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Managing Jewish Identity in Arguments Over Jewish Support for Palestine

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ABSTRACT

The Israel/Palestine conflict has led to intragroup conflict amongst diaspora Jews that do and do not support Israel's actions. This paper addresses that conflict, which is shown to not just be one of differing opinions but of exactly what it means to be Jewish; it is therefore a social psychological study of contested and conflicting identities. Context to intra-Jewish conflict and the concept of the 'self-hating Jew' is discussed alongside the discursive approach to identity. The research question is: How is British Jewish identity managed and policed in a debate about Jewish support for Palestine? A critical discursive analysis is conducted on a Facebook discussion initiated by the British Jewish pro-Palestinian organisation 'Na'amod', which contains over 300 inter-actions. The analysis shows that there is both support and criticism of Na'amod, with a major feature being the construction, by Jews, of what it means to be a Jew, including (1) supporting Israel and (2) attending a controversial march against antisemitism; together these actions constitute appropriate 'Jewish ethics' so that not doing these places a Jew as deficient because of self-hate and/or stupidity. The analysis therefore shows how Jewish identity is constructed in such a way as to police Jewish people's behaviour and ensure support for Israel.

1 | Introduction

While the brunt of the Israel/Palestine conflict is experienced by Palestinian, and to a lesser extent Israeli, civilians, the conflict also has implications for other conflicts. This includes the widening of violence in the Middle East more generally as well as between the Jewish and Muslim religions, where both Islamophobia and antisemitism increase when the Israel/Palestine conflict increases in violence, as it has done in the 2023/2024 conflict. Another implication of the conflict is on intra-Jewish relations amongst diaspora (i.e., non-Israeli) Jews, where a range of different positions regarding Israel can lead to conflict *between* Jews. Intra-group conflict is where there is a (perceived) difference of opinions between group members, so in the case of diaspora Jews, there can be intra-group conflict between those who broadly support and those that broadly oppose Israel's actions towards Palestine. Intra-group conflict is often studied in the context of organisational psychology (see, for example, de Wit, Greer, and Jehn 2012, for a review) but less so regarding a schism within (minority) groups. This paper addresses that conflict, which will be shown to not just be one of differing opinions but of exactly what it means to be Jewish; this is therefore a social psychological study of contested and conflicting identities.

1.1 | Opposing Zionism and the "Self-Hating" Jew

Finlay (2010) and Grabelsky (2023) address Jewish identity, particularly regarding the ideological split over Israel/Palestine. Finlay shows how political Zionism developed late in the 19th century as a result of antisemitism experienced by

Jews across Europe, as the desire for a Jewish state. The first Zionist Congress took place in 1897 and set its stated aim as a home for Jews in Palestine (Gilbert 1978). Initially the idea was not popular amongst European Jews (Grabelsky 2023), with opposition to Zionism based on the existing population of Arabs in Palestine, a desire to remain secular in their (European) home and for religious ideas (where the messiah, and not a political movement, is awaited to return Jews to Israel), a fear that it would increase antisemitism, and that Jews did not represent a homogenous, unified group (Finlay 2010). Grabelsky (2023) argues that Zionism always was, and remains, a European settler-colonial project and that it was backed by other European settler-colonial supporting countries, especially the United States and United Kingdom. It is generally understood that Zionism moved from a marginal to a dominant viewpoint amongst European Jews as a result of ongoing European antisemitism, culminating in (but not limited to) the genocide of the Holocaust. As a result, Zionism claims to represent all Jews and to offer them collectively a route to safety, which manifests in the right of all Jews to citizenship in Israel.

Zionism may have become the dominant Jewish ideology, but it remains highly controversial, with the increased violence (at the time of writing, in 2024) providing a new flashpoint for rehearsing the debates over Zionism. Chomsky (1989) shows how Zionists have endeavoured 'to identify criticism of Israeli policies as anti-Semitism—or in the case of Jews, as "self-hatred"' (1989, 433), a point echoed by Butler (2012). Grabelsky terms this calling of non/anti-Zionist Jews self-hating an 'intra-group testimonial injustice' (2023, 818) in which this marginalised group is silenced and othered by this slur, yet their 'very existence [as] anti-Zionist Jews contest[s] the notion that criticism of Israel is inherently antisemitic (2023, 820)'.

