it is wrong to say “the Jews” all the time. I would rather say “Zionism,” because Jews are people who have the religion Judaism, Zionists also have Judaism in their religion, but they have this extreme radical side, parallel to Islam. You have some people who are really radical, but they are not exactly following Islam. [. . .] We do not see Islam and we do not see Judaism, but we see Zionism and radical Islamism.]

This quotation is an example of how nuances emerged as the interviewees reflected further on a subject. It is also an example of how they could point to actual powerful actors to defend generalized ideas. Halim had very negative views about Zionism (see chapter 9.4), a term he associated both with Israeli policies towards the Palestinians and, related to this, with Jewish victimhood during the Holocaust. Rather than referring to Jewish nationalism, “Zionism” in Halim’s narrative is related to an extreme form of (Jewish) power. The strongly critical evaluation of Zionism is evident in the parallel he draws to extreme Islamists, which also included references to the terrorist attacks on 9/11. However, Halim made two important distinctions, first with Judaism (“it is not religion they are practising”) and then with “Jews.” Further nuancing his views, he drew a parallel to generalisations about Muslims. Perhaps inspired by a prior discussion in the interview about the use of the word “Jew” as a term of abuse, Halim admitted it was wrong to refer to “the Jews;” the common denominator of Jews is the Jewish religion, and Judaism seemed irrelevant to the question of power. According to Halim, the issue is not Judaism, it is Zionism. The same goes for Islam and the actions of terrorists; despite what many people claim, the issue is not really Islam, it is radical Islamism. This strong parallel suggests that the description of how “Zionism” uses references to Jewish identity as a means to expand its position internationally (“we are Jews”) might also be attributable to similar appeals to identity among some Islamists. Commenting on extreme Islamists who kill in the name of Islam, he said, “It is wrong to call what is happening and what they believe in, ‘Islam.’ Then people have to think of a new name. And it is wrong to call what is happening in Israel, ‘Judaism,’ the

media has to be honest and say that it is Zionism that is going on there.”⁴⁹⁴ This way, the knowledge Halim had of how Islamists use religious identity to promote their cause provided a key to interpreting the relation (or rather, the distinction) between “Jews” as a religious group and powerful Jews – i.e., “Zionists.”

The boundary interviewees sometimes described, between Jews as adherents of Judaism and Israel, reflected a discrepancy between religious images of Jews and notions of religious bonds between Muslims and Jews, on the one hand, and images where the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an important frame of reference, on the other. The different contexts thus encouraged very different narratives.

Halim’s experience was that both Judaism and Islam suffer from a distorted media image and widespread prejudice based on what are in fact the actions of extremists. The parallel also points to an identity struggle where the definition of Islam is at stake, in Norwegian society and internationally. One of the first points Halim made in the interview was that it is more difficult to be a Muslim in Norway today than it was in the 1990s, when his family came to the country as refugees from the war in Somalia. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that he was a child at the time and thus presumably not fully aware of problems the adults may have encountered. However, Halim mentioned the terrorist attacks on 9/11 as an example of an event where the image conveyed in the media contributed to a generalized, negative image of Muslims. This was a typical reference among the interviewees (see also chapter 10.5).

The interview with Jamel (interviewee no. 22) included both support for some elements of conspiracy theories, negative perceptions of Israel and Zionism, and rejection of a direct relation between the Jewish religion and power. As shown above, Jamel seemed to distinguish between different forms of religion, where “good Islam” was a profoundly inclusive influence (see chapter 7.1). Jamel also described different interpretations of the terms “Zionist” and “Jew.” Similar to Halim, he explained that Zionists were different (in a clearly negative way) from, though also “derived” from, Jews. Underlying the distinction between “Zionists” and “Jews,” there seemed to be different understandings of Judaism. Like Halim, Jamel pointed to internal identity struggles, and claimed Zionists had constructed their own version of Judaism and are defining who is Jewish and who is not: “I say ‘derived’ because a regular Jew, even I admit that, clearly does not agree with what they are doing. They [Zionists] are also people who do not live in Israel, [. . .] and have made their own version of Judaism. That is how they choose

⁴⁹⁴ “Det blir feil å kalle det som skjer og det de tror på, ‘islam.’ Da må folk finne på et nytt navn. Og det blir feil å kalle det som skjer i Israel, ‘jødedom,’ da må media være ærlig å si at det er sionisme, det som skjer der.”

who is a Jew and who is not.”⁴⁹⁵ Precisely the relation to – and possession of – power seemed to be at the core of the different evaluations of Zionists and Jews, and of a distinction between “good Jews” and “bad Jews” / “good Judaism” and “bad Judaism,” where “bad Jews” and “bad Judaism” seemed to be a code for Zionists and Zionism. Again, Israel and the Middle East constituted important elements of the narrative, as arenas where power was executed. When describing his views on the situation in the Middle East, Jamel explained that he was very concerned about the region and perceived strong forces standing in the way of peace. Jamel’s description of the situation in the Middle East centred on the issue of Israeli power:

Hvis en hel menneskehet ikke har noe å si mot det de gjør, ja, da har de makt.

– *Hvem da?*

Du kan si, den israelske stat, ja de har makt, de gjør som de vil. Når du er inne på Midtøsten, hvorfor, det har ingenting med jødedommen å gjøre, men hvorfor stopper ikke FN, eller NATO eller disse her, disse IS folkene, hvordan kommer ammunisjon så ofte til dem. Det bare irriterer meg. Det er en håpløs situasjon.

[If the whole of humanity has nothing to say against what they are doing, they have power.

– *Who?*

You could say the Israeli state; yes, they have power, and they do what they want. Talking about the Middle East, why – it has nothing to do with Judaism – but why doesn’t the UN, NATO or someone, stop these ISIS people, how do they get all the ammunition? It just irritates me. It is a hopeless situation.]

The hopelessness Jamel perceived seemed primarily to be a result of powerful forces not being willing, or perhaps able, to stop the war in Syria. Jamel’s irritation may suggest it is in fact a question of will. The narrative even seems to suggest that someone (Israel?) is involved in maintaining the war and the terror of ISIS, preventing the UN or NATO from intervening. Jamel did not clarify why any of the parties should wish to maintain the conflict. Clearly critical – and suspicious – of the situation, he made sure to distinguish between these actions and Judaism. Jamel’s understanding seemed to refer to traditional forms of power, such as political influence and military force, while also suggesting some form of hidden agency.

An inclination to describe powerful forces acting behind the scenes, without explicit suggestions as to a motivation for these actions, was also evident in other parts of the interview with Jamel. One example was his description of an incident

⁴⁹⁵ *Utsprang* sier jeg, fordi en vanlig jøde, det sier selv jeg, er ikke enig i det de gjør. De [sionister] er også mennesker som ikke bor i Israel, [. . .] og har lagd sin egen retning innen jødedommen. Det er sånn de har valgt og vraket hvem som er jøde og ikke.”

where the Israeli state had allegedly withheld information about activists on a convoy to Gaza. Once again, the narrative included no suggestions concerning the background to this action; rather, the point was to lend credence to the claim that Jews are powerful: “Then they have enough power to control the media, then they have power, it is proven.”⁴⁹⁶ Jamel also seemed disposed to believe in conspiracies about the terrorist attacks on 9/11: “If you go through the research, I have seen many documentaries, many people not at work that day. Moreover, a couple of weeks beforehand, Bush’s brother had taken some things from the base-ment. Inspected the premises.”⁴⁹⁷

Conspiracy theories about Jews include examples of comprehensive ideas and even worldviews. However, “conspiracy theories” are rarely communicated in terms of fully developed “theories.” It lies in the nature of these theories that they may promote a certain vagueness in their accounts due to the grandeur of their ideas, and such theories are often expressed in an indirect manner.⁴⁹⁸ The tendency that references to more or less hidden forces are made through hints and narrative abbreviations has been termed “conspiracy talk.”⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, the concept of *conspiracism* signifies a way of thinking about the world that is less concrete than a theory, but where important information is perceived to be hidden and where concealed forces are seen as the driving factors in historical developments. A central feature of conspiracy theories is that they provide an explanation for situations and incidents – they define them as meaningful or intended.⁵⁰⁰ However, it is difficult to maintain a clear distinction between “conspiracy theories” – in the sense of false ideas about secret alliances working behind the scenes – and references to actual “conspiracies” – in the sense of powerful people operating together to obtain certain results. Scholarly definitions more commonly point to a gradual development, where “conspiracy theories” are understood as relatively developed ideas about conspiracies signified by some typical errors in terms of logic, the actual circumstances described, or the relation between facts.⁵⁰¹

496 “Da har de nok makt til å styre media, da har de makt, det er bevist.”

497 “Om man går gjennom researchen, jeg har sett mange dokumentarer, veldig mange som hadde fri den dagen. Noen uker før så hadde jo broren til Bush også tatt vekk noen ting nede i kjelleren. Var på befaring der.”

498 Wolfgang Benz, *Was ist Antisemitismus?* (München: C.H. Beck, 2004), 87.

499 Asbjørn Dyrendal and Terje Emberland, *Hva er konspirasjonsteorier* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2019), 59–78.

500 Michael Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy: Apocalyptic visions in contemporary America* (University of California Press, 2013); Geoffrey Cubitt, “Conspiracy Myths and Conspiracy Theories,” *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 20, no. 1 (1989): 12–26.

501 Dyrendal and Emberland, *Hva er konspirasjonsteorier*, 17.

Jamel's reference to 9/11 is a typical example of "conspiracy talk" involving hints and abbreviated narratives. The short account draws on well-known conspiracy theories about Jews and 9/11, claiming they were not at work in the buildings on the day of the attack. The account also hints at a connection to the White House, suggesting the president's brother was involved in some mischief in the weeks prior. When asked to explain exactly what he meant, Jamel was not certain about the details but referred to the Discovery Channel as his source of information. The lack of explanation in Jamel's narrative deviates from the typical conspiracy theory, where the aim of explaining chaotic and confusing situations is precisely what is fundamental, and where a search for meaning and agency leads to over-interpretation rather than a lack of explanation.⁵⁰²

In both Halim and Jamel's narratives, the notion of Judaism was constructed as distinct from the "destructive power of the Zionists" or Israel, though both at some level originate from Judaism. An inclination to believe conspiracy theories – including that Jews were behind 9/11 and have the power to control the media – nevertheless suggests the boundary between "power" and "Jews" is not complete. The narratives differ in terms of the role of the Muslims: Halim presented a clear analogy between group constructions of Jews and Muslims, based on media portrayals of the actions of Zionists and Islamists. Jamel indicated a connection between Israel/Zionists (and other powers) and ISIS, suggesting alliances based on mutual interests in the Middle East. Whereas Halim outlined a parallel based on how prejudice works, Jamel seemed to suggest an actual conspiracy.

Ali (interviewee no. 32) used a religious definition of "Jew" to discuss and reject any notion of Jews being powerful as such. His line of reasoning also drew a parallel between Jews and Muslims:

At jøder per definisjon har for mye makt. Det tror jeg ikke noe på, det ville jeg ikke sagt jeg er enig i. [. . .] For det første, når vi sier "jøder", hvem snakker vi om, ikke sant? Det er mennesker som følger jødedommen. I mitt hode, så er det jødedommen. Samme som når de sier "muslim", så er det et menneske som følger islam. Det er ikke en politisk gruppe, det er folk som følger en religion, og det ligger ingen direkte assosiasjon da, til makt i dem.

[That Jews per definition have too much power; I do not believe that, I would not say I agree with that. [. . .] First, when we say "Jew," whom are we talking about, right? They are people who follow Judaism. In my mind, this is Judaism. Just like when one says "Muslim," it is a person who follows Islam. It is not a political group, it is people who follow a religion; there lies no direct association to power in them.]

502 Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 3–4. See also Cubitt, "Conspiracy Myths and Conspiracy Theories."

Ali's definition of both Jews and Muslims is based on the connection to religion, distinguishing between religion and politics, and between religion and power. The narrative illustrates how interviewees had a positive perception of religion, including Judaism and Jews as adherents of Judaism. However, Ali did not describe himself as particularly religious. He emphasised that in his view religion primarily had to do with following a set of rules of conduct and that rituals were an instrument to guide you in your behaviour. He described his relations with followers of other religions as "seamless": religion was not an issue in his contacts with other people. He also mentioned having friends who were atheist. Interactions between people were defined by the level of friendship, not their individual backgrounds, he explained. The quotation suggests a disentanglement of religion from any political agenda and a view of both Islam and Judaism as unrelated to power. However, in some interviews, it was precisely the possession of power (or lack thereof) that appeared as a fundamental difference between Jews and Muslims.

8.2 Power (or Lack of Power) as the Main Difference between Jews and Muslims

In those cases where the interviewees seemed to alternate between support and rejection of the notion of Jews being particularly powerful, the ambivalence was typically expressed in connection with claims about the international economy and specific examples of powerful individuals, trademarks owned by Jews (or Israelis), and political influence. While interviewees typically rejected the notion of "Jewish power" in the form of a global conspiracy or as an overarching concept, they would nevertheless support the view that Jews often have significant influence and are certainly more powerful than the "average" Muslim. Based on various concrete examples, interviewees described access to power – and the lack thereof – as a significant difference between Muslims and Jews. Furthermore, the perception of strong Jewish influence seemed related to a close association between Jews and "the West." In contrast to the destructive forces described in the more conspiratorial accounts, some of the narratives conveyed an image of this form of power being something positive that Muslims too should try to achieve, describing Jews as resourceful, well organised, and influential. Interviewees described this as desirable from a societal perspective, and – if similar influence were obtained by Muslims – potentially as a way to promote positive views about Muslims or to increase the influence of and improve opinions about Islam. One proponent of this view was Omar (interviewee no. 11).

As described above (chapter 7.2), Omar expressed strong religious feelings. He also showed interest in other religions and referred to having a broad social network consisting of people of different backgrounds and religions. While

Omar's family was of Pakistani origin and he was raised as a Muslim, there had not been many other Muslim pupils at his school, and he described most of his friends as "ethnically Norwegian." Talking about his childhood and the combination of Norwegian and Pakistani culture he had experienced, he said he had received "the best of both worlds."

At the time of the interview, Omar was a student of law. Higher education was something he valued and associated with the possibility of exercising positive societal influence. Omar's account described a difference between Muslims and Jews, specifically based on societal position and influence in relation to their respective religions, suggesting that Jews more often than Muslims hold positions of power while maintaining their religious views. The narrative thus outlined a connection rather than a distinction between "Judaism" and "power." As he explained:

Jeg [mener] vi muslimer kan lære en del av jødene også her i Vesten. Det er en realitet at de fleste jødene i Vesten, i USA for eksempel, er utrolig sterke, og de har store samfunnsposisjoner, og de er allikevel veldig sterkt knyttet til religionen sin. For eksempel, nå var det noen politikere som foreslo det med at omskjæring her i Norge bør bli forbudt, så kom Det mosaiske trossamfunn med én gang med sterke argumenter om at dere ikke har tillatelse til å forby omskjæring. Og det er noe som er likt med muslimene, ikke sant, det ritualet, så når vi muslimer mobiliserer, blir flinke samfunnsborgere, for eksempel har muslimer som både er aktive i samfunnet og har religionen med seg og er, for eksempel høytutdannede, er ministere, er kunnskapsrike lærere, rektorer og så videre. Når man har det, så er det slik at folk vil få en bedre forståelse av islam.

[I [think] we Muslims can learn something from the Jews here in the West. It is a fact that most Jews in the West, in the US, for example, are incredibly strong and they have big positions in society, and still, they are strongly connected to their religion. For example, when some politicians suggested that circumcision should be illegal in Norway, the Jewish community immediately responded with strong arguments that you were not allowed to prohibit circumcision. This [ritual] is something [Jews have] in common with Muslims, so when we Muslims mobilise and become good citizens and there are Muslims that are both active and have their religion with them and are, for example, highly educated, ministers, knowledgeable teachers, rectors and so forth, people will get a better understanding of Islam.]

Omar's account is an example of a positive evaluation of "Jewish power," understood as societal influence and the ability to make oneself heard in matters that concern the minority. Furthermore, it describes the possession of such power as a difference between Muslims and Jews. To explain why he believed Jews were in a strong position in the West and why this was something Muslims should also strive for, Omar referred to a specific intervention from the current Norwegian political debate on circumcision. Though the narrative in many ways conveys a generalized and exaggerated notion of Jewish influence, the main example still pertains to an actual incident.

Omar's example involves a case that concerns the religious practice of both Muslims and Jews. By relating the notion of power to the question of influence on

religious practice, Omar drew a parallel between Muslims and Jews, alluding to common interests regarding minority rights in Norwegian society. Although in Omar's view Muslims do not currently possess societal influence equal to that of Jews, in the case at hand, Muslims also benefitted from this influence as the legislation on circumcision concerns both minorities alike. Thus, the example, though outlining a difference between Jews and Muslims, in effect shows how the minorities share common experiences and solutions to specific problems. Furthermore, Omar's central point seems to be that increased integration and a stronger social position will lead to a better understanding of Islam in society as a whole. His argument reflects positive views about religion, where increased knowledge will lead to attitudes that are more positive.

Among the interviewees, this difference in perceptions of Jews' and Muslims' influence and power was also illustrated by pointing to the situation in the Middle East and the role of Israel, rather than by referring to religion or Norwegian society. Israel in these cases typically emerged as a symbol of Jewish power, while the surrounding Muslim countries were used to illustrate what interviewees perceived to be a lack of organisation among Muslims. Israel and the surrounding Muslim countries were thus portrayed as symbols of (respectively) the collective "Jew" and the collective "Muslim," albeit also as polar opposites. A difference in some narratives concerned how these portrayals related to the geographical area – while the notion of the collective Muslim symbolised by the Muslim countries was rooted in the Middle East, Israel instead emerged as the most visible and potent expression of what was really a *global* force.

Dalia (interviewee no. 26), a young woman of Moroccan origin, described a complex image related to power constellations in the Middle East and North Africa. She was aware of certain conspiracy theories about Jews but seemed inclined to reject them. Dalia's narrative referred to an impression of Jews being particularly influential in Muslim countries. She rejected the idea of Jewish power as a worldwide phenomenon but explained that Jews play a special role in the Middle East and Morocco. Dalia's account began by her mentioning an accusation made against Jews in Morocco, that they were the reason for the widespread corruption in the country. Though sceptical of the accusations of corruption, she agreed with the notion that Jews were powerful in Morocco and even stated that they controlled the country:

Det er mange som sier at jøder styrer verden, og styrer den arabiske verden. Jeg hører for eksempel i Marokko at det er jøder som styrer landet, derfor er landet så korrupt som det er. Men [jeg] tror ikke at det har noe sammenheng. Men jeg tror at for eksempel i Marokko så er det jødene som styrer landet, økonomisk. [. . .] Marokkos rikeste mann er jøde ikke sant. De som driver gullbutikker [og] elektroniske [butikker] er jøder. Det er de som styrer landet økonomisk, aksjer, selskaper . . .

[There are many who say that Jews rule the world and govern the Arab world. For example, I hear that in Morocco, the Jews rule the country, and that is why the country is corrupt, but [I] do not think there is any connection. However, I think that, for example, in Morocco, the Jews rule the country, economically speaking. [. . .] Morocco's richest man is a Jew, right. Those who run the gold shops [and] electronics shops are Jews. They are the ones who govern the country financially – shares, companies . . .]

Dalia's comment initially seems to nuance hearsay about powerful world Jewry, limiting Jewish responsibility for corruption in Morocco in particular. The reference to specific examples of rich Jews in Morocco nevertheless draws on stereotypical notions about Jews, and the last sentence suggests a more general idea of Jewish power. Furthermore, her description soon implied elements of conspiracism. As Dalia elaborated on the issue, she described how Jews may have a lot of power in the Middle East and in Arab countries through Israel, and that "there is much going on behind the walls, to say it like that."⁵⁰³ This part of the interview with Dalia is an example of how interviewees sometimes combined critical views and independent evaluation of "hearsay" with support for elements of conspiracism and stereotypical ideas.

Dalia's notion of powerful Jews was concentrated on a specific geographical context. Aleena (interviewee no. 4) described a broad set of alliances, initially linking Norwegians' attitudes towards Jews to a political strategy, connected to the close relationship between Norway, the United States, and Israel. This ultimately served to provide Jews with protection against problems and negative experiences, unlike Muslims, whose lack of similar resources made them vulnerable to attack:

Norge er jo ikke så veldig . . . Norge er ikke så strenge på jøder, allikevel, selv om de kanskje kunne hatt grunn til å være det. Det er fordi Norge egentlig ikke er så, hva skal jeg si, Norge er et veldig forsiktig land, som har veldig mye samarbeid med USA, og når da USA er alliert, så er liksom Israel alliert og jødene alliert, så da er det litt begrenset hva de kan vise av negativitet i forhold til jøder.

[Norway is not so very . . . Norway is not so strict about Jews, anyway, even though they perhaps might have reason to be. That's because Norway really is not so, what should I say, Norway is a very gentle country, which cooperates very closely with the United States, and when the United States is an ally, then somehow Israel is an ally and Jews are allies, so it becomes limited what they can show of negativity in relation to Jews.]

It seems that, according to Aleena, the reason why negative views about Jews are rarely expressed in Norway is due to the country's strong ties with the United States and, as a consequence, with Israel. The description is similar to Farid's, cited above, in the way that Israeli's powerful position is perceived as providing

503 "Det er mye som skjer bak murene, for å si det sånn."

Jews with protection against negative experiences. Aleena's narrative contrasts with what is commonly described in analyses of the relation between antisemitism and Israel – that negative views about Israel are projected onto Jews as such, or that latent antisemitism finds expression in criticism of Israel.

The quotation depicts how strong international power structures and the tenor of public discourse – and perhaps concrete political actions, as well – in Norway are ultimately governed by these international alliances. The multitude of attitudes towards Israel that exist among Jews (and in the rest of the Norwegian population) is not relevant to this situation; rather, the main point is that Jews benefit from these structures. Aleena later contrasted her perception of the situation of Jews with that of Muslims, declaring:

Vi har, altså, muslimene har jo ikke hverken ressurser eller er organisert på den måten at de kan håndtere noe samlet, mens jødene jo har det.

– Hvor tenker du at jødene har det?

Jeg tenker i forhold til at de har et tettere nettverk for kontakt med Israel, for eksempel. Og at de har kanaler så de kan formidle ting til hverandre. Altså, jødene har vært forfulgt i mange, mange, mange år, ikke sant? Så de har utviklet disse nettverkene, og de har fått masse støtte og ressurser til å opprette sin stat, og de har utviklet støtteordninger for alle disse sentrene som ligger spredt i hele Europa, i hele Vesten og i muslimske land, også. De har et mye mer sterkere nettverk. De kan jo faktisk jobbe på den måten, mye mer enn hva muslimer kan. [. . .] Vi har ikke noe nettverk, vi har ikke noe organisasjon eller noen sånne arbeidsmetoder som . . . Altså, hvis vi hadde hatt det, hadde vi ikke stått her vi står i dag i forhold til media og alt, [som] kan gjøre hva de vil, si hva de vil og alt er sant, liksom. Altså, . . . vi er ikke organisert på den måten at vi kan slå tilbake mot sånne propaganda-attakk på islam eller på noe. [. . .] Bare man slår opp i en avis så er den gjennomsyret av den svakheten hos muslimene. Mens hos jødene så ser man jo at de har et nettverk, de har en dialog seg imellom, og de beskytter hverandre hvor enn de er. Og støtter opp, både økonomisk og på andre måter, religiøst, og sånn. De er jo veldig organisert, sånn sett. Så der har de større forutsetninger for å påvirke det Israel gjør, også.

[Muslims have neither the resources nor the organisation to handle anything together, while the Jews do.

– What do you mean that Jews have this ability?

I am thinking of how they have a much closer network when it comes to contact with Israel, for example. They have channels where they can communicate things to each other. I mean, the Jews have been persecuted for many, many years, right. Therefore, they have developed these networks, they have lots of support and resources to create their own state, and they have developed schemes for all these centres throughout Europe, throughout the West, and in Muslim countries, too. They have a much stronger network. They can really work in this fashion, much more than Muslims can. [. . .] We have no network, we have no organisation or such working methods to . . . I mean, if we'd had this we would not be where we are today in relation to the media and everything, [who] can do whatever they want, say what-

ever they want, and it's like everything is true. I mean, we are not organised in such a way that we can fight back against propaganda attacks like this, against Islam or against anything. [. . .] You only have to open a newspaper, and it is permeated by this weakness among the Muslims. As for the Jews, we see that they have a network, they have a dialogue among themselves, and they protect each other wherever they are. They support each other, both financially and in other ways, religiously and so. They are very organised, in that respect. So there they are in a better position to influence Israeli actions, too.]

Again, a notion of Jewish power is described in positive, albeit stereotypical, terms and a lack of similar “organisation” is perceived as an obstacle and serious weakness among Muslims. Aleena seemed impressed by what she saw as a tightly knit network among Jews, though her arguments are similar to the antisemitic stereotype that Jews work behind the scenes to promote their own interests. The predominant elements in Aleena’s vision of Jewish power are a combination of “Jewish” unity and methods. The power is multifaceted, perceived as a practical, organisational factor, and as constituted by economic resources and religious unity. The interview was conducted at my office at the Holocaust Center, perhaps encouraging the reference to “centres” all over the world. The narrative also conveys a sense of frustration based on widespread negative representations of Muslims in the media, termed “propaganda,” presumably a reference to false and sensational content. Inability to counter negative media coverage becomes an expression of Muslim weakness in Aleena’s narrative. The claim about Muslims lacking a network is interesting. Based on the large number of existing Muslim organisations in Norway – including women’s groups, youth groups, and religious umbrella organisations, to mention only a few examples – this seems to suggest another form of (international or global) organisation that permits Jews to communicate in ways impossible for Muslims. As noted earlier and in contrast to other Ahmadi interviewees, Aleena did not distinguish between different sectarian communities; rather, the “we” in her narrative referred to Muslims in general, implying a common Muslim identity and experience (though simultaneously emphasising lack of organisation). Perhaps her Ahmadi identity nevertheless contributed to a sense of lack of unity among Muslims.

It was not clear how Aleena explained the differences between Muslims and Jews, why Jews became stronger as a result of the history of antisemitism, while Muslims have not been able to do the same following negative experiences connected to their Muslim identity. However, the focus on historical persecution suggests this occurred over time and was related to these experiences as a reaction against discrimination. As we have seen, other interviewees also pointed to the long history of the Jews – or, the long history of Judaism – to explain perceived differences between Muslims and Jews.

While Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict appeared to be an important factor in narratives about Jews as powerful, the quoted section of the interview

with Aleena modified the argument, presenting a powerful alliance of world Jewry which uses Israel for its own interests. This Jewish network, not the military capacity of Israel, thus appears as the decisive source of power, though the distinction may be blurred.

8.3 The Power that Rules the World

The topic of power typically came up when interviewees talked about their views on the current state of affairs in Europe, ongoing international conflicts, and political struggles. Narratives included very different explanations in terms of driving forces – for example, pointing to economic interests or to notions of “hidden agendas” – and did not necessarily include any mention of Jews. The accounts reflected a certain worldview and expressed interviewees’ analysis of the factors behind important current events, such as the conflicts in the Middle East and especially the civil war in Syria. Some interviewees expressed strong political views when explaining how they thought “things work” in society, clearly distressed on behalf of Muslims in many parts of the world, describing what they perceived as a lack of influence and systemic injustice. Some also expressed a certain fatigue and discouragement when talking about these issues, signalling that the forces controlling current affairs were untouchable and that it would be difficult or impossible for things to change. Among some interviewees, there seemed to be a perception that a wish to weaken “the Muslims” was a factor behind the situation, alluding to more or less concrete malevolent forces and outlining a polarisation between “Muslims” and “the West.” Interviewees could express such views without explicitly connecting them to Jews, but the notion of an opposition existing between “the West” and “Muslims” in some cases echoed an opposition between Muslims and Jews by drawing on stereotypical imagery.

For some interviewees, the notion of hidden agendas and powerful forces appeared to provide relief, as it offered a rational explanation for a distressing situation. Hassan (interviewee no. 5) commented on what he considered a deep paradox of our time, between great technological development and an increase in war and conflict, killing and suffering. The lack of correspondence between technical and social advancement needed an explanation, Hassan felt:

Jeg vil ikke tro at dette er tilfældig. Jeg vil ikke tro at dette er tilfældig. Jeg vil tro at det er planlagt. Planlagt av noen som vil dominere over hele verden, vil ha makt over hele verden.

[I do not want to believe that this is coincidental. I do not want to believe that this is coincidental [repeats]. I want to believe that it is planned. Planned by someone who wants to dominate the whole world, who wants to have power over the whole world.]

This quotation shows how Hassan believes – and wants to believe – that what he perceives as an increase in wars and conflicts is the result of a conscious act, planned and orchestrated. The belief serves to maintain a sense of order and relief. The relief occurs regardless of the fact that the notion implies the existence of a powerful, hidden, and negative force. The quotation was the most explicit formulation of such feelings in the material. However, similar impressions emerged from other interviews, when reflections on negative situations, such as the war in Syria, or more general issues, such as the status of Muslims in Europe, encouraged explanations pointing to strong and sometimes hidden forces, which somewhat paradoxically seemed to provide a form of reassurance.

The attempt to explain difficult or frightening situations is a central trait of many conspiracy theories. Michael Barkun describes how some comprehensive forms of such beliefs, similar to millenarian worldviews, are Manichaeic in the sense that they describe the world in terms of a struggle between good and evil, though conspiracism does not necessarily imply that good will triumph.⁵⁰⁴ Similarly, Geoffrey Cubitt notes that one central property of conspiracy myths is *dualism*, “The relationship between the effectively non-conspiratorial majority of society and the perpetually conspiring minority naturally lends itself to formulation in terms of morally absolute binary opposition: Good against Evil.”⁵⁰⁵ The psychological effect of believing in conspiracies is multifaceted, as such beliefs imply the existence of frightening forces while simultaneously offering a reassuring explanation of complex matters. As we have seen, one important trait of conspiracy theories is that they construct a world that is meaningful rather than arbitrary, providing a well-defined enemy against which to struggle.⁵⁰⁶ The inherent comfort in an organised world is apparent in Hassan’s comment, when he exclaims that he does not “want” to believe that the situation is coincidental. Hassan described himself as a religious man, and the search for meaning may seem similar to a religious outlook. However, Hassan’s descriptions at this point did not refer to a divine will; rather, they referred to how technology and the schemes of humans act together and somehow, in a way that is concealed or at least difficult to understand, a destructive situation develops.

The impression that there are powerful forces controlling global affairs implies that what we observe is merely superficial, that things are not as they seem. Secrecy and conspiracy are closely connected, related either to the (imagined or existing) force itself or to its activities. Secret or non-secret groups may conduct secret

504 Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 9–11.

505 Cubitt, “Conspiracy Myths and Conspiracy Theories,” 15.

506 Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 3–4.

or non-secret activities; however, only secret or non-secret groups engaged in secret activities lie within the realm of conspiracy theory.⁵⁰⁷ Among the examples of “secret groups acting secretly,” Barkun mentions the Illuminati, a Masonic organisation founded in 1776 and allegedly behind the French Revolution. Dissolved by suspicious governments early on, the Illuminati has nevertheless continued to “exist” to this day, as the subject of conspiracy theories. Another example is the “Jewish conspiracy” for world domination described in the infamous antisemitic forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁵⁰⁸

Though conspiracy theories are often fanciful, outlining schemes with massive implications, such as in the case of the Illuminati, many also combine their imaginative fabrications with realistic references in ways that serve to lend weight to the assertions made.⁵⁰⁹ Both the Illuminati and the *Protocols* provide examples of the potent combination of actual events and imaginary contents.⁵¹⁰ Other examples of conspiracy theories that similarly combine a level of open activity with secrecy can be found in accusations that Jewish lobbies have hidden agendas and work to promote Jewish interests, beyond their official interests and concealed from the public eye.

507 Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 4–5.

508 Or, *The Protocols of [the Meetings of] the Learned Elders of Zion*. The exact origin of the *Protocols* remains unknown, but evidence suggests it was constructed through the use of pre-existing sources by agents of the Russian secret police working in France at the time of the Dreyfus affair, between 1894 and 1906. Esther Webman, ed., *The Global Impact of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion: a century-old myth* (London: Routledge, 2011), 2.

509 It might be useful to distinguish analytically between different levels of conspiracies according to how comprehensive they are perceived to be. Barkun distinguishes between three levels of conspiracies: (1) *event conspiracies*, where the conspiracy is held responsible for a limited event or series of events; (2) *systemic conspiracies*, where the conspiracy is believed to have broad goals even though the machinery behind the plan is conceived as relatively simple, orchestrated by a single organisation or actor – for example, Jews; and (3) *super conspiracies*, referring to notions of multiple related (event and systemic) conspiracies. Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 6.

510 In the case of the *Protocols*, the first Zionist Congress was in fact a contemporary gathering of Jews in Basel, and the powerful Rothschild family did exercise political influence at the time. Later events, such as the Russian Revolution and even more so the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, have provided grounds for the reintroduction and contemporary proliferation of the document. However, the motivation behind the creation of the pamphlet and its forceful historical and cultural impact is primarily to be found in the antisemitism it expresses. The theories’ combination of imaginary and real aspects is even more apparent in the category Barkun terms “non-secret groups acting secretly”; the Masons and the CIA are two examples of such groups often mentioned in conspiracy theories. The implication is that these non-secret groups operate on two levels – one surface level that seems benign but that serves to hide the other, true and malicious, level beneath.

As indicated above, the material in the present study included few and typically critical references to classical notions of Jewish conspiracies like the *Protocols*; however, there were examples that included notions of Jewish or other agents working behind the scenes. Using Barkun's terminology, the references included both specific organisations (such as lobbies) – i.e., non-secret groups acting secretly – and some form of hidden forces – i.e., secret groups acting secretly. The secrecy sometimes concerned dominant narratives in society; for example, those related to significant incidents or historical facts. Some interviewees seemed to suggest that hegemonic narratives or “official versions” of such events were untrue, thus implying some form of suppressed truth. The interview with Karrar (interviewee no. 29) was one such example.

Discussing the background to the Holocaust, Karrar pointed to the way Jews “behaved.” He did not doubt the general descriptions of the genocide were accurate, and he supported the need for education about the Holocaust in schools, expressing sympathy with the Jewish victims – however, when asked to comment on the education, he complained that the background to the genocide and “why the Jews in particular” were victims, always remained unexplained. Karrar claimed this was part of a larger picture, symptomatic of society's approach towards this aspect of history in general. A specific agenda decided how the Holocaust was perceived and commemorated in society, Karrar stated:

Det er garantert, selv om det er riktige skildringer, og det tviler jeg ikke på, men det, jeg vet ikke om jeg kan si det, altså, det har en politisk agenda bak seg. Det vises aldri hvorfor, hva var grunnen for det, hva var grunnen for at de ble fanget, de jødene.

[Guaranteed, even if the descriptions are correct, and I have no doubt about that, but there is, I am not sure I can say this, but there is a political agenda behind it. You are never shown why, what the reason was for them being rounded up, the Jews.]

While he claimed not to question the Holocaust as historical fact, Karrar expressed the view that the background to the genocide was different from what we are told. In an attempt to outline this (concealed) background and explain why the Holocaust took place, Karrar pointed to conspiracy theories about Jewish power, aware that this was controversial. Attempting to strengthen his argument, he also pointed to what he perceived to be contemporary examples of powerful Jews: “They are so few, so the only way to control this world is through money. We also see that clearly today. The Rothschild family owns every central bank in the world.”⁵¹¹ Karrar's narrative relied on the assumption that Jews wish to con-

511 “De er så få, så den eneste måten å kontrollere denne verden på, er gjennom penger. Og det ser vi tydelig i dag også, Rothschild familien eier jo alle sentralbanker i hele verden.”

trol the world. Further explaining what he perceived to be the factors behind the Holocaust, he gave details about the characteristics of “Jewish” conduct:

Det var jo det at han [Hitler] skjønte at de ville ta over verden. Det høres veldig sånn dramatisk ut å si det, men de ville kontrollere bankene. De var veldig effektive og de jobbet mot et spesielt mål, som var å styre mest mulig, hente inn mest mulig penger. [. . .] Jeg har også lest at de har tuklet med tallene for eksempel, at det ikke var så mange som døde i Holocaust. At de tuklet med de tallene for å få landområder, for å få flere landområder. De tuklet med situasjonen sånn at de skulle være [fremstå] mer utsatt enn det de var. Og det kan jeg tenke meg at kan være mulig for du ser jo nå at de lobbierer, altså i USA. Og da kan det hende, de har jo den villigheten til å kunne tukle med tall, det har de. Så for all det vi veit så kan det stemme også, for det er ingen sannhet som kommer frem. Altså hver eneste konspirasjonsteori så bagatelliserer de bare, det er ikke noe å bry seg. Så hvis du går i mot strømmen, så er du en psykopat eller så er du en som er veldig spesiell. Det føler jeg er litt skummelt.

[The thing was that he [Hitler] understood that they wanted to take over the world. It sounds very dramatic to say it, but they wanted to control the banks. They were very efficient and they worked towards a particular goal, namely to rule as much as possible, gain as much money as possible. [. . .] I have also read that they have tampered with the figures, that not that many died during the Holocaust. That they tampered with the figures to get land, to get more land. They tampered with the situation in order to appear more vulnerable than they were. I believe that that may be the case, since you can see today that they lobby, I mean, in the United States. Then it may be the case, since they do have that willingness to tamper with figures, they do have that. So for all we know, it may be correct too, because no truth is brought forward. Every conspiracy theory, they just downplay it, nothing to worry about. If you go against the crowd, you are a psychopath or someone who is very weird. I find that a little scary.]

It is obviously pertinent to point to antisemitic notions about Jews from the interwar period, and particularly to Hitler and Nazi ideology, when explaining the background to the Holocaust. However, Karrar’s elaboration and historical “parallels” suggest the explanation for the genocide is not primarily the Nazi worldview, but that it lies instead in the nature of a “Jewish” character. Making use of well-known Holocaust denial arguments, including claims that the number of victims is the result of Jewish lies and tampering with figures, there was little to suggest distance from the core arguments in the accusations, though some doubt was evident. Karrar also seemed to hint at a connection to Israel, claiming Jews have tampered with the numbers of victims to “get land.” However, the essentialized “Jews” seem to be allied with another kind of agent in hiding the truth. Karrar’s narrative thus conveyed perceptions of authorities acting to prevent information from getting out. Accompanying these “insights,” there was also a sense of being alone with this knowledge. Karrar described an impression that references to conspiracy theories are usually strongly rejected and that people who believe in such ideas and “go against the crowd” are labelled as weird, even mentally unstable. This made Karrar worry, suggesting he

perceived the situation as pertinent not solely for the interpretation of historical situations (of the Holocaust, or of the status of the Jews as persecuted) but as something that has an impact today, to some extent affecting even him.

During the course of the interview, it became clear that Karrar considered the dominant historical narratives in society to be biased in favour of “Western” actors, in the sense that other perspectives are overlooked, particularly Muslim contributions. He mentioned Islamic philosophers as examples of historical figures who did not receive the attention they deserved. Karrar also explicitly placed Israel on the “Western side” when explaining why the Holocaust held such a prominent place in this narrative: “It is always the West, and Israel is on the Western side. When the Western side has been struck by something, like the Holocaust, it is worth commemorating. Then what has happened to the Eastern part is set aside.”⁵¹² From the interview with Karrar there emerged an image of society being permeated by a perspective that neglected elements outside a “Western” canon. The dominant narratives in society thus incorporated a “Western perspective,” with Jewish history as an integral part. The excluded voices that Karrar referred to were not just those representing a “Muslim” perspective, but also everything that was critical and went “against the crowd.” Karrar’s account thus associated the suppression of conspiracy theories with the suppression of a Muslim perspective in the West. Furthermore, any attempts to question the established narratives seemed impossible, leading only to social rejection and exclusion from the domain of the acceptable. While society considers conspiracy theories to be unacceptable, Karrar seemed to view them as important (possible) alternatives to dominant narratives, suggesting “the truth” may be different from official versions of history. Since the truth “never” gets out, reality may just as well be the one presented in the conspiracy theories.