Finlay (2010) explored in detail the history and use of the idea of self-hating Jews, tracing it back to German writers, before Lewin (1941) wrote, in English, a psychological account of self-hating Jews, where self-hatred was explained as a need for higher status than was afforded in the marginalised and discriminated-against Jewish in-group, as well as some internalisation of this prejudice. Finlay makes two strong arguments against Lewin's understanding of self-hatred. The first is that Lewin assumes that there is one correct way to express Jewish identity, and the second is that it assumes that there are core Jewish values (i.e., Zionism), both of which Finlay disputes. Finlay also shows how some writers on supposed Jewish self-hatred found evidence for this in conflict between different groups of Jews from different countries and cultures who did not view themselves as homogenous. While claims of self-hatred are now commonly directed towards anti/non-Zionist Jews, the early Zionists were themselves accused of self-hatred.

1.2 | The Discursive Psychological Approach to Identity and Identity Conflict

Finlay (2010) argues that 'Given the problems of the concept as a description of identity', it is worth stepping outside the question of who is or is not exhibiting self-hate and looking instead at what is being *accomplished* by making such a claim in a debate (2010, 209, emphasis added). In doing so, he is making a case for taking an interactional and discursive approach to discussions of identity. The discursive approach to identity (see, for example, Antaki, Condor, and Levine 1996) is that social identities are resources that are used in conversations to accomplish some kind of social action. Drawing on the work of Sacks, Benwell and Stokoe demonstrate how identity categories are 'inferential resources' (2016, 68) that include a range of expectations (see also, for example, Abell and Stokoe 2001). Because of this, as Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) show, membership of categories can be contested in interactions. This means that rather than being fixed, identities are instead understood to be actions that are accomplished in social interactions, so that identities are constructed through the ways in which they are talked about (so, for example, what exactly a 'refugee', is subject to intense political debates, with those broadly supporting and opposing refugees seen to construct very different definitions of what a refugee, see Goodman and Speer 2007). Identities can also be 'deployed' in conversations to bolster an account that is being made (see, for example, Foster and Kilby 2023, on how the identity of 'mother' is deployed to demonstrate expertise). The critical discursive psychology approach, developed by Wetherell and Edley (1999, 2009, 2014), also has a focus on identity, demonstrating how different identities, or 'subject positions', are constructed and negotiated in talk.

There are no discursive psychological studies explicitly on Jewish identity, but there are studies more broadly on Jewish identity. Rosner, Fuchs, and Slepkov (2023) found that Israeli Jews feel that Jewish identity cannot be partial but also show that Jews can be defined by their varying levels of religiosity, values and culture, suggesting that there is no simple definition of what it means to be Jewish. Ben Porat and Filc (2022) show how in Israel, Jewish identity can be contested in politics, particularly along the lines of 'authentic' and 'cosmopolitan elites' where religion can be drawn into populism. West (2022) points to the diversity of Jewish identities in North America, with the existence of more than one Jewish culture there.

Following the discursive approach, a 'Jew' is expected to behave in a particular way, including, as demonstrated above, supporting Zionism and Israel. In this way, 'self-hating Jew' can be understood not as a pathological self-hatred or internalisation of antisemitic tropes, but instead as a way of policing the behaviour of Jews who are deemed (by some) to be making the 'wrong' (i.e., non-Zionist) argument. Finlay (2010) provides examples of some Jews responding to and rejecting accusations of self-hatred, and Grabelsky (2023) rejects the use of the term as a technique for silencing Jewish critics of Israeli aggression; however, to date there is no systematic analysis of (Jewish) members of the public debating what it means to be Jewish and to oppose Israeli aggression. The research question for this analysis is therefore: How is British Jewish identity managed and policed in a debate about Jewish support for Palestine?

2 | Method

2.1 | Data and Context

The data are drawn from a complete Facebook discussion following a statement by Na'amod, which is a British Jewish organisation. Na'amod is a Hebrew word meaning "We will stand", and its symbol (seen in part one) is based on the Hebrew letter 'nun' (which makes the N sound at the beginning of its name) with the Israeli fence toppling. Its subtitle is "British Jews against Occupation", and it describes itself as "a movement of Jews in the UK seeking to end our community's support for Israel's occupation and apartheid and to mobilise it in the struggle for freedom, equality, and justice for all Palestinians and Israelis" (Na'amod 2024). The organisation, established in 2018, is therefore set up as an explicitly Jewish organisation, but also as one that positions itself at odds with the wider Jewish community, in that Na'amod aims to end support for what it calls Israeli aggression. Their existence is therefore controversial, and they caused further controversy when they publicly said 'Kaddish', the Jewish mourning prayer, for Palestinians killed by Israel. Na'amod has been particularly prominent following the escalation of violence that occurred with, and following, the Hamas attack in October 2023. Na'amod has been heavily involved with the regular demonstrations that have been happening in London and around the UK calling for a ceasefire. They are part of a wider 'Jewish bloc', which is a coalition of other Jewish groups that campaign for Palestinian rights. For full transparency, this paper's author is not a member of Na'amod, although they are on their mailing list and are a member of a similar Jewish Pro-Palestinian organisation, is supportive of their message, and work and have marched with them for a ceasefire.

Na'amod has a large social media presence, with over 22 thousand followers on Instagram and over 27 thousand followers on X. On Facebook, where the data for this study are taken, Na'amod has 6.2 thousand followers. The focus of this analysis is on their post and the complete discussion that followed it, called 'Our statement on the "March Against Antisemitism taking place today"', which was put on Facebook on the 26th of November, 2023 (and accessed in 2024 after the discussion was finished). This statement refers to a demonstration taking place that day, led by the Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA), a British Jewish organisation established in 2014, which describes itself as 'a volunteer-led charity dedicated to exposing and countering antisemitism through education and zero-tolerance enforcement of the law' (Campaign Against Antisemitism 2024), which was organised in part as a response to the increase in antisemitism that occurred alongside the increase in violence in Gaza (e.g., BBC 2023). That the CAA considers support for Palestine to be antisemitism (e.g., the front cover of their most recent 'Antisemitism Barometer' [2022] is illustrated with a picture of a car displaying Palestinian flags) is controversial and is topicalised and critiqued in Na'amod's statement in the data. The initial post by Na'amod is set out in three images that display a lengthy statement in which they set out their reasoning for not joining the CAA's march against antisemitism. The statement was 'shared' on Facebook 91 times and generated 51 replies. Many of these replies were individual comments on the statement (see parts 2–4), and 179 'icon' responses made up of supporting thumbs up 'likes' and heart 'loves'. The statement also generated a heated debate between Jewish Facebook users who opposed and supported the statement (see parts 5–8). In total, therefore, the post generated over 300 interactions and was likely viewed by hundreds or thousands of people.

2.2 | Analytic Approach

The data were analysed using a critical form of discursive analysis, which draws on both rhetorical psychology (Billig 1988) and discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter 1992) of the type set out by Wetherell and Edley (1999) in their work on masculine identities, making it relevant for this study on the construction and uses of Jewish identities. This approach is particularly beneficial as it addresses interactions in micro detail while also acknowledging broader ideologies (see for example Locke and Budds 2020), including taken-for-granted hegemonies that can reproduce power relations (Wetherell 1998), which has been argued to be appropriate for online hate interactions (Goodman et al. 2023). The analysis followed the steps set out by Goodman (2017) and Locke and Budds (2020). To do this, the author coded the initial statement and then each responding post in turn, post by post. First, particular attention was paid to whether or not the posts were supportive or critical of the initial statement, and while the earlier posts mainly fell into one of these, a more substantive debate between three different people was found to have more detailed discussion of Jewish identity and included some recognisable arguments that have been found elsewhere (and discussed in the introduction here), such as Finlay (2010), Chomsky (1989) and Grabelsky (2023), which provided the opportunity for more detailed coding of identity use as well as support and opposition. In keeping with the discursive approach, the coding focused on the action orientation of the comments, so rather than making any claims about what the Facebook users (including Na'amod) really think, posts were coded for what they were accomplishing in the interaction, with a focus on how identities are invoked, challenged, and used to forward arguments (see, for example, Antaki, Condor, and Levine 1996).

Ethical approval was granted by the author's institution, and Na'amod granted the author approval to use the data from their Facebook page. All extracts are presented as they appeared on Facebook, which is a freely available public space where contributors are aware that their posts will be read and may be interacted with. Nevertheless, to protect their identities, posters have been anonymised, so names and profile pictures are removed (with the exception of Na'amod, who initiated the interaction). The entire discussion is presented but is broken into parts for readability.