The references to conspiracy theories that Karrar made did not primarily seem related to a lack of information about the history of the Holocaust, nor to a lack of information about the specific fate of the Norwegian Jews during World War II. He knew the basic facts, and referred to what was taught at school as his source of information.⁵¹³ As mentioned above, Karrar also emphasised that he supported both education about and commemoration of the Holocaust, the geno-

512 “Det blir alltid Vesten, og Israel er da med den vestlige gruppen. Og når den vestlige siden har blitt rammet av noe som, som Holocaust, så er det minneverdig. Så legger man til siden det som har skjedd i den østlige delen.”

513 Karrar also referred to a meeting with “the dialogue pilots” [dialogpilotene]. People who work as “dialogue pilots” have taken a course at the University of Oslo focusing on dialogue between individuals with the aim of promoting understanding and fighting extremism. Dialogpilotene (website), <https://www.dialogpilotene.no/>.

cide in his view being a significant historical event. Nevertheless, at some point he seemed to have acquired a paradoxical yet profound scepticism regarding the context around the presented facts and to have developed a feeling that there was a boundary keeping him from the truth.

Karrar's inclination to believe conspiracy theories was also apparent when he commented on 9/11. Following what he termed "a red thread," or the line of argument in the interview, Karrar interpreted 9/11 as a way to legitimise war in the Middle East. The "red thread" presumably referred to the explanations he had outlined earlier, of powerful forces being responsible for (the interpretation of) major historical events and the current state of affairs. Conspiracy theories began circulating immediately after the 9/11 attacks, though not necessarily related to either antisemitism or anti-Muslim attitudes.⁵¹⁴ Karrar's reasoning concerning 9/11 began with a question about the circumstances of the attacks. "It has been confirmed, hasn't it, that it was the United States that was behind the attacks?" he asked.⁵¹⁵ Expressing doubt about the official version of the incident, he claimed it was unlikely that two airplanes crashed into Manhattan – there had to be laws against airplanes flying over the city area. The point may seem valid, but combined with a sceptical attitude towards the authorities, it paved the way to conspiracism.

Conspiracist ideas are particularly prevalent in the realm of "stigmatised knowledge," or knowledge claims that have not been validated by authoritative institutions.⁵¹⁶ The concept of stigmatised knowledge implies the existence of boundaries separating a socially and culturally defined "mainstream" from beliefs and ideas outside of it.⁵¹⁷ Barkun defines opposition to "cultural orthodoxy" as characteristic of cultures of conspiracy, the assumption being that "any widely accepted belief must necessarily be false".⁵¹⁸ The stigmatisation itself appears as evidence of truth. The critical attitude found among conspiracists towards widely accepted truths does not affect their attitude towards alternative narratives.

In Barkun's conceptualisation, stigmatised knowledge appears in various forms. Karrar's reference to a truth that is hidden from the general public fits with the variant termed "suppressed knowledge"; i.e., claims that are known to be valid (accord-

514 See, e.g., Peter Knight, "Outrageous Conspiracy Theories Popular and Official Responses to 9/11 in Germany and the United States," *New German Critique* 35, no. 1 (2008).

515 "Nå er det bekrefta, er det ikke, at det er USA som står bak det?"

516 Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 15–38.

517 Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 27.

518 Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 25.

ing to the believers) but are kept secret by authoritative institutions because they fear the consequences of the truth becoming known, or out of some malevolent motivation. As indicated in Karrar's narrative, social stigma is related to the attempt to question established truths.

Despite containing references to well-known conspiracy theories, Karrar's account did not suggest that his views were non-negotiable. Rather, he combined a suspicious view of dominant narratives with a basic attitude that all historical facts should be open for discussion. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly where the transition is made from critical exploration of established truths to support for conspiracy theories. While a critical attitude towards orthodoxy is perhaps a necessary precondition for belief in conspiracy theories, a critical sense is also essential in a world characterised by a continual flow of (mis)information. Conspiracy theories often come in a scientific guise, simulating scholarly publications in citation and reference styles, and texts prepared with footnotes and bibliographies. Combined with frequent references to what appear to be scientific facts, it may be extremely difficult to determine where the theories deviate from established truths.

Karrar was one of the youngest interviewees, only nineteen at the time of the interview, and still in school. Several times during the interview, he referred to what he had learned in history class, sometimes also displaying incorrect understandings. His young age may explain some of the views he expressed; for example, the sense of an authoritative historical narrative relatively closed to alternative accounts – an impression perhaps echoing a recent experience of classroom learning. However, Karrar's critical comments on how powerful forces – whether Jews or, more generally, Western society – preserve and conceal this narrative, suggest more than just a pupil's frustration over a teacher's recent display of authority.

In his typology of historical narration Jörn Rüsen suggests that, in interpreting historical narratives, historical consciousness bestows meaning and direction from past experiences onto the present and functions to orient individuals by "making sense of the past."⁵¹⁹ This way, the act of interpreting history serves as a means of orientation in the present. "In its temporal orientation, historical consciousness ties the past to the present in a manner that bestows on present actuality a future perspective," he writes.⁵²⁰ This function of orientation is realized through the narrative, and the competence of historical consciousness is essentially a "narrative competence" that makes sense of the past. Rüsen relates historical consciousness to the identity construction of individuals, as a way of expanding this identity beyond his or her personal life.

519 Rüsen, "Historical Consciousness," 69.

520 Rüsen, "Historical Consciousness," 67–68.

In the case of Karrar, the dominant narratives seemed to have lost their ability to provide such orientation. Instead, his interpretation of past events included an affinity for conspiracism. It is not clear which sources may have inspired Karrar's narrative. However, the Internet has made a significant contribution to undermining authority in a way that has been a precondition for the proliferation of "alternative narratives," such as the ones referred to by Karrar and other interviewees. Researchers often point to the impact that the Internet has had in disseminating conspiracy theories and antisemitism.⁵²¹ Often lacking the gatekeepers associated with traditional publications, such as editors and publishers, the Internet is a place where the creation and dissemination of content is possible for practically anyone, and "alternative versions" of significant events are readily accessible. Karrar's narrative seemed motivated by the impression that a "Muslim" (or "Eastern") perspective is being neglected and actively held back in society, affecting both current affairs and historical accounts. Perhaps this was an impression that also related to his personal history. Karrar had lived most of his life in Norway but described his situation as that of being divided between two cultures. He particularly emphasised the need to be *adaptable* in the constant shifting between life at school and life at home, between what he termed his "foreign friends" and his "ethnic Norwegian friends."⁵²² This adaptability was characteristic of how he interacted with Norwegians in Norway, with Iraqis when visiting Iraq, and with his family at home. Still, Karrar explained, perhaps precisely due to this ability, he belonged nowhere. He had become what he termed a "hybrid."

8.4 I do not Believe in Conspiracies, but . . .

As we have seen, interviewees sometimes commented on conspiracy theories while taking positions that were ambiguous; for example, expressing support indirectly through hints. Due to a tendency to change perspective during the interview, it was not always clear exactly where the interviewees situated themselves in relation to conspiracy theories. Though sometimes starting by referring to what "others" believed, presenting the ideas only indirectly as something they had heard from friends or elsewhere, they could nevertheless end up defending

⁵²¹ The importance of the Internet was already pointed out in the first report based on systematically collected data of manifestations of antisemitism throughout the European Union. See European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*, 24.

⁵²² Karrar referred to "utenlandske venner," i.e., "foreign friends," and "etnisk norske," i.e., "ethnic Norwegians."

these ideas. This may be interpreted as reflecting the complexity of the issues being discussed and the way qualitative interviews allow and encourage participants to develop their arguments. As such, even though the immediate response was rejection, a consequence of further reflection was that some elements were accepted. Ismail (interviewee no. 12) provides a good example of the complexity reflected in the material in this regard.

Ismail was one of the interviewees who claimed conspiracy theories were widespread among Muslims. “Everyone believes in one conspiracy theory or another,” he said.⁵²³ Talking about the prevalence of antisemitism, he explained:

Jeg tror vel at en sånn iboende mistro, på grensen av hat, til jødene er veldig vanlig blant muslimer, og jeg skal ikke legge skjul på det i det hele tatt. Og jeg syns det er trist at de gjør det. Det gir muslimene ingenting å tro disse tingene, ikke sant.

– *Men hva tror du det kommer av?*

Det kommer vel av at de mener at siden jødene har så mye makt, ikke sant, at den kommer-sielle makten som de sitter på, og den politiske lobbyen som de kan drive, at de hele tiden former samfunn i forhold til det som gagnar dem best, ikke sant.

[I guess I believe that such an inherent distrust, bordering on hatred, towards Jews is very common among Muslims, I will not conceal that at all. Moreover, I think it is sad that they do it. It gives Muslims nothing to believe in these things, right.

– *But how would you explain this?*

I think it comes from the fact that they believe that since Jews have so much power, the commercial power they possess, and the political lobby that they can run, that they constantly shape society in the direction of what benefits them the most, right.]

This comment suggests a certain distance between Ismail’s self-image and his perception of “other Muslims,” perhaps related to his Ahmadi identity. Describing antisemitism as both negative and common among other Muslims, Ismail explicitly distanced himself from anti-Jewish attitudes, which he attributed to the belief that Jews are powerful. The distancing from antisemitism did not, however, lead Ismail to deny the existence of Jewish power; rather, his later comments on this point appeared close to the views of “other Muslims,” his elaborate descriptions suggesting he was inclined to share these ideas, though he did not share the negative feelings. As will be explored more thoroughly below (chapter 9.2), when Ismail later compared Ahmadis to Jews, Jewish prosperity and influence was a central issue. A schism between “the West” and “the Muslims” was part of his explanation as to why some people believe in conspiracy theories; in an attempt to

523 “Alle tror jo på en eller annen konspirasjonshistorie.”

explain a polarised and difficult situation, Muslims always end up eventually pointing to the Jews, he claimed. Ismail perceived a polarisation that seemed to increase through the situation's own dynamics, creating a negative spiral that would ultimately lead to deep divisions among Muslims. Ismail explained:

Det som kan oppstå, er jo at nå når man prater om den polariseringen, at du har islam, og du har Vesten og de andre. Du har demokrati på den ene siden og islam på den andre siden. At det bryter opp i flere ledd. At det er en polarisering mellom muslimene. Ikke sant. Du har de mer liberale muslimene som vil promotere sin tolkning av hva islam er, og så har du en enda hardere linje av muslimer, og imellom så vil det være veldig mye forvirring og frustrasjon blant muslimer. "Hvilken side skal vi velge?" Og jeg tror det skillet over de neste fem-ti år vil bli veldig, veldig klart. Så vi kommer til å være en generasjon av muslimer som kommer til å være veldig forvirret over hvilken side vi skal velge. [. . .] Og der tror jeg det ligger veldig mye. Så er det disse konspirasjonsgreiene, det ene er konspirasjonen om at Vesten har skapt dette her, og at USA står bak alt sammen, og det er jødene som styrer, ikke sant.

[What may happen, with the polarisation, is that you have Islam and you have the West and the rest. You have democracy on one side and you have Islam on the other. That it splits into more parts. That there is a polarisation among the Muslims. You have more liberal Muslims promoting their view of what Islam is like, and you have more hard-line Muslims, and in between there will be a lot of confusion and distress among Muslims. "Which side should we choose?" I think that dividing line will be very clear in the next five or ten years. I think we will be a generation of Muslims who are very confused about which side to choose. [. . .] I think a lot lies there, and then you have the conspiracy theories that the West has created it, that the United States is behind everything and that the Jews are in control, right?]

Ismail's narrative suggested a perceived boundary between Jews, liberal Muslims, and "the West" on the one hand, and (non-liberal) Muslims on the other, and he seemed to place himself on the liberal side. He described conspiracies about Jewish control as an attempt to explain this polarisation, thus the search for meaning in a distressing situation reinforced the conflict.

The degree to which Ismail supported perceptions of Jewish power seemed related to the level of concretisation – with less comprehensive notions and more concrete examples increasing his level of support. While Ismail initially denied any support for conspiracy theories, claiming "that is just how society develops,"⁵²⁴ he also emphasised the existence of powerful interests in the Middle East and referred to the general complexity of the region when commenting on ISIS and the war in Syria. At this point in the interview, he seemed prone to accept that there was some kind of (hidden) agency, claiming both the Arab Spring and ISIS were "constructed":

524 "Det er ikke noen konspirasjon, det er sånn samfunnet utvikler seg."

Altså, den “arabiske våren,” det var en konstruert katastrofe som bare førte med seg elendighet. Jeg ser ikke noe annet enn destabilisering av hele regionen. Det eneste landet som de ikke har klart å destabilisere, er Iran. Jeg tror det er det landet de frykter mest. Jeg synes Saudi Arabia er slått litt fallitt. De trodde jo at de skulle bli kalifaer etter at den arabiske våren, og IS synes jeg er det mest konstruerte som finnes.

– *Hvem er det som har konstruert IS?*

Jeg tror det er veldig mange involverte parter. Jeg tror ikke det bare er liksom jødene som har gjort det.

[I mean, the Arab Spring was a constructed disaster that only brought misery. I see nothing but destabilisation of the entire region. The only country that they have failed to destabilise is Iran. I think it is also the country they fear the most. I think Saudi Arabia has collapsed a little. They thought they would become caliphs after the Arab Spring. I also think ISIS is the most constructed there is.

– *Who has constructed ISIS?*

I think there are many parties involved. I do not think it is just, like, the Jews who have done it.]

Explaining what he meant by this “construction,” and criticising the idea that people joined ISIS simply because they met someone in jail or similar simplistic (“naïve”) notions of radicalisation processes, Ismail said:

Hvem er det som kan styre en så velfungerende organisasjon, finansieringen av den? Ja, det kan både være muslimske land selv og andre land som er med. Så det er veldig mange. Jeg tror ikke det er bare sånn at “nei, det er jødene som står bak.” Jeg tror ikke det. Jeg tror det er veldig mange krefter som står bak det. Jeg tror at det er en balansevekt i samfunnet, at IS finnes der, og det er et viktig balansepunkt at den finnes, så den kommer til å vedvare. Hvis den forsvinner, vil noe annet dukke opp.

[Who can control such a well-functioning organisation, the funding of it? Yes, it can be both Muslim countries and other countries included. Therefore, there are very many. I do not think it is just like “No, the Jews are behind it.” I do not believe that. I think there are numerous forces involved. I think there is a form of balance in society related to the existence of ISIS, and it is an important balance, so it will prevail. If it disappears, something else will emerge.]

Clearly critical of the idea that the Jews are behind current developments or ISIS, Ismail was nevertheless convinced that there had to be something more than just radicalized individuals at the core of the group. There had to be some kind of larger organisation; Ismail suggested both Muslim countries and other countries as possible candidates. This is an example of what he meant by “it is just how the world works”; namely, that strong, more or less concealed forces control international developments. Ismail even perceived a form of balance related to this situation. This perception does not necessarily represent a “conspiracy theory,” in the

sense of being a theory about a conspiracy that lacks any connection to reality. Ismail's narrative did not include any denial of facts, mention of new theories, or disbelief regarding official versions of events (for example, related to the 9/11 attacks). Nevertheless, there were repeated indications that he did not think the public knew the whole truth about major events. At another point in the interview, Ismail stated that warfare after 9/11 had been a "super-experiment," which had led to a polarisation between the West and Islam. While describing worldwide forces controlling wars and the situation of the entire Muslim population, Ismail repeatedly stated that there was no need to believe in conspiracy theories. The interview with Ismail showed how explicit rejection of both antisemitism and conspiracy theories about Jews may be combined with support for ideas that nevertheless are associated with stereotypical representations of Jews (see also chapter 9.2) and arguments similar to those found in conspiracy theories.

The tendency of interviewees to distance themselves from conspiracy theories about Jews may be seen as an expression of skepticism regarding such ideas and an awareness of how they often are based in traditional anti-Jewish views. In the case of Ismail, rejection of conspiracy theories seemed to represent an important position that concerned both his attitude towards Jews and towards society in a broader sense. "You always have to be part of society to change it for the better, right? The minute you fall for conspiracy theories, you begin to opt out," he said.⁵²⁵ Interviewees' rejections of such theories may have also been driven by insights into how such theories are generally negatively viewed by society and associated with social stigma (as noted by Karrar). As a consequence of this stigma, it is built into the very concept of "conspiracy theories" that believing in them is not part of a self-designation. More specifically, the rejections may have been influenced by the interview situation and an awareness of the norm of anti-antisemitism, which renders expressions associated with antisemitism socially unacceptable. A contributing factor may have been the public debate labelling Muslims as antisemitic. Although interviewees referred to how negative attitudes towards Jews are a problem among many Muslims, they simultaneously distanced themselves from such attitudes. Some also mentioned negative experiences due to the association between their own Muslim identity and antisemitism (also discussed in chapter 9.2). In this way, the interviewees positioned themselves in relation to prevalent ideas about Jews and Muslims, whether they were asked directly about them or not.

However, as was noted in Ismail's case, rejection of belief in antisemitic conspiracy theories did not always imply rejection of the notion that Jews are powerful.

525 "Man skal alltid være en del av samfunnet for å endre det til noe bedre, ikke sant? Med én gang man faller for konspirasjonsteorier, så begynner man å melde seg ut."

Somewhat paradoxically, some interviewees thus seemed to have categorised the concepts “conspiracy theory” and “antisemitism” as something negative, while “Jewish power” had a positive connotation. Again, this may be interpreted in relation to perceptions of social stigma, whereby conspiracy theories are negatively connotated, while “Jewish power” escapes this negative categorisation because it translates into something admirable (influence, resources, organisation). Furthermore, knowledge of the realities of international politics may lie at the core of these explanations – though “conspiracy theories” are associated with prejudice, “conspiracies” obviously are not just fantasy. Both powerful Jews and conspiracies do exist, and powerful forces do indeed play a role in international politics and in wars and conflicts. When reflecting on the topic of power in relation to Jews, the interviewees walked a fine line between acknowledging these realities, reconstructing stereotypical notions, and subscribing to conspiracy theories.

8.5 Core Narratives about Jewish Power

The antisemitic image of Jews as a powerful enemy that seeks or already possesses world dominance is, with some notable exceptions, predominantly a Christian or secular European heritage. The Christian anti-Judaic heritage is connected to notions of Jews as killers of the Messiah and allies of the Devil, but it has also included a number of other threatening and powerful notions with a long history. From the high medieval period onwards, the demonisation of Jews intensified, until it came to incorporate anti-Jewish conspiracy narratives, such as the legend of the blood libel and the narrative of host desecration.⁵²⁶ Islamic anti-Judaism is less focused on powerful and threatening images and more prone to describing Jews as deceitful and weak, even as defeated.⁵²⁷ However, throughout the history of antisemitism, influences from different sources have come together. Today, elements from classic Christian anti-Judaism, secular European antisemitism, and Islamic traditions are all part of an anti-Jewish ideological complex. Bassam Tibi has conceptualized “religionized Islamist antisemitism,” where two prominent ideas are “Islam under siege” and the notion of a conspiracy of “Jews and crusaders” against Islam.⁵²⁸ Narratives about powerful enemies thus take on a “Jewish” face in contem-

526 Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Antisemitism and Conspiracism,” in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. Michael Butter and Peter Knight (London/New York: Routledge, 2020), 357–58; Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism*, 78–94.

527 Judaken, “So What’s New? Rethinking the ‘New Antisemitism’ in a Global Age,” 541. See also chapter 2.1.4.

528 Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2012), 58.

porary anti-Jewish rhetoric, combining secular, conspiratorial antisemitism and a religious framing.

This chapter has explored interviewees' reflections on different forms of power, explanations of international situations, societal and political influence. It has shown how perceptions of Jewish power, or awareness of such perceptions among others, encouraged a range of different narratives. Interviewees conveyed positive notions of Jews as influential, or described how Jews were associated with negative or even destructive forms of power. The descriptions of power varied in terms of its perceived scope (whether it was viewed as limited to certain countries or specific fields like the economy, or if it was seen as a worldwide force) and in terms of concrete examples of such power offered by the interviewees.

The analysis shows how perceptions of power influenced the image of Israel in the material, typically expressing a close association between "Israel," "Zionists," and (sometimes) "Jews." Interviewees shifted between descriptions that barely distinguished between these concepts and descriptions that highlighted differences. Narratives sometimes portrayed Israel as a symbolic expression of the "collective Jew" and Muslim countries as the "collective Muslim." The Jewish state generally appeared significantly more powerful than any Muslim country and was in some cases perceived as the incarnation and executor of Jewish influence and political aspirations. In contrast to this view of Israel, Judaism was rarely associated with notions of power (with some exceptions, as noted in chapter seven). On the contrary, great respect for Jews as religious people seemed to entail a view that Jews who misuse power (for example, with reference to Israel) have gone astray in terms of their religion. The numerous (more or less concrete) references to powerful Jews were typically related to international finance, political lobbies, military achievements, or even memory culture (of the Holocaust), rather than to religion. Accordingly, interviewees sometimes distinguished between Jews and Judaism on the one hand, and the powerful and destructive counterparts "Zionists" or "Israel/Israelis" on the other. These narratives thus constructed a boundary within the broader category "Jews," and only the group associated with power was viewed negatively. The analysis mirrors findings from chapter seven in that a religious frame of reference primarily entailed positive narratives about Jews.

Some narratives suggested a causal connection between perceptions of an underprivileged position occupied by Muslims and support for ideas about powerful Jews. Interviewees suggested Muslims rationalized and bestowed meaning on what appeared as confusing or chaotic situations in the world by subscribing to comprehensive ideas and explanations, including conspiracy theories. Some interviewees also seemed to explain perceptions of Muslim powerlessness through the existence of powerful international (hidden) forces. One example related to conspiracy theories about the 9/11 terrorist attacks, an incident generally perceived to represent a

turning point in how Muslims were seen in the West, with widespread negative views about Muslims and an increasingly difficult situation ensuing. Interviewees also referred to negative public representations of Muslims and an inability to mobilise against such portrayals. In its most extensive form, this narrative included references to powerful international forces that wished to undermine the situation of the Muslim population and orchestrate a schism between “the West” and “the Muslims,” pointing to war and strife in many Muslim countries. The assertion that Muslims lack organisation and power may be interpreted as an implicit repudiation of Islamophobic (conspiracy) theories claiming Europe is being taken over by Muslims. Accusations that Muslims seek world domination have resurfaced following 9/11, but they have an older history in Western traditions and constitute one of the shared features of Islamophobia and antisemitism.⁵²⁹ By maintaining that Muslims have come to find themselves in a weak position and currently lack the necessary organisation to counter negative views, interviewees implicitly repudiated any such idea.

In his thesis about the “clash of civilisations,” American political scientist Samuel Huntington famously formulated the idea that cultural and religious identity would constitute the primary source of global conflict after the Cold War.⁵³⁰ Though the thesis has been heavily criticised by academics and others,⁵³¹ the idea of insuperable boundaries dividing Western civilisation from the Islamic world is nevertheless often referred to in public debates, and surveys have found similar views to be widespread. The Norwegian population surveys found that approximately one in three respondents supported the statement “Muslims do not fit into modern Western society.”⁵³² Similar results have been found in other surveys.⁵³³ Olivier Roy has noted,

529 See, e.g., Kalmar and Ramadan, “Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Historical and Contemporary Connections and Parallels,” 360–61.

530 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

531 See, e.g., Göle, “Decentering Europe, Recentering Islam.”

532 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 47.

533 A survey from 2015 among youth aged sixteen to nineteen in Oslo found that more than half of respondents (58%) believed there was an ongoing war between the West and Islam. Viggo Vestel and Anders Bakken, *Holdninger til ekstremisme: Resultater fra Ung i Oslo 2015* (Oslo: NOVA Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, 2016), 65. Furthermore, almost half of the Norwegian respondents (47%) in a comparative Scandinavian population survey from 2015 believed that Islam was a threat to Norwegian culture. This was a greater proportion than Swedish respondents but somewhat less than Danish respondents. Knut Lundby et al., “Religion between Politics and Media: Conflicting Attitudes towards Islam in Scandinavia,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 10, no. 4 (2017): 449.

“The word ‘Muslim’ has a deep political meaning. It refers not to a religion but to some sort of neo-ethnic group that is defined in its opposition to the ‘West’.”⁵³⁴

Among interviewees in the present study who supported Manichaean visions of opposing global forces, some expressed a sense of profound societal exclusion. The material conveys a sense of silencing, loss of speech, and sometimes explicitly describes an impression that a “Muslim” perspective is being invalidated and suppressed, associating (Western) society’s attitude towards this perspective with the suppression of socially unacceptable narratives, such as conspiracy theories. References in the current material to a suppression of Muslim voices thus occurred alongside opposition to what was perceived as culturally dominant narratives or “cultural orthodoxy.”⁵³⁵ Suggesting that “the truth is elsewhere,” interviewees suggested that alternative (or “Muslim”) perspectives are being suppressed due to some external force, sometimes perceived as a Jewish power. Similar to Barkun’s concept of stigmatized knowledge, the reasoning behind such views was characterised by a circular argument, whereby the silencing itself served as evidence of the truthfulness of the theory and thus of the existence of the hidden forces. The narratives in the present study show how attempts to explain and rationalize a marginalized position (or perceptions of such) may promote explanations that are close to those constructed within radical milieus – thus suggesting a way in which such explanations might spread from the “fringes” to the “mainstream.”⁵³⁶ What was characteristic of these narratives was not that they offered elaborate alternative explanations of different events or of the current state of global affairs, but rather that they questioned a dominant narrative, suggesting that someone was controlling events and the knowledge of these events, without formulating alternative narratives. I have related this tendency to the concept of conspiracy talk, which signifies the way in which conspiracy theories are typically expressed in abbreviated forms, consisting of hints and hearsay, and accompanied by denial of commonly held truths. The implicit way in which some of the interviewees referred to conspiracy theories is characteristic of how such theories are often expressed.⁵³⁷

534 Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, 332.

535 Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*, 25.

536 Günther Jikeli has suggested that difficulties in distinguishing between mainstream Islam and antisemitic Islamism has made it more problematic for many Muslims to distance themselves from the latter: “La difficulté qu’éprouvent jusqu’à aujourd’hui bien des musulmans pour faire la distinction entre le courant général de l’islam et un islamisme antisémite rend plus malaisée la prise de distance envers les opinions allant dans ce dernier sens.” Jikeli, “L’antisémitisme en milieux et pays musulmans: débats et travaux autour d’un processus complexe,” 112.

537 Benz, *Was ist Antisemitismus?*, 87.

A driving force behind many conspiracy theories is a reticence to believe official explanations, but critical reflections about current international conflicts and existing power structures may lead to similar results. The interviewees' understanding of the concept of conspiracy theories seemed, in line with common interpretations, to go beyond simply believing that "someone has conspired." Interviewees rarely subscribed openly to conspiracy theories in this more expansive sense; on the contrary, they typically rejected notions of major hidden forces. However, narratives sometimes followed a pattern where interviewees started by noting that belief in such theories was a problem among others (or among "Muslims") and then gradually changed their perspective over the course of the interviews, expressing support for some elements in the theories. The rejection of a belief in conspiracy theories was sometimes expressed in terms of normalising power relations (and, de facto, conspiracies). Interviewees thus implied a notion of "conspiracy theories" as referring to something extraordinary, almost supernatural, while powerful forces orchestrating and controlling situations on an international level was "just how the world works." In combination with an interest in political affairs and concern about existing conflicts and discrimination, knowledge of actual power relations may have influenced these narratives.

Some narratives demonstrated how explicit rejection of both antisemitic notions and of conspiracy theories about Jews may be combined with support for ideas that are nevertheless associated with stereotypical representations of Jews and the same kinds of arguments as are found in such theories. In an apparent paradox, interviewees thus both supported the idea that Jews are powerful and control global affairs and rejected a belief in (antisemitic) conspiracy theories. The analysis suggested this may be related to the social stigmatisation of the concept of "conspiracy theories," which led to them being rejected as an element of the interviewees' self-identification, even though they supported notions that seemed to fit with the concept. Awareness of the norm of anti-antisemitism may in similar ways have contributed to the downplaying or silencing (communication latency) of explicit antisemitism, while allowing more subtle or implicit expressions of such notions. I have also suggested that this finding may reflect how interviewees had categorised the concept "antisemitic conspiracy theories" as something negative and unacceptable, while "Jewish power" had a positive connotation. Furthermore, the rejection may have been due to interviewees not recognising what exactly constitutes an antisemitic conspiracy theory, thus both expressing and rejecting support for such ideas at the same time.

Based on this analysis, some core narratives can be identified. I will call one narrative "Jews have significant influence, but notions of a Jewish conspiracy are mistaken." This narrative expressed a distance from prevalent conspiracy theories. However, parallel to this distance, it emphasised an impression of Jews as often

being powerful – certainly more powerful than Muslims. Furthermore, this narrative expressed positive recognition of Jewish achievements while sometimes also incorporating stereotypical views.

When explaining the factors behind what they perceived to be the powerful position of Jews in society, interviewees sometimes referred to historical persecution, arguing that the persecution had made Jews strong and well organized and able to protect themselves against attack. These descriptions stood in contrast to perceptions of the evolution of the position of Muslims, which described an increasingly negative situation for Muslims worldwide and Muslims as unable to counter discrimination and prejudice. Based on this, a second narrative, focusing on notions of evolution, may be termed “Jews have become powerful due to historical persecution, while international developments have made Muslims weak.” This narrative did not necessarily imply a notion of a conspiracy. On the contrary, it may be interpreted in light of widespread conspiracy theories about Muslims, such as the Islamophobic “Eurabia theory,” signalling resistance to such ideas.

Another narrative also described a difference between Muslims and Jews but described this difference as interconnected, claiming, “Muslims are powerless in a world controlled by Jews.” The function of this narrative has similarities to the function of conspiracy theories as conceptualized by Michael Barkun: making sense out of chaos, constructing meaning in what would otherwise be perceived as meaningless, replacing coincidence with agency. By constructing an antagonism between “Muslims” on the one hand, and “the West”/“the Jews” on the other, this narrative builds on and echoes central elements found in both Islamist and Islamophobic discourse. The notion of an opposition between “the West” and “Muslims” expressed an opposition between Muslims and Jews by drawing on stereotypical images. As noted above, some interviewees either subscribed to such narratives or described them as prevalent among others. For some interviewees, the notion of hidden agendas and powerful forces appeared to represent relief, by offering a rational explanation for a distressing situation.

9 Victimhood in Narratives about Jews

During the interviews, references were made to the history of Jewish immigration to Norway and to the broader history of Jews in Europe. A central aspect in recollections of this history was Jewish victimhood. Although the interviewees' notions about Jews as victims had different sources, including contemporary manifestations of antisemitism, the narratives typically referred to specific historical incidents; primarily the persecution of Jews in Europe in the 20th century, especially during the Holocaust. While references to religious concepts were typical initial associations when asked about Jews, and were sometimes mentioned in narratives about powerful Jews, this was less common in narratives that referred to Jewish victimhood. The many references made to Jewish victimhood may seem to contradict the otherwise predominant image of Jews as powerful; however, they primarily relate to an image of Jewish victimhood as belonging to the past.

Central themes in the interviews also included the participants' experiences of negative attitudes towards Muslims, perceptions of misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims in public discourse, and views on the prevalence of and factors behind anti-Muslim sentiments. Interviewees were concerned with recent developments and perceived an increase in negative attitudes towards Muslims in Norway and other European countries. Personal experiences of anti-Muslim attitudes typically derived from encounters with the Norwegian majority society. Some experiences also related to sectarian differences and conflicts within the Muslim community. The interviewees referred to cases of harassment and hate speech, and to situations that had given rise to a sense of exclusion from Norwegian society (or more precisely, to a lack of inclusion into what society defined as "Norwegian"). Views on the factors behind negative attitudes towards Muslims are explored in chapter ten, below. Of special interest to the following is how these topics provided a framework for the interviewees' narratives about Jews, typically expressed by parallels being drawn between their own experiences and their knowledge of the historical and contemporary victimisation of Jews. In doing this, the accounts suggested identification and sympathy with Jews. Identification with Jews in these narratives was closely connected to a minority identity, whether vis-à-vis the (Norwegian, European, or "Western") majority population or a Muslim majority inside or outside of Norway. In some cases, however, the narratives were characterised by a notion of Muslims having replaced Jews as victims, defining Jewish victimhood as something (merely) historical or expressing a sense of competing for victimhood status.

As shown above, interviewees expressed identification with Jews in a variety of ways. The first part of this chapter explores perceptions of Jewish victimhood as

a cause for sympathy and identification. How did the interviewees' experiences of victimisation function as a reference point in narratives about Jews? What aspects were perceived as shared and how did experiences appear different? The second part of the chapter looks at perceptions of intra-Muslim (sectarian) differences in the narratives. While sectarian differences were discussed as part of a religious frame of reference in chapter 7.5, this section asks how narratives about Jewish victimhood invoked references to experiences of exclusion, social distance, and discrimination based on sectarian differences. Following this is a section that explores perceptions of society's approach to Muslim and Jewish victimhood. How did narratives relate to the broader context of Norwegian society? What did they perceive as dominant narratives about Jewish history, and how did these compare with the discourse about the experiences of the Muslim minority? The fourth section explores views on the Holocaust, asking how narratives referred to the history and commemoration of the Holocaust, what thoughts were expressed on the contemporary relevance of this history, and the need for education in schools. The last part of this chapter discusses the notion that Muslims are the "new Jews."

9.1 Jewish Victimhood and Narratives of Identification and Solidarity

Narratives about Jewish victimhood sometimes included references to interviewees' own negative experiences, giving rise to analogies between Muslims and Jews and constituting a source of identification with Jews. One example of such experiences and subsequent identification with Jews was provided in the interview with Ubah (interviewee no. 14). Ubah seemed to draw a parallel between her experiences of being associated with "radical Islam" and similarly negative group constructions of Jews. She said, "I have felt it personally, that people associate me with radical Islam, I've actually thought about what people associate with Jews, and . . . a lot of injustice in politics, let's put it that way."⁵³⁸ What may be perceived as an implicit reference to Israel ("a lot of injustice in politics") suggested that a negative association to Jews based on the policies of Israel was similar to a negative association to Muslims based on the actions of Islamist extremists (or exponents of "radical Islam"). Ubah's later remarks made the reference clear. She described how she was tired of always having to explain that "this is not Islam" or "Muslims do not

⁵³⁸ "[J]eg [har] selv følt det på kroppen, at folk assosierer meg med radikal islam, så har jeg faktisk tenkt over det med assosiasjonen folk har til jøder, og . . . mye urettferdighet i politikken, da, for å si det sånn."

support terrorism.” She imagined that this probably also applied to Jews, that they had had enough of always having to distance themselves from the actions of the State of Israel:

Man har allerede brukt såpass lang tid på å vise at nei, faktisk, majoriteten av oss tror ikke på dette. [. . .] Jeg har ikke fått snakket med en jødisk person om det, men jeg kan jo tenke meg at de også føler det samme. At de må på en måte vise at de ikke er for alt det staten Israel gjør.

[We have already spent so much time showing that no, in fact, the majority of us do not believe in this. [. . .] I have not had a chance to talk to a Jewish person about this, but I can imagine that they also feel the same. That they have to show that they do not support everything Israel does.]

This comment showed how Ubah perceived a parallel between the Muslim and Jewish experiences and also a similarity based on the diversity that exists among both Jews and Muslims. Shared experiences and identification with Jews thus simultaneously emphasises and relies upon the internal diversity within the categories “Jews” and “Muslims.” In similar ways, other interviewees referred to the public discourse about ISIS as an example of such generalisations and as a basis for shared experiences between Muslims and Jews. Interviewees in these cases seemed to view the public opinion of Israel as negative and to feel that this affected perceptions of Jews negatively. Parveen (interviewee no. 6) stated, “[I]t’s just like with ISIS; ISIS is not representative of Islam, and not all actions by Israel or Palestine are representative of the entire Jewish population or the entire Muslim and Palestinian population.”⁵³⁹ Parveen also described the Arab-Israeli conflict as being an important factor in how the relation between Muslims and Jews was perceived: “There are so many who see the Israel-Palestine conflict as a synonym for the relationship between Jews and Muslims in general, or for Israel/Judaism, Palestine/ Islam, so I think the conflict has probably meant a great deal, unfortunately.”⁵⁴⁰ It is interesting that Parveen explicitly states that Palestine should not be understood to represent all Muslims. Although presumably an uncontroversial statement, this was not a typical nuance in the interviews. On the contrary, interviewees seemed to identify with the Palestinians and their cause based on perceptions of a common Muslim identity. The sense of there being an international Muslim community was

539 “[D]et er akkurat sånn som med IS, at IS ikke er en representant for islam, så er ikke alle handlinger som Israel eller Palestina gjør, representativt for hele den jødiske befolkningen eller hele den muslimske og palestinske befolkningen.”

540 “[D]et er så mange som ser på Israel- og Palestina-konflikten som synonymt for forholdet mellom jøder og muslimer generelt, eller som Israel/jødedommen, Palestina/islam, ikke sant, så jeg tror nok den konflikten generelt har hatt veldig mye å si, dessverre.”

an underlying, though often unarticulated, premise in many of the arguments. By differentiating between “Palestinians” and “Muslims,” Parveen justified her argument about the problems with conflating “Jews” and “Israelis,” by applying the logic more generally. Following the emphasis on the internal diversity within these categories, she also disentangled the Islamic and Jewish religions from the two parties in the conflict. In effect, she defended the religions against negative views of them, distanced herself from negative attitudes towards Jews based on Israeli policies, and nuanced the construction of a wider Muslim community based on identification with the Palestinians.

Other examples of resistance to group constructions were made with reference to the diversity in national backgrounds of both Jews and Muslims. Nadia (interviewee no. 25) remarked, “Just like Muslims, the Jews are . . . most of them do not live in Israel. [. . .] They [other people] think that all Muslims are Arabs, when Arabs only account for a limited number of them. It’s the same thing.”⁵⁴¹ Nadia seemed to imply that both Israelis and Arabs are viewed negatively by society and that (other) Jews and Muslims are included by association in the negative view. Perhaps her Kurdish–Iranian origins influenced her emphasis on national diversity among Muslims and the misconception suggesting all Muslims are Arab. A Muslim religious identity did not seem very important to Nadia. She described how her family held very diverse views on religion: some were “extremely” religious, while others were less so or even atheist, but they were all keen to preserve their ties with Kurdish culture and “to be proud of being Kurdish rather than Muslim.”⁵⁴² Nadia also downplayed the significance of religion with regard to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Emphasising that the suffering of the victims is the same, whether Palestinian or Israeli, she instead drew parallels to other international conflicts and seemed to focus on political aspects: “The same can be said about Iran and Iraq, and the same can be said of Syria and Turkey. It has nothing to do with a Jewish country being against a Muslim country. It is only a conflict between two countries.”⁵⁴³

Other interviewees pointed to other examples of intra-Muslim conflicts, such as the ongoing war in Syria, claiming they did not have a sectarian root. This may be interpreted as an impulse to keep “religion” out of what was perceived to be a

541 “Akkurat som med muslimer, så er jøder–flesteparten av dem bor ikke i Israel. [. . .] De tror at alle muslimer er arabere, men det er et begrenset antall som egentlig er arabere. Det er jo samme greia.”

542 “Være stolt over å være kurder fremfor muslim.”

543 “Akkurat det samme kan sies om Iran og Irak, akkurat det samme kan sies om Syria og Tyrkia. Det har ikke noe å si at det er et ‘jødeland’ mot et ‘muslimland’. Det er bare en konflikt mellom to land.”

destructive conflict. A similar impulse may explain the downplaying of religion as an element in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; while Muslim-Jewish relations understood within a religious framework were typically perceived as positive, the conflict was defined as destructive and as a secular and political phenomenon.

A common feature in the examples mentioned above is that they served to underline intra-Muslim and intra-Jewish diversity. Furthermore, the basis for the interviewees' comparisons between Muslims and Jews in these cases was the way in which an entire group, Muslim or Jewish, was associated with the actions of individuals or specific milieus. Similarly, the concept of "victimhood" related to the way in which the broader group was held accountable for the actions of a few individuals. These examples also give an indication of just how critical the interviewees were of Israel, with parallels drawn between terrorist attacks and ISIS on the one hand and the politics of the Israeli government on the other. As such, reservations about the close association between "Palestinian" and "Muslim" did not indicate support for Israel.

Nihat (interviewee no. 9) also referred to generalized images of Jews and Muslims, focusing on how they created a polarised image of Muslim-Jewish relations. Commenting on the "ring of peace," Nihat said:

Jeg fikk dessverre ikke vært med på det, men jeg syns det var et veldig bra initiativ. Jeg ble veldig glad for at det skjedde, det var veldig positivt for min del, at det var . . .

- Hva var det særlig du likte, som du ble glad for?

Altså, det var mange muslimer som jeg kjenner, som stilte opp. Også er det veldig kjent at muslimer og jøder har et anstrengt forhold, men det er det som er kjent på en måte [det er det] mediebildet gir oss, så jeg synes det var veldig fint at mange muslimer stilte opp den dagen. [. . .] Så det synes jeg var veldig positivt, selvom det er egentlig, sannheten er at det er ikke så anstrengt forhold i hverdagen og blant muslimer i Norge, men å vise det i praksis synes jeg var veldig fint.

[Unfortunately, I was not able to participate, but I thought it was a very good initiative. I was very happy that it took place, it was very positive, I believe.

- What was it that you liked, particularly, that made you happy? [. . .]

Well, many Muslims I know participated, and it is a widespread opinion that Muslims and Jews have a tense relationship, but in fact, that is [just] what people think, [it is] the image media creates, so I think it was great that so many Muslims participated that day. [. . .] I thought it was very positive, although the truth is in fact that there is not a lot of tension in everyday life, or among Muslims in Norway, but showing this in practice was very good, I think.]

Nihat's comment suggested a discrepancy between the public image of Muslim-Jewish relations and her own experiences. She appreciated the opportunity that

the “ring of peace” provided to publicly express positive views and to counter what she described as a media-produced polarised image. Her perception of everyday life and attitudes among Muslims in Norway resonates with the findings from the two Norwegian surveys on antisemitism and Islamophobia, where results showed Muslim and Jewish respondents felt they had experiences in common and supported cooperation against prejudice, and where prejudice among Muslim respondents related to notions of Jewish power and international affairs, rather than to everyday life in Norway.⁵⁴⁴

9.2 Intra-Muslim Differences in Narratives of Jewish Victimhood

While the interviewees’ experiences of prejudice were typically described as resulting from anti-Muslim sentiments within the Norwegian majority society, some were also connected to tensions within the Muslim community itself. Experiences related to affiliation with a sectarian minority led some interviewees to identify with Jewish experiences of victimhood. In particular, interviewees from the Ahmadi community expressed a strong self-identity as members of a minority within the Muslim community. Ahmadis were perceived as relatively isolated among Muslims in Norway. Some interviewees suggested that it was “best” for the Ahmadis to continue to keep to themselves, implying that it could be problematic or even dangerous for them to get involved with the broader Muslim community. As shown above, explanations of the social exclusion of Ahmadis typically attributed the negative views to what was perceived as the Ahmadi belief in a prophet after Muhammad, a serious charge given the Islamic view of Muhammad as the “Seal of the Prophets” (see chapter 7.5). What follows are examples of narratives that single out Ahmadis or Shiites as different, without reference to religious myths or concepts but instead to the experience of victimisation.

The exclusion of Ahmadis by the broader Muslim community in Norway was typically not described as violent or aggressive, but rather as a social distance. As an example, some Ahmadi interviewees mentioned that their Muslim neighbours refused to reply to the greeting *as-salāmu ‘alaykum* (peace be upon you), which according to common practice is answered with *wa’alaykumu s-salām* (and upon you, peace). The gesture – or lack thereof – was interpreted as exclusionary and as a demonstration of community boundaries.

544 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 72; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 101–02.

An association between Israelis and Ahmadis was also mentioned as an expression of boundaries between Ahmadis and other Muslims. Daniel (interviewee no. 3), who was Ahmadi, explained how this was a serious charge:

Det er mange argumenter mot oss, mot Ahmadiyya-muslimene, som andre muslimer bruker. Et av dem er at vi i sin tid ble betalt, at vi er engelske agenter. Det andre er at vi er israelske agenter. [. . .] Da har du bønn i bøtta. Da er du bare utafør, du er knust, du er sosialt død.

[There are many accusations against us, against the Ahmadi Muslims, used by other Muslims. One of them is that we once were paid, that we are English agents. The second is that we are Israeli agents. [. . .] That is really a low point. Then you are shut out, you are crushed, you are socially dead.]

According to Daniel, one of the reasons given for the allegation that Ahmadis are Israeli agents is that the Ahmadiyya movement has a long history in Israel (and before Israel, in the region); there has been an Ahmadi community – Kababir – in Mount Carmel in Haifa since the 1920s. However, as Daniel himself pointed out, there are plenty of other Muslims in the area, so why focus only on the Ahmadis? The question suggests there is another explanation. The reference to Ahmadis as British or Israeli “agents” (also made by Tanveer, see chapter 7.5), suggests the answer is related to notions of an external party with some kind of subversive agenda. Daniel also referred to attacks against Ahmadis in Pakistan and to the term “Qadiyani,” used as a pejorative to denote Ahmadis. He suggested a parallel to the labelling of Jews in Nazi Germany: “In the passport, there is a stamp: ‘Qadiyani,’ right? ‘Jude’ [speaks German], right?”⁵⁴⁵ The Pakistani registration is an example of official discrimination. Though they did not describe similar experiences in the Norwegian context, knowledge of such discrimination or physical attacks in other countries worried some of the interviewees.

Another Ahmadi interviewee, Ismail (interviewee no. 12), was born in Pakistan, having come to Norway with his parents in early childhood. He expressed a strong awareness of how Ahmadis are discriminated against in Pakistan as well as in other countries, such as Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Referring to this situation, he later described the Ahmadis’ experiences as a feature they shared with Jews. Interestingly, his image of Jews and Ahmadis as victims was combined with one of both minorities being particularly resourceful, describing this as an effect of persecution and discrimination. The interview with Ismail thus showed how negative experiences related to a minority identity could be turned into a positive (counter)narrative of strength and resilience.

⁵⁴⁵ “I passet står det jo stemplet ‘qadiani’, ikke sant? ‘Jude’, ikke sant?”

Ismail began by commenting on conspiracy theories about Jews, expressing reservations on this subject (see also chapter eight). He then described what he perceived as the common experiences of Jews and Ahmadis and the effect of these experiences:

For meg så høres det litt banalt ut å si at “nei, jødene er årsaken til alt.” Jo, jødene sitter med veldig mye makt. De har en veldig sterk politisk lobby. De er en liten gruppe, og kanskje klarer jeg også å identifisere meg [med dem] nettopp fordi at vi [ahmadiyyaer] også har vært i samme situasjonen, at vi blir diskriminert, fordi vi blir forfulgt, vi blir jaget rundt, som gjør at vi utvikler oss. Og de har jo blitt jagd rundt hele tiden, ikke sant, sånn at de utvikler seg, [det] kan være helt naturlige årsaker til det. Det er som å legge en dynamitt på bakken, da vil den sprenges som en kinaputt. [Men] graver du den ned og legger trykk på den, så vil den eksplodere. Det er nesten en naturlov slik jeg ser det, at når en gruppe i samfunnet blir diskriminert så sterkt og blir lagt så mye press på, så må de yte mer for å overleve. Og da må de tenke strategisk, siden de hverken har våpen eller muskelmakt, så må de bruke hjernen. Og faktisk er det en av de sterkeste tingene du kan bruke. Så at du lykkes med det, da, du kan ikke si [. . .], at det er fordi at du er jøde at du . . . Det er fordi at du er en gruppe som har gått gjennom det[te] over lang, lang, lang tid, altså flere hundre år. Da utvikler du et overlevelsesinstinkt som gjør at du må yte mer. Du må tenke annerledes, du må bruke hjernen din annerledes.

[To me it sounds a bit trite to say, “No, the Jews are the cause of everything.” Yes, the Jews have a great deal of power. They have a very strong political lobby. They are a small group, and maybe I am able to identify with them precisely because we too have been in the same situation, because we are discriminated against, because we are persecuted, we are hounded, which means that we develop. They have been hounded all the time, right, so the fact that they develop may be put down to entirely natural reasons. It is like placing a stick of dynamite on the ground; it will go off like a firecracker. [But] if you bury it and apply pressure to it, it will explode. It is almost a law of nature as I see it, that when a group in society is so heavily discriminated against and is placed under so much pressure, they have to work harder to survive. Then they have to think strategically, since they have neither weapons nor muscles, so they have to use their brains. In fact, that is one of the strongest things you can use. So the fact that you succeed, then, you cannot say [. . .] it is because you are a Jew . . . It is because you are a group that has gone through this for a long, long time, for hundreds of years. You develop a survival instinct that allows you to achieve more. You have to think differently, you have to use your brain differently.]

Ismail seemed to consider Jews in general to be a “successful” minority and to believe that a major factor behind their achievements was that centuries of discrimination and persecution had made them strong. His comments were detailed, indicating he had reflected on this topic previously. It seemed that his engagement derived partly from how he perceived this to be a general principle and from the close connection it had with his own identity. Ismail also had a friend who was Jewish, which may have contributed to the personal engagement. Perhaps the identification between Jews and Ahmadis was something they had dis-

cussed, or perhaps his thoughts on the matter somehow mirrored his relationship with this friend.

Apart from the dynamite metaphor, the description is characterised by a “soft” image of Jews, describing them in non-violent terms as being “with no weapons or muscles,” though with other kinds of strength. The narrative constructs an analogy between the two minorities sharing a clear evolution, moving from victimhood and persecution to strength and success. The perception of Ahmadiis and Jews as minorities that have responded successfully to persecution and discrimination thus refers to the contemporary situation of both minorities. Historically, portrayals of Jews in Norwegian media have sometimes included similar descriptions of Jews as having become strengthened by persecution.⁵⁴⁶ However, Ismail’s minority perspective turns the image around, from being a description of “them” to being a description of “us.” The narrative effectively suppresses negative connotations that typically go hand in hand with similar portrayals of Jews in traditional anti-Jewish discourse. By positioning himself alongside the image (or stereotype) of “the Jew,” the perspective does not merely reflect an image of the *other* but rather, or equally importantly, constitutes an image of the desired self.

Ismail’s description contrasts with Aleena’s cited above, on the incapacity of Muslims to react to media “propaganda” directed against them (chapter 8.2). Both describe the idea that persecution has made Jews stronger. However, the emphasis in Ismail’s narrative was that this was an experience shared between Ahmadiis and Jews, while Aleena instead emphasised a difference between Muslims and Jews in this regard. Subject to unfair treatment in the media and elsewhere, the Muslims in her narrative have not grown stronger; on the contrary, the negative experiences appear to have had no positive consequences, and it is precisely because they are not strong like the Jews that Muslims cannot fight back.

While the positive perspective in Ismail’s narrative might offer a plausible explanation for some Jewish and Ahmadi accomplishments, the histories of discrimination clearly could have been presented quite differently, as a burden. Still, similar interpretations were expressed by other Ahmadi interviewees; for example, in descriptions of a high level of education being a way to respond to a precarious position in society. These examples can be seen as expressions of an unwillingness to accept victimhood as a defining identity. Furthermore, by describing the ways in which discrimination makes groups stronger as “almost a law of nature,” Ismail elevated the example to a general rule, valid for other cases of victimhood as well. Indeed, experiences of discrimination have produced

⁵⁴⁶ Simonsen, “[. . .] De krasseste utslagene av de samfunnsmessige understrømningene som truer sivilisasjonen.’ Diskursen om jødene og antisemittismen etter 1945,” 251.

similar reactions among other minorities; the strategy of “honouring” the stigma is evident, for example, in the historical example of African Americans in the 1960s declaring that “Black is beautiful.”⁵⁴⁷ Instead of confronting or denying the stigma, the tactic was to “destigmatise” it by rendering it a positive value, to obliterate through embracement. The example from the interview with Ismail describes a transition, which not only neutralizes a disadvantage but also redefines the Jewish and Ahmadi positions by portraying them as strengthened. Through this symbolic reversal, the action erases “the orthodoxies of relations between the powerful and the disadvantaged.”⁵⁴⁸

Analogies between Jewish and Muslim experiences of victimisation made in the present study did not necessarily appear related to similarities between the figure of “the Jew” and the figure of “the Muslim,” as they can be derived from the repertoires of antisemitism and Islamophobia. Indeed, interviewees sometimes perceived significant differences between the ways society viewed (constructed) the two minorities (see also chapter ten). The examples above nevertheless show how self-image and perceptions of shared experiences could lead to an identification with Jews for some interviewees.

Parveen (interviewee no. 6), whose parents had experienced violent persecution in Pakistan for being Ahmadi, expressed how these experiences had made an impact on her as well. “It has probably affected me more than I think,” she said.⁵⁴⁹ The issue of minority rights was important to Parveen; they were something that should not be taken for granted in contemporary society. She said, “There are many different minority groups in the world. I wonder if this protection is actually working. [. . .] I just want to dive deeper and see how everything works in practice. Laws are great on paper, but that is that.”⁵⁵⁰ Expressing some doubts about whether global society is really capable of protecting persecuted people, Parveen emphasised similarities in experiences between different minority groups, providing the situation of Jewish refugees after World War II and today’s refugees from Syria and Afghanistan as examples. “There are many refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, etc., but this was also a problem many years ago, in the aftermath of World War II, with the Jews,” she said.⁵⁵¹ Parveen’s narrative had a broad generational

547 Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*.

548 Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 60.

549 “Det har sikkert påvirket meg mer enn jeg tror.”

550 “Det finnes mange ulike minoritetsgrupper i verden. Jeg lurer litt på om hvorvidt det vernet faktisk fungerer. [. . .]. Jeg har bare lyst til å dykke dypere inn i det og se hvordan alt fungerer i praksis. Lovverket er jo kjempefint på papiret, men det er det.”

551 “Det er mange flyktninger fra Syria, Afghanistan etc., men [allerede] for mange år siden så man dette som en utfordring i kjølvannet av andre verdenskrig, med jødene.”

and historical perspective, and constituted an example of how a vulnerable minority position can have continued importance through generations and encourage empathy and solidarity with other victims of persecution. While explicitly identifying with Jewish victimhood, Parveen, like Ismail, still signalled a reluctance to adopt the position of the victim. At the same time, her narrative did not have the focus on transformation, which was so central to Ismail's.

Another example of identification with Jews related to intra-Muslim differences was provided in the interview with Fatimah (interviewee no. 1). Fatimah was Shiite and expressed sympathy for Jews based on personal experiences of Sunni-Shiite antagonisms. Again, this was likened to a "Jewish" victim experience. As a young girl, Fatimah had gone to a school on the east side of Oslo with a majority of Sunni pupils. There were also some Jewish pupils in her class. Just like her Jewish classmates, who out of fear of antisemitism hid the fact that they were Jewish, Fatimah was told by her parents to keep her head down, to hide her identity and stay away from Sunni Muslims. This created a sense of identification with her Jewish classmates, as she explained:

Jeg vet hvor vondt det er. Jeg vet hvor skummelt det er, å bli minnet på av min familie, mamma og pappa, at "Å ja, du skal gå der, ja? Da må du forte deg! Å ja, fått deg ny venninne, fått deg ny kompis? Ikke røp noe som helst. Ikke røp noe før du er hundre prosent sikker . . ." Jeg kan kjenne på de jødene jeg kjenner, hvordan de har det, og de vet jo hvordan jeg også har det. Vi kan egentlig relatere.

[I know how painful it is. I know how scary it is, being reminded by my family, mum and dad, that "Oh, you are going there? Then you have to hurry! Oh, you got a new friend, a new pal? Do not tell them anything. Do not tell them anything before you are one hundred percent sure." I can sense it in my Jewish friends, how they feel, and they know what it is like for me. We can relate.]

Fatimah described a violent incident involving her father as the reason for her parents' fear. As shown above (see chapter 7.5), other interviewees did not seem to perceive similar levels of tension between Sunnis and Shiites in Norway, but this incident had deeply affected Fatimah and her family. Fatimah also described how being Muslim in Norway could be difficult due to prevalent negative attitudes towards Muslims among the majority population. As one example of this, she mentioned a perception of Muslims as antisemitic, claiming this and other negative views about Muslims sometimes led her to keep her Muslim identity hidden. Fatimah said, "Sometimes I just avoid saying that I'm Muslim. Just so I do not have to talk about it."⁵⁵² Fatimah also spent a considerable amount of time during the interview distancing herself from antisemitism among Muslims, while describ-

552 "Noen ganger bare dropper jeg å si at jeg er muslim. Bare for å slippe å snakke om det."

ing such prejudice as a problem limited to only a small part of the community. Commenting on “the ring of peace,” she expressed how good it felt to show everyone that Muslims support Jews. She said, “It is fantastic that young Muslims and non-Muslims joined hands around the synagogue in solidarity and compassion, demonstrating that, ‘you know what, we Muslims do not actually have anything against Jews.’”⁵⁵³ She gave the impression that fighting antisemitism was important to her.

The interview with Fatimah showed that perceptions of negative attitudes towards Jews within the Muslim community encouraged awareness of the interviewee’s own (sectarian) minority identity, subsequently promoting identification with Jews. Furthermore, experiences of an imposed image of Muslims as being generally antisemitic, conveyed in Norwegian society, had motivated Fatimah to express her anti-antisemitic opinions and participate in the “ring of peace,” a public event. The opportunity to express resistance against antisemitism also seemed to be an important factor motivating Fatimah to participate in the interview.

9.3 Competitive Victimhood

While negative experiences in many cases seemed to have encouraged sympathy and identification with Jews, they sometimes provided grounds for what can be termed competitive victimhood, in the sense that Jewish victimhood and Muslim victimhood were compared and seen to conflict. Jews and Muslims were thus perceived to be competing for sympathy or attention, an impression that can be summarised in the question: Who are the main victims (or “the Jews”) in today’s Europe? Sometimes the argument was based on quantitative comparisons, where the interviewees considered antisemitism to be a relatively minor problem due to fewer incidents or less prevalent negative attitudes (see also chapter 10.5). A typical view was that antisemitism received too much public attention compared with anti-Muslim attitudes. These arguments seemed influenced by personal experiences or, more generally, by the interviewee’s identification with Muslims as a minority that experiences prejudice. One example was the account given by Yusuf (interviewee no. 17), who was bullied by his classmates throughout childhood and adolescence and was disappointed by his school’s inability to deal with the situation. He attributed these experiences to his Muslim identity, describing

⁵⁵³ “Det er helt fantastisk at unge muslimer og ikke-muslimer valgte å slå ring rundt synagogen, i solidaritet og medmenneskelighet og vise at ‘Vet dere hva, vi muslimer, vi har egentlig ikke noe imot jøder.’”

prejudice against Muslims as widespread in society. He also described an impression that there tended to be less interest in Islamophobia than in antisemitism, notwithstanding the two being equally important problems. At this point in the interview, Yusuf also referred to my employment at the Holocaust Center, perhaps associating this with the same tendency to focus on antisemitism. Yusuf said, “You work at the Holocaust Center, right? Yes. And another thing is that there is a lot, I think there is not as much focus on combatting Islamophobia as on antisemitism, although both are just as bad and problematic.”⁵⁵⁴ Yusuf’s comments did not suggest negative views about Jews on his part; rather, his impression seemed based on a combination of personal experiences and perceptions of tendencies in society. The interview thus showed that a perceived lack of balance in society’s reactions to prejudice did not necessarily provoke negative sentiments towards Jews as “prioritised” victims. Yusuf described the *problems* as equally important; the difference lay in the attention granted to the victims.

Aleena (interviewee no. 4) also expressed a sense that there exists an imbalance in society’s attitudes towards Jews and Muslims, pointing to different expectations. As shown above, some interviewees drew parallels between the way Muslims are associated with Islamist extremists and terrorism on the one hand, and the way Jews are associated with Israeli policies on the other. They expressed frustration over always having to take a stand against the negative actions of other Muslims, comparing it to the way Jews have to distance themselves from Israeli policies. Aleena (interviewee no. 4), while also expressing frustration, saw matters differently:

[A]lltid hvis det er noe IS har gjort, eller sånn som det i Paris, Charlie Hebdo-greiene, ikke sant, så forlanges det at alle muslimer skal stå opp og si at vi tar avstand fra det. Enda jeg har ingen verdens ting med dem å gjøre. Jeg har ingen ting som er relatert til det. [. . .] Men forlanges det parallelt, overfor jødene, at de tar avstand fra det Israel holder på med? Gjør det det? Nei, det gjør ikke det. Så konsekvensene for muslimer er mye sterkere, mye hardere for oss enn det er for jødene her, som minoritet.

[A]ll the time, when ISIS has done something, or, like this thing in Paris, the Charlie Hebdo incident, it is always expected that Muslims stand up and say that we reject it. Yet I have nothing to do with them. [. . .] Conversely, are Jews expected to reject what Israel is doing? No, they are not. Therefore, the consequences for Muslims are much harsher, much harsher for us than for the Jews here, as a minority.]

554 “Du jobbet på HL-senteret, ikke sant? Ja. Og en annen ting er jo at det er veldig, jeg syns ikke det er så mye fokus på bekjempelsen av islamofobi som antisemittisme, for jeg tenker at begge er like ille og problematiske.”

This statement shows how Aleena perceived a double standard on the part of the majority society, where Muslims suffer as a result of society's negative generalisations and constant expectations that they take a stand against extremism, while Jews are not similarly held responsible for what happens in Israel. Thus, what were originally perceived as similar situations, ultimately led to a negative comparison between the two minorities regarding the consequences for the actions in question. The comment does not imply that Jews should have been held responsible; rather, the problem lies in society's attitude towards the Muslim minority.

Aleena also gave several examples during the interview of why she believed Jews received too much attention compared with other victims. Her arguments seemed to rely on a perception of antisemitism as exaggerated and comparable to many other histories of persecution:

Det er et veldig fokus på "stakkars jøder, stakkars jøder." Men jeg ser ikke på jøder som noen "stakkars" . . . Den informasjonen, eller den holdningen, eller den forståelsen bør oppdateres, tenker jeg. Jøder er ikke det eneste folket i verden som har blitt forfulgt.

[There is such a heavy focus on "the poor Jews, the poor Jews." However, I do not see the Jews as "poor." That information, or that attitude or that understanding should be updated, I think. Jews are not the only people in the world who have been persecuted.]

Clearly aware of the Jewish history of victimisation, including the Holocaust, Aleena nevertheless saw the commemoration of this victimhood as biased. Furthermore, she implied that the persecution of Jews belonged to the past by saying that the understanding of Jews as vulnerable needed to be "updated." In other words, Jews were no longer victims and should not be viewed as such. Later, Aleena explicitly defined the victimisation of Jews as "history," in the sense that it no longer occurred.

The perception of Jewish victimhood as something that belonged to the past, and of a historical development that had changed the image of the main victims of discrimination in Europe was typical among interviewees. However, while some questioned the prevalence of antisemitism today, their accounts rarely questioned the severity of the historical Jewish experiences. Indeed, historical antisemitism seemed to function as a model for interpreting contemporary anti-Muslim attitudes (see also chapter 9.4). Aleena, however, seemed to contest the established discourse surrounding the Jewish history of victimhood. Her narrative is an example of how a critical view of this discourse sometimes referred to a broader context, going beyond Muslim-Jewish relations:

Hvis det er noen som faktisk har blitt virkelig forfulgt og har, hva skal jeg si, slitt og sliter i dag, er det det afrikanske folket, vil jeg si da, som har opplevd slavehandel og sånne ting nesten opp til vårt årtusen, og liksom, hvis det er noen som trenger erstatning, eller burde få, så er det dem, ikke jødene. De er vel det folket som har mest både penger og makt i dag.

[If anyone has been persecuted and has, what should I say, struggled and still struggles today, I'd say it is the African people, who have experienced slavery and things like that almost up to our millennium, and if there is someone who needs compensation, or should get it, then it's them, not the Jews. They are probably the people with the most money and power today.]

According to Aleena's narrative, the history of the persecution of Jews was exaggerated compared with what Africans have endured. During the interview, Aleena returned to this point, insisting that Jews had been treated favourably compared with other groups who have experienced injustice. Indeed, Jews appeared to be the only group receiving sympathy:

Hvorfor er det bare jødene som er stakkarslige? Hvorfor er ikke indianerne stakkarslige? Hvorfor er ikke Sør-Afrika stakkarslig? Hvorfor er ikke Australia stakkarslig, de innfødte der? De innfødte i Amerika? Hvorfor er det bare jødene som er stakkarslige?

[Why are only the Jews to be pitied? Why are the Indians not pitied? Why is South Africa not pitied? Why is Australia not pitied? I mean the Indigenous people there. Or the Native Americans? Why are only the Jews to be pitied?]

Aleena's narrative has a broad perspective, addressing not just the Norwegian or even the European discourse on Jewish victimhood, but approaching the topic on a global level.

Aleena's critique of what she perceived to be a profoundly biased perspective seems to conform to Rüsen's "critical" type of historical consciousness, using a series of critical historical arguments against established historical narratives, which are presented as outdated.⁵⁵⁵ This critical type of historical consciousness perceives of historical narratives as having lost their validity and relevance to present-day reality and events and of no longer constituting a source of orientation. The critical narrative develops its argument by pointing to elements that provide a counter-narrative instead. "In its most elaborate variant, such critical thinking presents moral reasoning as an ideology-critique of morality," Rüsen notes.⁵⁵⁶ Similarly, maintaining the need for a reinterpretation of the predominant narrative of Jewish victimhood, Aleena suggests the current understanding has lost its validity. Her counter-narrative can be described as post-colonialist. The argument is based on a moral judgement, criticising the attitude she sees as determining society's approach to this history, perceiving it to have led to the neglect of other persecuted groups. Aleena perceived a significant imbalance and

555 Rüsen distinguishes between four varieties of historical interpretation. In addition to the critical, there is the traditional, exemplary, and genetic. Rüsen, "Historical Consciousness," 70–76.

556 Rüsen, "Historical Consciousness," 76.

injustice related to victim status, with insufficient sympathy towards the historical suffering of all minorities except Jews. Later in the interview, it became clear that Aleena's main examples of this bias were related to the commemoration of the Holocaust and the history of the State of Israel.

9.4 The Significance of the Holocaust

The long history of persecution of Jews in Europe, particularly the history of the Holocaust, was a recurring topic in many of the interviews. The project's affiliation with the Holocaust Center may have contributed to the association and the sense of relevance of this topic. The material displayed different approaches to the subject, among which were both sympathetic views about Jews based on this history and identification based on parallels to discrimination towards Muslims today. A typical comment regarding the Holocaust as a historical incident was made by Imran (interviewee no. 15), who said, "What was done, was tragic, and should not have happened."⁵⁵⁷ However, parallels between present-day discrimination and the history of the Holocaust sometimes triggered a relativisation and downplaying of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Interviewees related the history and commemoration of the Holocaust to the establishment and present policies of the State of Israel. A critical view of this connection argued that Jews today exploit the historical victim status resulting from the genocide to obtain particular benefits or support for Israeli policies.

Despite this range of approaches to the topic, interviewees typically underlined the significance of the Holocaust as a historical event and the importance of teaching about it in school. Support for Holocaust education was sometimes linked to an engagement against Islamophobia. Education about the genocide of the European Jews was thus seen as a means to combat contemporary negative attitudes, a view that signalled sympathy and identification with the historical suffering of the Jews. Mahmud (interviewee no. 31) remarked that anything other than support for Holocaust education and commemoration would be inconsistent and would make engagement against other forms of injustice, such as discrimination against Muslims, difficult:

Det blir jo også litt, veldig, dobbeltmoralsk og hyklersk hvis vi muslimer klager over det og samtidig sier at det er greit det som skjedde med jøder. Det blir helt feil.

557 "Det som var utført, det var tragisk, og det burde ikke ha skjedd."

[It would be a little, or very much, a double standard and hypocritical if we Muslims were to complain about such and at the same time say that it is ok what happened to Jews. That would be completely wrong.]

The argument relies on a perception of (some) similarity in the experiences and of the common human dignity of Muslims and Jews. The legitimacy of combatting anti-Muslim attitudes implied that similar attention should be granted the historical victimisation of Jews.

Fatimah (interviewee no. 1) described similar views, seeing the history of the Holocaust as still relevant today and as something that directly concerns other people experiencing prejudice and discrimination. However, this subject had been very difficult during her time in school; apparently her classmates had felt negatively about learning about Judaism and the Holocaust. Fatimah described how they had called the Holocaust a lie, drawn swastikas in the classroom, and made the Nazi salute; presumably to provoke the teachers, she thought. Fatimah experienced the situation as deeply distressing. As described above, there was a Jewish girl in her class, and the behaviour of Fatimah's classmates made her understand why the girl had been uncomfortable and had kept her identity hidden. The negative attitudes expressed by her classmates, who were mainly Muslim, seemed strange to Fatimah, because "What happened during the Holocaust is happening to us Muslims."⁵⁵⁸ She seemed to perceive her classmates' reactions as thoughtless but also felt it might have helped if the lessons had outlined historical parallels more clearly:

Man må lære også det at det som har skjedd før, og det som skjer nå, det er på en måte det samme. Det er jo folkegrupper som på en måte blir myrdet for ingen grunn. Folk som IS, for eksempel, [de] anser dem de dreper for null verdt. Hitler så på jøder som null verdt.

[You have to learn, too, that what has happened before, and what is happening now, in a way is the same. It is people being killed for no reason. People like ISIS, for example, [they] look at those they kill as worthless. Hitler looked at the Jews as worthless.]

It seems this connection between past and present was missing in the lessons at Fatimah's school, and she thought it would have helped if the teachers had framed the history of the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust differently. The claim that Muslims today are experiencing a "holocaust" is not adequate, but the second comment made the perception of similarities more specific, relating to the senselessness of killing innocent people and the parallels in the dehumanising enemy constructions. Rather than suggesting that Muslims deserve more atten-

558 "[D]et som skjedde i forbindelse med Holocaust, det skjer med oss muslimer."

tion or that dominant narratives on the Holocaust are mistaken, the parallel in Fatimah's comment functions to convey a sense of sympathy and shared experience with Jews and a view of Holocaust education as relevant and important today. She wanted to show her classmates the potential for solidarity inherent in the historical narrative of the Holocaust.

The argument raised by some of the interviewees, that commemoration and education about the Holocaust should be done with an aim to extract historical lessons, touches on one of the key themes in Holocaust education. Some interviewees' interpretation of the historical victimhood of the Jews defined it as an expression of discrimination and prejudice not linked solely to the historical situation, but rather as an example of the extreme consequences that such attitudes may lead to. Jörn Rüsen conceptualized "exemplary narratives" as a way of "generalizing experiences to rules of conduct."⁵⁵⁹ This form of historical narrative perceives of history as a past recollected with a message or lesson for the present; i.e., it has a didactic dimension. Holocaust education conducted in this way treats history as containing a set of insights that can be used to guide our actions today. In Norway, education about the Holocaust has been an explicit focus of public strategies to combat contemporary antisemitism.⁵⁶⁰ Rather than contemporary antisemitism, however, when discussing the pertinence of Holocaust education, interviewees in the present study focused on the persecution and discrimination faced by other minorities and the situation of Muslims in Europe today.⁵⁶¹

The inclination to see historical similarities and to draw parallels across time and between different peoples was sometimes explicitly linked to perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Parallels drawn between the genocide of the European Jews during World War II and the situation of the Palestinians today resulted in criticisms of the commemoration of and education about the Holocaust. The point seemed motivated by a critical view of Israeli policies and of a perceived failure in that regard to learn the lessons of the Holocaust.

⁵⁵⁹ Rüsen, "Historical Consciousness," 72.

⁵⁶⁰ See, e.g., Minister of Education Guri Melby's speech in connection to the launch of the new action plan against antisemitism, January 2021: "Markering av Den internasjonale Holocaustdagen 2021" [Marking the International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2021], YouTube (website), 27.01.2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyTTOPqvVJ8>.

⁵⁶¹ The Norwegian population surveys showed that this view is widespread in Norway. The statement "Knowledge about the Holocaust is important for preventing the oppression of minorities today" was supported by a majority in all three adult samples (general population, Muslims, and Jews) both in 2017 and 2022. Support was almost 90% in the general population, close to 100% among the Jewish respondents, and among the Muslim respondents it had increased from 57% to 72% between 2017 and 2022. Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 39.

Jamel (interviewee no. 22), shared the view that Holocaust education and commemoration were important. However, he perceived a lack of balance and relevance to contemporary society that needed to be remedied:

Det er helt greit [minnemarkering og undervisning om Holocaust], men da må du også minnes alle andre som dør. Det er helt greit, det er menneskeslakt nå, til den dag i dag, som vi har snakket om, i Midtøsten, Palestina. Det er menneskeslakt i Irak, det er menneskeslakt i Syria. Må minnes dem og, de må ha en dag de og [Den internasjonale Holocaustdagen]. Men det kommer trolig ikke til å skje.

[It is fine [to commemorate and educate about the Holocaust], but then you also have to commemorate all the others who also die. It is fine, [but] there is a human slaughter going on up until this day, as we said, in the Middle East, in Palestine. There is a slaughter going on in Iraq, there is a slaughter in Syria. We have to commemorate them too, they need a day too [similar to International Holocaust Remembrance Day]. However, that will probably never happen.]

As Jamel saw it, commemoration and education about the Holocaust should be conditional on other ongoing situations receiving the same amount of attention. His statement implied that those engaged in its commemoration would probably be unwilling to introduce such an approach to history. Jamel also criticised how the teaching portrayed Jews, remarking that school only told you to feel sorry for the Jews and not to view them “as people.” Viewing Jews “as people” apparently meant addressing a broader picture, including contemporary issues and problems, specifically the situation in Israel and Palestine; as Jamel explained:

[M]an lærte ikke da vi gikk på skolen om hva som skjedde i Palestina. Vi fikk aldri høre noe om det. De prenter inn i hodet ditt fra du er liten at man skal synes synd [på jødene], men ikke se på dem som vanlige medmennesker.

[We didn't learn anything about what was going on in Palestine. We never heard anything [about that]. From when you are small they drum into you that you should feel sorry [for the Jews], not to look upon them as normal people.]

Jamel seemed to feel that the position of Jews as victims during the Holocaust had somehow created a one-dimensional and unrealistic image, preventing nuances and education about contemporary issues – specifically, what was happening in Palestine. His criticism suggested a revision of this image of “the Jew,” but the distinction between the historical victims and today’s political leaders in Israel was blurred.

The interview with Berat (interviewee no. 20) included a similar perception of Jews, relating both to World War II and to Israel. Describing the first association he made to the term “Jew,” he explained:

Det første jeg kommer på, er “menneske,” som jeg har sagt tidligere. Det finnes gode og dårlige mennesker i alle samfunn. Det jeg kommer på når jeg hører ordet “jøde,” det kan jeg knytte til undertrykkelse, både for og imot. Jeg kom på det Nazi-Tyskland har gjort med jødene under andre verdenskrig. Også kommer jeg på hva Israel har gjort med landområder i Midtøsten.

[As I said before, the first I think of is “person.” There are good people and bad people everywhere. What I think of when I hear the word “Jew” is related to oppression, both for and against. I think of what Nazi Germany did to the Jews during World War II, and I think of what Israel has done with territories in the Middle East.]

Following the first statement, which initially communicated a neutral position towards Jews, Berat’s next associations were characterised by opposing images. The quotation shows how the word “Jew” promotes associations in diametrically different directions, though the point of departure is the same, related to “oppression.” Berat’s association when asked about Jews was that they were both “for and against” this, presumably meaning Jews can be characterised both as oppressed and as oppressors. The narrative again describes a complete reversal of the position ascribed to Jews, moving from victim to perpetrator. Among interviewees who avoided direct analogies suggesting “Jews/Israelis are the new Nazis,” there nonetheless seemed to be a sense that the logical consequence of education about the Holocaust was that you also learned about the situation in Palestine, and consequently that these two situations were somehow similar or related. In the eyes of some interviewees, the “Holocaust” of today is happening to the Palestinians.

Karrar (interviewee no. 29) also perceived a parallel between the situation of Jews during the Holocaust and Muslims’ situation today, claiming Jews today received too much attention:

Det som irriterer meg aller mest, er at de blir tatt hensyn til av Vesten. Og den ekstrahjelpen de får, som landområder og støtte. Det er på grunn av Holocaust, at de ble forfulgt, men nå er jo muslimer i samme situasjon. Altså muslimer i Mosul, for eksempel, blir jo også forfulgt og de ble drept og det er hat overalt og i hele verden, men likevel så får vi ikke den anerkjennelsen og respekten vi skal ha. Da føler vi at det er noe bak. Det er ikke bare på grunn av at de har blitt undertrykt at de får den hjelpen. Det er heller det at de har fått makt og de gir seg selv den hjelpen. De manipulerer systemet. Og det ser vi, for vi har vært gjennom det samme, men vi har ikke endt opp med samme resultat. Da er det feil i hele mattestykket, det er noe som mangler—det er den makten de har som ikke vi har. Det er akkurat det.

[What annoys me most is that the West takes them into account. And the extra help they receive, such as land and support. It is because of the Holocaust, that they were persecuted, but now Muslims are in the same situation. I mean, Muslims in Mosul, for example, are also persecuted, they were killed, there is hatred everywhere, and throughout the world, yet we do not get the recognition and respect we should have. Then we feel there is something behind it. It is not simply because they were oppressed that they get that help. It is rather that

they have gained power and give themselves that help. They manipulate the system. We see that because we have been through the same but have not ended up with the same result. The whole thing just does not add up, there is something missing – and it is the power they have that we do not. That is what it is.]

With reference to widespread anti-Muslim hatred and the brutalities committed by ISIS in Mosul – widely broadcast at the time of the interview – Karrar described contemporary discrimination against and persecution of Muslims as comparable to the victimhood of the Jews, the difference being that it is not recognised as such. The narrative portrays the West as only concerned with the situation of the Jews, while Muslim victimhood does not receive similar attention. As was also noted above (chapter 8.3), “Jewish power” and some form of pulling of strings seemed a key factor in Karrar’s narrative, explaining both prejudice against Jews and the support Jews currently receive, in contrast to Muslims.

Despite this critical view of contemporary realities, Karrar did not imply that he rejected the significance (or factual circumstances) of the Holocaust. Karrar supported the idea of commemoration and of schools teaching about the Holocaust (see also chapter 8.3), as it was a significant historical event. Summarising such education, he said, “We learn that it is incredibly wrong what happened during the Holocaust, it is simply a misdeed.”⁵⁶² In Karrar’s view, it was a question of balance and equality. At the same time, however, the relevance of the Holocaust seemed to be diminishing:

Jeg synes at det er riktig gjort [minnemarkeringer, undervisning], fordi det er garantert en hendelse som skiller seg ut, men jeg synes at det får litt for mye oppmerksomhet. For hvis man skal gi dem så mye oppmerksomhet, så må man gi like mye oppmerksomhet til andre situasjoner som ligner på den, som det som skjer med muslimer. Så jeg tenker at istedenfor hele tiden å studere fortiden, kan man ikke heller studere nåtiden, det som skjer nå?

[I think it is OK to do it [commemoration, teaching], because it is definitely an event that stands out, but I think it gets a bit too much attention. If you are going to give them that much attention, you must give as much attention to other situations that are similar, like what is happening to Muslims. So I think instead of constantly studying the past, why can't we study the present, what is happening now?]

Besides expressing a sense of injustice at society’s assessment of the suffering of Jews versus the suffering of Muslims and other people who experience discrimination, the central argument relates to Karrar’s understanding of significance, where engagement with historical incidents seemed less important than under-

562 “Vi lærer at det er utrolig feil det som skjedde, det som skjedde i Holocaust altså og at det ja, det er bare en ugjerning rett og slett.”

standing current affairs. In other words, Karrar understood Holocaust education as primarily oriented towards the past, disconnected from present situations. Expressing views about young people's interests and the educational benefits of studying history, he also seemed to believe that contemporary issues were more interesting to young people, as this is where their political engagement lies. The narrative echoes Aleena's (interviewee no. 4) critical assessment of the public discourse on victimhood as being too focused on Jewish suffering and the Holocaust. However, a difference can be seen in the way Karrar acknowledges the value of commemoration and education, though arguing that other situations deserve similar attention, while Aleena contested the dominant Holocaust narrative and understanding of Jewish suffering.