2.2.1 | Analysis

2.2.1.1 | Part One: The Initial Statement. The thread begins with a lengthy statement by Na'amod on their Facebook page where they set out their argument for not attending the march against antisemitism.

Since October 7, the surge in antisemitism and Islamophobia has been deeply distressing, and we extend our unwavering solidarity to anyone affected or feeling fearful. Holding any community collectively responsible for the actions of Israel or Hamas is indefensible.

Within this context, The Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA) is holding a march today 'against antisemitism'. We won't be attending – here's why:

It's clear from the event description that CAA have organised this march in response to the huge weekly ceasefire demonstrations in London. They claim these demonstrations have turned London into a 'no-go zone for Jews', promoting 'glorification of terrorism' and 'incitement to racial or religious hatred against Jews'. This could not be further from the truth

The overwhelming majority of the hundreds of thousands of people attending these Palestine solidarity marches do so out of a profound commitment to freedom and dignity for all people. While we vehemently oppose anyone exploiting this cause to express antisemitism, we must also strongly resist attempts to discredit the entire movement for Palestinian liberation on the basis of a small, unrepresentative minority.

2/3

We know from experience that many Jews who oppose Israel's war on Gaza have felt incredibly welcome and supported at these ceasefire demos. Na'amod is proud to be part of the Jewish bloc.

There are many laudable, beautiful ways of showing solidarity with Jews facing antisemitism. These do not include smearing those mobilising for a ceasefire and Palestinian freedom – Jewish and non-Jewish – as inherently antisemitic.

Pitting Jewish safety against Palestinian freedom doesn't make Jews safer; it makes fighting antisemitism harder. True safety lies in solidarity with other marginalised communities, working together to dismantle systems of oppression that put us all at risk. We keep each other safe because our safety is interconnected.

3/3

179   51 💬 90 ↗

The original statement is a long one. It delicately criticises the 'march against antisemitism'. It begins by acknowledging a rise in antisemitism (and also Islamophobia) and criticises collective blame, which taps into lay representations of prejudice (Figgou and Condor 2006). It is noteworthy that Israel and Hamas are presented as the key actors in the conflict, as it is the country (Israel) and the government/terrorist organisation (Hamas) rather than Palestine that has agency. Opposition to the march, which is presented as happening within a context (of the conflict and prejudice) they disapprove of, is made tentatively: 'We won't be attending'. In part two of the post, the march and its organiser's (Campaign against Antisemitism; CAA) rationale that there is antisemitism in the pro-Palestinian demonstrations is challenged as inaccurate, and instead the pro-Palestinian demonstrations are presented as about peace. There is a concession that antisemitism may be present in a minority of the protestors, which takes the form of a disclaimer (Hewitt and Stokes 1975) and (again) presents antisemitism as a problem that must be tackled. This 'minority', it is claimed, is used to undermine the pro-Palestinian marches. In part three of the post, the idea that the pro-Palestinian marches are hostile to Jews is opposed, here drawing on personal experience (e.g., Barnes, Palmary, and Durrheim 2001), where Jews are deemed welcome at the marches; this works to undermine claims of antisemitism.

Next, a distinction is made between positive and negative ways to show solidarity with Jews and against antisemitism. While the positive ways are not elaborated, calling those who support Palestinians and the call for a ceasefire antisemitic is clearly presented as a negative, through the use of 'smear'. Finally, a plea is made to not distinguish groups (here Jews and Palestinians) and instead the two are categorised together (or as a superordinate category, using social identity theory's terminology) as groups that can be marginalised and lacking safety. It is claimed that the two groups should work as one. In summary, throughout this statement, work is done to distinguish support for Palestinians from antisemitism, which *is* deemed to exist (and in minority cases does overlap with support for Palestinians). Jews are presented as involved in support for Palestinians and welcome at demonstrations. This all works to undermine the CAA's argument for the necessity of a march against antisemitism, which instead is repositioned as an attack against solidarity with Palestinians and those opposing violence against them. The post results in the following discussion.

2.2.1.2 | Part Two: Initial Support for the Post. The first replies to Na'amod's statement are generally positive, as can be seen in the following examples which mainly contain support.

In the current context it is a March for genocide, apartheid. Supported by the far right Tommy Robinson and Douglas Murray.
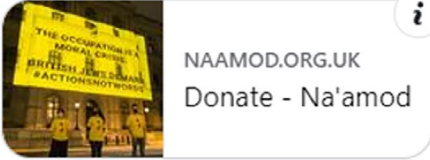
6 w   Like   Reply   👍😂 3

Thank you for this statement. Your work is hugely important.

6 w   Like   Reply   👍 2

The work you're doing is so important, thank you. As someone who isn't Jewish, what's the best way I can support? Do you take donations?

6 w   Like   Reply   👍❤😂 12

Author
Na'amod: British Jews Against Occupation
You can make a donation here https://naamod.org.uk/donate/

NAAMOD.ORG.UK
Donate - Na'amod

6 w   Like   Reply   👍 5

Na'amod: British Jews Against Occupation Many thanks, have just done that!

6 w   Like   Reply   👍 3

🇮🇱🇮🇱🇮🇱🇮🇱🇮🇱🇮🇱 👍😢 6

The first post aligns with Na'amod and criticises the march, in part because it has support from prominent, controversial far-right figures (Robinson and Murray) and presents it clearly as about support for Israel, rather than against antisemitism, which works to present the march as hateful and undermine its message. This post has both support (thumbs-up emoji) and criticism (in the form of a laughing emoji). The next response aligns with Na'amod's statement describing its 'work as important' (and gets support itself in the form of emojis). Another post praises Na'amod, again referring to it as important, and makes a show of support by asking how to donate, which generates a link in response, and then a show of giving the donation. The poster makes a display of not being Jewish. These posts get support (and also a laugh emoji). The final post of this page consists simply of six Israel flag emojis. This works to criticise Na'amod and also to link the antisemitism demonstration with support for Israel and its actions. This post gets a thumbs up but also a cry emoji, which either challenges it for being a sad position or presents Na'amod's position as upsetting.

2.2.1.3 | Part Three: More Supporting Statements. The next group of messages also contains explicit support for the statement and Na'amod more broadly.

Excellent statement. 👍 2
6 w   Like   Reply

Well said, expressed my views beautifully. Thanks 🙏❤
6 w   Like   Reply   4

Thank you for your bravery and support
6 w   Like   Reply   👍 3

Thank you for your principled stand, i salute you
6 w   Like   Reply   👍 2

i have just watched the BBC news on this - the Palestinian protest didn't even merit any moving footage, but this one got a short film that looked shot and edited by the organisers. and a claim of 100,000 attending. is this accurate/..
6 w   Like   Reply

yes
6 w   Like   Reply

We are behind you & the march yesterday, yes to worldwide peace - no to heavy bombs & arms dealers - protect our fragile planet & it's ecosystems, we are not the number 1 superior life on Earth x
6 w   Like   Reply   Edited   👍 3

I tried to donate but there seems to be something wrong with your donation page.
6 w   Like   Reply

These posts contain support for the statement in a number of ways, from praising the statement through to explicit displays of gratitude, and the use of works like 'bravery' and 'principled', which points to Na'amod's position being a controversial one, which points to the supposed hegemony of the idea that all Jews support Israel, which is being challenged by both Na'amod and the supporting comments. Also in support of Na'amod's general position, the antisemitism march is presented as getting more media attention and support than the pro-Palestinian ones that were occurring weekly. The claim of mass support for the antisemitism march is questioned and is supported in the reply. Another post makes a more generic call for peace, claiming to be behind both Na'amod and the antisemitism march. The final post is about donating, which, like in the previous examples, works as a show of support for Na'amod. At this point, there is generally positive support for Na'amod and its statement.

#### 2.2.1.4 | Part Four: Support and Opposition.

The first post here is a reply, the first direct reply to a comment, to the final comment in the previous part about Na'amod's donation page not working, so the claim that the page has 'common sense' presents support for Na'amod as irrational, albeit without an explanation for why. Further criticising the initial statement, the next comment describes 'this' as disappointing. The next three posts are all simple displays of support (solidarity, shared, bless you/thank you) and these each have a thumbs-up emoji for support. The use of the name 'Amnon' is noteworthy because, as a biblical, Hebrew name, meaning 'faithful', this could infer that the contributor is Jewish, although it is their political affiliation (socialist party) that is made explicit. Next comes the comment, 'sorry you feel this way'. It is not entirely clear what this refers

to (i.e., sorry about the situation Na'amod describes, or perhaps more likely that they [wrongly] think this). The comment has no response. The last post here is more support ("perfect"). This extract shows that while there is support for Na'amod and its statement on their Facebook page, this is not unanimous, with some opposition to them and their position. Up until this point, there have been single responses to the statement, usually in the form of explicit support but also displaying some opposition.