Perhaps the clearest example of how some interviewees drew parallels between the Nazis' treatment of the Jews during the Holocaust and Israelis' (or "Zionists'") treatment of the Palestinians was given in the interview with Halim (interviewee no. 23):

Når du sier "sionist" så tenker jeg på staten Israel, jeg tenker på et folk som genuint kriger for å utsette et annet folk. Det er det jeg tenker på når jeg hører ordet "sionisme." Og det jeg også tenker på når jeg hører ordet "sionisme" er at "glemmer de så fort, liksom?" Dette her skjedde med dere for hva da, under 50 år siden, så skjedde akkurat det dere gjør mot disse menneskene, det skjedde med dere. Hvor er lærdommen i historien?

[When you say "Zionist," I think about the State of Israel. I think about a people who genuinely fight to eradicate another people. That is what I think of when I hear "Zionism." Moreover, what I also think of when I hear the word "Zionism" is "do they really forget this quickly?" This happened to you for, what – less than 50 years ago? Exactly what you are doing to these people happened to you. Where is the historical learning?]

This statement is a typical example of how some of the interviewees regarded the situation in Israel-Palestine. In the words of Halim, "Israel is the new Germany and Benjamin Netanyahu is the new Hitler in my eyes."⁵⁶³ Interviewees expressed frustration with what they saw as a deep injustice in the behaviour of Israel towards the Palestinians, and some suggested that Israelis had a particular responsibility to know better, given the history of the Holocaust. In these instances, there seemed to be no distinction made between "Israeli" and "Jew," or between Jews during the Holocaust and Jews/Israelis today. As discussed above (see chapter 7.4), the notion that the Jews, once oppressed, have now become the oppressors is common in contemporary anti-Israel statements, where Israelis are portrayed as "Nazis" and Pal-

563 "Israel er den nye Tyskland og Benjamin Netanyahu er den nye Hitler i mine øyne."

estinians as the historical Jewish victims of the Holocaust.⁵⁶⁴ The Norwegian surveys on antisemitism indicate that this notion is widespread in the general population, though a decrease was observed between 2011 and 2022.⁵⁶⁵ In contrast, support had become stronger in the Muslim sample, (63% support in 2022 compared with 51% in 2017). Equating the Holocaust to the experiences of the Palestinians (or “Muslims today”) does not necessarily indicate a belief that the experiences and situations are (exactly) the same. The Holocaust has assumed a position as an expression of “absolute evil,” and references to the genocide may serve as a means to convey severe criticism. As such, the statement may also, however, be seen as a variant of the old antisemitic notion that Jews are allied with evil. Most Jews in Europe perceive the statement to be clearly antisemitic, and it represents a form of relativisation and trivialisation of the Holocaust.⁵⁶⁶ Both the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and the 1994 report on antisemitism issued by the Runnymede Trust describe the analogy as antisemitic. The Runnymede Trust note that this is among other reasons based on how “the making of it diminishes the significance of the Holocaust and is designed to provoke Jewish sensibilities.”⁵⁶⁷

Perceptions of similarities between the experience of Jews in the Holocaust and contemporary experiences of Muslims in Europe, or of Palestinians, elicited a deep frustration among some of the interviewees in the current study, as well as a sense of double standards regarding society’s treatment of victimhood. The interviewees seemed to detect some kind of faulty logic in commemorating the Holocaust but not taking action on behalf of the Palestinians or other persecuted groups. Related to this, there also seemed to be an impression among some of the interviewees that Norway (Norwegians) supports Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians. These perceptions thus indicated a boundary to the majority population.

564 The tendency is evident online. A report from the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism (ISCA) in 2017 noted a rise in Israel-related online antisemitism (the report refers to social media, mainly Twitter and Facebook) that portrays Israelis or Zionists as the “new Nazis.” Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, ed., *Best Practices to Combat Antisemitism on Social Media* (Bloomington: ISCA, Indiana University, 2017), 11.

565 The statement “Israel treats the Palestinians just as badly as the Jews were treated during World War II” was supported by 38% of respondents in 2012 and 33% in 2022. Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 70.

566 FRA, *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism: Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*, 25.

567 Runnymede Trust, *A Very Light Sleeper: The Persistence and Dangers of Antisemitism* (London: The Runnymede Trust, 1994), 32. See also, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), “Working Definition of Antisemitism,” last accessed February 2, 2024 What is antisemitism? (holocaustremembrance.com).

The view that Jews exploit the Holocaust was expressed in the interview with Aleena, who saw this as part of a pattern going back a long way in Jewish history. Aleena pointed to the Jewish diaspora from Israel, claiming that Jews had twisted the story in order to claim a right to return to a country they had in fact left voluntarily – “They weren’t even chased out of there.”⁵⁶⁸ She claimed there were a number of other cases where minorities had been driven from their lands without demanding to get them back, mentioning the history of Native Americans as one example. As Aleena saw it, the main source of this injustice was that Jews were able to pull strings to get their own way – the main result of this effort being the establishment of the State of Israel. To achieve this goal, the Jews also exploited their history of persecution, specifically of the Holocaust, as she explained:

Og så er det jo 2. verdenskrig, at de har liksom snudd den trenden [. . .] til at “Det er så synd på oss” og “Vi har blitt forfulgt i Andre verdenskrig” og “Det var dere som drepte oss.” Så har de liksom [solgt] inn den historien som en grunn til å få Israel og å få alle landene med seg på at “Vi vil ha det tilbake,” og “Dere skal støtte oss for å få det tilbake.”

[Then there is World War II, that they have somehow shifted that trend to [. . .] “Poor us” and “we were persecuted during World War II” and “it was you who killed us.” And they have somehow [sold] that story as a reason to get Israel and all countries to support them when they say “We want it back,” and “You must support us in getting it back.”]

Aleena seemed to suggest that European guilt following the Holocaust had been instrumentalized by Jews to establish Israel. Accusations that the memory of the Holocaust is being exploited are common in the context of the Middle East conflict.⁵⁶⁹ This tendency, which emerged shortly after World War II, is referred to as *secondary antisemitism*, a term coined by Peter Schönbach.⁵⁷⁰ Central to the concept is the idea that Jews exploit the European (or German) sense of guilt for the Holocaust, hence it is often stated that secondary antisemitism exists not *in spite of* Auschwitz, but rather *because of* it. Typically, Jews are charged with using the memory of the genocide to acquire money or power, or to further the interests of Israel.⁵⁷¹ Though

⁵⁶⁸ “Og de var jo ikke jagd derfra engang.”

⁵⁶⁹ Günther Jikeli, “Perceptions of the Holocaust Among Young Muslims in Berlin, Paris and London,” in *Perceptions of the Holocaust in Europe and Muslim Communities: Sources, Comparisons and Educational Challenges*, ed. Günther Jikeli and Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 105–06; Wetzel, “Antisemitism and Holocaust Remembrance,” 21.

⁵⁷⁰ Peter Schönbach, *Reaktionen auf die antisemitische Welle im Winter 1959/1960* (Europ. Verlag-Anst., 1961).

⁵⁷¹ See also Theodor W. Adorno, “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977). For an example of this argument, see Norman Finkelstein’s controversial book *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000).

primarily linked to German responsibility for the genocide, the idea that Jews exploit their historical victimhood status is prevalent among the general population in many parts of Europe.⁵⁷² European Muslims are presumably less personally affected by the Holocaust in terms of family histories or stories of collaboration than are members of the majority populations in Europe, including Norway.⁵⁷³ However, as Günther Jikeli has remarked, support for different kinds of secondary antisemitism among European Muslims can be related to the influence of contemporary discursive patterns whereby antisemitic attitudes develop new expressions that are socially acceptable, such as in Israel-related antisemitism.⁵⁷⁴ In the Norwegian population surveys, around one fifth of respondents in the general population and one third of the Muslim sample supported the statement “Jews today exploit the memory of the Holocaust for their own benefit.”⁵⁷⁵

9.5 Who are the “New Jews”?

The claim that “Muslims are the new Jews in Europe” has often been made, and certainly not only by Muslims. Besides suggesting that Muslims are the main victims in Europe today, it may be seen as an allusion to the connection between different forms of prejudice; specifically, to the relationship between antisemitism and Islamophobia, to similarities in stereotypes, or perhaps to similarities in experiences of discrimination. However, the comparison of Jewish and Muslim experiences is debated; critics point to how it seems to entail a relativisation and diminution of Jewish historical victimhood, particularly during the Holocaust. Instead, it is sometimes emphasised that the relevant comparison is between European stereotyping of Jews in the late 19th century and contemporary prejudice

572 Zick, Küpper, and Hövermann, *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination*;; Wetzel, “Antisemitism and Holocaust Remembrance.”; Staetsky, *Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain. A study of attitudes towards Jews and Israel*.

573 However, Muslims played a role in the Holocaust both within and beyond European borders. In Albania, some Muslims saved Jews from deportation despite the German occupation from 1943–1944, while others collaborated with the National Socialists in their persecution. Jikeli, “Perceptions of the Holocaust Among Young Muslims in Berlin, Paris and London,” 105; Norman H. Gerschman, *Besa: Muslims Who Saved Jews in World War II* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008). Afridi suggests Muslims’ involvement expands and particularises the genocide of Jews, having affected countries like Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya under the Fascist, Nazi, and Vichy governments. Afridi, *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes*, 182.

574 Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism: Why Young Urban Males Say They Don’t Like Jews*, 4, 121.

575 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 39.

against Muslims.⁵⁷⁶ In a disentangling of the notion that Muslims are the “new Jews,” Brian Klug demonstrates how the meaning often seems to be that “the Muslims are the Jews of yesteryear,” as the victimhood attributed to the Jews is not derived from a contemporary situation but is connected to historical persecution.⁵⁷⁷ Subsequently, Klug shows how the significance of the related, though narrower, claim that “Islamophobia is the new antisemitism,” is not that Islamophobia is equal to the antisemitism of today or perhaps to the “new antisemitism” but rather that it is equivalent – or strongly analogous – to historical expressions of antisemitism. Furthermore, the claim seems to be that in addition to being equal to the antisemitism of the past, Islamophobia has superseded present-day antisemitism.⁵⁷⁸ Klug argues that the question we need to ask is not are Islamophobia and antisemitism analogous, but what is the analogy worth – “The value of the analogy lies in the light it sheds on the social and political realities that confront us in the here and now,” he claims.⁵⁷⁹

Uriya Shavit has explored comparisons made between the Jewish and Muslim experiences by a number of contemporary Muslim writers.⁵⁸⁰ In contrast to the

576 A debate on the validity of a parallel between the Jewish and Muslim experiences and the claim that “Muslims are the ‘new Jews’” occurred in the Norwegian media in 2011, when the leader of the conservative party Høyre, (and later Prime Minister) Erna Solberg, suggested Muslims in Norway were suffering discrimination similar to what the Jews had experienced in the 1930s. Solberg referred to the terrorist attacks committed by Anders Behring Breivik on July 22 of that year as an example of how anti-Muslim attitudes had become extreme in some milieus, claiming there were parallels to antisemitic portrayals of Jews in the pre-war era, though not suggesting Muslims suffered similar persecution. Lars M. Glomnes, “Erna Solberg mener muslimer hetses som jødene på 30-tallet [Erna Solberg claims Muslims are harassed in similar ways as Jews in the 30s],” *Verdens Gang*, April 4, 2011, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/Gpyxj/erna-solberg-mener-muslimer-hetses-som-joedene-paa-30-tallet>.

577 Klug, “The Limits of Analogy: Comparing Islamophobia and Antisemitism.”

578 Klug, “The Limits of Analogy: Comparing Islamophobia and Antisemitism,” 444–45.

579 Klug, “The Limits of Analogy: Comparing Islamophobia and Antisemitism,” 458.

580 Uriya Shavit, “Muslims are the new Jews’ in the West: Reflections on Contemporary Parallels,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2016). The writers included academics, religious leaders, journalists, and politicians. Shavit refers to, e.g., Muhammad Al-Ghazali, “Mustaqbal al-Islam Kharij Ardih: Kayfa Nufakkiru Fihi [The Future of Islam Outside Its Boundaries: How to Conceptualize It],” (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1997); Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, “Muslim Minorities and Politics,” April 20, 2012; Steve Doughty, “We Muslims are the new Jews’ says MP who has been victim of a hit-and-run and a firebomb attack,” *The Daily Mail*, July 4, 2008, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1031697/We-Muslims-new-Jews-says-MP-victim-hit-run-firebomb-attack.html>; Maleiha Malik, “Muslims are now getting the same treatment as Jews had a century ago,” *The Guardian*, February 2, 2007; and an open letter compiled in 2008 by scholars from the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations Amineh Hoti and Michael Mumisa, “An Open Letter: A Call to Dialogue and Understanding between Muslims and Jews,” compiled in 2008. Last accessed February 2, 2024,

image of the threatening and antisemitic Muslim “other,” his analysis shows how European Jews in these texts serve as a reflection of European Muslims, providing important lessons to European Muslims today.⁵⁸¹ Similar to interviewees in the present study, the writers invoked the Jewish example to caution Western societies and the Muslims living in them to take expressions of Islamophobia more seriously. Comparisons were also made between the Muslim minority experience and the history of Jewish integration in Europe, either to argue for separation in order to preserve religious identity or to advocate for integration. Finally, comparisons sought to encourage Muslims to unite politically to further Muslim interests, with reference to successful Jewish initiatives in the past and present.⁵⁸² Shavit’s analysis concluded that some readings of Jewish history were indeed reductionist; for example, by drawing unwarranted parallels between the genocidal persecution of the Jews in 20th-century Europe and the discrimination experienced by Muslims in Europe today. Nevertheless, the examples show how comparisons between Jewish and Muslim history in Europe have fulfilled a dual function among European Muslims, both providing cause for alarm and offering hope for a better future.⁵⁸³

As shown above, in the present study, understandings of the relation between Jews and Muslims as victims of discrimination and prejudice involved a range of interpretations among the interviewees. Narratives suggested a strong analogy between Jews and Muslims when interviewees commented on the impact that victimisation has on the lives of the minorities; i.e., a similarity of experience. However, in some cases where interviewees indicated that “Muslims are the new Jews,” what they seemed to be saying was that Muslims now experience more or less the same situation as Jews did in the past, hence Muslims today are similar to

<https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/research/publications/reports/an-open-letter-a-call-to-dialogue-and-understanding-between-muslims-and-jews>. According to the centre’s web page, the letter received support from Muslim religious scholars and leaders from around the world, with signatories including Akbar S. Ahmed, Tariq Ramadan, Ataullah Saddiqui, Khalid Hameed, and Shaykh Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia, amongst many others. Shavit also referred to Wolfgang Benz, “Antisemiten und Islamfeinde: Hetzer mit Parallelen [Anti-Semites and enemies of Islam: agitators with parallels],” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 21, 2012, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/antisemiten-und-islamfeinde-hetzer-mit-parallelen-1.59486>. Benz suggested a parallel between antisemitism and Islamophobia. See also the interview with Wolfgang Benz, “Sind Muslime die neuen Juden? [Are Muslims the new Jews?],” *Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (SRF)*, September 11, 2017, <https://www.srf.ch/news/international/sind-muslime-die-neuen-juden>.

581 Shavit, “‘Muslims are the new Jews’ in the West: Reflections on Contemporary Parallelisms,” 3.

582 Shavit, “‘Muslims are the new Jews’ in the West: Reflections on Contemporary Parallelisms,” 12–13.

583 Shavit, “‘Muslims are the new Jews’ in the West: Reflections on Contemporary Parallelisms,” 13.

“the Jews of yesteryear.” Jewish victimhood thus seemed to emerge as a reference point and example of quintessential victimhood, but the meaning of the symbolic Jew in these cases was “victim of the past.” What can be termed competitive victimhood occurred in cases where interviewees perceived that antisemitism was viewed (by society, by the Norwegian majority population, or by “the West”) as a more serious contemporary problem than Islamophobia, or when commemoration of Jewish victimhood, most notably the history of the Holocaust, was seen to conflict with attention paid to Muslim victims and other discriminated-against groups today. Though acknowledging the long history and extent of Jewish suffering in the past, some interviewees thus seemed to support the notion of a “super-session of victimhood,” where Islamophobia today has replaced antisemitism as the main problem in Europe.

9.6 Core Narratives about Jews and Victimhood

This chapter has explored the theme of victimhood in narratives about Jews. The analysis has shown that interviewees expressed sympathy with Jews based on their knowledge of historical or contemporary examples of Jewish victimhood, relating this to their own experiences of discrimination. Creating parallel structures, narratives about the victimisation of Jews were mirrored in accounts of contemporary discrimination against Muslims and other victimised groups. The narratives also referred to interpretations of historical events and to the relevance of those events today. Through these references, the interviewees commented on dominant narratives and memory culture related to Jewish victimhood.

Identification with Jews was sometimes linked to shared experiences of group constructions where negative actions by individuals (or a minority within the broader category) were attributed to the whole group – i.e., to all Muslims or Jews. The influence of public discourse on the narratives was visible in how some interviewees referred to a public image of Muslims being antisemitic.

The analysis has also explored how identification with Jewish victimhood can be part of a positive self-image based on the belief that negative experiences make the victim stronger. Narratives expressing such views conveyed a resistance to victim status, or at least to an identity where victimhood is a defining trait. Correspondingly, the analysis has discussed how the image of Jews as victims was sometimes intertwined with a notion of Jews as resourceful and influential, where victimhood led to a struggle to attain a more powerful position. The analysis pointed to how this rejection of victimhood status resembled a tendency described by Cohen as a symbolic “reversal,” dissolving the relations between the

victim and the powerful.⁵⁸⁴ In the present study, perceptions of Jews as being empowered through victimhood showed how sympathetic views about Jews and identification with Jews could sometimes go hand in hand with notions echoing classical stereotypes about Jews.

Jewish victimhood proved to be a central aspect of what interviewees knew about Jewish history and considered to be an important part of society's collective memory. This finding can be seen as a reflection both of the Holocaust's central place in the European collective memory and of the study's affiliation with the Norwegian Holocaust Center. Interviewees referred to what was taught in school and the public attention devoted to the European history of prejudice and discrimination against Jews, particularly related to the Holocaust. From this history there seemed to emerge an image of "the Jew" as the – eternal and primal – victim. "The Jew" functioned as a symbol of victimhood and as a reference point in the narratives, both in relation to personal experiences and in relation to other historical or contemporary situations. By identifying with the Jewish history of suffering, interviewees placed the experiences of Muslims within a European minority narrative. However, some interviewees outlined Jewish victimhood as a closed historical chapter and consequently understood Jews as victims in the past, not the present. Instead, they expressed that other victims, such as Muslims in present-day Europe, were the ones who now deserved attention and sympathy for being the target of prejudice and hatred. Some narratives thus described Muslims, in effect, as "the new Jews in Europe" – concluding, not in identification, but instead in a sense of difference or even competition over victimhood. The notion that Muslims have replaced Jews as the primary victims in Europe was brought up in relation to interviewees' personal experiences and to the current prevalence of anti-Muslim attitudes in Europe. Similar experiences thus resulted in diametrically different narrative approaches, some leading to identification with Jews, others to competitive victimhood. The main difference did not seem to be connected to perceptions of Muslim-Jewish relations; rather, it related to the majority society's discourse and practice towards the two minority groups, and to perceptions of a narrow and biased memory culture. Narratives that expressed a sense of competitive victimhood advocated for a change of perspective in the surrounding society, suggesting that more attention should be devoted to other examples of historical and contemporary victimisation.

I have analyzed the narratives using the concept of historical consciousness developed by Rüsen, discussing different varieties of historical narratives present

584 Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*.

in the material.⁵⁸⁵ The “exemplary” type of historical interpretation was typical among the interviewees, suggesting there are certain general rules that can be extracted from the history of the Holocaust that are relevant today. Interviewees emphasised the importance of the Holocaust as a historical event, the gravity of Jewish suffering, and that education about this history was important. They also based arguments about current and future actions on this history; i.e., they made moral judgements related to the historical narrative of the Holocaust. While the Holocaust was perceived as a part of history that had ongoing relevance due to contemporary antisemitism, it was more typically seen as having parallels in the situation of “the Jews of today,” with reference to contemporary anti-Muslim attitudes or the present situation in Palestine.

There were also critical interpretations that used historical arguments to suggest that current interpretations and conclusions drawn from the Holocaust were outdated, such as narratives that contested an interpretation where Jews were ascribed a particular position as historical victims. Despite this critical approach in some of the narratives, there were no examples in the present study of interviewees denying the Holocaust as historical fact; however, claims about Jews exploiting their historical status as victims, relativisation of the genocide, and other “soft” forms of Holocaust denial did occur.⁵⁸⁶ In her comparative study of Armenian genocide denial and Holocaust denial, Maria Karlsson argues that this form of denial, which also includes trivialisation, self-victimisation, and rationalisation of the genocide, is the most frequent and, over time, the most influential.⁵⁸⁷

By accusing Jews of exploiting the historical victimhood of European Jewry during the Holocaust, narratives in the present study bore similarities to what has been referred to as secondary antisemitism.⁵⁸⁸ While this concept relates anti-semitism after the Holocaust to a psychological reaction that, based on a sense of guilt, places the responsibility for the genocide on the Jews, the present study shows how the notion of Jewish exploitation of the Holocaust can gain support if linked to competition over victimhood or to personal experiences of discrimination. A perception that the suffering of the Palestinians is neglected in favour of the historical or contemporary suffering of the Jews also played a role in this dynamic, linking the competition over victimhood to perceptions of

⁵⁸⁵ Rösen, “Historical Consciousness.”

⁵⁸⁶ As described by Lipstadt, cited in Jonny Paul, “Holocaust scholar warns of new ‘soft-core’ denial,” *The Jerusalem Post*, February 6, 2007, <https://www.jpost.com/jewish-world/jewish-news/holocaust-scholar-warns-of-new-soft-core-denial>.

⁵⁸⁷ Maria Karlsson, “Cultures of Denial. Comparing Holocaust and Armenian Genocide Denial” (PhD diss., Lund University, 2015), 109.

⁵⁸⁸ Schönbach, *Reaktionen auf die antisemitische Welle im Winter 1959/1960*, 80.

shared Muslim experiences and identity. These narratives are examples of how support for the Palestinians has become an identity marker among many Muslims in the West.

Since the 1990s, commemoration of the Holocaust and acknowledgment of the norm of anti-Semitism have become central values in the formation of a common European identity.⁵⁸⁹ As a “concretion of identity,” collective memory distinguishes between “those who belong and those who do not.”⁵⁹⁰ In an increasingly diverse Europe and globalized world, the question of how memory culture and national narratives can encompass immigrant minorities and diverse accounts of victimhood has become a topic of scholarly, political, and pedagogical interest. Part of this debate concerns the question of the uniqueness or specificity of the Holocaust and whether it is possible or desirable to compare it to other historical and contemporary situations. The emphasis on the uniqueness of the Holocaust has been criticized as having come to exclude important comparative perspectives and as contributing to the construction of a hierarchy of suffering.⁵⁹¹ Scholarly publications have introduced transnational and non-linear approaches to memory that challenge monolithic and exclusionary perceptions.⁵⁹² As noted by Jikeli, the comparison of the Holocaust to other genocides is legitimate and may deepen the understanding of the Holocaust, and “biased views begin with equating rather than comparing.”⁵⁹³ Instead of viewing memory of the Holocaust as competing with other narratives about victimisation in a “memory competition,” Michael Rothberg develops the concept of “multidirectional memory,” which “posits collective memory as partially disengaged from exclusive versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites.”⁵⁹⁴ Some narratives in the present study did convey parallels that were unwarranted or simplistic; for example, in suggesting equations between the Holocaust and the situation of the Palestinians or the contemporary

589 Aleida Assmann, “Transnational Memories,” *European Review* 22, no. 4 (2014); Tony Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

590 Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, “Collective memory and cultural identity,” *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 130.

591 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 8–10.

592 See, e.g., Steven Robins, “Thinking through and beyond ‘Competitive Memory’ and Hierarchies of Suffering,” *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (2018); Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*; Assmann, “Transnational Memories.”

593 Günther Jikeli and Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun, eds., *Perceptions of the Holocaust in Europe and Muslim Communities: Sources, Comparisons and Educational Challenges* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 2.

594 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 11.

situation of Muslims in Europe. However, the way in which interviewees related the historical suffering of the Jews to their own experiences of victimisation also raised the possibility of empathy and solidarity, suggesting that such parallels in some cases may promote positive intergroup relations even when the situations are fundamentally different. The material includes a variety of approaches to the memory of the Holocaust that, whether expressed as a source of identification or in the form of competition over victimhood, show how perceptions of this history imply a reflection on values and have normative implications. The narratives placed the interviewees' own experiences, as well as notions of the contemporary and historical experiences of others, in relation to this history. From a variety of perspectives, the history of Jewish victimhood served as a reference point for the self-identification of the interviewees and for the temporal orientation of this identity; referring to this part of Jewish history, interviewees situated their own experiences as minorities within a broader historical framework.

To summarize, three core narratives can be formulated that focus on Jewish victimhood, expressing: (1) Identification with the Jewish victims, (2) Competition over (or "supersession" of) victimhood status, and, (3) Inversion of victimhood status. The primary argument of the first narrative is that Jewish victimhood creates identification between Jews and Muslims based on a similarity of experiences. Reflecting this perspective, I will call this narrative "Jews and Muslims have similar experiences of victimhood." The narrative refers both to perceptions of victimhood related to majority-minority relations and to victimisation derived from intra-Muslim relations. It defines "the Jew" as a symbol of victimhood and perceives Jewish and Muslim (minority) experiences as similar, creating identification with Jews.

The second narrative also describes a parallel but differs from the first by establishing a historical development between the two perceived victims, Jews and Muslims, leading to a replacement of the former by the latter. Like the first narrative, the second acknowledges the historical suffering of the Jews and sympathises with the victims, suggesting a similarity in the experiences of Jews and Muslims. However, a central notion in this narrative is that Muslims have superseded Jews as victims, situating Jewish victimhood in the past and hence describing the current situations of the minorities as dissimilar. This narrative describes a process moving from the "Jewish victim" to the "Muslim victim," sometimes formulated as a competition over victim status. I will call this narrative, which describes a supersession of victimhood, "Jewish victimhood was significant in the past, while Muslims are the new 'Jews'."

The third narrative also focuses on a perceived change in the situation of the Jews, though suggesting a complete reversal of their status by claiming, “Jews are the new oppressors.” This narrative describes a change from victim to oppressor as formulated in the concept of perpetrator-victim inversion. This narrative includes notions of Jews exploiting historical victimhood, specifically the Holocaust, and stereotypical views about “Jewish” influence and cunning having radically altered the position of the Jews. Narratives of inversion of victimhood described the relation between Jews and Muslims as antithetical, placing Jews in a privileged position, thus in contrast with the self-identity of the interviewee. The role of the Muslims was in some cases described as being the victims of this new Jewish oppressor.

10 Interpretations of Antisemitism and Islamophobia as Contemporary Problems

This chapter explores the interviewees' reflections on antisemitism and Islamophobia as societal and contemporary phenomena in Norway and internationally, asking to what extent, why, and among whom interviewees perceived negative attitudes towards Jews and Muslims to be a problem. The analysis also looks into how their own experiences constitute a frame of reference for understanding such attitudes.

As we have seen in chapter nine, some participants perceived antisemitism to be less prevalent than negative attitudes towards Muslims while at the same time describing negative attitudes towards Jews as widespread in sections of the Muslim community. Assessing antisemitism as widespread among Muslims may seem to contradict the notion, expressed by some interviewees, that Muslims today have replaced Jews as victims of discrimination; however, the two impressions were not necessarily combined. A certain focus on attitudes among Muslims may have been triggered by the study's overall perspective on Muslim-Jewish relations. Furthermore, victimisation of Muslims was sometimes linked to anti-Jewish attitudes; for instance, when interviewees suggested that experiences of discrimination were a source of antisemitic attitudes among Muslims, as a way of understanding and rationalising the negative experiences. The interviewees did not express an equivalent explanation of Islamophobia – i.e., that negative views about Muslims had developed among Jews following experiences of anti-Jewish attitudes. This difference may have been due to the interviewees lacking specific knowledge of or experience with such attitudes among Jews. It may also be related to the way Jews appeared as an abstract category in some narratives, thus not as directly (personally) affected by negative views. The understanding of Jewish victimhood as a phenomenon located in the past may have further reduced the perception of a connection between negative attitudes and contemporary Jewish experience.

This chapter is based on the interviewees' answers to two similar questions: "What do you think is the reason for negative attitudes towards Jews?" and "What do you think is the reason for negative attitudes towards Muslims?" The idea of including these questions was inspired by the open-ended questions in the Norwegian population surveys.⁵⁹⁵ Results from these surveys suggested the ques-

⁵⁹⁵ Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, ed., *Antisemitism in Norway*, 35–39; Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 66–71; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 87–100.

tions would be suited to exploring interviewees' own attitudes as well as their reflections on the factors behind other people's attitudes.⁵⁹⁶

This chapter explores how interviewees explained negative attitudes towards Jews and Muslims by referring to specific dynamics, such as scapegoating, and other related forms of prejudice, such as racism or xenophobia, asking what they perceived to be the main factors behind negative attitudes. Did they see any commonalities between antisemitism and Islamophobia? How are the prejudices different? By relating the question of the factors behind prejudices to the interviewees' own experiences in Norway, the analysis explores perceptions of majority-minority relations as well as Muslim-Jewish relations in contemporary Norway.⁵⁹⁷

10.1 Xenophobia and Ignorance as the Source of Negative Views

Interviewees mentioned ignorance as something that could prepare the ground for negative attitudes towards both Jews and Muslims. This argument is based on the assumption that increased knowledge about the (Jewish or Muslim) minority, whether in terms of information about religious matters or increased social contact, was an effective way to combat prejudice. Some seemed to suggest that a lack of knowledge was particularly pertinent when it came to antisemitism since the Jewish minority in Norway is very small and prejudice and misinformation may pass unrecognised.

When xenophobia and ignorance were perceived as factors in the emergence of Islamophobia, this was typically attributed to the immigrant background of Muslims and a "foreign culture" rather than a lack of social interaction. However, prejudice against Muslims was also sometimes explained by a lack of contact with the Muslim population or misunderstandings due to a lack of (correct) information. Drawing on many personal experiences of othering and discrimination, the interviewees pointed to several ways that Muslims appear "different" – cul-

596 Further analyses of the material from these surveys can be found in: Vibeke Moe et al., "Hvis de hadde oppført seg som vanlige nordmenn, hadde alt vært greit, tror jeg" – Nordmenns syn på årsaken til negative holdninger til jøder og muslimer," *FLEKS-Scandinavian Journal of Intercultural Theory and Practice* 3, no. 1 (2016); Vibeke Moe, "How People Explain Antisemitism: Interpretation of Survey Answers," in *The Shifting Boundaries of Prejudice: Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Norway*; Moe and Døving, *Diskrimineringsferfaringer blant muslimer i Norge*; Døving, "Muslims are . . ." Contextualising Survey Answers."

597 The terms "antisemitism" and "Islamophobia" are used as synonymous for "negative attitudes towards Jews/Muslims" in this chapter, based on how the questions were posed in the interviews. More developed definitions are presented in chapters 2.2 and 3.1.

turally, religiously, or in terms of appearance. Though having an immigrant background was also described as an asset, the typical response when reflecting on the factors behind Islamophobia was that being an immigrant, having immigrant parents, or just looking “different” was an obstacle in terms of acceptance in Norwegian society. The reference to appearance (phenotypical traits) constituted a difference in the explanations, in that it was only mentioned in relation to Islamophobia. There were no instances in the material of Jews being described as a visible minority.

Some interviewees explained exclusionary and xenophobic attitudes by pointing to the understanding that Norway is, or used to be, a homogeneous society. However, they also described these attitudes – fear or rejection of the foreign – as a typical human behaviour, not specifically related to the Norwegian context. Xenophobia was thus seen as a general source of negative attitudes that was also relevant to antisemitism among Muslims.

The interview with Farzan (interviewee no. 30) provided an example of an explanation of antisemitism that pointed to ignorance. Lack of knowledge and of prior contact with Jews rendered people vulnerable to disinformation and to the hatred conveyed by religious extremists, Farzan suggested. He referred to Internet-driven “echo chambers” as something that enhanced negative views. However, the way in which narrow social contexts can serve to confirm views is probably not a new phenomenon, he said. Rather, it seemed like an old mechanism reinforced through modern technology:

Hovedroten mener jeg er uvitenhet og lite balanserte meninger. Det har kanskje alltid vært sånn, men la oss si at du er på Facebook [. . .]. Du har liksom et ekkokammer av dine egne meninger, du blir liksom matet de samme tankene hele veien. Det var kanskje [slik] før i tiden også, siden man bodde i små, lukkede samfunn og alle mente det samme, stort sett.

[The main source, I believe, is ignorance and biased opinions. Maybe it has always been like that, but let’s say you are on Facebook [. . .]. You have sort of an echo chamber of your own opinions; you are fed the same thoughts all the time. It might have been like this before, too, since people lived in small and closed societies and everyone thought the same, basically.]

Without addressing specific opinions, this comment suggests that social exchange is a way to combat negative attitudes because rigid and biased views are challenged in diverse milieus. Farzan also described what he saw as a connection between prejudice, susceptibility to conspiracy theories, and age. Farzan, who was in his late 20s at the time of the interview, explained that although he thought that relations between Jews and Muslims in Norway were generally good on a personal level, there were some problems of antisemitism among the younger generation of Muslims. Once again pointing to disinformation and lack of knowledge, he said, “I think it is most common perhaps in the early teens that you are

prejudiced and [express] hate speech against Jews. I think it comes from ignorance, lack of source criticism and easily influenced youth influenced by conspiracy theories.”⁵⁹⁸ Farzan described an evolution in the history of antisemitism. The starting point, he said, was fear of the Other, or xenophobia. Following this initial fear was the incorporation of more complex ideas, including religious views, specifically Christian anti-Judaism. In its most developed form, antisemitism today included conspiracy theories, Farzan explained:

I første omgang så var det bare fordi de var annen gruppe, utlendinger på en måte. Etterpå ble det mer spesifisert og forvridd ved at man skyldte på jøder for at Jesus ble drept. Så ble det enda mer forvridd, senere, helt frem til moderne tid hvor det er konspirasjonsteorier om at jøder styrer verden og de kontrollerer alt og styrer oss mot anti-Krist. [. . .] Etter flere tusen år ikke sant, så blir det enda mer forvridd.

[Initially it was based on the fact that they [Jews] constituted another group, foreigners, in a way. After this, it became more specific and twisted, and included accusations that Jews had killed Jesus. It became even more twisted later, until modern times with conspiracy theories that Jews govern the world, control everything, and are leading us towards the Antichrist. [. . .] After several thousand years it becomes even more twisted.]

The description of the accusations against Jews as “twisted” (forvridd) expressed Farzan’s distance from the notions. He perceived the ideas as wrong but also as increasingly complicated or complex. The negative attitudes, which were initially rooted in “simple” prejudice related to perceptions of Jews as foreign, developed into ideas about ideological networks, where Jews now constitute an evil force at the centre of a grand conspiracy. While ignorance combined with perceptions rooted in Christianity seemed to constitute the driving force in Farzan’s narrative about the historical origin of antisemitism, he described the Internet both as a current source of antisemitic misinformation and as a place where he had acquired knowledge about the history of antisemitism.

Like Farzan, Fatimah’s (interviewee no. 1) answer focused on prejudice among Muslims. She applied a generational perspective in her explanation, describing differences within the Muslim immigrant community. Ignorance was an important factor behind prejudice, Fatimah said, but in contrast to Farzan, she seemed to perceive negative attitudes as more prevalent among the parent generation than the younger generation, which had a broader and more diverse social environment:

⁵⁹⁸ “Jeg føler egentlig at det er mest vanlig kanskje i [de] tidlige ungdomsårene at man har fordommer og [kommer med] hatytringer mot jøder. Jeg føler at det kommer av uvitenhet, lite kildekritisk og lett påvirkelig ungdom som er påvirket av konspiratorisk tankegods.”

Ja, jeg føler at de foreldrene har sterkere holdninger, ja. [. . .] Unge er mer i samfunnet, ikke sant. Har venner og går på skolen og jobber. Foreldrene er ofte mer hjemme, eller er ofte kun med sine egne folk, som er kun lik dem, da.

[Yes, I believe the parents have stronger attitudes, yes. [. . .] The young are more out in society, have friends and go to school, right. The parents are more at home, or are more often only with their own people, [those] who are only like themselves.]

Again, the comment suggests that a narrow range of social contacts may enhance prejudice and, conversely, that encountering a diversity of people and opinions is a way to avoid biased views. Young people go to school, meet people from other religions, and “understand much more than their parents,” Fatimah said.⁵⁹⁹ She had observed how young people adjusted their behaviour when at home, not wanting to challenge the views of the parents; in this way, prejudices could persist. Describing the parents’ negative views about Jews mainly as related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she saw this lack of confrontation as based on a wish to avoid letting the parents down: “I feel that the young do not want to disappoint their parents.”⁶⁰⁰ Fatimah thus seemed to identify a stronger personal engagement for the Palestinians among the parents and a more nuanced approach to the conflict among their children.

Both Farzan and Fatimah related prejudice in general, and antisemitism in particular, to closed milieus and a lack of social exchange and diversity of perspectives, though they expressed different views regarding which generation of Muslims held more pronounced negative attitudes.

Other interviewees pointed to the small number of Jews in Norway to explain negative attitudes, suggesting that ignorance due to lack of contact with actual Jews paved the way for prejudice and misunderstandings. Karrar (interviewee no. 29) related negative attitudes towards Jews to xenophobia based on this lack of contact, pointing to how the only information available was from the media. He said:

Det [er] vel fremmedfrykt [som kan forklare negative holdninger til jøder] i og med at det ikke er så mange av dem og det eneste vi hører om dem er fra mediene. Det er jo det vi gjør, vi omgås ikke med dem i det hele tatt. Så de tankene, vi får grunnlaget for dem via media. [. . .] De blir også en fremmed gruppe som vi ikke kjenner til, vi muslimer som kjenner til det norske miljøet, men ikke kjenner til det jødiske miljøet. Da er de, de eneste vi ikke kjenner til.

⁵⁹⁹ “Får med seg mye mer enn hva foreldrene gjør.”

⁶⁰⁰ “Jeg føler at ungene kanskje ikke vil skuffe foreldrene sine.”

[I guess it is xenophobia [that explains negative views about Jews], since they are so few and the only thing we hear about them is from the media. That is what we do; we do not socialize with them at all. Those ideas, we get their basis from the media. [. . .] They also become a foreign group, unfamiliar to us Muslims who know the Norwegian context, but do not know the Jewish one. Then they are the only ones we do not know.]

Besides emphasising the lack of exchange and social contact as an important factor behind antisemitism, Karrar indicated that knowledge about the “Norwegian context” did little to increase knowledge about the Jewish minority. Karrar did not specify why the information provided by the media might constitute a basis for negative views, but he did mention “documentaries,” perhaps a reference to coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As we have seen, Karrar expressed elaborate views about Jewish power and influence on an international level (see chapter 8.3). At another point in the interview, Karrar had said, “The prejudices [against Jews] come from them having too much power even though they are a small group.”⁶⁰¹ His explanations took a different approach when describing Muslim-Jewish relations in Norway, defining negative attitudes as based on xenophobia and primarily being a question of social distance. The two different explanations Karrar gave for antisemitism suggested two opposed images of Jews, one neutral or sympathetic, connected to the minority in Norway, and the other negative, representing an abstract notion of international power.

The interview with Karrar was also an example of how xenophobia was understood differently when related to Islamophobia compared with when it was related to antisemitism. Explanations that referred to xenophobia typically located the main source of negative attitudes in the majority population. Karrar, however, put some responsibility on the minority itself when discussing negative attitudes towards Muslims. He emphasised how adjusting to the surrounding culture and maintaining an open attitude towards society were essential to preventing prejudice. He mentioned different personal experiences related to xenophobia and majority-minority relations, underlining the significance of an open attitude and integration into society. Using his own behaviour as an example, Karrar said:

Jeg er åpen, rett og slett. Når du er det, er du ikke så mystisk lenger. Derimot hvis du har dine vaner og din rutine, dine verdier og du kanskje ekskluderer andre norske verdier så vil du være litt mer mystisk og derfor kan du få disse negative påvirkningene, når du skiller deg ut. Fremmedhat kommer jo av at de ikke kjenner deg.

601 “Fordommene kommer av at de har for mye makt selv om de er en liten folkegruppe.”

[I am open, simply. When you are open, you are not mysterious any more. On the other hand, if you have your habits and routines, your values, and maybe exclude other Norwegian values, you will be more mysterious, and may get these negative impressions when you stick out. Xenophobia comes from not knowing you.]

Karrar seemed to view his chances of being accepted in Norway positively, largely putting this down to his own behaviour and willingness to adjust. The comments again suggest that xenophobia is a relatively superficial problem, which disappears upon real contact. The focus on the responsibility of the individual to counter negative views through their behaviour differs from his explanation of antisemitism, where no similar approach was suggested for Jews.

Parveen (interviewee no. 6) mentioned several related causes in her explanation of antisemitism, stating, “I think it is ignorance, it is misunderstandings more than anything else. Ignorance. That you have too little knowledge about each other, and then there are some who just do not bother to seek that knowledge.”⁶⁰² The comment suggests that combatting prejudice requires a willingness to acquire knowledge. Parveen also mentioned fear as an important factor behind the negative reactions of the majority society, referring to the fact that Muslims and Jews share a history of relatively recent immigration to Norway:

Jeg tror at mye baserer seg på frykt. Nå er det muslimer det begynner å bli mange av, men før var det liksom jødene som plutselig kom. Etter alt med 2. verdenskrig og konsentrasjonsleirene var det nok mange som følte at: “Oi, herregud, var ikke dette landet vårt? Oi, hvor kommer alle disse menneskene fra?” Jeg tror nok det er frykt.

[I think that much depends on fear. Today, the Muslims are the ones that are growing in number, but before them, the Jews were the ones who suddenly arrived. After World War II and the concentration camps, there were probably many who felt that: “Oh my God, wasn’t this our country? Where are all these people coming from?” I think it is probably fear.]

Parveen suggested that significant Jewish immigration after World War II raised concerns among the general population in Norway. Her example is not quite historically accurate: Jewish immigration to Norway was not large after the war. However, historians sometimes make the same argument by drawing the line further back in time, to the period before the first Jewish immigration to Norway in the 19th century and the debate over Article two in the 1814 Norwegian constitution, which prohibited Jews from entering the country. Indeed, some participants

⁶⁰² “Jeg tror det er ignoranse, det er misforståelser, mer enn noe annet. Kunnskapsløshet. At man har for liten kunnskap om hverandre, og så er det enkelte som bare ikke gidder å søke den kunnskapen.”

in this historical debate argued that Norway faced a threat of Jewish mass immigration (see also chapter four). The point remains that both Muslims and Jews arrived in Norway as immigrants and have been met with negative attitudes and xenophobia. This parallel was not typically made by the interviewees. Jews were rarely referred to as immigrants and generally seemed to be (more) closely associated with Norwegian society (and, as we have seen, with “the West”). Parveen’s main point was undoubtedly to show a resemblance between the Jewish and the Muslim experiences and how negative attitudes towards both minorities might have similar causes. However, the narrative also suggests a key difference between the situations of the two minorities: while the explanation of anti-Jewish attitudes has reference to a historical event, the anti-Muslim attitudes are described as originating in the current situation in Norway today. Negative views about Jews are indirectly described as belonging to the past, with less relevance to the present-day situation.

Ali (interviewee no. 32) was one of the interviewees who described xenophobia as a common and more or less natural human reaction. He seemed to perceive fear as a typical human response to anything foreign, again suggesting the solution to the problem was more knowledge. As he explained:

Fremmedfrykt ligger dypt inne i menneskets natur, tenker jeg, uten at jeg er en psykolog. Det er dårlig forståelse av andre kulturer og veldig mye uvitenhet. Folk tror veldig fort at man kan defineres utfra hvilket område man kommer fra eller hvilken hudfarge man har.

[Without being a psychologist, I believe xenophobia is deeply rooted in human nature. There is a lack of understanding of other cultures and a lot of ignorance. People are quick to believe that you can be defined based on where you come from or the colour of your skin.]

To underline that a xenophobic attitude was a general phenomenon, Ali pointed to how he had experienced similar fear in Lebanon, in that case because he was from Norway.

Berat (interviewee no. 20) also mentioned his appearance as something that created a barrier between himself and other Norwegians – a barrier that would never disappear. Berat was born in Norway, was a Norwegian citizen, and, as he put it, “felt Norwegian inside. Still, there will always be an obstacle that I have to climb over that my ethnic Norwegian colleagues do not.”⁶⁰³ Berat maintained that these experiences made him stronger: “I feel stronger when I get these reactions. I

603 “Jeg er norsk, jeg er norsk statsborger, jeg føler meg også norsk innvendig, men det finnes alltid barrierer som jeg må klatre over enn det min etnisk norske kollega trenger å gjøre.”

do not care anymore, because the people who say things like that are ignorant.”⁶⁰⁴ He mentioned specific cases of insults from his work as a security guard, such as when someone had called after him, “Check out the monkey with the beard,” “Check out the terrorist with the beard,” or “Check out the Muslim bastard!”⁶⁰⁵ Berat explained these experiences as being due to a lack of knowledge about his religion, apparently relating all such incidents to anti-Islamic or anti-Muslim attitudes. “I think people say things like that because they are very ignorant about my religion and instead of looking into it, they listen to what other ignorant people say,” he said.⁶⁰⁶ At the same time, Berat insisted he had never experienced blatant stereotypes “for no reason.” Presumably, the incidents were related to a certain context. He also said that he felt safe when walking the streets of Oslo. Later in the interview, his interpretation of the negative experiences moved in a slightly different direction. Commenting on the impact of social differences, Berat suggested it might have to do with his job: “I guess people tend to look down on security guards if they themselves are lawyers or doctors.”⁶⁰⁷ This comment suggests that the experiences could be related to perceptions of socio-economic differences in addition to negative attitudes related to his Muslim identity or to Islam. Similar combinations of explanations were typical among the interviewees, regarding both antisemitism and Islamophobia. However, only explanations of Islamophobia referred to socio-economic differences. Thus, the context for Islamophobic attitudes was typically described as social and local, while the source of antisemitism remained more abstract and distant.

Mahmod (interviewee no. 31) also perceived prejudice against Muslims and Jews as rooted in ignorance. However, he placed the main responsibility to reduce antisemitism on the older generation and claimed the young could not be blamed for being ignorant. He explained that he too at one point had had negative views about Jews:

Jeg hadde negative tanker fra ung alder ja, men jeg vokste dem jo fra meg når jeg ble eldre, jeg skjønnte jo hva som er rett og galt. Så jeg vil si at jeg vil ikke klandre en ung person for negative tanker. Det er ikke hans feil.

604 “Jeg føler meg sterkere når jeg får disse tilbakemeldingene. Jeg tar dem ikke innover meg lenger, fordi jeg vet at de personene som kommer med disse utsagnene, er uvitende.”

605 “Sjekk den apen med skjegget!”, “Sjekk den terroristen med skjegget!” and “Sjekk han muslim-jævelen!”

606 “Jeg tror at disse menneskene sier det fordi de er veldig uvitende om hva min religion går ut på, [og] fordi de istedenfor å undersøke, så velger de å tro på det de hører fra andre uvitende personer.”

607 “Jeg [vil] tro at folk ser kanskje ned på en vekter, hvis man er utdannet som jurist eller lege.”

[I had some negative thoughts when I was younger, but I grew out of it as I grew older, I understood what was right and wrong. Therefore, I will not judge a young person for having negative thoughts. It is not his fault.]

When asked what had encouraged his change of opinions, Mahmud replied that he had “debated and acquired knowledge,”⁶⁰⁸ again suggesting social contact and exchange of opinions had been important factors in combatting prejudices. The narrative also seemed to suggest that growing out of prejudiced views was part of one’s natural development into adulthood. When asked about negative views about Muslims, Mahmud suggested there were different factors but emphasised representations in the media and misunderstandings about Islam. However, towards the end of the interview, he returned to the topic, pointing specifically to the question of appearance and a “Western look,” implying that racist or xenophobic attitudes were central. Mahmud described a lack of acceptance in Norway based on perceptions of foreigners, contrasting this to attitudes in other countries. He said:

Jeg mener at Norge har en lang vei å gå med å akseptere andre kulturer og andre etnisiteter. Drar du til USA med et ikke-vestlig utseende så blir du fortsatt sett på som amerikaner. Drar du til Sverige som er rett ved siden av Norge og du snakker språket, så blir du sett på som svensk. De ser på deg som svensk, de bryr seg ikke om du har et ikke-vestlig utseende.

[I think Norway has a long way to go in terms of accepting other cultures and other ethnicities. If you go to the USA with a non-Western appearance, you are still looked upon as American. If you go to Sweden, which is right next to Norway, and speak Swedish, you are still regarded as Swedish; they do not care if you do not look Western.]

This comment suggests a definition of “Norwegian” that excludes persons with a “non-Western appearance,” and illustrates that negative attitudes towards Muslims in Norway were sometimes associated with racism without implying any notion of Muslims as adherents of Islam. Mahmud also suggested that Norwegians were afraid to lose privileges, such as their economic social benefits, and therefore tried to keep foreigners out. This comment may have reflected an impression gleaned from public debates on immigration, which have included a focus on pressure on the welfare system.⁶⁰⁹ Mahmud included himself among the foreign-

608 “Jeg debatterte og tilegnet meg kunnskap.”

609 Surveys show that a majority of Norwegians believe immigration related to asylum seekers has a negative impact on the Norwegian economy, while considering work-related immigration to have a positive effect. Brekke, Fladmoe, and Wollebæk, *Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold i Norge. Integreringsbarometeret 2020*, 49–50. The population surveys on antisemi-

ers in this context, a position he probably would have to keep for some time – “The rest of my life if there is no change.”⁶¹⁰

When discussing the issue of integration and exclusion in the Norwegian society, interviewees also related to their immigrant background, describing how this background could be the cause of identity conflict, leaving them between different national identities and without a true sense of belonging. Mustafa (interviewee no. 18) highlighted how his sense of belonging was situational, implying that both attitudes in his surroundings and his own interpretations were significant. Mustafa was born in Turkey but arrived in Norway as a small child. He said:

Jeg føler meg mer norsk, enn jeg føler meg tyrkisk. Men jeg kødder ikke, jeg føler meg mer norsk. Problemet er at når jeg drar til Tyrkia, så føler jeg meg som utlending. Jeg føler meg ikke som utlending her, men det kan hende at på grunn av visse situasjoner kan tenke at “Oh shit, jeg er ikke så norsk.”

[I feel more Norwegian than I feel Turkish. I am not kidding, I feel more Norwegian. The problem is that when I go to Turkey, I feel like a foreigner. I do not feel like a foreigner here, but perhaps due to certain situations I sometimes think that, “I am not really *that* Norwegian.”]

The comment outlines a boundary between “Turkish” and “Norwegian” not easily overcome yet somewhat flexible and permeable. A sense of boundary-crossing is suggested in Mustafa’s underlining that he was “not kidding” when he said he felt more Norwegian. Mustafa perceived some ambivalence between a Turkish and a Norwegian national identity, and claimed that everyone who has similar “double” national backgrounds will somehow fall in between the two. He explained how he felt at home in both Norway and Turkey up until the moment someone pointed out his “other” national identity. Mustafa’s sense of belonging seemed fragile and easily lost. As an example, he explained that if we were to ask him about his identity while he was in a room alone or with his friends, he would confirm that he was Norwegian. However, in a room full of “Norwegians,” he would hesitate due to a feeling that he would not be fully accepted. Mustafa’s identity and belonging seemed dependent on reactions from his surroundings, and a Norwegian identification was easier to maintain in situations where people knew him than among strangers. He also described how his own state of mind determined his reaction to negative experiences. If he “felt” like a Norwegian

tism and Islamophobia still show a marked decrease in the percentage that sees immigrants as exploiting the welfare system. Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 65.
610 “Resten av livet mitt hvis det ikke skjer endringer.”

the day it happened, he was less offended and less likely to interpret the incident as exclusionary.

10.2 Religious Otherness as Cause for Prejudice

While both Jews and Muslims are religious minorities in Norway, negative reactions to religious otherness figured more prominently in explanations of Islamophobia. Explanations of antisemitism did not focus on perceptions of Judaism or Jewish religious practice. As we have seen, when discussing antisemitism among Muslims, interviewees sometimes mentioned Islamic religious views in their explanations but labelled them as misinterpretations. They did not describe antisemitism as concerning the imams or other leaders in the mosques; indeed, antisemitism seemed to not be an issue regarding activities in the mosque at all, in the sense that it was unrelated to the Islamic religion and religious practice. However, the wide range of activities connected to the mosques mentioned in this study included at least one devoted to combatting negative attitudes and radicalisation among the younger generation.

When discussing the factors behind negative views about Muslims, narratives differed in where they put the emphasis, whether on the surrounding society's perceptions and attitudes or on the way that some Muslims practised their religiosity (i.e., in forms of conservative religiosity or religious extremism). Interviewees also referred to cultural practices, drawing a line between "culture" and "religion." They suggested there was some confusion among Muslims or in the majority society related to this distinction; i.e., concerning the difference between the Islamic religion "as such" and practices that, according to the interviewees, were *cultural* traditions. The latter signified traditions from the Muslims' countries of origin, as related to their immigrant background, while Islam "as religion" seemed unattached to these cultural expressions and thus unrelated to prejudice. Thus, a detachment of "religion" from "culture" could be traced in interviewees' explanations of anti-Muslim attitudes. The critical views on certain (cultural) practices reflected recurrent debates in Norway, suggesting the interviewees distanced themselves from the problems identified in these debates.

As an example of how criticism of "Muslims" confused religion and cultural practices, Parveen (interviewee no. 6) referred to female genital mutilation (FGM, or female circumcision), pointing to how this is primarily a problem in some African countries but is sometimes associated with Islam in general. "Culture and religion

are simply confused too much,” she said.⁶¹¹ The distinction between religion and culture in effect shielded Islam from criticism. Some interviewees, however, saw a potential for intolerance lying in religion. When explaining the factors behind negative attitudes, Berat (interviewee no. 20) mentioned religious exclusivism. According to Berat, a tendency to regard one’s religion as superior explained negative views between Muslims and Jews and between religious people in general:

Den viktigste årsaken er polariseringen, at de lukker seg og vender ryggen til den andre religionen, da, at for eksempel muslimer kan vende seg mot jøder fordi de ikke kommer overens eller at de hevder at religionen deres er best fremfor den andres.

– *Muslimene?*

Kan også være at det samme gjelder for kristne eller jøder. Det er kanskje det som er [bakgrunnen for] at de ikke kommer overens, fordi de hevder at deres religion er den rette, og at den andre religionen ikke eksisterer for deres øyne.

– *Jødene hevder det?*

Ja, for eksempel.

– *Og det er med på å skape negative holdninger til dem?*

For det fører til konkurranse innad.

[The most important explanation is the polarisation, that they close themselves and turn their back against the other religions. For example, that Muslims turn against Jews because they do not get along or claim their religion is better than the religion of the others.

– *The Muslims?*

Could also be the same for Christians and Jews. It might be the reason why they do not get along, because they claim that their religion is better and the others’ religion does not exist in their eyes.

– *The Jews say that?*

Yes, for example.

– *And that creates negative views about them?*

Because it leads to internal competition.]

Berat’s comment describes the same attitude – religious exclusivism – as being at the origin of negative views among adherents of different religions, whether Muslim, Jewish, or Christian, and seemed to imply that some form of spiritual ex-

611 “Kultur og religion blandes for mye sammen, rett og slett.”

change and religious open-mindedness is important in order to avoid negative views.

Karrar (interviewee no. 29) also pointed to attitudes among religious people and how ostentatious expressions of religiosity could contribute to negative attitudes, using religious clothes as an example. Karrar described himself as more religious than most Muslims, having had a strict religious upbringing. Growing older, he became more independent from his parents' religious practice. During his time in school, he experienced what he perceived as religious extremism among two of his classmates. Karrar found this problematic, as he explained:

Da jeg gikk på ungdomsskolen, hadde jeg to klassekamerater. De var sunnimuslimer, veldig, veldig religiøse. Jeg ville ha kalt dem for ekstremister faktisk, fordi, altså, de var ekskluderende, og de var arrogante. Jeg hater det, fordi det er akkurat det som bidrar til rasisme. Ikke sant, det bidrar til rasisme. Det gir rasister en grunn til å være rasister. Jeg synes det gir dem en grunn, fordi når han kommer og ser ned på deg fordi du er en ateist for eksempel. Så blir det feil, fordi du er ikke i en muslimsk stat. Her har alle mennesker likeverd.

[In secondary school, I had two classmates who were Sunni and very, very, religious. I would call them extremists, actually, because they were exclusionary and arrogant. I hate that, because it contributes to racism. It gives racists a reason to be racist. I believe it does, because when he comes and looks down on you for being atheist, for example, it is wrong because you are not in a Muslim state. Here all people are seen as equal.]

This statement describes religious exclusivism as the cause of racism, suggesting that this form of religiosity led to negative views about other Muslims as well. Karrar maintained that everyone was allowed to believe what they want and that freedom of speech secured the right to express religious views regardless of what others may think. At the same time, he emphasised that this freedom was no excuse for exclusionary views like those expressed by his classmates. As discussed above (chapter 8.3), Karrar described himself as a “hybrid,” indicating how he managed to shift between identities in accordance with his surroundings and different social settings (between Iraq and Norway, between “ethnic Norwegians” and “foreign friends”). The ability to adapt and adjust, and thus to interact with people of very different backgrounds, seemed important to him. Furthermore, Karrar pointed out that acting superior and looking down on others who think differently can end up backfiring. Exclusionary and intolerant views were perhaps intended to exclude society, he said, but in fact, “You only exclude yourself.”⁶¹² The statement touches upon the difficult question of how to “adapt” and interact with people whose attitudes are less open, or are perhaps closed, to dialogue. Acculturation, rather than assimilation, seemed necessary to reduce prob-

612 “Du tror at du ekskluderer samfunnet, men du ekskluderer kun deg selv.”

lems with prejudice, he suggested: “I think it should be more like a compromise, because these values come from a different geographical area.”⁶¹³

Karrar’s explanation placed the emphasis on exclusionary attitudes among religious Muslims, suggesting that the tendency to remain separate from the majority society indirectly promotes racist and anti-Muslim views. Taking a different perspective, Jamel (interviewee no. 22) located problems related to perceptions of Islam mainly among non-Muslims, though he also underlined the importance of integration. Jamel described the development of the Pakistani community becoming integrated in Norwegian society. They had “worked their way up” and established families, thus diminishing resentment against them. Jamel, who belonged to the Pakistani community himself, noted, “They have blended in. They are practically no longer visible. People only talk about refugees, never about Pakistanis.”⁶¹⁴ The interview took place at a time when there was an intense debate about refugees in Norway and the rest of Europe, which was perhaps reflected in the comment. However, though “Pakistanis” were less at the centre of the debate, Jamel still perceived prevalent negative attitudes towards Muslims in Norwegian society, indicating that the “invisible” status of Pakistanis may have been more a question of a change in terminology than a change in attitudes. Jamel described how ignorance about Islam and religious practices created misunderstandings and fear in the majority population:

Jeg skjønner jo at de kanskje er redde for islam og at barna deres skal gå med hijab, men det er jo også valgfritt. Min kone går ikke med hijab. [. . .] Du kan aldri tvinge noen til å gå med noe de ikke vil. Om du ikke vil ha skjegg så skal du ikke ha skjegg. Om du ikke vil ha hijab, så skal du ikke ha hijab. Det er hva du har i hjertet som er det viktigste. Jeg tror at disse menneskene ikke har forstått det.

[I understand that they perhaps are afraid of Islam and fear that their children will wear hijabs, but that is voluntary. My wife does not wear a hijab. [. . .] You can never force someone to wear something that they do not want. If you do not want a beard, you shall not wear a beard. If you do not want to wear a hijab, you shall not wear a hijab. What you have in your heart is what matters. I think these people have not understood that.]

Jamel’s comment indicated that a narrow understanding of Islam among non-Muslims and the impression that it is a rigid and conservative religion, may explain negative attitudes towards Muslims. As noted above (chapter 8.1), Jamel distinguished between “good” and “bad” expressions of Judaism, the latter

613 “Jeg mener heller at det blir som et kompromiss, fordi disse verdiene kommer fra et annet geografisk område.”

614 “De har blenda inn så hardt. De er nesten ikke synlige i dag lenger. Det snakkes kun om flyktninger, aldri om pakistanere lenger.”

being related to his concept of Zionism and Zionists. He also distinguished between a “good” and a “bad” Islam, tracing a similar internal diversity related to Islamic religiosity among Muslims. One-dimensional perceptions of both religions and their adherents were a source of negative attitudes. While Islam according to Jamel implies individual freedom and leaves elements such as religious clothing up to everyone to decide for themselves, this is often not understood by non-Muslims. Furthermore, the negative attitudes created by perceptions of Islam being a rigid religion were not confined to the practice of Muslims; the comment suggests they were based in a fear that Islamic practices, such as the hijab, would be introduced by force throughout all of society. Jamel described a religious evolution, illustrated by how Christianity had replaced the earlier Norse mythology as the predominant belief in Norway: “It is a Christian country, it has always been a Christian country. Before that, it was the Norse mythology and Thor with the hammer [laughs], but it is developing.”⁶¹⁵ This was an ongoing process, Jamel explained, and people feared that Islam was going to take over. The comment may refer to public debates on Islam and immigration that convey (Islamophobic) notions of Muslims “taking over” Europe. The Norwegian debate has centred on the neologism *snikislamisering* (“Islamisation by stealth”), a basically conspiratorial concept roughly analogous to the English “creeping sharia” or “stealth Jihad.”⁶¹⁶ The term became known in Norway following a comment by the leader of the Progress Party in 2009. She used it to describe what she perceived as a negative development of Islam being introduced in more and more contexts, gradually taking over society and replacing “Norwegian” culture and values.

Günay (interviewee no. 19) pointed to misunderstandings about Islam as an important factor explaining negative attitudes towards Muslims. Again, the suggestion was that Muslims should take responsibility for negative attitudes by explaining what Islam is “really” like. Günay’s background was from Turkey but she came to Norway as a child. She told a story about how the textbook in a religion class had included a passage about a prophet hitting a child, with reference to Islam. Günay said that one of the hadith does indeed refer to how hitting children may be justified in some cases, but this did not reflect how Muslims actually behave towards their children. She had complained to the teacher and said that she was a Muslim and would never do such a thing. “We should get better at explain-

615 “Det er et kristent land, det har alltid vært et kristent land, før det var det norrøn mytologi eller Tor med hammeren [ler] men det går jo videre.”

616 A term inspired by Robert Spencer, *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2008). See Kathrine Fangen and Mari Vaage, “‘The Immigration Problem’ and Norwegian RightWing Politicians,” *New Political Science* 40, no. 3 (2018): 463–64.

ing ourselves, [and say that] in fact, not everyone is like that. I told them that the textbook was wrong, that this is not what Muslims are like. Maybe we Muslims were like that a hundred years ago, when we did not know better,” Günay said.⁶¹⁷ The comment implied that Islam is not a static religion; on the contrary, it is subject to personal interpretation and norms evolve as times change.

Günay did not describe herself as a very religious person, but she described Islam as an inherent part of her identity and something she wanted to pass on to her children. As an example of a negative interpretation of Islam, she mentioned another story about how one of her children had learned at their (Islamic) religious weekend class that Christians would go to hell when they died. The child came home worrying about what would happen to their Christian friends. Günay had explained to the child that this was incorrect, according to her understanding of religion and of Islam; a Christian could be a “Muslim” too, in the sense of being a good person. Günay seemed uncertain about the factors behind negative attitudes towards Jews but suggested that attacks against Jews conducted by Muslims in Europe might be based on antagonistic images of “Judaism versus Islam,” and perhaps a wish to create conflict. However, a “real” Muslim would never act in that way. Similar to Jamel and other interviewees, Günay’s narrative distinguished between a correct, tolerant version of religion and a misunderstood, intolerant one.

Fatimah (interviewee no. 1) also suggested that anti-Jewish prejudice and hatred among Muslims were an expression of religious ignorance, rooted in one-sided and misunderstood interpretations of Islam. She drew a clear line separating Islam from negative attitudes towards Jews; the Islamic religion did not support such views, she said, though some people tried to defend hatred by referring to Islamic sources. Despite the fact that the Qur’an includes passages that promote respect and positive bonds between the People of the Book, many Muslims ignored these references, Fatimah claimed:

Jeg er ingen ekspert på islam, men det lille jeg har lest i Koranen angående jøder og kristne, så står det at det er fred mellom oss, fred mellom islam, kristendom og jødene. Og så står det i Koranen at bokens folk [. . .] skal vi faktisk knytte bånd til, for de har samme gud og samme utgangspunkt i religionen. Så står det at maten fra bokens folk og Toraens folk, den kan vi spise. [. . .] Men det jeg tror de aller fleste muslimer gjør, er at de ser bort fra det. De ser bort fra det som står der og gjør det om til sitt eget, [hevder] at Gud hater jødene og sånt. Da prøver jeg [å si]: “Men har dere ikke lest det og det verset?”

617 “[V]i bør være flinkere med å forklare oss, [det er] faktisk ikke alle som er sånn. Jeg sa ifra at det som står i fagboka vår er feil, at det er ikke sånn vi muslimer er. Det er kanskje sånn vi muslimer var for hundre år siden, da vi ikke visste bedre om barn.”

[I am not an expert on Islam, but from what I have read in the Qur'an about Jews and Christians, it says that there is peace between us, peace between Islam, Christianity, and the Jews. It says in the Qur'an that we should actually have connections with the People of the Book [. . .] because they have the same god and the same religious origin. It says that we can eat the food from the People of the Book and the People of the Torah. [. . .] However, I think most Muslims ignore this. They ignore what is written there and make it their own, [claim] that God hates the Jews and stuff. I try [to say], "but, have you not read those verses?"]

Fatimah expressed a strong conviction that Islam emphasised positive bonds between Muslims and Jews and that attempts to use religious sources to promote negative views about Jews were based on misunderstandings or perhaps a deliberate disregard of unequivocal passages. As discussed above (chapter 9.2), Fatimah spent a lot of time during the interview distancing herself from antisemitism within the Muslim community, though she described such attitudes as prevalent among only a minority.

10.3 A Human Need for Scapegoats?

When reflecting on possible reasons for antisemitism and Islamophobia, some interviewees mentioned a human need for scapegoats. Again, the explanations sometimes combined notions of Jews and Muslims as victims with views that drew on old stereotypes.

The interview with Aleena (interviewee no. 4) is a good example of these combined explanations that include a notion of Jews as scapegoats. Drawing a parallel between what she perceived as the behaviour of Jews before and after World War II, her narrative sought to explain why the Holocaust had taken place and the reason for antisemitism. Aleena described how in school she had tried to figure out the reasons for the persecution that ultimately led to the Holocaust:

[D]et jeg har forstått, var at det var veldig trange kår i Europa, og at jødene har alltid vært veldig flinke på finansiering og sånne økonomiske greier, ikke sant. Og det var veldig mye finansiert av renter alt sammen, som det ofte er. Og de eneste som var velstående, og som klarte seg, det var jødene, før andre verdenskrig. Og det som jeg tenker, da, det er jo at når du kan leve helt uten bekymring, sånn som jødene gjør nå også, i Israel, at man har liksom som en vegg rundt seg. Så har du det fint og behagelig, og mat og klær og alt er greit, men du bryr deg ikke om den som har det dårlig rett ved siden av deg, det er veldig karakteristisk for Israel og palestinerne, nå. Sånn kan det ha vært, tenker jeg, før andre verdenskrig også. Og så er det jo samfunnet, de tenker at de eneste som overlever, som klarer seg, er jødene, og de bryr seg ikke om oss, og da er det de som er årsaken til vår . . . alle problemene våre. Fordi at de sitter på noe som de ikke vil dele med oss. Og så begynner forfølgelsen, ikke sant. Sånn forstår jeg det.

[[W]hat I have understood is that things were difficult in Europe at the time, and that the Jews had always been very good at financing and financial stuff, right? And a lot was financed totally by interest, as it often is, and the only people who were wealthy and who managed before World War II, were the Jews. What I think, then, is that when you can live without any worries, as the Jews do now too, in Israel, you have a sort of a wall around you. Everything is nice and comfortable, and food, clothing, and everything is taken care of, but you do not care about those who suffer right next to you. That is very characteristic of Israel and the Palestinians now. I imagine it might have been like that before World War II, too. Then there is society. They think that the only people who survive, who manage, are the Jews, and they do not care about us, so they are the cause of our . . . all our problems. Because they have something, they do not want to share with us. Then the persecution begins, you see. That is how I see it.]

The narrative describes society's views and the behaviour and character of Jews as connected. Based on her assessment of the current situation in Israel and Palestine, Aleena draws a historical parallel to explain the causes of the Holocaust. In this narrative, Jewish financial success and privilege sparked negative sentiments in the surrounding society and ultimately led to the Holocaust, with Israeli clannishness serving as a contemporary parallel to this dynamic. Society's tendency to blame the Jews for its problems and Jewish self-centredness are both at the origin of the negative attitudes, according to this view. The narrative describes the current situation of the Jews as enjoying peace and comfort, with antisemitism seeming a possibility more than a reality. The interpretation may be seen as projecting a future development, similar to the one Aleena presented with reference to Jews as "pharaohs" (chapter 7.4); i.e., as a warning of what might happen if the Jews do not adjust their behaviour.

Aleena's narrative focused on how Jews were blamed for the negative situation experienced by the general population. Ismail (interviewee no. 12) claimed that antisemitic conspiracy theories among Muslims serve a similar purpose. His narrative also made it clear that he perceived antisemitism and Islamophobia to be related phenomena. With reference to prevalent negative attitudes towards Muslims after the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in New York in 2001, he said, "And then there are the conspiracy theories; one is the conspiracy that the West has created all of this, that the US is behind everything, and that the Jews are pulling the strings."⁶¹⁸ Ismail saw these theories as expressions of a common phenomenon whereby difficult situations are handled by the construction of a scapegoat in the guise of an external enemy, explaining the emergence of antisemitic attitudes as a result of this need. To "make sense" of anti-Muslim senti-

618 "[. . .] og så er det dette her med konspirasjonsgreier med at, det ene er konspirasjonen om at Vesten har skapt dette her, og at USA står bak alt sammen, og det er jødene som styrer."

ments after the attacks, Muslims pointed to the “Jews” and “the West” as the powers behind 9/11. Perceiving a close association between antisemitism and Islamophobia, Ismail expected antisemitism to increase:

Jeg tror det kommer til å øke. Jeg tror det kommer til å øke fordi nettopp sånn som Vesten trenger en naturlig fiende, så trenger muslimene en naturlig årsak og en fiende, og da er det veldig enkelt å henge det på knaggen som heter “jøde,” og at det er de som egentlig konspirerer for å gjøre alt dette her. Hvorfor var det ikke noen jøder i de bygningene som falt, ikke sant? Og alt dette leder til sånne konspirasjonsteorier, at det er jødene som står bak alt sammen, ikke sant. Når man ikke har fornuft og fornuftige argumenter, så blir det veldig enkelt å se det som en årsak. “Her har du en årsak, den er servert.”

[I think it is going to increase. I think it is going to increase because just like the West needs a natural enemy, the Muslims need a natural explanation and an enemy, then it is very easy to hang it on the hook called “Jew,” claiming that it is actually them who conspire to do all this. Why were there no Jews in the buildings when they fell, right? All this leads to these kinds of conspiracy theories where the Jews are seen as behind everything. When you do not have sense and reasonable arguments, it becomes very easy to present that as a reason. “Here you have a reason, it is ready made!”]

The narrative describes the emergence of negative attitudes as founded on the premise that the “natural enemy” of “the West” is “the Muslim,” while the enemy of “the Muslim” is “the Jew.” As we have seen above (chapter 9.2), Ismail, who was Ahmadi, identified with Jews based on a perception of common experiences having made both minorities stronger. Ismail’s example above does not specify among whom he perceived such views to be prevalent, but the binary between the West and Islam resembles an Islamist outlook. The argument has certain similarities to Aleena’s understanding described above, suggesting that negative attitudes may have a functional explanation. Hatred against Muslims and conspiracy theories about Jews have a certain social and societal function in that they construct explanations for why things go wrong. The narrative also equates the sources of anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish sentiments: they have the same origin, namely the – conscious or unconscious – need to construct an enemy.

When Farzan (interviewee no. 30) explained his thoughts on the factors behind negative attitudes towards Muslims, he suggested this was due to many reasons, one being a general human tendency to engage in scapegoating. “A major cause is the natural tendency in every society to look at the one who is different and blame them for everything that goes wrong,” he said.⁶¹⁹ Reflecting further on what kinds of problems could lead to scapegoating in a country like Norway,

619 “En hovedgreie er at det er naturlig i ethvert samfunn og se på den som er annerledes og skylde på den for alt som er galt i samfunnet.”

where there are relatively few obvious causes for conflict, Farzan used the example of a current debate on halal food:

Det plager ikke vedkommende om det tilbys en halalpølse ved siden av den vanlige pølsen. Det har ikke noe å si for hans liv, men problemene er så få og vi har det så godt at vi må liksom pirke på noe og da er det naturlig å velge en såkalt ekstern fiende da. Det er vanlig i alle samfunn å skille ut de som ikke er som oss.

[It does not bother anyone if halal sausages are served beside the regular sausage. The problems are few and we are ok, but we have to poke at something, pointing to the “external enemy” is natural. It is common in every society, to single out those who are not like us.]

Farzan’s explanation seemed to define negative views as almost unavoidable ingredients in any human society. Similarly, Yusuf (interviewee no. 17) also perceived this function in society’s construction of Jews and Muslims:

Jødene [før Holocaust] ble jo syndebukker for alt mulig som skjedde. [. . .] Nå føler jeg at alt blir problematisert rundt muslimer, og vi muslimer er syndebukker for alt mulig. Altså i større grad enn innvandrere og flyktninger generelt, føler jeg at muslimer blir gjort til syndebukker for alt mulig.

[Jews [before the Holocaust] became the scapegoats for everything that happened. [. . .] Now I feel that everything about Muslims is problematised. We Muslims are scapegoats for everything; to a greater extent than immigrants and refugees in general, Muslims are scapegoats.]

The comment distinguishes the position and function of the “Muslim” from that of immigrants and refugees. The parallel to the construction of “Jews” in the period before the Holocaust indicates the gravity of the situation.

Yusuf had many negative experiences related to being a Muslim in Norway, such as harassment at school. That anti-Muslim attitudes were not being taken seriously was visible everywhere, he said. It seemed useless to try to raise the issue, because:

De som snakker om erfaringene sine, enten rasistiske kommentarer eller [kommentarer] fra folk som hater muslimer eller er generelt skeptiske til folk med innvandrere- eller flyktningebakgrunn, så blir det sånn: “Og nå skal du spille offerkortet igjen?”

[Those who speak about their experiences – either of racist comments or [comments] from people who hate Muslims or who are generally suspicious of people with an immigrant or refugee background – are told “And now you are playing the victim card again?”]

As an adult, Yusuf had negative experiences at least every month; for example, on public transport. He described a situation where the combination of wide-

spread negative attitudes and accusations that Muslims take advantage of claims of discrimination left the victim with few possible means of taking action.

10.4 The Impact of the Few – Group Constructions and Portrayals in the Media

Group constructions were a recurring theme in interviewees' explanations of negative attitudes towards both Jews and Muslims. The media played an important role in these constructions, though in somewhat different ways in narratives about antisemitism compared with those about Islamophobia. As discussed above, interviewees seemed to consider the tendency to conflate Israelis with Jews to be a central factor behind antisemitic attitudes. For some, it seemed important to express awareness about the problems related to such generalisations and to express distance from antisemitic attitudes, by signalling opposition to similar group constructions among Muslims. One example occurred in the interview with Rashida (interviewee no. 10). Underlining that she would not make the same mistake, she said, "Negative attitudes towards Jews? I think it has to do with . . . I distinguish between Israel, the state, and what they do, and regular Jews who . . . [are] like me, like Muslims, like normal people."⁶²⁰ The comment distinguishes between "regular Jews" – who are like Rashida herself – and the people responsible for Israeli policies. There seemed to be no reason for negative views towards the former.

The media representations causing negative views about Jews were described as reports about Israeli policies that, even if correct, might provide a basis for negative generalisations of Jews. Interviewees did not, however, turn the argument around, and claim that negative attitudes towards Jews have found expression in anti-Israeli statements. As such, they did not echo the "new antisemitism" thesis, which claims that criticism of Israel constitutes a way to express antisemitism in an "acceptable" manner. Interviewees also did not refer to media representations of Jews or Judaism as biased, only to negative (but correct) portrayals of Israel, Zionists, or Zionism affecting the way people viewed Jews. The problem with media depictions of Muslims seemed more complex – on the one hand, a problem related to how the images focused on the actions of a small minority among Muslims, causing generalisations based on the radical, extremist few. On the other, they presented what interviewees perceived to be a distorted picture of "normal" Muslims and Islam. The majority of articles about Muslims and Islam were perceived as bi-

⁶²⁰ "Negative holdninger til jøder? Jeg tror det har litt med . . . Jeg skiller mellom Israel, staten, og hva de gjør, og jøder some [er] . . ., som meg, som muslimer, som vanlige folk."

ased. “I cannot remember the last time I saw a positive headline about a Muslim . . . it is always negative,” Rashida said.⁶²¹ “A very short answer would be the media,” Imran (interviewee no. 15) answered, when asked about what caused negative attitudes towards Muslims.⁶²²

Halim (interviewee no. 23) initially also pointed to a negative and distorted media image as the main reason for negative attitudes towards Muslims. However, with reference to the cartoon controversy, he also criticised some religious Muslims, calling for “thicker skin” and a focus on deeper knowledge of Islam rather than loud opposition.⁶²³ The Norwegian newspaper *Magazinet* reprinted the cartoons in January 2006. Halim used the reaction against the newspaper’s editor Vebjørn Selbekk as an example:

Det er to ting, den ene er media, som får islam til å fremstå dårlig, og det andre er muslimer selv, for å være helt ærlig. Vi er ikke åpen for dialog. De er veldig hårsåre, mener jeg. [. . .] Hvem er vi, muslimer, til å gå og straffe denne mannen [redaktøren for Jyllands-Posten], og si at “du skal ikke gjøre dette her”? [. . .] Hvis du faktisk skal bry deg, så bry deg på en god måte, og heller undervise og gi kunnskap til disse menneskene som ikke har kunnskap om din kultur. [. . .] Er det sånn ordet “fred” og islam er, at når en person snakker dårlig om islam, så skal vi gå og angripe den personen og klikke mentalt? Det er på en måte to deler, både samfunnet og vi muslimer selv er med på å skape disse problemene for hverandre.

[There are two elements [that contribute to negative attitudes]; one is of course the media [that] makes Islam look bad, the other is Muslims themselves, to be honest. We are not open to dialogue. They are very thin-skinned, I believe. [. . .] Who are we to go and punish this man [Vebjørn Selbekk] and tell him he is not allowed to do this? [. . .] If you have to care, then educate people in a good way. Convey knowledge to these people who know nothing about your culture. [. . .] Is this what the word “peace” and Islam means, that when a person

621 “Jeg kan ikke huske sist gang jeg leste en positiv overskrift om hva en muslim . . . , det er alltid noe negativt.”