So far, the comments are relatively straightforward and may look like any other controversial topic where there will be differing opinions. In the following part, a discussion between three people begins, and it is at this point that the debate about Jewish identity fully begins.

2.2.1.5 | Part Five: Na'amod as 'Useful Idiots'.
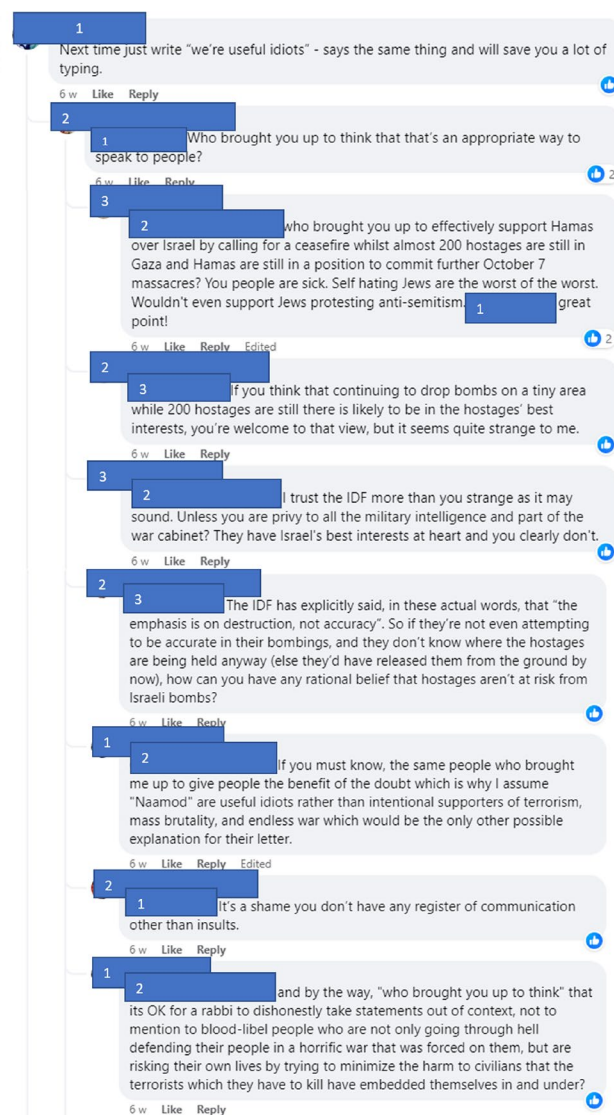
This first post begins a lengthy conversation between this poster (1) and two other Facebook users. It begins with 1 directing an insult towards Na'amod in the form of 'useful idiot' to both insult and undermine their message, which is presented as stupid and self-defeating. 'Useful idiot' refers to a person who takes on an

opponent's perspective in a way that is useful to that opponent, so here this means that Jews supporting Palestine are stupidly duped into their useful support, indicating that Na'amod are not operating in a way that is appropriate for their (Jewish) in-group because they are not supporting Israel and therefore not aligning with the hegemonic position. Here acceptance of Jews is contingent on their behaving in a particular way, much like how support for refugees has been shown to be contingent on their 'appropriate' integration (e.g., Goodman and Kirkwood 2019). There is a token of support for this comment, which also starts two threads in response (both with the same speakers).

The first response is from 2, who presents the prior comment as rude and inappropriate through the use of a rhetorical question and, in doing so, aligns with Na'amod. This comment gets two thumbs up and also leads to a response from a new person (3). 3 directs their comment at 2, and in support of 1, this time beginning to make a more detailed argument. The post begins by repeating the structure of the previous post ('Who brought you up to'?). Na'amod's post is then presented as supporting Hamas (over Israel). Na'amod's call for a ceasefire is challenged on account of Hamas's actions (the atrocities committed on the 7th of October 2023). Hamas is presented as an ongoing threat (could commit further massacres), which warrants continued action against them. 3 then describes Na'amod, 'you people', as sick, before describing them as 'self hating Jews'. This contested category works as an insult directed towards Jews who supposedly hate themselves and 'side' with anti-Semitism (see Finlay 2010). Na'amod are then called 'the worst'. This is attributed to their (supposed) lack of support for Jews protesting against antisemitism, where the use of 'wouldn't even' suggests that marching against antisemitism is the most basic act that any (non-self-hating) Jew must do. As well as undermining Na'amod's position, this also works to decontextualise the march from the ongoing war and associated support for Israel (seen, for example, in the Israel flag emojis in part two). There is then explicit support for 1's (useful idiots) post ('great point').