622 “Et veldig enkelt svar ville være media.”

623 The “Muhammad cartoon controversy,” began in September 2005 after the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. According to the newspaper, the publication was a contribution to the debate on criticism of Islam and was motivated by concern for freedom of speech. Based on the Islamic tradition that considers depictions of Muhammad blasphemous, Muslims around the world reacted strongly against the cartoons, triggering a “minor global crisis” Lasse Lindekilde, Per Mouritsen, and Ricard Zapata-Barrero, “The Muhammad cartoons controversy in comparative perspective,” *Ethnicities* 9, no. 3 (2009): 291. In the midst of the crisis, in February 2006, the Norwegian and Danish embassies in Damascus were attacked and set on fire. See, e.g., Espen Brynstrud and Kristjan Molstad, “Norges ambassade brent ned,” *Aftenposten*, February 4, 2006 <https://www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/Eago5/norges-ambassade-brent-ned>.

speaks ill of Islam, we attack that person and snap mentally? In a way there are two elements, both society and we Muslims ourselves create these problems for each other.]

The Muhammad cartoon controversy served as an example of what Halim perceived as a connection between the actions of individual Muslims and negative media representation. His frustration focused on the violent reaction of certain Muslims during the controversy and suggested a critical view of this response; perhaps precisely due to the generalized, negative image of Muslims it created in media reports. Halim also suggested ignorance had an impact and that efforts to educate people about Islam would have been more productive.

The perceived negative media perspective was explained by a constant need for sensational stories to sell. Ali (interviewee no. 32) saw an inherent logic in the news media promoting demonisation and simplistic versions of complex issues; as he explained:

Det er ingen som vil lese en femti-siders rapport om en konflikt i Afrika eller Midtøsten eller Asia for den saks skyld. Folk vil lese tre kjappe setninger, og hvis de klarer å få det så forenkla som at [. . .] den onde vil slakte de gode og derfor må vi stå med de gode, så er det veldig fort og lett å selge det.

[Nobody wants to read 50 pages about some conflict in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia. People want to read three sentences, and if they manage to simplify it to be about [. . .] the evil guy wanting to kill the good guy and that we have to stand by the good guy, it is very easy to sell.]

Ali felt the situation was particularly difficult for Muslims, based on simplistic associations between Islam and violence in the Middle East, making it easy to portray Islam as a violent religion. He criticised what he perceived to be a language that focused on “Islam” and contributed to negative views about the religion in cases where it was not relevant. While other attacks were merely labelled “terrorism,” the media always referred to “Islamic terrorism” when Muslim extremists were responsible, he said. Similarly, “If someone with a Muslim background [kills a woman], it is automatically termed ‘honour killing,’ but when a non-Muslim ethnic Norwegian does it, it is called ‘jealousy,’”⁶²⁴ indicating that the media uses an (Islamic) religious interpretative framework whenever Muslims do anything wrong but choose an individual or nuanced approach in other cases.

Omar (interviewee no. 11) also pointed to how the religious backgrounds of the terrorists were focused on, though he did not blame the media alone of creating negative attitudes:

624 “Når en med muslimsk bakgrunn gjør det [dreper en kvinne], er det automatisk ‘æresdrap,’ mens når en ikke-muslimsk etnisk norsk gjør det, [er det] fordi vedkommende er sjalu.”

Jeg tror mye av det har med media å gjøre. På andre siden så må vi muslimer også ta selvkritikk og innrømme at det finnes noen gærninger blant oss som sier mye tull, som dessverre får medias oppmerksomhet, og det bare øker til de negative tankene om muslimerne.

[I think it has a lot to do with the media. However, we Muslims also have to do some self-criticism and admit that there are some crazy people among us who say a lot of nonsense and unfortunately get media attention and increase negative ideas about Muslims.]

Explanations of Islamophobia that pointed to the media included references to ignorance in much the same way as explanations that focused on xenophobia did. Some interviewees suggested that a lack of knowledge in combination with biased/negative portrayals shaped negative views. Again, some pointed out that this was a normal human reaction, and the solution seemed to be increased social interaction and information. Some interviewees also indicated that they themselves were affected by negative portrayals in the media and became less optimistic regarding society's relation to Muslims as a whole. Bushra (interviewee no. 7) described how the portrayals could lead Muslims to avoid contact with the surrounding community: "Most people I know [. . .] if they have a multicultural background, they prefer to be with someone from the same background."⁶²⁵ A negative dynamic thus developed, where negative experiences were followed by withdrawal, which would in turn reduce social interactions and perhaps even contribute to more prejudice.

Commenting on the effect the media had on attitudes, Mustafa (interviewee no. 18) saw the emergence of stereotypes as a normal reaction, explaining that he would have reacted in a similar way himself if he were exposed to the same information. Communication and contact were even more important, he said:

Jeg skylder ikke på dem som tror det, for de vet ikke bedre. Det er den informasjonen de får. Hvis jeg hadde fått den informasjonen om muslimerne så hadde jeg tenkt akkurat det samme. Det er derfor jeg sier at det ikke er deres skyld, det er mediene som fremstiller oss på den måten. Det har ingenting med dem å gjøre. Det er derfor viktig at vi snakker med mennesker om hvordan islam faktisk er, uten å være aggressive.

[I do not blame those who think it [is true], because they do not know better. This is the information they have. If I had such information about Muslims, I would think the same way. That is why I say it is not their fault; it is the media, who portray us like that. It has nothing to do with them. That is why it is important that we talk to people about what Islam really is, without being aggressive.]

Placing responsibility for negative attitudes on misrepresentations in the media, Mustafa suggested that negative views should be countered with correct informa-

⁶²⁵ "De fleste jeg kjenner [. . .] hvis noen er fra en flerkulturell bakgrunn, så ønsker de mest å være med folk fra den samme bakgrunnen."

tion about Islam and by Muslims engaging with non-Muslims. He also pointed to actions of individuals from the Muslim minority; for example, Islamist extremists and terrorism. However, he was convinced that the main problem was ignorant and biased media coverage. With more (correct) information about Islam, people would be able to understand why the images were wrong, Mustafa explained. He also seemed to consider ignorance among Muslim extremists to be an indirect source of negative attitudes, pointing to ISIS members who kill innocent people and believe they are going to heaven as an example of a misinterpretation of Islam that may lead to negative impressions of Muslims. Mustafa suggested that dialogue could help against extremism, indicating that pushing people away rather than maintaining some form of dialogue can contribute to processes of radicalisation. A lack of knowledge and education was thus a recurring factor in Mustafa's explanations of Islamophobia. At the same time, he placed some of the responsibility for fighting anti-Muslim prejudice on the Muslim population itself. It was up to Muslims to explain to people, either the prejudiced parts of the population or Muslims who have misunderstood elements of Islam, what Islam is "really" like.

When talking about the causes of negative attitudes towards Jews, Mustafa pointed to the policies of Israel. Apparently narrowing the question to anti-Jewish attitudes among Muslims, he referred to a feeling of sympathy with the Palestinians based on them being their Muslim "brothers." Despite this sense of identification with the Palestinians, Mustafa emphasised that holding Jews in general accountable for the actions of Israel was a mistake:

Jeg tror at det [antisemittisme] er på grunn av konflikten mellom Palestina og Israel. For oss muslimer så er det konflikten. For min del, så tenker jeg bare på konflikten. Jeg har ikke noen problemer med jøder. Jeg tenker på konflikten mellom Palestina og Israel [. . .], hvordan de behandler mennesker, hvor urettferdig, hvordan palestinerne har det. Et av verdens største fengsel. Hvordan det faktisk er å være der, bo der. Hvordan de kan behandle mine "brødre" på den måten der. Det er det eneste jeg tenker på. [. . .] Selv om det ikke er jødernes skyld. Det er statens skyld.

[I think it [antisemitism] is due to the conflict between Palestine and Israel. For us Muslims, it is the conflict. For my part, I only think of the conflict. I do not have any problems with Jews. I think of the conflict between Palestine and Israel [. . .] how they treat people, how unjust, what it is like for the Palestinians. One of the world's largest prisons, what it is actually like to be there, to live there. How they can treat my "brothers" like this. That is the only thing I think about. [. . .] Although it is not the Jews' fault. It is the state's fault.]

The somewhat paradoxical argument that negative attitudes towards Jews are due to the actions of Israel and as such have nothing to do with Jews, suggests a distinction between an understanding of "Jews" as "ordinary" people, perhaps like Jews in Norway, and a negative image related to Israel. Antisemitism is

aimed at the latter, not the former. Mustafa also seemed to imply that ignorance was an issue when it came to antisemitism. Elaborating on his views, Mustafa expressed a profound distance from Jews, admitting he was not comfortable talking about Jews because he did not know anything about them:

De er sikkert akkurat samme som meg og deg, men jeg tenker ikke over det. [Det er] mye mer ubehagelig når du spør meg om jødene, enn når du spør meg om hvordan det faktisk er å vokse opp i Norge. Fordi det er noe jeg kan relatere meg til. Men når du snakker om de jødene, “de jødene” [gjentar, ler], om Israel, jeg vet ikke. Det blir som om man må tenke over hva man sier, for jeg har ikke kjennskap til det.

[They are probably just like you and me, but I do not think about it. I am less comfortable when you ask me about Jews, than when you ask about my experiences growing up in Norway, because I can relate. When you talk about those Jews – “those Jews” [repeats, laughs] – about Israel, I do not know. It is like, you have to think about what you say, because I don’t know anything about it.]

Mustafa combined a clear perception of the factors behind negative views towards Jews and an only partial distinction between “Jews” and “Israel” with a great deal of distance from actual Jews. However, his comment suggests that his immediate reaction is that Jews are probably like other people, “you and me,” a similar impulse to that of Berat (interviewee no. 20), who maintained that there are good people and bad people everywhere. The reason for antisemitism was not to be found among actual Jews, but still seemed to have a “Jewish” cause in the form of Israel.

Farid (interviewee no. 21) was also clear that the media was the main reason why people have negative attitudes towards Muslims. His impression was that the media always had a critical perspective, focusing on violence and groups like ISIS. This stood in contrast to Farid’s own understanding of what being a Muslim meant and what was central to Islam as a religion. Farid appeared to exclude members of ISIS from his definition of “Muslims”:

Hadde de vært ordentlige muslimer, så hadde de ikke gjort det de gjør i dag, eller gjorde før. Mitt syn på muslimer er at det er en bra religion, det er fredelig. Så du skal ikke drepe noen, du skal ikke slå noen, du skal ikke mishandle noen, selv om noen snakker vondt om deg. [. . .] Du skal ikke ta hevn eller noe sånt. Du skal bare la det gå, også går du videre. Det er sånn en muslim skal tenke og handle.

[If they had been real Muslims, they would not have done what they do, or did before. My view of Muslims is that it is a good religion; it is peaceful. You are not supposed to kill anyone, hit anyone; you are not supposed to mistreat anyone, even if someone speaks ill of you. [. . .] You are not supposed to seek revenge. You should just let it pass and carry on. That is how a Muslim should think and act.]

Farid's explanation focused less on the problem of group construction by the media and more on what Islam meant to him and how the violent individuals getting all the attention are not real Muslims. He did not primarily argue against the fallacies of generalisation, by which a whole group of people is blamed for the negative behaviour of individual members; rather, he excluded these individuals from his definition of "Muslim" altogether.

10.5 Evolving Trends

While antisemitism was seen as less relevant today by many interviewees, primarily connected to a historical situation, there seemed to be a general impression that negative attitudes towards Muslims are currently increasing in Norway and internationally. The impression that antisemitism is less important today also emerged indirectly through a certain lack of discussion as to how such attitudes might affect Jewish individuals. One example of this view was the following remark, made by Hassan (interviewee no. 5): "I know it happens [antisemitism], but it's very rare. There's much more happening to Muslims, harassment and so on."⁶²⁶ As previously mentioned, Hassan was one of the only interviewees who did not support the "ring of peace" around the synagogue in Oslo. He explained this by pointing to Israeli policies and the Jewish congregation's affiliation with Zionism. While Hassan emphasised being opposed to antisemitism and the importance of distinguishing between Jews and the State of Israel, his reluctance to participate in the "ring of peace" demonstrated how anti-Israeli attitudes might nevertheless cause social distance towards Jews in Norway and constitute an obstacle to expressions of solidarity. Hassan's views also seemed motivated by experiences of negative attitudes. He had worked for many years among Muslim youth in Oslo and described an impression of increasing anti-Muslim attitudes in Norway.

Commenting on Islamophobia, Imran (interviewee no. 15) suggested that attitudes that had been lying beneath the surface were expressed openly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. "'9/11' has created an environment where those who were quiet, who had a silent hatred towards Muslims inside, came out with their hate, they came out with their Islamophobia," he said.⁶²⁷ In Imran's view, the attacks in 2001 created an opportunity to express attitudes that were already there,

⁶²⁶ "[J]eg vet at det skjer, men det er veldig sjelden. Det er veldig mye mer som skjer med muslimer, trakassering og så videre."

⁶²⁷ "'9/11' har skapt et miljø hvor de som var stille, de som hadde sånt stille hat inni seg, så kom de ut med sitt hat, de kom ut med sin islamofobi."

it was not the terrorist attack as such – and the image of Muslims that it created – that sparked the prejudice. This comment did not imply that Islamophobia has been subject to silencing the way antisemitism has since the Holocaust, but it nevertheless suggested that attitudes previously unexpressed may find new modes of articulation through specific incidents – such as 9/11.⁶²⁸

Yusuf (interviewee no. 17) described a change in the way negative attitudes are expressed, from an earlier concentration on skin colour and other (traditional) racist expressions to a focus on the (perceived) Muslim identity of the victim. Yusuf described this as his personal experience and reflected on the fact that skin colour may be the first thing you notice about another person, while religion is something that can be hidden. “Name and skin colour you see instantly, while faith becomes more evident after a while, at least among men and among women who do not wear a hijab,” he said.⁶²⁹ He also referred to friends from Kosovo and Bosnia who had more “Norwegian” appearances and who experienced less negative attitudes despite also being Muslim. Yusuf was very pessimistic about the situation of Muslims in Europe. Again, Jewish victimhood seemed to constitute an interpretative key. Describing a scenario of increasing restrictions aimed at the Muslim minority, he said:

I dag sier man at vi må forby det, og så blir burka forbudt. I morgen er det kanskje niqab, og så er det kanskje hijab, skjønner du? At liksom religionen skal begrenses stadig mer. Mange er redde for at turen skal komme til andre ting. [. . .] Det har jo skjedd veldig mye, også i europeiske land. Og hvis du tenker på . . . Ja, du vet jo det, ikke sant, det der med gasskamrene og alt det der, det kom jo ikke over natta.

[Today they say we have to forbid the burka, and then the burka is forbidden, tomorrow it might be the niqab, and then perhaps the hijab, you see? Religion is restricted more and more. Many [people] fear the turn will come for other things as well. [. . .] Many things have been happening also in Europe. If you think about – you know the whole thing with the gas chambers and everything – it did not happen overnight.]

The negative development Yusuf feared was not limited to restrictions regarding clothing or religious practice; he was afraid that Muslims would experience new forms of discrimination following these initial measures. The history of the persecution of Jews in Europe serves as a reference point, the argument drawing a paral-

⁶²⁸ Participants in group interviews of Jews and Muslims conducted in 2017 also perceived of 9/11 as being a decisive moment, marking the beginning of widespread negative portrayals of Muslims in the media. Claudia Lenz and Vibeke Moe, “Negotiations of Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Group Conversations among Jews and Muslims,” in *The Shifting Boundaries of Prejudice: Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Norway*.

⁶²⁹ “Navn og hudfarge ser du med én gang, mens tro blir mer synlig etter hvert, i hvert fall for mannfolk og kvinner som ikke bærer hijab.”

lel between the Jewish and Muslim experiences, not because Muslims have experienced what Jews did during the Holocaust but because discrimination and the exclusion of minorities may follow similar patterns. As discussed above (chapter 10.3), Yusuf referred to how negative experiences were not taken seriously (explained away as someone “playing the victim card”). His reference to the gradual historical development of persecution and discrimination against Jews warned of what could happen if a society did not acknowledge such discrimination to be a serious problem.

Halim (interviewee no. 23) observed a change in society’s understanding of the concept “minority,” creating a distinction between Muslims and other minorities. He said, “I came here as a refugee, but the feeling of being a minority was strengthened after the term ‘Islam’ was looked down on and associated with evil and terror.”⁶³⁰ He described a change in the meaning of the term “minority” that became particularly clear after 9/11. While the term’s definition applied to any group of foreigners in Norway, including Italians and Germans, Halim no longer perceived these groups as “minorities” – only Muslims were “minorities” in Norway, he claimed. He said that the word had nothing to do with other religions like Buddhism, Judaism, or Christianity, “It only relates to the term ‘Islam’.”⁶³¹ This change in the meaning of the term started with the terrorist attacks in 2001, Halim explained. “I think the image of the minority changed that day in Norway, and in the rest of the world,” he said. Halim maintained that people with white skin were not minorities, while people of colour were perceived as foreigners in Norway. Halim’s associations to the word “minority” outlined a set of connected characteristics – being a person of colour, Muslim, and “foreign” – and a boundary separating these from another set of characteristics related to people who are not part of a minority – white, non-Muslim, and not foreign. Jews belonged to the category of non-minorities, apparently not affected by this negative development.

Halim recalled several personal experiences related to his skin colour and his background from Somalia. Similar to Berat and Ismail, he also claimed that negative experiences had some positive effects. Arguing in much the same way as Ismail did when explaining the achievements of the Jewish and Ahmadi minorities (chapter 9.2), Halim seemed keen to interpret his experiences in a constructive way:

⁶³⁰ “Jeg kom hit som flyktning, men følelsen av å være minoritet ble forsterket etter at ordet ‘islam’ ble sett ned på og forbundet med ondskap og terror.”

⁶³¹ “Det har kun med ordet islam å gjøre.”

Det påvirker meg egentlig ganske på en positiv måte, eller jeg prøver å gjøre det til en positiv . . . det gjør meg sterkere. Det gjør meg mer bevisst på at det finnes mennesker der ute, som har disse meningene. Det gjør meg mer bevisst på hvem jeg er, hvor jeg kommer fra.

[It affects me in a positive way, or, I try to make it into a positive . . . it makes me stronger. It makes me more aware that there are people who have these opinions. It makes me aware of who I am, where I come from.]

Halim described how his experiences had changed his understanding of his position in society, from being unaware of any perceptions of difference in early childhood to gradually acknowledging that he was not “like the others.” Halim’s narrative showed a reciprocity in this development, where he became aware of his own identity parallel to society’s constant reminder of his (and other Muslims’) “difference.” Halim said:

Når man er “kid,” tolv-tretten, eller under det, er du på en måte blant de andre kidsa og føler deg som dem, men faktisk, når du begynner å bli eldre så tenker du [at] “jeg er faktisk ikke som dem, jeg er annerledes.” Jeg har ikke de samme verdiene som dem, jeg har kanskje ikke de samme meningene som dem. Men det betyr jo selvfølgelig ikke at folk skal behandle deg på den måten, men man merker også at man er annerledes, og du får vite daglig via media, folk på gata, via samfunnet generelt at du er annerledes. “Du er på den siden, vi er på den siden.” Ikke det at det kanskje er bevisst ment at det skal være sånn, samfunnet minner meg og andre minoriteter på daglig at vi er annenrangsborgere [enten det gjelder] på jobbintervju, å finne en bolig, å bare leve her. Så blir du på en måte behandlet annerledes. Du blir ikke behandlet med gjensidig respekt. Du blir ikke behandlet som et individ, men du blir behandlet ut ifra hvem du er, og hvordan du ser ut og hvilken hudfarge du har.

[When you are a kid, twelve or thirteen years old or younger, you are among the other children and feel like the others, but as you grow older, you think that “in fact, I am not like them, I am different.” I do not hold the same values; perhaps I do not have the same opinions as them. Of course, this does not mean that people should treat you like this, but you also feel that you are different; you are told every day, in the media, by people on the street, and in society, that you are different – “You are on one side, we are on the other.” Not that it is intentionally meant; society reminds me and other minorities on a daily basis that we are second-rate citizens [whether it applies] to a job interview, to finding a home, to just living here. You are treated differently. You are not treated with mutual respect. You are not treated as an individual, but you are treated based on who you are and how you look and what skin colour you have.]

The narrative describes how Halim gradually internalized perceptions of difference related to experiences of exclusion, to the point where he seemed to accept the imposed image of otherness. Halim insisted on maintaining a positive perspective, but the description of how Muslims were classified as inferior citizens clearly signals discrimination and feelings of social exclusion.

A negative view of changing attitudes in regards to Islam/Muslims was not the only opinion expressed among the interviewees. With reference to what it was like to live as a Muslim in Norway, Bashir (interviewee no. 8) described a sense of there being no obstacles – he had never experienced that Islam was incompatible with his work plans or other things he had wanted to do, he said. Bashir had also observed an increased interest in Islam in Norwegian society:

Jeg tror de fleste, på grunn av mye mediedekning, at de fleste har blitt mer interessert i å lære mer om, hva er islam? Jeg tror de fleste har innsett at det er ikke det samme som, slik det kommer frem i media, bare terrorisme, vold eller kvinneundertrykking. Det er faktisk mye mer enn det. Det er selvfølgelig fordi jeg går på religionshistorie, der er det mange som er åpne og interesserte, men også ellers – at jeg møter folk som har mer kunnskap om islam enn det jeg har, som ikke er praktiserende. Så jeg tror det er mye mer i vinden nå.

[I think most people, due to the extensive media coverage, have become more interested in learning, what is Islam? I think most people have understood that it is not like what is presented in the media, [which is] just terrorism, violence, and oppression of women. It is in fact much more than that. Of course, this is partly due to my religious studies, where many are open and interested, but [it occurs] also elsewhere. I meet people who know more about Islam than I do, who are not practising [Muslims]. So, I think it is more popular now.]

Bashir's impression was unusual in the sense that it described a positive development resulting from the extensive media focus, with an increased interest and awareness of the diversity in Islam. Contrary to other interviewees, he thought that most people understood that negative portrayals in the media were biased. He did not seem affected by these depictions; rather, his focus was on people's response to the media images, convinced that they looked beyond one-sided representations. Bashir's interpretation resonates with his own nuanced perception of other people, where he repeatedly refused to subscribe to group characteristics.

10.6 Core Narratives about Antisemitism and Islamophobia

Islamophobia and antisemitism are sometimes perceived as contrasting attitudes, implicitly or explicitly defining Jews and Muslims as opposites, either as victims or in terms of the ideas that the prejudices convey. Though admitting that the notion of a parallel between Islamophobia and antisemitism holds some validity, Matti Bunzl has claimed that the idea of a more profound analogy between the two prejudices is misleading.⁶³² His central argument is that while antisemitism

⁶³² Matti Bunzl, *Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Hatreds Old and New in Europe* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2007).

endeavoured to “protect the purity of the nation-state,” Islamophobia in contemporary European society is related to the development of a common European identity and aims at preserving “European civilisation.”⁶³³ According to Bunzl, post-war Europe sees the Jews as the embodiment of a postnational order.⁶³⁴ Indeed, some significant differences can be found in the function of the stereotypes conveyed in the prejudices and in how the attitudes have been manifested in the respective histories of discrimination against Jews and Muslims, perhaps the most clear example being the scale of the persecution of Jews in European history, culminating in the Holocaust. Nonetheless, important parallels can be found in terms of the construction of enemy images and in the experiences of Jews and Muslims.⁶³⁵

An assessment of similarities is dependent on which historical manifestations of the prejudices is being referred to. One could argue that contemporary anti-Muslim prejudices have more in common with what has been termed Enlightenment-based antisemitism (*Aufklärungsantisemitismus*), which portrayed Jews as religiously backward and was critical of traditional Jewish religious practices, as opposed to the anti-modern form of antisemitism that developed in the late 19th century.⁶³⁶ Shared traits relating to conspiracy theories and a fear of domination may also support the claim that antisemitism and Islamophobia are related phenomena. Though antisemitic constructions of Jews as powerful have a more prominent history in Europe, both Jews and Muslims are associated with power in contemporary enemy constructions.⁶³⁷ The Eurabia theory is perhaps the clearest example of how Muslims today are portrayed as a threat to Europe. Further-

633 Bunzl, *Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Hatreds Old and New in Europe*, 45.

634 Bunzl, *Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Hatreds Old and New in Europe*, 14.

635 See, e.g., Glynis Cousin and Robert Fine, “A Common Cause: Reconnecting the Study of Racism and Antisemitism,” *European Societies* 14, no. 2 (2012); Kalmar and Ramadan, “Antisemitism and Islamophobia Historical and Contemporary Connections and Parallels.”; James Renton and Ben Gidley, eds., *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared History?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

636 Lars Dencik and Karl Marosi suggest that a form of Enlightenment-based antisemitism today may (also) be a disguised attack against the numerically much larger Muslim minorities, based on the similar religious practices of Muslims and Jews, particularly related to circumcision and animal slaughter. Lars Dencik and Karl Marosi, “Different antisemitisms: on three distinct forms of antisemitism in contemporary Europe. With special focus on Sweden,” *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 27, no. 2 (2016): 36.

637 This characteristic has, however, been identified as a central difference between antisemitism and other forms of racism or xenophobia in both Norwegian and German right-wing extremism, see Michael Kohlstruck and Rainer Erb, “Die Funktionen von Antisemitismus und Fremdenfeindschaft für die rechtsextreme Bewegung,” in *Strategien der extremen Rechten: Hintergründe – Analysen – Antworten*, ed. Stephan Braun, Alexander Geisler, and Martin Gerster (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009), 435–36; Simonsen, “Antisemitism on the Norwegian Far-Right, 1967–2018,” 654.

more, notions sometimes combine references to Jews and Muslims; for example, in the idea of a threatening Muslim mass immigration being orchestrated by Jews. Bunzl's analysis may be criticised for being too predisposed to focus on the importance of the nation-state in historical antisemitism. Taking into account Klaus Holz's theory of "the Jew" as a non-national in the European antisemitic repertoire, the analogy to Islamophobia may seem more clear.⁶³⁸ Furthermore, references to a "postnational order" may be premature.⁶³⁹ Surveys also suggest that antisemitism and Islamophobia are connected in terms of how attitudes are distributed in the population.⁶⁴⁰

This chapter has discussed how interviewees explain antisemitism and Islamophobia, what they identify as the reasons for prejudiced views, where and among whom they regard these views as being most common, and what trends they see occurring. The analysis has shown that interviewees directly or indirectly conceived of antisemitism and Islamophobia as related phenomena, by defining them as being based on ignorance, group constructions, and xenophobia. Knowledge of the history of antisemitism served as an interpretative key for understanding Islamophobia as a phenomenon, both when discussing causes of discrimination and when anticipating possible future developments. The analysis also pointed to areas where the interviewees' narratives showed perceptions of differences as to the causes, content, and implications of the negative attitudes. A further distinction could be made based on whether the explanations were either essentialising or functional; for example, by pointing to "Jewish" characteristics to explain antisemitism or else by describing prejudice as related to scapegoating.

One main difference in some of the explanations was apparent in the way antisemitism was related to an abstract notion of Jews, while Muslim individuals or particular groups among Muslims were seen as the cause of negative views about Muslims. Though interviewees also referred to perceptions of Muslims as incorporating an international threat, negative views about Muslims were more often related to societal problems in contemporary Norway. This finding correlates with the Norwegian population surveys, which pointed to how negative atti-

638 Klaus Holz, *Nationaler Antisemitismus: Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001).

639 Klug, "The Limits of Analogy: Comparing Islamophobia and Antisemitism," 457; Fine, "Fighting with phantoms: a contribution to the debate on antisemitism in Europe."

640 Pew Research Center, *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Unfavorable Views of Jews and Muslims on the Increase in Europe*; Pew Research Center, *Being Christian in Western Europe*; Zick, Küpper, and Hövermann, *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination*; Zick et al., "The Syndrome of Group-Focused Enmity: The Interrelation of Prejudices Tested with Multiple Cross-Sectional and Panel Data.," Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 96–97.

tudes towards Muslims were explained by reference to specific societal problems, while explanations of negative attitudes towards Jews generally lacked similar concrete references to Norway.⁶⁴¹

The question of the relation between social contact and prejudice has been an area of focus in the social sciences; Gordon Allport formulated the widely cited hypothesis known as intergroup contact theory, which suggests that intergroup contact under the right conditions can lead to reduced prejudices.⁶⁴² In the present study, interviewees' awareness of the basic elements of this theory may have inspired references to social contact as a way to combat prejudice. Explanations

641 Recurring themes in the answers regarding the reasons for antisemitism were the Middle East conflict and (negative) actions of Israel, and historical prejudice in the majority population. The images of “the Jew” that emerged in relation to the conflict were predominantly negative and associated with oppression, ruthlessness, and power. Moe et al., “Hvis de hadde oppført seg som vanlige nordmenn, hadde alt vært greit, tror jeg’ – Nordmenns syn på årsaken til negative holdninger til jøder og muslimer.”; Moe, “How People Explain Antisemitism: Interpretation of Survey Answers.” The significance ascribed to the conflict reflects the international tendency of expressions of anti-Israel sentiments sometimes being combined with anti-Jewish stereotypes and where developments in the conflict correlate with manifestations of antisemitism (see chapter 2.2.2). Explanations of Islamophobia often referred to cultural/religious differences or lack of integration. For further analysis of the results regarding explanations of negative attitudes towards Muslims, see Døving, “Muslims are . . .’ Contextualising Survey Answers.”

642 Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Optimal conditions, according to Allport, were equal group status within the situation, common objectives, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authorities, law, or custom. These criteria were later found to be beneficial rather than crucial for reducing prejudice. Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, “A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 5 (2006). Contact theory has been supported by a large number of studies and across different implementations, participant populations, and bases for group membership. Ananthi Al Ramiah and Miles Hewstone, “Intergroup Contact as a Tool for Reducing, Resolving, and Preventing Intergroup Conflict: Evidence, Limitations, and Potential,” *American Psychologist* 68, no. 7 (2013); R. Brown and M. Hewstone, “An integrative theory of intergroup contact,” *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 37 (2005). However, the effect of intergroup contact on attitudes is complex. In an attempt to explain negative attitudes towards Muslims in the Netherlands, Savelkoul et al. tested two contradictory mechanisms, derived from ethnic competition theory and intergroup contact theory. Results pointed among other things to the impact of relative outgroup size. Michael Savelkoul et al., “Anti-Muslim Attitudes in The Netherlands: Tests of Contradictory Hypotheses Derived from Ethnic Competition Theory and Intergroup Contact Theory,” *European Sociological Review* 27, no. 6 (2011). Other studies have also pointed to situations where intergroup contact may *promote* generalized views. Sarina J. Schäfer et al., “Does negative contact undermine attempts to improve intergroup relations? Deepening the understanding of negative contact and its consequences for intergroup contact research and interventions,” *Journal of Social Issues* 77 (2021); Rose Meleady and Laura Forder, “When contact goes wrong: Negative intergroup contact promotes generalized outgroup avoidance,” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 22, no. 5 (2019).

pointing to ignorance or “misunderstandings” can also be seen as a way of rationalising negative experiences and an attempt to protect oneself against them: if prejudice is based on ignorance, the criticism and negative sentiments are unjustified and the problems may be seen as superficial. Perhaps contrary to what one might expect, explanations that referred to xenophobia sometimes also placed responsibility for anti-Muslim attitudes “inside” the minority; i.e., with Muslims themselves. The narratives included references to a large number of personal experiences of negative attitudes; however, there seemed to be an established view that Muslims were not solely victims. The narratives sometimes marked a boundary with the interviewees’ self-perception or with a notion of “real” or “good” Muslims. In effect, the interviewees also distanced themselves from the object of the negative attitudes.

Historical expressions of antisemitism have related specific physical traits to Jews.⁶⁴³ Narratives in the present study did not refer to any form of external traits in discussions of antisemitism; rather, Jews were in some narratives associated with the majority “Western culture” and a lack of phenotypical difference (associated with whiteness). By contrast, anti-Muslim attitudes were related to visible “difference” in terms of appearance, with many interviewees describing experiences of harassment related to skin colour or clothing. Negative views about Muslims were also related to cultural and religious differences, and the discrimination was thus perceived to be based on both classical racist views and on what has been termed cultural or “new” racism.⁶⁴⁴ The analysis has displayed how interviewees referred to notions of Norway as an ethnically homogeneous society, explaining negative attitudes directed against Muslims as being based on perceptions of Muslims as foreign.

In some narratives, a perception of Islam as unrelated to “culture” situated the reason for negative attitudes in different cultural practices, in distinction from (true) Islam, severing any connection between the negative views and the religion. The process of deculturation (or “objectification”) – i.e., the de-linking of religion and culture, which, according to Roy, is characteristic of deterritorialized Islam (see chapters 3.2 and 7) – was thus articulated as an explanation for negative views and functioned as a shield against criticism. The weight some interviewees placed on the importance of providing correct information about Islam

⁶⁴³ See, e.g., Sara Lipton, “What’s in a Nose? The Origins, Development, and Influence of Medieval Anti-Jewish Caricature,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism*; Sander L Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

⁶⁴⁴ Martin Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe* (London: Junction Books, 1981); Simon Clarke, *Social Theory, Psychoanalysis and Racism* (London: Macmillan Education UK, 2003), 28–42.

and on the problems related to religious “misunderstandings” among Muslims simultaneously implied an inclination to define some practices or beliefs among Muslims as “un-Islamic.” As shown in chapter seven, some interviewees also referred to “misunderstandings” about Judaism among Jews, describing Jews as religiously misled. However, this distinction between “true” and “untrue” versions of the religion seemed less pertinent to explanations of antisemitism. There were no concrete descriptions of misunderstandings about Judaism amongst the public or in the media similar to those regarding Islam. Though Jews were associated with Judaism, Jewish religiosity was not related to anti-Jewish attitudes in the same way as Islam and Islamic religious practices were related to negative attitudes towards Muslims. The difference indicates that what many interviewees perceived as the main causes of antisemitism, namely the policies of the State of Israel and an abstract “Jewish” power, typically were not associated with (true) Judaism. In much the same way, interviewees did not see antisemitism among Muslims as caused by *Islam* as such, but rather as based on misunderstandings or selective reading of Islamic sources.

The impression that the media has fuelled negative attitudes towards Muslims may reflect a polarised public debate in Norway.⁶⁴⁵ Interviewees seemed to be referring primarily to news reports in the editorial press when they talked about biased portrayals, not op-eds, comment sections, or similar contributions by the public. Furthermore, these references were to the image of Muslims and Islam, not to Jews or Judaism, or to Israel. The connection between Israel and antisemitism was perceived as based on group constructions where negative views about Israel are projected onto Jews in general, not on a biased or misleading media image of Israel. Herein lies a difference between this study and findings from the population surveys, where a negative image of Israel in the media was often perceived to be false or biased.⁶⁴⁶ There were no indications that interview-

645 Negative portrayals in the media were also one of the most common explanations for negative attitudes towards both Muslims and Jews in the Norwegian population surveys as well as in a recent interview study among Muslims in Norway. Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 66–69; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 87–89, 94–96; Moe and Døving, eds., *Diskriminerings erfaringer blant muslimer i Norge* (Oslo: HL-senteret, 2022), 8. As pointed out in a Norwegian survey on attitudes towards immigration, there is no necessary connection between representations in the media and attitudes in a given population. Opinions expressed in (traditional and new) media may reflect a tendency whereby those who have strong opinions – for example, on immigration and integration – typically are those who speak out and are therefore most visible. Brekke, Fladmoe, and Wollebæk, *Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold i Norge*, 17.

646 Moe et al., “Hvis de hadde oppført seg som vanlige nordmenn, hadde alt vært greit, tror jeg” – Nordmenns syn på årsaken til negative holdninger til jøder og muslimer.”; Hoffmann and

ees in the present study saw anti-Israel expressions as a way of voicing antisemitism in situations where such expressions are taboo, as described in the thesis of the “new antisemitism.”

The question of the reasons for discrimination may be less of a concern for those who experience prejudice.⁶⁴⁷ The present study has shown how some interviewees perceived differences in the situations of Muslims and Jews as victims of discrimination and prejudice, with Jewish victimisation defined as primarily historical (see particularly chapter nine). A difference in terms of consequences was also suggested in the way antisemitism seemed unrelated to the Jewish presence in Norway. This impression may be related to the very small size of the Jewish community in Norway and the fact that few interviewees had personal relationships with Jews. A clear distinction made between “Jews” as related to “Israel,” “Zionists,” or international power on the one hand, and “Jews” as a minority in Norway and as adherents to Judaism on the other, served to further distance “ordinary” Jews from being either the cause or object of negative attitudes. However, a similar distance also reflects a typical trait of antisemitism, namely that Jews are often conceived of abstractly (see also chapter 2.3). Some explanations of antisemitism in the present study thus mirrored central aspects of antisemitism as a phenomenon.

The narratives in this study sometimes downplayed the severity of negative experiences. Experiences of harassment and racism were framed in ways that minimised the harshness of the incidents. Typical examples of such downplaying occurred when interviewees declared that xenophobia, scapegoating, and group constructions are common human reactions, or that experiences of discrimination had made them stronger. A tendency to define hatred and exclusion as “normal human behaviour” may be motivated by an impulse to reject a victim status and a vulnerable position (see also chapter nine) as well as by a hope for integration. By redefining prejudice as part of human coexistence, the interviewees created a new narrative that simultaneously dissolved the boundary between victim and perpetrator, and between (discriminated) minority and (prejudiced) majority. Prior research has pointed to how the history of antisemitism, and particularly the Holocaust, have been important factors behind a wish to not “rock the

Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*; Moe, “How People Explain Antisemitism: Interpretation of Survey Answers”; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*.

⁶⁴⁷ Günther Jikeli, “Discrimination Against Muslim and Antisemitic Views among Young Muslims in Europe,” in *Papers on Antisemitism and Racism*, ed. Roni Stauber and Beryl Belsky (Tel Aviv: Kantor Center, Tel Aviv University, 2013), 4.

boat” (i.e., attract attention) among the Jewish minority in Europe.⁶⁴⁸ Muslims in the present study did not refer to a history of discrimination or similar reasons for downplaying negative experiences. However, frustration towards expressions of conservative religiosity among fellow Muslims indicated that such expressions were regarded as an obstacle to integration and a reason for negative attitudes in the surrounding society. The downplaying may also reflect a context where narratives of discrimination have in many cases lacked an audience. Another form of “downplaying” occurred when some interviewees described antisemitic views among Muslims as a (psychological) reaction to their own experiences of prejudice.

A set of core narratives can be identified from this analysis, explaining the reasons for negative attitudes towards Jews and Muslims. One narrative identifies the main source of antisemitic and Islamophobic prejudice as similar; I will call this narrative “Negative attitudes towards Jews and Muslims have the same source and derive from ignorance, xenophobia, and group constructions.” Related to this narrative was the perception that social contact and exchange would help to reduce prejudice by increasing knowledge and understanding. This narrative sometimes constructed a close relationship between Islamophobia and the Muslim minority, describing how Muslims should act to counter prejudice. A similar responsibility for (preventing) antisemitism was not ascribed to the Jewish minority in this narrative.

A second narrative describes a difference between antisemitism and Islamophobia in terms of current prevalence. I will call this narrative “Though significant in the past, antisemitism is less relevant today, while Islamophobia is increasing.” This narrative does not deny that persecution and discrimination against Jews have occurred and have been significant, particularly in European history. However, it suggests that Islamophobia has replaced antisemitism as the most pressing problem in contemporary European society. This narrative sometimes included references to the shared experiences of Jews (in the past) and Muslims (today), using Jewish history as an interpretative framework. However, the emphasis on how antisemitism is primarily historically important indicated that Muslim and Jewish experiences were not equally important today and suggested a supersession of antisemitism by Islamophobia.

The difference interviewees perceived between the causes of Islamophobia and antisemitism constitutes the central element of the third narrative. I will call this narrative “Antisemitism has an abstract and international ‘Jewish’ cause,

⁶⁴⁸ This has also been described as a motivating factor behind the strategy of “quiet integration” of the Jewish minority in Norway in the pre-war period (see also chapter four).

while the cause for Islamophobia is local and social.” This narrative constructs an opposition between the two forms of prejudice, implying a difference in both cause and consequence. According to this narrative, Muslims suffer from widespread Islamophobia, while Jews are significantly less affected by antisemitism. The difference is closely connected to what was perceived as the source of antisemitism, which was related to a notion of Jews as powerful and included an association between the concepts “Zionist,” “Jew,” and “Israel.” By describing the cause of antisemitism as “Jewish,” this essentially constitutes an antisemitic explanation of antisemitism.

11 Narratives about “Jew” as a Term of Abuse

This chapter discusses interviewees’ reflections related to the use of the word “Jew” as a term of abuse. Pejorative use of the word “Jew” has been a subject of public attention in recent years in Norway, particularly with reference to schools.⁶⁴⁹ Perhaps due to this attention, interviewees in the present study were typically well aware of such use of the word and commented upon it during the interviews. The analysis explores how they perceived the use of the term differently and highlights some central aspects in interpretations of different forms of hate speech. The chapter includes a number of concrete examples of situations referred to in the narratives, exploring where the line was drawn between acceptable and unacceptable discourse. While the focus of the previous chapter was on interpretations of the factors behind negative attitudes, this chapter investigates a range of interpretations of an action. The analysis focuses on perceptions of intention and meaning behind the language. The distinction between antisemitic intent and antisemitic expression is important; how did the interviewees understand the meaning of the word “Jew” when used in this way? Did they perceive it to be an expression of antisemitic attitudes? How did they compare this with experiences of other similar derogatory terms? The analysis also explores how interviewees described the relation between “Jew” as a term of abuse and actual Jews.

11.1 “Boys’ Talk”

When asked what they thought the meaning was behind the pejorative use of the word “Jew,” some interviewees mentioned classical stereotypes about Jews, such as ideas that Jews are greedy, stingy, and selfish. The explanations given for why the

⁶⁴⁹ A survey conducted in 2011 among pupils in Oslo schools was an important factor behind this attention. The survey showed that half of the respondents answered that pupils at their school sometimes use the term “Jew” in a negative sense. Perduco, *Kartlegging av kunnskaper og holdninger på området rasisme og antisemittisme: undersøkelse blant elever (trinn 8–10) i osloskolen gjennomført for Utdanningssetaten i Oslo* (Oslo: Utdanningssetaten, 2011), 43. See also Stian Eisenräger, “Norge 2014: “Jøde” brukes fortsatt som skjellsord [Norway 2014: “Jew” still used as a term of abuse],” *Verdens Gang*, May 5, 2014, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/a6OBd/norge-2014-joede-brukes-fortsatt-som-skjellsord>. Furthermore, half of the respondents in the Norwegian population survey from 2011 had heard the word used in this way. Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, ed., *Antisemitism in Norway*, 24. The use of “Jew” as a slur is not a new phenomenon, examples have been found at least as far back as the 1950s (K.B. Simonsen, personal communication, March 3, 2021).

word was used as a negative term thus had similarities with some of the explanations of antisemitism, by pointing to “Jewish” characteristics. These explanations show how anti-Jewish stereotypes were part of a familiar, culturally transmitted repertoire among the interviewees. Negative characteristics that do not usually form part of a traditional antisemitic repertoire were also mentioned. Some referred to the word as a synonym for “idiot,” defining the term as primarily a way of showing a lack of respect. However, this interpretation seemed mainly related to the act of name-calling in itself, not specifically to the content of the word. Interviewees also claimed they had no idea about the meaning of “Jew” when used in this way, they just perceived it to be conveying something negative without reference to any specific content. The derogatory use of the term “Jew” was perceived as more common among boys than among girls and as a phenomenon that was common among, though in no way exclusively related to, Muslims. On the contrary, some interviewees emphasised that such language was also common among non-Muslims. They also claimed its use was primarily related to school and young people, stopping in the higher grades. Some pointed to different social milieus as an explanation for why some people used the term and others did not.

Berat (interviewee no. 20) mentioned how “Jew” as a pejorative was common among his (male) cousins. He also referred to some traditional stereotypes about Jews when explaining the meaning of the term when used in an offensive way, mentioning both greed and selfishness as possible interpretations:

Jeg har yngre fettere som går på videregående nå og jeg har faktisk stilt det samme spørsmålet til dem, hva er det de legger i det begrepet, så har jeg forstått at “jøde” eller det begrepet de bruker som “jøde” innebærer grådighet, en person som ikke liker å dele, en person som er egoist på en måte, som tenker på sitt beste fremfor andres.

[I have younger [male] cousins in high school, and I have actually asked them the same question [about the meaning of the term], what they understand by the concept, and I have understood that “Jew” – or the concept they use – implies greed, a person who does not like to share, a person who is egoistical in a way, who thinks about his or her own good instead of others.]

Berat did not seem to use the term in this way himself. Indeed, what lay behind his asking his cousins was that he was uncertain as to what it signified and curious about its meaning. In addition to traditional stereotypes about Jews being stingy, the interpretation relating to selfishness and self-centredness resonates with Berat’s explanation of negative attitudes towards Jews and Muslims, which focused on religious exclusivism and internal competition based on the belief that one’s religion is better (chapter 10.2).

Parveen (interviewee no. 6) emphasised that "Jew" was rarely used in a negative way among her own circle, but it was common among her younger brother's friends. She said:

Jeg hørte det mer som et skjellsord i generasjonen til lillebroren min enn min egen, faktisk. Jeg har sikkert hørt det et par ganger . . . Vi hadde en sånn østkantgjeng med gutter fra sånn . . . de hadde litt sånn "ghettotilnærming" til hverdagen sin.

[In fact, I heard it more often used as a term of abuse in my younger brother's generation than among my own. I guess I have heard it a couple of times . . . We had this gang of East-Enders . . . They had more of a "ghetto-like" approach to their everyday life.]

Besides attributing the language to (boys and) the younger generation, Parveen seemed to imply that a pejorative use of the word "Jew" was part of a general "bad" attitude, something you could do to signal a certain identity related to the East End (of Oslo) and notions of "the ghetto." Both descriptions serve to distance Parveen from such language, although the connection to her younger brother confirmed she was personally familiar with it.

Hajra (interviewee no. 24) was Sunni with a Somali background and had a job as a social worker at the time of the interview. She reflected on the similarities between the use of "Jew" and other derogatory language in terms of how the words had negative connotations without having any clear meaning. She said, "When they call someone 'homo' or 'gay' it is not because a boy has tried to kiss another boy. They just say it, it is meant to hurt, so it must be negatively connotated."⁶⁵⁰ She suggested one possible explanation could be that Jews are a minority but changed her mind since she had never heard anyone use the word "Muslim" in this way.

Some interviewees mentioned different social settings related to football as situations where one might hear the term "Jew" used negatively. Karrar (interviewee no. 29) mentioned how he and his friends used to call an "easy goal" a "Jew-goal." The language seemed to have a clearly negative meaning, though the descriptions also implied that it was so common that it was not taken very seriously.⁶⁵¹ The significance of "Jew" and "Jewish" when used at the football field is different from the more (stereo)typical connotations of the words as someone

⁶⁵⁰ "[N]år de sier 'din homo' eller 'din homse', så er det ikke fordi en gutt har prøvd å kysse en annen gutt. De bare sier det, det er for å såre, så det må jo være negativt ladet, da."

⁶⁵¹ An interview study among Jews in Oslo and Trondheim also found that football practices among youth were an arena where many had had negative experiences. Calling someone a "Jew" was tantamount to defining them as a failure or simply as not good (for example, by calling the boy finishing last in a race a "Jew"), the analysis concluded. Vibeke Moe, "Antisemittisme-erfaringer og refleksjoner," in *Det som er jødisk. Identiteter, historiebevissthet og erfaringer med antisemittisme*, 83.

“clever” or “resourceful/powerful,” perhaps explainable by the specific situation, where the logic of the game encourages descriptions of opponents as weak and unsuccessful. However, the usage plays into historical stereotypes about Jews, which have included notions of Jews being physically weak or using tricks because they could not compete in a fair fight.⁶⁵²

Interviewees’ explanations also included frequent references to joking. Focusing on a lack of negative intent, these explanations defined the usage as something other than an expression of antisemitism.

11.2 “Just a Joke” or the Downplaying of Negative Intention

Some interviewees laughed when asked about the use of “Jew” as an insult, perhaps because they saw the phenomenon as less serious, more or less as a joke. The laughter may also have been a sign that the interviewees felt uncomfortable because they were aware that it was socially unacceptable to use the word “Jew” in this way or perceived it to be disrespectful due to the religious meaning of the word. However, some interviewees also openly admitted having used the word as a term of abuse themselves, though insisting it had not been “meant seriously,” downplaying its significance. Describing the language primarily as a phenomenon among classmates at school and part of teasing among friends, they did not perceive the intention behind it as antisemitic, though they were sometimes critical of the practice and referred to it as inappropriate. In contrast to this, some interviewees seemed to take a position that, as a point of principle, the term was disrespectful and unacceptable regardless of the speaker’s intention or motivation. At the heart of these reflections lies the distinction between antisemitic intent and antisemitic expression, understood as a form of action.

Though interviewees underlined the lack of serious intent, they also seemed reluctant to use the term in this way when Jews were present, suggesting they perceived the possibility of a more critical interpretation. Bashir (interviewee no. 8) described an experience where he had called someone a “Jew” and was subsequently confronted with the fact that the person actually was Jewish:

⁶⁵² The notion of Jews as weak and defeated can be found both in European secular antisemitism and, as we have seen, in Islamic anti-Judaism. Lars Lien explores representations of “Jewish” physical weakness in his analysis of Norwegian newspapers and the comic press from the inter-war period. Lien, “. . . pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøderne’ Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norsk dags- og vittighetspresse 1905–1925.”

Jeg har selv brukt det, en gang. Det var bare på tull, det skal jeg innrømme, men da visste jeg ikke at vedkommende jeg sa det til, var jøde. Da var det liksom helt stille rundt bordet, for vi var ute og spiste. Så var det noen som sa: “Du vet han er jøde?” Jeg følte meg dårlig, vi hadde akkurat begynt å bli venner, og jeg sa det bare på spøk, og han bare “jeg tar meg ikke nær av det, for jeg bare, jeg er ikke praktiserende.” Og vi endte . . . Vi ble jo gode venner.

[I have used it once myself. It was just a joke, but I did not realize that the person I had said it to was Jewish. It was completely quiet around the table, because we were out eating. Then someone said, “You know he is Jewish?” I felt bad, we had just begun to become friends, and I only said it as a joke. He just said, “It does not bother me, since I am only, I am not really a practising Jew.” We ended up . . . We became friends.]

The experience was embarrassing to Bashir; he had not anticipated the possibility that the person he was talking to was Jewish. The story is an example of how the discursive boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable are socially constructed. What can pass as “a joke” in certain environments is considered a breach of social norms in another setting. Furthermore, the story shows how crossing the line between these two categories was perceived as deeply uncomfortable; the experience seemed to have made a lasting impact on Bashir, who claimed this was the only time he had ever used the word “Jew” in this manner. In other parts of the interview, Bashir emphasised how Islam was a source of positive relations between Jews and Muslims and that hostility against Jews was related to political views and was basically a misunderstanding (chapter 7.2).

Related to downplaying the seriousness of the term and the denial of antisemitic intent was the lack of any association between the language and actual Jews. To underline this lack of reference to actual Jews, interviewees described how they too had been called “Jew” on several occasions. The language was described as common among friends. However, the downplaying of the negative intent was sometimes connected to a more general attitude where other similar actions involving references to Jews, such as antisemitic jokes, were also described as not being particularly serious. Ubah (interviewee no. 14) described the derogatory use of “Jew” as widespread but not very seriously intended, though she denied having used it herself. She also admitted having found jokes about Jews funny and that she had even told such jokes herself. According to Ubah, this all stopped as she and her friends got older and understood that it was wrong. Nevertheless, this part of the interview gave the impression that she did not consider the derogatory use of the word “Jew” or jokes about Jews to be a serious problem, as the meaning was not particularly negative and there had been no Jews present. Some interviewees drew parallels between the derogatory use of the word “Jew” and other examples of verbal insults, such as *Paki* (a negative term for “Pakistani”) and *Neger* (a Norwegian slur for black people). Ubah also downplayed the use of the word “Neger.” She said:

Ingen av ordene [“neger” og “jøde”] var altfor negativt ladet, for å si det sånn. Det ble jo slengt både fra mørke mot ikke-mørke, og ikke-mørke mot mørke. Men det var ingen jødiske på skolen, tror jeg i hvert fall, så det var ikke-jødiske som slengte det mot andre ikke-jødiske. Jeg slengte faktisk jødevitser en del. Jeg kalte aldri noen “jøde” som skjellsord, men jeg syntes jødevitser var morsomme, og det var det heller ingen som sa noe imot, så . . .

[Neither of the words [“Neger” or “Jew”] was very negatively connotated, to say it like that. It [“Neger”] was used by people of colour against non-coloured people and by non-coloured against people of colour. There were no Jews at school, I think, so it was non-Jews who used it [“Jew”] against other non-Jewish people. I actually told quite a few jokes about Jews. I never called anyone “Jew” as a term of abuse, but I thought jokes about Jews were funny, and there was no one who said anything against it, so . . .]

Ubah had not tried to prevent her classmates from engaging in the name-calling, describing this as somewhat socially difficult. However, the main point in the argument and explanation of why this was so widespread seemed to be that nothing was meant very negatively, it was generally a youth phenomenon, and there were no Jews present to experience any of it. The statement suggests that the presence of Jews would have put a stop to the joking and derogatory language and thus implicitly expresses an awareness that the language could be hurtful. Furthermore, this seems to constitute a difference between the use of the racist term “Neger” and “Jew,” where the latter was somehow potentially more serious. “Neger” was used regardless of the identity of the persons present, though the usage seemed limited to a circle of friends or acquaintances at school.

The discussions sometimes pointed to differences in interpretation related to the identity of the one uttering the words; what one person could get away with as a joke, another person could not. The interview with Ismail (interviewee no. 12) provides a good example of this distinction. Ismail pointed to the difference between his own use of “Paki” (as a Pakistani) and someone else’s, saying, “From my perspective, it is ‘a license to kill,’ right? I can say it since I am Pakistani myself.”⁶⁵³ He related the difference to the phenomenon where some Afro-Americans have appropriated slurs historically used against blacks and explained how he and his Pakistani friends could use the word “Paki” to be funny, in an ironic way. However, use of the word “Jew” was different, Ismail claimed. Although “Jew” was sometimes used jokingly, he did not find it funny. Ismail said, “‘Jew’ is sometimes used in a humorous, ironic way. I do not think it is ironic, I actually think there is more irony in the term ‘Paki’ than in ‘Jew’ as a term of abuse.”⁶⁵⁴ In this part of the inter-

653 “Fra mitt perspektiv, så er det liksom ‘license to kill’, ikke sant. Jeg kan si ‘pakkis’ fordi at jeg er pakistaner selv.”

654 “[J]øde’ blir også slengt som en sånn humoristisk, ironisk sak. Jeg synes ikke det er noe ironi, jeg syns faktisk det finnes mer ironi i ‘pakkis’ enn det finnes i skjellsordet ‘jøde.’”

view, Ismail maintained that “Jew” primarily – in normal use – signified a religious adherence; hence, in his perception, the term was not, or should not be, an invective. Clearly critical, Ismail concluded that using the term “Jew” in this manner was “simply discriminatory. It is simply racism.”⁶⁵⁵ The difference in Ismail’s perceptions may be due to the imagined speaker not being Jewish, thus the parallel to “Paki” was not complete; a Jew would not have used the word “Jew” the way he used “Paki.” Ismail also described the term “Jew” as “charged,” meaning filled with a potential for stereotypical content, which seemed to make it difficult to use jokingly. Ismail drew on personal experiences where a derogatory term had been related to his Pakistani identity. A similar parallel, with reference to his Muslim identity and the word “Muslim” as a term of abuse, did not seem relevant even though he primarily perceived “Jew” to be a religious designation.

When Parveen (no. 6) commented on the pejorative use of the term “Jew,” she referred to the history of racism in the United States and “everything that went on.” She related the use to a history of increased Jewish immigration, suggesting this was in some ways a similar situation, where words take on new meaning following societal changes. Parveen said:

Akkurat som “neger” ble et skjellsord på grunn av alt som pågikk i USA, så når det plutselig kom en masse jøder, både her i landet og andre land, ble det plutselig sånn der “oi, wow,” ordet “jøde” ble plutselig skjellsord, ikke sant.

[Just like “Neger” became a term of abuse due to everything that went on in the USA. When suddenly a large number of Jews arrived in this country [Norway] and other countries, it became like “oh, wow” and then the word became a term of abuse.]

It was not clear exactly what period Parveen was talking about, when this increased Jewish immigration was to have taken place. Maybe she was thinking of the Jewish immigrants to Norway at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, following the pogroms in Russia and other societal developments. However, the comment is perhaps best understood as an example of how interviewees’ narratives about Jews were sometimes related to perceptions of Jews being an immigrant minority in Norway.

The focus on the lack of antisemitic intent sometimes seemed to stand in the way of interviewees acknowledging the possibility of other interpretations. By primarily relating the language to joking among friends, the practice is potentially also allowed to continue, since by downplaying any serious intent it is shielded from criticism. The interview with Mustafa (interviewee no. 18) provided

655 “[Å] bruke skjellsordet ‘jøde’ syns jeg er en ufin sak. Det er rett og slett diskriminerende. Det er rett og slett rasisme.”

an example of such downplaying. He referred to how the usage resembles other (neutral) types of name-calling, pointing to descriptions of national identities. Mustafa seemed to overlook the possibility of a more negative intention or negative connotations, though he admitted it might be different if a Jew were present. After reflecting on the question, he said:

Når jeg tenker på det, så er det sikkert ikke greit å si det hvis det hadde vært en jøde i rommet, men det er kun for kødd. Jeg tenker ikke negativt. [. . .] De kaller oss “laz.” Det er slang for den byen jeg kommer fra. Jeg er laz, akkurat som “jøde,” “kurder” . . . “laz.” Det er samme greia. [. . .] Hvis jeg kaller deg “jøde,” og du faktisk er jøde, hvorfor er det et skjellsord?

[When I think about it, it is probably not ok to say it if there is a Jew in the room, but it is just a joke. I do not think of it as something negative. [. . .] They call us “Laz.” It is slang for someone who comes from the town I am from. I am “Laz,” just like “Jew,” “Kurd” . . . “Laz.” It is the same thing. [. . .] If I call you “Jew” and you are actually Jewish, why is that a term of abuse?]

Mustafa gave several examples of words used “jokingly” in similar ways, including calling a Muslim with a long beard a “terrorist.” However, the deeper meaning of such language remained unclear. Even after repeated questions from the interviewer about the significance of the word “Jew” when used in this context, Mustafa maintained that he did not have any idea what it meant, though he finally admitted it was “probably” a term of abuse. Mustafa’s explanation erased differences between slang, discriminatory language, and derogatory use of otherwise neutral words such as “Jew.”⁶⁵⁶ Towards the end of this part of the interview, upon being directly asked by the interviewer whether the word might relate to “a conflict,” Mustafa suggested the conflict between Israel and Palestine has caused the word “Jew” to be used in a derogatory way. However, this seemed far from being his first association. Mustafa explained:

Hvis du hadde sagt “Israel” så hadde jeg sagt “greit, [det refererer til] konflikten mellom Palestina og Israel.” Men “jøde,” nei. Det må ikke være samme ting. En jøde er ikke en del av konflikten mellom Palestina og Israel. En jøde kan faktisk være med den andre siden, faktisk være uenig med Israel.

[If you had said “Israel,” I would have said, “ok, [it refers to] the conflict between Israel and Palestine,” but “Jew” – no. It does not have to be the same thing. A Jew is not a part of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In fact, a Jew can support the other side and disagree with Israel.]

⁶⁵⁶ “Laz” is an ethnonym used in Turkey to denote a people in the Black sea region of Turkey and the Caucasus who speak a language related to Georgian. Thomas Solomon, “Who Are the Laz? Cultural Identity and the Musical Public Sphere on the Turkish Black Sea Coast,” *The World of Music* 6, no. 2 (2017): 83, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44841947>.

Based on the interview with Mustafa, it appears that the use of the word “Jew” as a term of abuse can be sustained without any kind of consensus as to its meaning and in conjunction with a clear distinction being made between “Israel” and “Jew.” However, the association between “Jew” and “Israel”/“Israeli” or “Zionist” was an important element in other explanations for the negative use of the term, reflecting explanations about antisemitism.

11.3 “Jew” means “Israel”

A typical explanation for the negative connotation of “Jew” was that it referenced the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, interviewees also problematised this association and criticised the name-calling, based on a lack of any actual connection between Norwegian Jews and Israeli policies. Dalia (interviewee no. 26) talked about how a Jewish girl at her school had been treated badly during high school. The behaviour made her wonder, “They called her ‘fucking Jew.’ It is unnecessary, she is not even from Israel, and she is not a Zionist. She is a Norwegian Jew, so why should you insult her?”⁶⁵⁷ Apparently, Dalia interpreted the harassment as related to an association between Jews and Israel. The story came up when Dalia explained that she did not know any Jews personally; the incidents from school were the only personal references she had to a Norwegian Jew. Describing the relationship between Jews and Muslims in Norway, Dalia also mentioned the attack against the synagogue in Oslo in 2006 (see chapter 2.2.1). Again, she questioned the motivation behind the action, drawing a connection to Israel: why should you attack the synagogue in Oslo because of things that happen in Israel? Dalia was clear that she was critical: “There is no connection [to what happens in Israel]. It is a synagogue that stands still, right?”⁶⁵⁸

The interview with Dalia pointed to the way in which an association between Jews and Israel may cause verbal and physical attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions – and to precisely how this association can be criticised. As we have seen, the lack of any actual connection between Jews in Norway and Israeli policies against the Palestinians was a point raised by several interviewees, while a similar lack of connection between Muslims in Norway and the Palestinians was rarely discussed. Rather, interviewees referred to concrete connections and identification between Norwegian Muslims and the Palestinians. One example was in

657 “De kalte henne ‘jævla jøde’. Det er jo unødvendig, hun er jo ikke fra Israel en gang, og hun er ikke sionist. Hun er norsk jøde, så hva har det med, hvorfor skal man bruke skjellsord mot henne?”

658 “Det har ikke noe sammenheng. Det er en synagoge som står stille ikke sant?”

the interview with Sivar (interviewee no. 27). Referring to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and reactions among friends with a Palestinian background, Sivar underlined the importance of social influence to explain why the word “Jew” had developed as a term of abuse. He said, “Because you grow up with Palestinian friends and they are treated that way by Israel, people have started to use the word as a term of abuse.”⁶⁵⁹

Sivar came to Norway with his family from Kurdistan/Iraq as a young boy. He described the derogatory use of the word “Jew” as “insanely” widespread and common among Muslims and non-Muslims alike, explicitly exempting the language from having any connection to Islam. In a similar vein, the influence of Palestinian friends was not described as being based on religious identification, but rather as a result of social interactions and shared political engagement. Sivar admitted that his primary associations to the word were negative, denoting “bastard”⁶⁶⁰ and a general sense of something negative, due to the widespread derogatory use of the word. However, he soon nuanced this predominantly negative perception by referring to a comedy show from the national broadcaster NRK called “Svart humor” (“Black humour”). In one of the episodes of this programme, which in a humorous way focuses on prejudice in present-day Norwegian society, the hosts addressed the topic of Muslim-Jewish relations and the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sivar described how reactions differed among Jews and Muslims:

Da de [programlederne i NRK] solgte israelske greier foran en muslimsk moské så begynte alle å bli sure og ba dem gå vekk. Men da de solgte palestinske ting foran en synagoge, så tok de dem imot og kjøpte varene. Så de [jødene] er egentlig ikke så dårlige som vi tror, i Norge i hvert fall.

[When they [hosts from the NRK] sold Israeli things in front of a Muslim mosque, everyone was angry and asked them to go away. However, when they sold Palestinian stuff in front of the synagogue, they were greeted and people bought the goods. So in fact, they [the Jews] are not as bad as we think, in Norway, anyway.]

Sivar’s interpretation of the derogatory use of “Jew” alluded to a connection to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to actual relations with Palestinians in Norway. At the same time, his reflections about the TV show emphasised that the negative impression of “Jews” emanating from this conflict is not generally applicable and that Jews, at least in Norway, are “not as bad as we think.” Perhaps equally important

⁶⁵⁹ “[F]ordi man vokser opp med palestinske venner og de blir behandla sånn av Israel så har man begynt å bruke det ordet som skjellsord.”

⁶⁶⁰ “Drittsekk.”

was Sivar’s explanation of the language as socially constructed and the product of the influence of friends. He explained a process whereby the word was initially used in this way due to negative views about Israel, with the use continuing later as a result of the social influence of friends. This explanation served to disconnect the meaning of the word “Jew” from actual Jews in Norway. In Sivar’s description, the negative use of the word encouraged the negative associations and preserved this meaning in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. He explained, “When I think about the word ‘Jew’ I only think of terms of abuse, I do not think of the people. It is like, you get influenced by your environment, I believe.”⁶⁶¹ Paradoxically, its exclusive usage as a term of abuse functioned to downplay its severity, as it emphasised that the language was not aimed at actual Jews.

Similar Perceptions of a loose connection between actual Jews, Israel, and the word “Jew” as a term of abuse may explain why some interviewees considered the usage less problematic; because the term was aimed at Israel, it was perceived to be justified. Furthermore, the lack of (perceived) connection to actual Jews suggested the derogatory usage was mostly harmless and unrelated to antisemitism. Sivar summarised his views, stating, “As a Jew, a Jew is just a Jew. There is nothing more to it. I have nothing against them, either. I have . . . I know a Jew. He is really nice.”⁶⁶²

Drawing a line between notions of Jews as adherents of Judaism and views related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Halim (interviewee no. 23) said, “It is not because he hates the religion [that someone uses the word as a term of abuse]. He does not hate Judaism. It is only because of that specific seed.”⁶⁶³ As discussed above (chapter 9.4), Halim had very critical views about Israeli policies, associating Netanyahu with Hitler. Similar to other interviewees, he initially explained the use of the word “Jew” as a term of abuse common among schoolchildren, or more generally as slang among youth, seeming to distance himself from such usage. Other interviewees also commented on the distinction between “Jew” used as an epithet and Jews as adherents of Judaism.

661 “Når jeg tenker på ordet ‘jøde’ så tenker jeg bare på skjellsord, jeg tenker ikke på folket. Men det er sånn, man blir påvirket av det miljøet man er i, føler jeg.”

662 “Men som jøde, en jøde er bare en jøde. Det er ikke noe mer enn det. Jeg har ikke noe imot dem, heller. Jeg har . . . jeg kjenner en jøde. Han er veldig hyggelig.”

663 “Det er ikke fordi han hater religionen, ikke sant. Han hater ikke jødedommen. Det er kun på grunn av det spesifikke frøet der, da.”

11.4 Religious Views in Interpretations of “Jew” as a Term of Abuse

As shown, interviewees typically described the derogatory use of “Jew” as prevalent among Muslims and non-Muslims alike and, furthermore, as not primarily aimed at actual Jews. The usage was thus seen as overarching and as occurring independent of notions of religiously based identities. Nevertheless, among the interviewees who felt negatively about the derogatory use of the word “Jew,” some explained this by reference to the religious meaning of the term. A typical example occurred in the interview with Aleena (interviewee no. 4). She was clear that the term “Jew” was not a pejorative word, “No, a Jew is a Jew. It is religious; it is not a term of abuse.”⁶⁶⁴ Aleena’s comment seemed to reject any rationale for using “Jew” in this way, since in her opinion, the word only signified Jews’ adherence to Judaism. As discussed in chapter 7.4, Aleena perceived Jews as having become “pharaohs” in their relation to Muslims. This was a comprehensive notion that seemed to characterise the relation between Jews and Muslims on an international level and how Jews had strayed from the true path of their religion. Her rejection of the use of the word “Jew” as a term of abuse may suggest a distinction between this image and her approach to Jews as individuals, or perhaps it was due to a general view of name-calling as inappropriate, combined with respect for Judaism.

Another example focusing on the religious aspect appeared in the interview with Imran (interviewee no. 15). Imran pointed to the construction of boundaries inherent in the act of calling someone a “Jew.” In answer to the question of how he would understand the word if it were aimed at him, he explained, “First of all, you would not be viewing me as a Muslim. So that is a big deal, that you would say to me that ‘you are not a Muslim’.”⁶⁶⁵ His reflections also emphasised a broader negative connotation, relating to different stereotypes, specifically to notions of Jews having “occupied the economy,” “occupied the media,” or that Jews are powerful – “So [laughs], you do not want that description.”⁶⁶⁶ Imran also claimed that the first thing Muslims thought of when they heard the word “Jew” was Israel, relating this to a “political opinion.” Returning to his initial associations to the term, however, Imran said, “You feel humiliated, that ‘you are not

664 “Nei, en jøde er en jøde, liksom. Det er religiøst, ikke et skjellsord.”

665 “Aller først ville du ikke betrakte meg som en muslim, da. Så det er stort for meg, at du sier til meg at ‘du er ikke muslim’.”

666 “Mange mener at de er sånn, de har okkupert økonomien, de har okkupert media, de har sånn, de har makt. Så [latter] . . . Så man vil ikke få en slik beskrivelse.”

one of us’.”⁶⁶⁷ Imran’s interpretation thus focused on his own Muslim identity, which entailed that the meaning of the word “Jew” would be “not Muslim.” His reflections underline the religious difference between Muslims and Jews, essentially interpreting the language as a manifestation of this difference and an expression of boundaries.

In contrast to this description, it was the religious bond and closeness between Muslims and Jews that was the central point in Omar’s (interviewee no. 11) comment. As shown above (chapter 7.2), Omar described himself as very religious. Several times during the interview, he referred to how different Islamic sources (the Qur’an, hadith) served to guide his personal conduct. He also defended Islam against any allegations regarding anti-Jewish contents. When commenting on the pejorative use of “Jew,” Omar referred to an experience from his own time in school. Omar had confronted a classmate who had been bullying a girl and using the term “Jew” negatively, asking him if he did not understand that in terms of religion, this Jewish girl was the one with whom he had most in common in class (presumably apart from those who were Muslim). Omar referred both to the religious affinity between Judaism and Islam and to the girl’s personal religiosity, claiming that she, in contrast to most of the rest of the class, believed in God. Omar also pointed to how the girl believed in the rules of the Torah. Clearly frustrated by the situation, Omar referred to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to explain the classmate’s behaviour towards the Jewish girl. According to Omar, the conflict was the only explanation for such attitudes having developed. Drawing a connection between pejorative uses of “Jew” and antisemitic attitudes, he said:

Grunnen til antisemittisme, som de kaller det, grunnen til at det er i Midtøsten og så videre, er mest på grunn av problemet med Israel. Jeg er ganske sikker på at hadde ikke det problemet vært der, at Israel angriper sivile palestinere og okkuperer land, så ville det ikke ha vært en så negativ holdning mot jødene. Og det kan man se fra historien, faktisk.

[The reason for antisemitism, as they call it, the reason why it exists in the Middle East and so on, is mostly due to the problem with Israel. I am pretty sure that if that problem were not there, i.e., Israel attacking Palestinians and occupying territory, the attitude towards the Jews would not be so negative. In fact, you can see that from history.]

Omar pointed to different historical examples, particularly to the Ottoman Empire and Muslim rule in Spain, arguing that negative perceptions of Jews were linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and should be considered secondary and superficial. In his view, there is nothing fundamental standing in the way of a good relationship between Jews and Muslims; on the contrary, history has shown

667 “Man føler seg sånn nedverdiget og at ‘du er ikke som oss’.”

that this is possible. Omar was clear that using the word “Jew” in a derogatory way was unacceptable, explaining that it was something he reacted against very strongly and that he usually confronted anyone using it that way. As he himself had a profoundly positive view of religion in general, Omar related the derogatory use of the word “Jew” to young people who were less religious or ignorant about religion, mostly boys. Turning to Islamic tradition for guidance, he said:

Det er ingen steder hvor det står at Profeten eller hans følgesvenner eller store imamer gjennom tidene, ingen steder står det at noen har kalt en annen for “jøde” på tull til og med, eller noe annet. Så det er mest de gutta som ikke bryr seg om religioner noe særlig, de bare kommer og bruker slang-ord.

[It is not written anywhere that the Prophet or his followers or important imams throughout history, nowhere does it say that anyone called someone a “Jew,” even as a joke or anything. It is mostly those boys who do not care much about religion, who use slang words.]

Omar’s strong rejection expressed a normative attitude against the usage, suggesting it was incompatible with respect for religion, be it Judaism or Islam. Omar also stated that he believed it was a sin according to Islam to act in this way. Still, his critical remarks against using “Jew” as a term of abuse were not solely related to the religious status of Jews. Similar to other interviewees, Omar saw a parallel in the use of other words, such as “Neger,” which he regarded as equally wrong. Once again, his rejection referred to the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Omar described how Muhammad had once defended a dark-skinned man against insults:

Og så sa Profeten at “jeg er like mye sønn av en hvit kvinne som jeg er av en svart kvinne,” på grunn av at Profeten var ammet av en svart etiopisk kvinne, og i islam er det slik at den som ammer deg, hun blir som en mor for deg.

[And then the Prophet said, “I am just as much the son of a white woman as I am of a black woman,” since the Prophet had been nursed by a black Ethiopian woman, and Islam says that the woman who nurses you becomes like a mother to you.]

This example shows how references to Islamic tradition served both to repudiate the antisemitic use of the word “Jew” and racist terms related to skin colour. Furthermore, unlike the often abstract notion of Jews conveyed in some of the narratives, the example from Omar’s class shows how a religiously framed perception of Jews could provide grounds for a positive relationship with actual Jews.

11.5 Core Narratives about “Jew” as a Term of Abuse

This chapter has discussed different explanations of the meaning behind the use of the word “Jew” as a term of abuse. It has also provided examples of how and

under what circumstances such language is used, suggesting the language fulfills different functions.

The analysis has shown how some interviewees downplayed the severity of the intention behind the pejorative use of “Jew.” However, the interviewees’ interpretations were dependent on the social context, suggesting communicative boundaries are flexible. While interviewees typically did not refer to having used the word “Jew” in a negative way themselves, there seemed to be an impression that such language was widespread and they described it as something they had often experienced. A typical explanation of the pejorative use of “Jew” was that the term related to Israel and to negative views due to the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Interviewees also related the language to other forms of name-calling and joking among friends, thus downplaying the negative intent and describing it as part of a social phenomenon or as a (bad) habit, without any deeper (or antisemitic) meaning. The connection to joking and differences in perception related to the presence of Jews were also observed in the Norwegian population survey in 2011.⁶⁶⁸ Interviewees in the present study described the language as common among both Muslims and non-Muslims and as particularly prevalent among the younger generation and among boys. This impression is also supported by the findings from the population survey, where there were clearly more younger respondents who had experienced this language (66% aged 18–29 compared with 40% among those over 60).⁶⁶⁹

The impression that such language was more common among youth can be taken to suggest an increasing problem or a particularly negative view of Jews among younger generations. As we have seen in the present study, however, while negative attitudes towards Jews were explained by generational differences, some in fact emphasised that such attitudes were a bigger problem among the older generation. By relating the derogatory use of the word “Jew” to certain milieus and people of a certain age, interviewees instead seemed to view it as something you grow out of as you grow older.

Some of the explanations given for the use of “Jew” as a term of abuse bore similarities to explanations given in an interview study among Jews in Norway from 2014. Similar to interviewees in the present study, the younger generation in that study often described the use of “Jew” as a joke among friends (though not

668 20% of respondents in the population survey answered that they would have interpreted it as a “joke” if they had heard someone use the term “Jew” as a term of abuse, while 18% answered that they did not think there was any reason to react as long as it was not aimed at an actual Jew. Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, ed., *Antisemitism in Norway*, 25.

669 Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, ed., *Antisemitism in Norway*, 26.

finding it funny themselves).⁶⁷⁰ The older generation of Jewish interviewees was more critical and typically described such language as unacceptable regardless of intention. Using the word in this way was perceived as insulting and inherently antisemitic. The analysis related this generational difference to the history of antisemitism and particularly to the interviewees’ own family experiences during the Holocaust.⁶⁷¹ Some interviewees in the present study were also very critical of the pejorative use of “Jew.” However, they typically did not point to the Holocaust or the history of antisemitism to explain why they disliked it. The strongest argument interviewees put forward for why they did not find the pejorative use of “Jew” to be appropriate was that the word refers to a religious identity and affiliation with Judaism. Some argued that it made no sense to use the term in an offensive way, as this simply was not what the word meant. Others seemed to be critical out of respect for Judaism, pointing to its religious connection to Islam and drawing on Islamic tradition for guidance. This finding resonates with the general impression from the study that the religious bond between Islam and Judaism encouraged positive perceptions of Jews and resistance to prejudice.

While Jews are the victims of antisemitism, it is precisely its lack of a connection to real people that may be described as being at the core of antisemitic ideology. Brian Klug notes, “In short, antisemitism is the process of turning Jews into ‘Jews’.”⁶⁷² The word “Jew” obviously is not in itself antisemitic, but its use may be. The interpretation depends on context. The analysis has shown that the presence of actual Jews restricted the derogatory use of the term by exposing the discriminatory effect of the language. In Norway, such presence will rarely occur, due to the very small size of the Jewish community, but the finding indicates that the language, though often perceived to be without negative intent and to be merely a “joke” among friends, was nevertheless considered inappropriate in some situations. The analysis has also pointed to the significance interviewees ascribed to the speaker’s identity. Comparing the negative use of “Jew” with other terms – such as “Paki” or “Neger,” a derogatory word for black people in Norwegian – they claimed a difference was related to whether one “owned” the identity, in which case the negative usage lost its insulting capacity. It seemed that using the term “Jew” as a term of abuse was considered to be more serious and inappropriate because it related to someone else’s identity. While interviewees used their

670 Moe, “Antisemittisme—erfaringer og refleksjoner.”

671 Moe, “Antisemittisme—erfaringer og refleksjoner,” 71–73.

672 Klug, “The Collective Jew: Israel and the New Antisemitism,” 124.

own experiences as a reference point, the examples also indicated that the word “Muslim” was not used in this way.

Reflecting on these questions, the narratives touched on how boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable discourse are socially constructed. Different relations between the persons involved and different social settings affected how something that could pass as innocent name-calling in one context was considered a breach of social norms in another. The way interviewees described how the presence of Jews would render the language unacceptable may suggest that social distance and the lack of personal relations to Jews is one of the reasons why such language persists. The central difference between the core narratives in this analysis relates to interpretations of the meaning and intention behind the language.

One core narrative underlines that the primary meaning of the word “Jew” is religious. Based on this religious connotation, this narrative expresses that using the term negatively is inappropriate. The narrative associates the usage with other discriminatory language, stating, “‘Jew’ means an adherent of Judaism, and derogatory use of the term is racist.” The narrative criticises the derogatory language out of respect for Judaism and with reference to Islamic tradition, expressing identification with Jews. Given that the meaning of the word is “someone who adheres to Judaism,” the interpretation also seems to suggest that using the word as a term of abuse makes no sense.

Another core narrative emphasises a connection to the situation in the Middle East and describes a development in the meaning of the word. I will call this narrative, “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has changed the meaning of the word ‘Jew’ from its original religious sense to a term of abuse.” This narrative also includes explanations claiming that the language is primarily meant as a joke or part of innocent name-calling, similar to other forms of name-calling experienced by the interviewees. An important distinction is made, however, in that the meaning is said to have little or nothing to do with actual Jews, hence the language’s inherent antisemitism is downplayed. The narrative describes how the presence of someone Jewish would change this understanding, thus promoting an awareness that the language can be insulting and discriminatory. This narrative therefore describes a transition in the interpretation, one that exposes the discrimination inherent in the communication and renders it unacceptable.

The third narrative also relates the meaning of the word to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, though suggesting a clearly negative meaning and opposition to Jews. This narrative can be termed, “‘Jew’ means ‘Israel’.” Based on the speaker’s concern about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and identification with the Pal-

estonians as Muslim “brothers,” the term “Jew” in this narrative is perceived, in effect, as opposed to “Muslim.” The interpretation perceives the language as clearly negative, though interviewees again emphasised that it was not aimed at Jews in Norway. Nevertheless, while aimed at Israel, the term in this narrative expresses a perception of the Israeli state as a Jewish collectivity.

12 Conclusion

For both Christianity and Islam, and therefore for both Christians and Muslims, the Jews and Judaism have a certain cosmic stature. They are known; they have a place, and indeed an important place, in both the theological and historical scheme of things. For good or for evil, they are seen as significant.

– Mark R. Cohen,

Foreword to B. Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*

The interreligious exchange between Islam and Judaism has a history as old as Islam. Today, the political situation in the Middle East and the status of Muslims as minorities in Europe constitute important backdrops to the relationship between Muslims and Jews. Drawing on culturally embedded narratives, perceptions of contemporary situations, as well as personal experiences, interviewees in the present study have reflected on this relationship.

While previous research has suggested a close connection between images of “Jews” and national identity constructions in Norway, the question of what functions the discursive construction of “the Jew” might serve for the Muslim minority has been a largely neglected field of research. This study has explored different factors behind constructions of “the Jew”, identifying them in religious traditions, individual religiosity and in interviewees’ affiliations with different denominations of Islam, as well as in relation to transnational Muslim solidarities and views on political power dynamics and to personal experiences of discrimination, imposed identities, and “narratives about Muslims” in Norwegian society. The analysis has demonstrated how the symbolic “Jew” has a potential for meaning and complexity in (re)formulations of Muslim-Jewish relations. The narratives also show how perceptions, understandings, and convictions fluctuate, are subject to re-evaluation, and are not always – or even usually – unequivocal. Rather, ambivalence and changes of opinion were expressed in the interviews.

The different images of “the Jew” in the material can be seen to reflect what Cohen describes as the versatility of symbols, where people with radically different views can find their own meanings in what nevertheless remain shared symbols.⁶⁷³ The diverse interpretations of the symbolic “Jew” constructed and deconstructed perceptions of boundaries between Muslims and Jews and within the Muslim community itself. In contrast to the dominant impression from previous research, the present study shows numerous possibilities for identification between Muslims and Jews. The history of the Jewish minority in Europe and the history of modern anti-

673 Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 18.

semitism served as interpretative keys in the narratives, used to explain the situation of the Muslim minority in contemporary Europe. Similarly, interviewees referred to their own experiences of exclusion as a frame of reference for interpreting Jewish experiences today. Thus, narratives about Jews simultaneously constituted narratives about Muslims.

The analysis has identified a set of core narratives which can be organised into three main categories according to their common traits and characteristics. The narratives are “ideal-types” and do not imply a categorization of the interviewees. I will call the categories *Identification*, *Transition*, and *Opposition*. The categories were identified in narratives related to religious myths and concepts, notions of power and societal influence, historical and contemporary victimisation of Jews and Muslims and, finally, in interpretations of antisemitism and Islamophobia as contemporary problems, including interpretations of different forms of discriminatory discourse.

Describing Jews as adherents of Judaism, as victims of persecution or as minorities in contemporary Europe, the narratives in the first category – Identification – emphasise that Jews and Muslims have something in common. They express identification with Jews by constructing symbolic communities between Muslims and Jews, thereby rejecting the validity of negative constructions and rendering them irrelevant to perceptions of Jews and Muslim-Jewish relations today.

Narratives in the second category – Transition – posit a difference between the contemporary significance of Jewish and Muslim realities. While Judaism, Jews’ religious status, and Jewish experiences of victimhood are ascribed historical significance, they are seen as less relevant today. In different ways, present-day Muslim experiences and Islam occupy more central positions. Although they express identification with Jews in the past, narratives in this category focus on this change in significance as a central aspect of Muslim-Jewish relations, suggesting notions of supersession, i.e., that Judaism and Jewish experiences today are seen as having been replaced by Islam and Muslim experiences.

The third category of narratives – Opposition – emphasises symbolic boundaries, focusing on a perceived antagonism between Muslims and Jews. In various ways, this category of narratives expresses an opposition towards Jews. The image of “the Jew” is associated with global imaginaries and international affairs, describing “Jewish” power or societal influence, or else functions as a symbol of religious otherness. The category includes narratives about Jews occupying a position that differs fundamentally from that which they held in the past, suggesting an inversion of this position; specifically, from “victim” to “perpetrator” or from a position of religious chosenness to one of being religiously “lost.” The core narratives traced in the material are presented below, organised according to the three main categories:

Table 1: Three Main Categories of Core Narratives.

	Religion	Power	Victimhood	Antisemitism and Islamophobia	Interpretations of the word “Jew”
Identification	Jews are the People of the Book.	Jews have significant influence, but notions of a Jewish conspiracy are mistaken.	Jews and Muslims have similar experiences of victimhood.	Negative attitudes towards Jews and Muslims have the same source and derive from ignorance, xenophobia, and group constructions.	“Jew” means an adherent of Judaism, and derogatory use of the term is racist.
Transition	Judaism once contained divine truth but has since been superseded by Islam.	Jews have become powerful due to historical persecution, while international developments have made Muslims weak.	Jewish victimhood was significant in the past, while Muslims are the “new Jews.”	Though significant in the past, antisemitism is less relevant today, while Islamophobia is increasing.	The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has changed the meaning of the word “Jew” from its original religious sense to a term of abuse.
Opposition	Jews are the religious Other.	Muslims are powerless in a world controlled by Jews.	Jews are the new oppressors.	Antisemitism has an abstract and international “Jewish” cause, while the cause for Islamophobia is local and social.	“Jew” means “Israel.”

Similar to other European discourses, the master narratives of Norwegian nation-building in the 19th century constructed Jews and other minorities as the religious Other, perceptions that were materialized in exclusionary practices.⁶⁷⁴ The “foreignness” of the Jewish religious practices of circumcision and kosher slaughter

⁶⁷⁴ Ulvund, *Religious Otherness and National Identity in Scandinavia*.

have also been highlighted in contemporary debates.⁶⁷⁵ This study has explored constructions of Jews from the perspective of another religious minority in contemporary Norway, demonstrating how Jewish religiosity, rather than serving as a marker of “foreignness,” may constitute a basis for understanding and identification. Accordingly, one significant narrative in the first category, termed “Jews are the People of the Book,” emphasised the close religious bonds between Muslims and Jews. Variations of this core narrative was a typical response when interviewees described the initial associations they made with Jews, and it constituted an important underlying narrative in much of the material. Referring to religious sources, the narrative expressed respect for Judaism and for Jews as adherents of Judaism. A similar sense of respect seemed important when interviewees criticised the use of “Jew” as a term of abuse by referring to the religious meaning of the word. The analysis also showed how examples of negative constructions of Jews in Islamic sources were historicised and de-essentialized, and how Islam was perceived as unrelated to contemporary negative views about Jews. This finding simultaneously indicates an impulse among the interviewees to shield Islam from associations with antisemitism.

Whereas the narrative about the People of the Book emphasised a connection between the Jewish (and Christian) and Islamic religions, another core narrative emphasised an evolution in terms of the religions’ respective relationships with divine truth, claiming Judaism once contained divine truth but has since been superseded by Islam. This narrative had similarities with the (Christian and) Islamic theology of supersession. Descriptions of Islam’s relation to Judaism and Christianity sometimes incorporated references to tampering and falsification of the earlier scriptures. In the present material, the assessment of Judaism as having somehow lost its connection with the original divine truth did not necessarily imply a negative view of Jews. This and other narratives made a point of distinguishing between negative views about the symbolically constructed “Jews” and attitudes towards actual Jews. However, a third narrative emphasised a religious opposition between Muslims and Jews, defining Jews as the religious Other. Though sectarian differences between Muslims in Norway typically seemed to be of less importance to the interviewees in the present study,⁶⁷⁶ this narrative also included a focus on sectarian religious Others, “the Jew” thus symbolising both

675 Døving, “Jews in the News—Representations of Judaism and the Jewish Minority in the Norwegian Contemporary Press.”; Davidsen, “Forhistoriske overgrep mot småbarn’ Omskjæringsdebatten i norske avismedier og andregjøring av jøder.”

676 Reflecting findings from other studies, see Sandberg et al., *Ung muslimske stemmer*; Marius Linge and Göran Larsson, “Sunni–Shia identities among young Norwegian Muslims: the remaking of Islamic boundaries,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 37, no. 2 (2022); Linge, “Sunnite–Shiite Polemics in Norway.” A minority among the participants in Linge and Larsson’s study also

intra-Islamic theological differences and intra-Muslim community boundaries. The narrative was linked to experiences of exclusion and negative attitudes on the part of the majority Muslim community in Norway or to knowledge of such discrimination internationally.

In Norway, as in many Western countries, Islam is targeted in public discourse, accused of being a violent and intolerant religion. Previous research has shown that a large proportion of the Norwegian population views Islam as incompatible with central values in Norway and considers Muslims unfit for Western society.⁶⁷⁷ Interviewees in the present study expressed frustration over what they perceived as a one-dimensional and negative public depiction of Islam. There was a strong perception that predominantly negative media representations both reflected and fuelled widespread anti-Muslim attitudes in society.⁶⁷⁸ This perception may have encouraged interviewees explicitly to defend Islam and contributed to the predominantly positive descriptions of religion conveyed in the interviews. Furthermore, it may have inspired the narratives' focus on a distinction between a "true" Islam on the one hand and the worldview of Muslim extremists or "radical Islamists" on the other, thus disentangling religion from ongoing conflicts and wars and suggesting misperceptions among sections of the Muslim community.

The analysis has shown how narratives about contemporary victimisation of Muslims sometimes described a binary opposition between Islam and "the West" that associated "Jewish power" with the Western side. Previous research has found that notions of Jews as powerful are prevalent among Muslims in Norway.⁶⁷⁹ To investigate this more deeply, the present study has explored interviewees' reflections on different forms of power, explanations of international situations, and societal and political influence on narratives about Jews. The analysis found that, although interviewees believed Jews have significant influence in global affairs, they typically shied away from antisemitic conspiracy theories. Furthermore, the study's exploration of this topic showed that, while interviewees' initial statements supported perceptions of "powerful Jews," further discussion typically revealed more nuanced views. This finding suggests that widespread support of statements

highlighted Sunni-Shia differences to reaffirm their identities as "true believers" in opposition to other Muslims, similar to participants in the current study.

677 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 47–48.

678 The finding corresponds with recent studies among Muslims in Norway, where media are described as biased and as a source of negative experiences. See Moe and Døving, *Diskrimineringserfaringer blant muslimer i Norge*, 12, 87–88; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 94–96, 105.

679 Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 33–34; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 34–36.

about Jewish power and influence, found in quantitative research among Muslims, does not necessarily reflect fixed negative attitudes in individuals. Perceptions of Jews as powerful persist, and may form part of individual narratives because they constitute elements of a culturally transmitted repertoire. In some cases, the interviewees in the present study seemed to have categorised the concept “antisemitic conspiracy theories” as something negative and unacceptable, while “Jewish power” had a positive connotation. Nevertheless, a consequence of the latter was that more subtle or implicit stereotypical notions could persist. Furthermore, the image of the “powerful Jew” seemed to transcend perceptions of the Jewish minority status in important ways, redefining the situation of Jews from a previously vulnerable position to one of success and influence. In contrast, narratives described Muslims as being at the bottom of a European “hierarchy of minorities,” to some extent mirroring findings from quantitative research.⁶⁸⁰ Exploring this impression further, the analysis showed how references to Jews as influential and resourceful could also express a hope among the interviewees of Muslims obtaining a similar position in the future. The possible existence of some kind of agency to explain a difficult situation seemed to represent a form of relief by conferring meaning, a central function of conspiracy theories.⁶⁸¹

Another core narrative from this study described differences in the effect of negative experiences and discrimination, suggesting that Jews have become powerful due to historical persecution while international developments have made Muslims weak. The narrative can be related to how an important reference point for the interviewees was the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which were seen as the starting point of a negative spiral for Muslims worldwide, leading to the current situation of intra-Muslim conflict and a prevailing negative view of Muslims in Western societies. According to this narrative, the powerful position of Jews made it possible for them to avoid negative experiences while the situation of Muslims was vulnerable, making it difficult to counter discrimination and negative portrayals. Previous research has shown that generalised views based on terrorist attacks perpetrated by Muslim extremists constitute a source of negative experiences among the Muslim population in Europe, including Norway.⁶⁸²

680 The analysis from the Norwegian population survey in 2022 concluded that, similar to findings from 2011 and 2017, respondents in the general population were most sceptical of having contact with Roma. One-third (32%) of the respondents did not want social contact with Roma, compared to 15% who did not want social contact with Muslims and 20% who did not want contact with Somalis. Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 45–47, 52, 59–62.

681 Cubitt, “Conspiracy Myths and Conspiracy Theories.”; Barkun, *A culture of conspiracy*.

682 See, e.g., FRA, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Muslims – Selected findings*; Jacobsen, *Tilhørighetens mange former. Unge muslimer i Norge*; Sissel Østberg,

While support for Islamist extremism has been found among Norwegian Muslims,⁶⁸³ interviewees in the current study explicitly rejected support for violent individuals and groups such as ISIS and the understanding of Islam conveyed by Islamist extremists. The interviewees typically complicated an association between extremists and “regular Muslims,” just as they did a binary view of Muslim-Jewish relations. However, the narrative of powerless Muslims and powerful Jews draws on culturally embedded narratives prevalent both among Islamists and in Islamophobic rhetoric.

Similar to the religious bond between Islam and Judaism, knowledge of shared experiences of discrimination and prejudice was also named as an important source of identification with Jews by the interviewees. Expressing sympathy with Jews, they related anti-Jewish attitudes and the history of antisemitic discrimination to their own experiences of prejudice and anti-Muslim manifestations. Reflecting this perspective, one core narrative stated that Jews and Muslims have similar experiences of victimhood. While this narrative emphasised similarities in Jewish and Muslim experiences of discrimination, another narrative described Jewish victimhood as a historical rather than contemporary phenomenon, and as closely connected to the history of the Holocaust. Though a perception of shared experiences could also be implied by this narrative, the emphasis was placed on how Muslims have superseded Jews as the main victims of discrimination and persecution in contemporary European society. The analysis thus shows very different interpretations of the nature of contemporary Muslim and Jewish experiences.

Related to the narrative of supersession of victimhood, some interviewees expressed the feeling that victimisation of Muslims in Europe does not receive the attention it deserves, contrasting it with the amount of attention given to Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Interviewees also mentioned that what they had been taught in school focused too much on the past and failed to make this part of European history relevant to other victims of persecution and prejudice today. The question of how the history of the Holocaust can continue to be relevant as part of European memory culture and incorporate perspectives reflecting the current

Muslim i Norge: religion og hverdagsliv blant unge norsk-pakistanere (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 2003). Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 70–75; Døving, “‘Muslims are . . .’ Contextualising Survey Answers,” 256; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 98; Moe and Døving, *Diskriminerings erfaringer blant muslimer i Norge*, 44. Discourse analysis of Norwegian media has, nevertheless, concluded that the image of Muslims has become more nuanced, due primarily to Muslims’ increased contributions and to more knowledge of Islam among journalists. Døving and Kraft, *Religion i pressen*, 128.

683 Linge and Bangstad, *Salafisme i Norge: historien om Islam Net og Profetens Ummah*; Uzair Ahmed, “Muslims and Political Violence: a Sociological Study of Meaning-Making among Radicalised and Non-Radicalised Muslim Men” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2023).

demographic make-up of Europe, including the experiences of recent immigrant populations, has been a topic of debate in Holocaust education.⁶⁸⁴ Cultural theory has closely connected the construction of collective memory to group identity.⁶⁸⁵ In their exploration of the relation between collective memory and group identity, Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka describe how cultural memory can be seen as a “concretion of identity” preserving the knowledge from which a group derives an “awareness of its unity and particularity.”⁶⁸⁶ The links between national identity formation, memory culture and values are evident in the way in which Norwegian memory culture after the Holocaust defined antisemitism as “un-Norwegian.”⁶⁸⁷ In a broader perspective, and representing an integral part of the reconstruction of European identity in the aftermath of the Cold War, the commitment to abolish antisemitism has been described as a marker of commitment to European society.⁶⁸⁸ The willingness of immigrants to oppose antisemitism thus emerges as a marker of their capacity to integrate within European society. Conversely, this integration raises the question of Europe’s capacity to encompass inclusive perspectives in its approach to the memory of the Holocaust. Rethinking “collective memory” and, in particular, the public discourse on the memory of victimhood, Michael Rothberg challenges what he describes as a zero-sum logic whereby memories are seen to be in competition with one another. Instead, he proposes the concept of “multidirectional memory,” a “decolonised” Holocaust memory capable of addressing “shared histories of racism, spatial segregation, genocide, diasporic displacement, [and] cultural destruction.”⁶⁸⁹

The analysis in the present study shows how the interviewees’ narratives relate to past events, simultaneously presenting them as interpretations of these events and as encounters with established historical narratives, interpretative

684 See, e.g., Esra Özyürek, “Rethinking empathy: Emotions triggered by the Holocaust among Muslim-minority in Germany,” *Anthropological Theory* 18, no. 4 (2018); Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*.

685 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilisation: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

686 Assmann and Czaplicka, “Collective memory and cultural identity,” 130.

687 Hoffmann, “A Marginal Phenomenon? Historical Research on Antisemitism in Norway, 1814–1945.” See also chapter 2.3.

688 Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945*. Aleida Assmann suggests that in 2005, through the European Parliament’s adoption of a resolution against antisemitism and declaring January 27 (the day of the liberation of Auschwitz) as a European day of commemoration, “participation in the Holocaust community of memory became part of the entry ticket into the EU.” Assmann, “Transnational Memories,” 549.

689 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, 23.

traditions and value systems. The narratives thus thematise European memory culture after the Holocaust and relate to the dominant norm of anti-antisemitism in Norwegian society. Despite a tendency towards competitive victimhood in some of the narratives, interviewees generally supported Holocaust education and commemoration. They did not, however, see such education as relevant primarily to fight antisemitism, but rather as a tool to fight other forms of prejudice and racism in today's society. The idea that education about the Holocaust can be a way to combat contemporary antisemitism has been problematised by scholars.⁶⁹⁰ Juliane Wetzel notes that while Holocaust education is important for several reasons and may promote both integration and increased sensitivity and empathy among immigrant youth towards Jewish experiences, it is not designed to prevent antisemitism.⁶⁹¹ Knowledge about the Holocaust can coexist with anti-semitism, and contemporary antisemitism “often evolves around issues that are linked to events that have occurred since 1945, such as the ongoing Middle East conflict, or to debates about the Holocaust, i.e., issues that by definition cannot be addressed within the framework of Holocaust education, that require a different focus.”⁶⁹² Besides failing to make Holocaust education appear relevant, addressing antisemitism solely through Holocaust education may indirectly contribute to an impression that antisemitism is not a contemporary issue.⁶⁹³ This point has also been made in criticisms of teaching materials used in Norwegian schools.⁶⁹⁴ Indeed, a core narrative in the present study conveyed an impression that anti-semitism was not a significant contemporary issue. However, the narratives also show how reflecting on the Holocaust and the historical victimisation of Jews from a minority perspective may foster a particular sensitivity and understanding of this part of Jewish history.

This study has discussed how, sometimes violating the post-Holocaust norm of anti-antisemitism, criticism of Israel can be combined with antisemitism. Simi-

⁶⁹⁰ See, e.g., Andy Pearce, Stuart Foster, and Alice Pettigrew, “Antisemitism and Holocaust Education,” in *Holocaust Education: Contemporary Challenges and Controversies*, ed. Stuart Foster, Andy Pearce, and Alice Pettigrew (London: UCL Press, 2020); Wetzel, “Antisemitism and Holocaust Remembrance.”

⁶⁹¹ Wetzel, “Antisemitism and Holocaust Remembrance,” 26.

⁶⁹² Wetzel, “Antisemitism and Holocaust Remembrance,” 27. See also Jikeli, “Perceptions of the Holocaust Among Young Muslims in Berlin, Paris and London.”

⁶⁹³ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Teaching about Anti-Semitism through Holocaust Education: Teaching aid 5*, (Vienna: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2019), <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/3/441104.pdf>.

⁶⁹⁴ Arnfinn H. Midtbøen, Julia Orupabo, and Åse Røthing, *Beskrivelser av etniske og religiøse minoriteter i læremidler*, Rapport 2014:10, (Oslo: Institutt for samfunnsforskning, 2014).

lar to other European countries, the question of whether and when criticism of Israel is antisemitic has been a recurring topic of public debate in Norway.⁶⁹⁵ Quantitative research has shown a small but noticeable connection between traditional antisemitism and anti-Israel views in Norway as well as widespread support of Nazi analogies in references to Israeli policies towards the Palestinians.⁶⁹⁶ The connection between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and antisemitic mobilisation has become increasingly visible in public discourse since October 7, 2023. The latest Norwegian survey on antisemitism suggested attitudes towards Jews among Muslims are more influenced by the conflict than are attitudes in the general population.⁶⁹⁷ A survey update among the general population from February 2024 revealed an increase in both traditional antisemitic attitudes and Israel-related antisemitism. Interviewees in the present study were aware that Jews are associated with Israel and that negative views about Israel are sometimes projected onto Jews in general. Narratives thus underlined a distinction between “Israel” and “Jews,” particularly Jews in Norway, generally expressing nuanced understandings of Jewish relations with Israel and political views among Jews. However, the distinction was sometimes blurred, with fuzzy or shifting boundaries between the terms “Israel,” “Jew,” and “Zionist.” While a sharp distinction between these categories is difficult to maintain due to the reality of overlapping identities, the strongly anti-Israel views expressed by many interviewees in some cases incorporated antisemitic expressions. Rather than signifying Jewish nationalism, references to “Zionism” or “Zionists” encompassed notions of power and oppression. Another core narrative dealing with Jewish victimhood was related to this negative image of Israeli policies, suggesting a complete reversal of the status of the Jews and claiming that Jews are the new oppressors. This narrative described an evolution from victim to oppressor as formulated in the concept of perpetrator–victim inversion, a phenomenon familiar from the history of antisemitism and from contemporary anti-Israel polemics in particular. The strongly negative view of Israeli policies among interviewees in the present study is reflected in this narrative and is a recurring theme in the material. The attitude was also expressed in analogies between ISIS and Israeli policies, and in the narrative that interprets the pejorative use of “Jew” to be a reference to Israel.

695 See, e.g., Hoffmann, “A Fading Consensus: Public Debates on Antisemitism in Norway, 1960 vs. 1983.”; Lenz and Geelmuyden, “The Gaarder Debate Revisited: Drawing the Demarcation Line between Legitimate and Illegitimate Criticism of Israel.”

696 Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, ed., *Antisemitism in Norway*, 70; Hoffmann and Moe, eds. *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 94; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 73–75.

697 Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 73–75.

Previous research among the general population and the Muslim minority has shown similarities in explanations of antisemitism.⁶⁹⁸ The present study has looked further into this topic. By asking interviewees directly for their views on the factors behind both antisemitic and Islamophobic prejudices, the study also explored perceptions of the relation between the phenomena. Highlighting the potential and significance of shared minority experiences and intergroup solidarity when addressing historical and contemporary examples of discrimination, the findings constitute a valuable point of departure for combatting such attitudes.

The impression that Jewish and Muslim victimhood were connected or similar was evident in the interviewees' explanations of the factors behind antisemitism and Islamophobia, which often pointed to the impact of ignorance, xenophobia, and group constructions. A sense of difference between antisemitism and Islamophobia in terms of their underlying causes was nevertheless apparent in the material, with narratives suggesting antisemitism has an abstract and international "Jewish" cause while the cause of Islamophobia is local and social. By describing antisemitism as rooted in international ("Jewish") affairs, the material reflected a notion of "the Jew" that suggested actual Jews were unaffected by antisemitism. This narrative may have been influenced by the fact that the Jewish minority is very small in Norway, hence most interviewees had no personal relationships with Jews. It also reflects how the antisemitic construction of "the Jew" is abstract in nature, and how antisemitism can be described as the "process of turning Jews into 'Jews'."⁶⁹⁹ This is also a trait of historical antisemitic expressions in Norway, where actual Jews were typically referred to as "exceptions" to the negative portrayals.⁷⁰⁰ The way anti-Jewish attitudes by interviewees in the current study were described as directed at a symbolic and abstract, or international, perception of "Jews" and not at Jews in Norwegian society, was also visible in references to the use of "Jew" as a term of abuse. Such language was typically described as a way of joking among friends without antisemitic intent and without consequences for Jewish individuals. Nevertheless, narratives about the (usually hypothetical) presence of someone Jewish demonstrated how something that can pass as "a joke" in one situation becomes a breach of social norms in another, exposing the discrimination inherent in the language.

While narratives about Islamophobia reflected public debates involving both Muslims and the presence of Islam in Norwegian society, interviewees did not re-

⁶⁹⁸ Hoffmann and Moe, eds., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017*, 69–70; Moe, ed., *Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2022*, 87–94.

⁶⁹⁹ Klug, "The Collective Jew: Israel and the New Antisemitism," 124.

⁷⁰⁰ Lien, "' . . . pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøderne' Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norsk dags- og vittighetspresse 1905–1925," 369–72. See also chapter 2.3.

late Judaism to anti-Jewish attitudes in a similar way. The analysis suggested that this difference reflected how what was perceived as the main source of antisemitism, the policies of the State of Israel, was not associated with Judaism. Interviewees did, however, refer to Islam when discussing antisemitism among Muslims but attributed it to misunderstandings or selective readings of Islamic sources.

By relating negative attitudes towards Muslims to concrete societal issues and personal experiences, interviewees seemed to perceive the *consequences* of Islamophobia and antisemitism differently, with Muslims being more directly affected. However, similar to antisemitism, experiences of Islamophobia were also perceived as something that strengthened the victim. The way in which interviewees sometimes downplayed negative experiences and defined them as part of ordinary human behaviour bore striking similarities to the ways in which Jewish interviewees in previous research downplayed their experiences of antisemitism.⁷⁰¹ A tendency to define prejudice and discrimination as “normal human behaviour” may be motivated by an impulse to reject a victim status and a vulnerable position, but also by a hope for integration. The analysis in the present study discussed how the redefinition of the negative experiences simultaneously dissolved the boundary between victim and perpetrator and between (discriminated against) minority and (prejudiced) majority. The downplaying may have reflected how narratives of discrimination have in many cases lacked an audience. This tendency in the material would have perhaps been different had the interviews been conducted after the Black Lives Matter movement, given the increased awareness of racism in Norwegian society this movement entailed. Still, the material bears witness to interviewees’ experiences of discrimination and prejudice. In a broader perspective of minority integration, and in line with the tendency for the Jewish minority to be more outspoken about experiences of antisemitism today compared with the historical strategy of “quiet integration,” these narratives may be seen to reflect how the Muslim minority in Norway has increasingly raised its voice against racism.

The material in the present study included no explicitly hostile anti-Jewish expressions similar to those found in, for example, Islamist extremist propaganda or among right-wing extremists.⁷⁰² The symbolic boundaries expressed in the narratives were permeable in the sense that imagined communities shifted during the course of the interviews and perceptions of “Jews” generally were dynamic and negotiable. Perhaps an awareness of the norm of anti-antisemitism in Norwe-

701 Vibeke Moe, “Antisemittisme. Erfaringer og refleksjoner,” in *Det som er jødisk. Identiteter, historiebevissthet og erfaringer med antisemittisme*, 71–77.

702 See, e.g., Simonsen, “Antisemitism on the Norwegian Far-Right, 1967–2018.”

gian society led to the silencing of negative views or an overemphasis on the rejection of antisemitism. Qualitative methodology involves taking the interview situation and broader societal framework into consideration when interpreting results. I have discussed some examples where I believe that the study's affiliation with the Holocaust Center may have had an impact on the narratives. The affiliation may, for example, have resulted in less negative views about Jews being expressed or more interest being shown in the history of the Holocaust. However, it may also have had an impact on the interviews in other ways; for example, by reminding interviewees of the attention that the Holocaust and other historical manifestations of antisemitism receive in Norwegian (or Western) society. Searching for latent antisemitism in narratives which in fact explicitly reject negative views, or suggesting that a lack of antisemitic expressions is merely due to a norm of anti-antisemitism, is problematic. As we have seen, some narratives did indeed express both negative and stereotypical views about Jews or expressed the view that Jewish victimhood was receiving too much attention at the expense of other accounts of discrimination in contemporary society. Others discussed what was perceived to be widespread antisemitism in sections of the Muslim community but took a clear stance against such attitudes. The opportunity the interview provided to counter negative portrayals of Muslims and a binary view of Muslim-Jewish relations seemed to be a motivating factor for these interviewees to participate in the study.

While the study aimed at a broad perspective both in the recruitment and in the topics discussed, positive views of religion permeate the material. In line with most Muslims in Norway, the interviewees generally had a strong religious identity. More critical views of both Judaism and Islam, and of Jews as adherents of Judaism, might have been found if the study had included more interviewees with a less religious worldview or a "cultural" Muslim identity. The material still contains widely varied narratives of the relationship between Islam and Judaism, and includes critical evaluations of what interviewees perceived as extreme or ostentatious religiosity.

A certain focus on religious identity may also be related to how the choice of concepts used in an interview situation has an impact on the answers obtained. The study's emphasis on "Jews," both in the description of the project during the recruitment process and in the interviews themselves, may have contributed to an increased focus on the participants' own religious identities. Peter Mandaville points to how Islam, though an important reference for self-identification among

many Muslims in Europe, is one “whose strength and meaning are contingent on circumstances rather than fixed.”⁷⁰³ The circumstance created by the study may have strengthened narratives referring to Muslim religious self-identification. An emphasis on Muslim identity also “mirrors” the broader discursive shift from describing immigrants in national and ethnic terms to describing them in religious terms (see chapter 3.1). On the other hand, the different ways in which interviewees related a Muslim identity to narratives about Jews are a focus area of the study, and reflections on topics such as belonging and prejudice also encouraged references to national identities and ethnicity during the interviews.

The study does not provide a definitive answer to what causes anti-Jewish attitudes among Muslims. Findings from research in several European countries as well as the current study suggest negative experiences are of secondary importance as a cause of antisemitism among Muslims.⁷⁰⁴ However, some interviewees were inclined to interpret antisemitic attitudes as being somehow related to Muslim experiences of discrimination. In describing scapegoating not only as an important function of negative attitudes in the majority population but also as a coping mechanism in the minority population, interviewees saw Muslim-Jewish relations as closely interconnected with and affected by majority-minority relations, reflecting societal inclusion or exclusion. Indeed, some of the strongest expressions of opposition to Jews and constructions of antagonism between “Jews” and “Muslims” were found in perceptions of bias in the attitudes of the *majority* society, with Jewish and Muslim victimhood being perceived as unequal in the eyes of Norwegian (or Western) society, leading to competition for victimhood and connected to a sense of exclusion. The analysis of these narratives shows that relations between minorities are determined by broad societal conditions and cannot be studied in isolation. The strong impact that society’s approach to Muslim and Jewish experiences seems to have on perceptions of Muslim-Jewish relations constitutes an important finding in the present study. A topic for further research might be to explore how symbolic boundaries can become social boundaries and the role of the majority society in this process.

703 Peter Mandaville, “Muslim transnational Identity and State Responses in Europe and the UK after 9/11: Political Community, Ideology and Authority,” *Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 493.

704 Jikeli, *Antisemitic Attitudes among Muslims in Europe: A Survey Review*; Jikeli, “L’antisémitisme en milieux et pays musulmans: débats et travaux autour d’un processus complexe.” No connection was found between reported negative experiences and antisemitic attitudes among Muslim respondents in the Norwegian survey from 2022. Finding based on analysis by Ottar Hellevik. Some previous research has, however, suggested that perceived victimhood fuels antisemitism. Georgios Antoniou, Elias Dinas, and Spyros Kosmidis, “Collective Victimhood and Social Prejudice: A Post-Holocaust Theory of Anti-Semitism,” *Political Psychology* 41, no. 5 (2020).

The construction of difference through symbolic boundaries is not (necessarily) the result of actual boundaries, and the drawing of such boundaries does not necessarily entail a categorical distinction.⁷⁰⁵ However, when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon, they may take on a constraining character and pattern social interactions in important ways.⁷⁰⁶ The narratives identified in the current study delineate shifting community boundaries and identifications that transcend dichotomised notions of “Muslims versus Jews.” While boundary-constructing narratives focused on Muslim-Jewish relations on an international level and sometimes conveyed impressions of Muslims as occupying a radically different position from Jews in contemporary society, the study has also shown how the shared identity of Muslims and Jews as minorities in Europe constitutes a possibility for understanding and cooperation. Narratives of identification in the present study represent a strong counter-narrative to the boundary-constructing narratives of difference and opposition, focusing on religious bonds and shared minority experiences as the main aspect of Muslim-Jewish relations. The multifaceted image of the symbolic “Jew” encompasses this narrative complex.

705 Fredrik Barth, “Boundaries and Connections,” in *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Identities*, ed. Anthony Cohen (New York: Routledge, 2000), 17.

706 Lamont and Molnár, “The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences,” 168–69.

Appendix

Interview Guide

The study was conducted through individual semi-structured qualitative interviews with the use of an interview guide. The interviews focused on the following main topics: (1) background and family history; (2) religiosity (interviewees' descriptions of their own religiosity, religious affiliation, religious practice, and views on other religions); (3) experiences living in Norway as a Muslim, experiences of prejudice and discrimination; (4) views on factors behind negative attitudes towards minorities (particularly Muslims and Jews); (5) relations with other minorities, including Jews and members of other Islamic denominations; (6) views on certain current events, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and situation in the Middle East.

The interview guide was adjusted throughout the data collection period in accordance with findings from the interviews. One early adjustment included an increased focus on different Islamic denominations (Shiites, Sunnis, and Ahmadis). This already seemed important after the first interview, which was conducted with a young Shiite woman. Her perspective underlined the importance of taking the interviewees' experiences and relations with other Muslim communities into consideration when exploring narratives about Jews.

Coding and Analysis

I have analyzed and coded data from the beginning of the project. This method enabled an open approach to the research topics and also resulted in some changes to the interview guide during the course of the data collection. The study also included participant observation at different activities and events in mosques and elsewhere, which provided a valuable framework for the analysis.

All interviews were audio recorded and full verbatim transcriptions were made. This approach allows the researcher to revisit the data several times during the coding process, in accordance with constant comparison analysis technique.⁷⁰⁷ The transcriptions were analyzed with the use of NVivo computer software, which has been developed especially for qualitative data analysis. The

⁷⁰⁷ Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

software permits analysis of both audio and text files, and the initial coding of the text files (creating “nodes”) was conducted while simultaneously listening to the interviews. This method enabled a more direct revisiting of the interviewees’ sentiments and engagement in the different topics. The interviewers also took notes during the interviews as an aid to structure ideas during data collection. I listened to the audiotapes and also read the notes and transcriptions of each interview repeatedly during the analysis process.

Scholars point to three main methodological stances in narrative analysis. The *sociocultural* stance focuses on shared cultural narratives and how they are called on and modified by individuals; the *naturalist* stance focuses on idiosyncratic features and provides rich descriptions of people’s stories; and the *literary* approach explores the discourse used in the narratives, and narrative elements such as metaphors, plotlines, and actors.⁷⁰⁸ The analysis in the present study includes elements of all three stances, though emphasis is on the two former. Based on shared features in these narratives, the analysis resulted in a typology consisting of a number of core or “ideal-type” narratives. These core narratives therefore did not occur in the material as such, but were formulated as result of the analysis based on commonalities in the data.

List of Interviewees

Interviewee no.	1
Name	Fatimah
Sex	Female
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Iraqi, born in Iraq
Religious affiliation	Shia
Residence(s)	Vestfold / Oslo / Troms
Education/Work	Student, Psychology
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	VM

⁷⁰⁸ Lynn McAlpine, “Why might you use narrative methodology? A story about narrative,” *Eesti Haridusteaduste Ajakiri* 4, no. 2 (2016): 35–37; Pinnegar and Daynes, “Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative.”

Interviewee no.	2
Name	Tanveer
Sex	Male
Age	40s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Pakistan
Religious affiliation	Ahmadi
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	MA and religious education
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	3
Name	Daniel
Sex	Male
Age	60s
National background	Norwegian
Religious affiliation	Ahmadi
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	College
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	4
Name	Aleena
Sex	Female
Age	40s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Pakistan
Religious affiliation	Ahmadi
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Bachelor's
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	5
Name	Hassan
Sex	Male
Age	50s
National background	Norwegian-Lebanese, born in Lebanon
Religious affiliation	Shia
Residence(s)	Akershus
Education/Work	Religious education, working
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	6
Name	Parveen
Sex	Female
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Ahmadi
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Student, Law
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	7
Name	Bushra
Sex	Female
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo / Bergen
Education/Work	Student, Psychology
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	8
Name	Bashir
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Moss
Education/Work	Student, History of Religion
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	9
Name	Nighat
Sex	Female
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Student, Economics
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	10
Name	Rashida
Sex	Female
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Somali, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Student, Dentistry
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	11
Name	Omar
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Student, Law
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	12
Name	Ismail
Sex	Male
Age	40s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Pakistan
Religious affiliation	Ahmadi
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Full-time job (paternity leave)
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	13
Name	Farrokh
Sex	Male
Age	70s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in British India (Pakistan)
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Drammen
Education/Work	Teacher
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	14
Name	Ubah
Sex	Female
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Somali, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Student, UiO
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	15
Name	Imran
Sex	Male
Age	30s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Pakistan
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	University education, working
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	16
Name	Yasmin
Sex	Female
Age	40s
National background	Norwegian-Pakistani, born in Pakistan
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Religious work
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	17
Name	Yusuf
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Turkish, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Buskerud
Education/Work	Dentistry, working
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	VM

Interviewee no.	18
Name	Mustafa
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Turkish, born in Turkey
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Three years university, working
Marital status	In a relationship
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	19
Name	Günay
Sex	Female
Age	30s
National background	Norwegian-Turkish, born in Turkey
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence:	Akershus
Education/Work:	Student
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	20
Name	Berat
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Turkish, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Bachelor's, working
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	21
Name	Farid
Sex	Male
Age	30s
National background	Norwegian-Albanian, born in Macedonia
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Bachelor's, working
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	22
Name	Jamel
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Tunisian, born in Norway, Norwegian mother
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Working
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	23
Name	Halim
Sex	Male
Age	30s
National background	Norwegian-Somali, born in Somalia
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Bachelor's, working
Marital status	In a relationship
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	24
Name	Hajra
Sex	Female
Age	30s
National background	Norwegian-Somali, born in Somalia
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Bachelor's, working
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	25
Name	Nadia
Sex	Female
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Kurdish, born in Iran
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	MA student, working
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	26
Name	Dalia
Sex	Female
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Moroccan, born in Norway
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	MA student, working
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	27
Name	Sivar
Sex	Male
Age	18
National background	Norwegian-Kurdish, born in Iraq
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Student, upper secondary school, part-time job
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	28
Name	Hamid
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Somali, born in Somalia
Religious affiliation	Sunni
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Upper secondary school, working
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	29
Name	Karrar
Sex	Male
Age	19
National background	Norwegian-Iraqi, born in Iraq
Religious affiliation	Shia
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Student, upper secondary school, part-time job
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	30
Name	Farzan
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Iranian, born in Iran
Religious affiliation	Shia
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Bachelor's, relevant job
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	31
Name	Mahmod
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Iraqi, born in Iraq
Religious affiliation	Shia
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	Bachelor's student, part-time job
Marital status	Single
Interviewer	UA

Interviewee no.	32
Name	Ali
Sex	Male
Age	20s
National background	Norwegian-Lebanese, born in Lebanon
Religious affiliation	Shia
Residence(s)	Oslo
Education/Work	MA, working
Marital status	Married
Interviewer	UA

All names of interviewees have been anonymised.

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