2 then responds to 3. 2 makes no reference to the comment about self-hating Jews and instead moves to criticise Israel's actions, 'dropping bombs on a tiny area', and presents it as a 'strange' and ineffective way to resolve the issue. This post therefore ignores the main challenge set out by P2 and works to align with Na'amod (and reject P1 and P3's opposition). 3 replies to 2, stating a desire to favour information from the IDF (the Israeli army) over 2's statement, because the IDF is deemed to have Israel's best interests in mind, while 2 does not. This means that the discussion has now explicitly moved from support and opposition for the march against antisemitism to Israel's (and its army's) actions. 2 replies to 3 quoting the IDF to undermine 3's argument, which relies on a trust of the IDF, which in turn works to present 3's belief in them as irrational.

1 becomes involved again to challenge 2. This is done through responding to 2's earlier (rhetorical) question by saying they were 'brought up' to 'give the benefit of doubt'. This benefit of doubt is used to present a (supposedly) reasonable and measured assessment of Na'amod, which is that they are unintentionally bad (brought about through a three-part list: supporters of terrorism, brutality and war). Here a binary is presented where there is either support for Israel or Hamas/terrorism, which removes the

possibility of any nuance (such as supporting Palestinians and *not* Hamas, as Na'amod do in their statement). The invoking of supposedly being against war to justify the bombing of Gaza is an example of 'peace in the service of war', which is shown to be used by Israeli politicians, amongst others (Gavriely-Nuri 2014).

2 responds to 1 not by picking up a specific point but by criticising 1's use of 'insults'. 1 retorts by criticising 2, drawing on their identity as a rabbi, as being dishonest, again using the 'who brought you up to think' structure. This is the first time that any poster's (Jewish) identity is made explicit. Next, 1 introduces blood libel which is a deeply antisemitic trope that can be used to mean any false accusation. Being able to use this type of antisemitic trope to another Jew suggests being in a dominant position. 1 then presents Israel as the victim of a war (forced on them, see Mitrani 2013). Israel here is presented as the innocent victim that is attempting to minimise the harm caused by Palestinians (terrorists), which is another use of the strategy of peace in the service of war.

2.2.1.6 | Part Six: Self-Hating Jews.
The discussion continues between these three Facebook users.
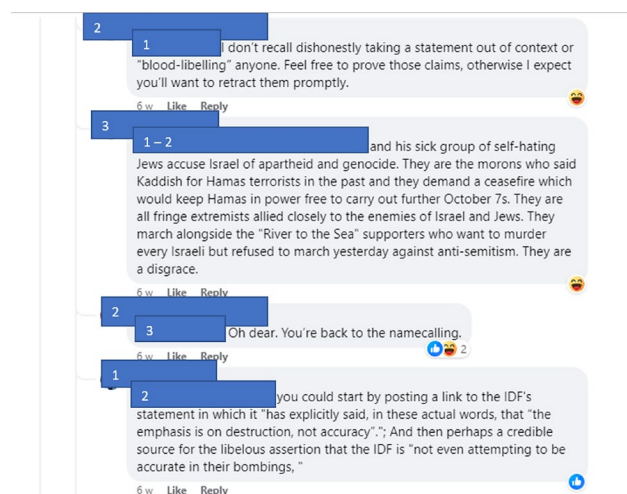
2 responds to 1, denying the accusations from the previous post, particularly around blood libel. 2 moves to demand proof or a retraction of 1's comment. At this point the debate is a clear example of arguing over truth. 3 returns to the discussion now. The comment is directed to 1 (who 3 has been agreeing with) but also names 2, who 3 (and 1) have been opposing. 3 restates the self-hating comment along with the claim of disgust (sick), which is attributed to their opposition to Israel (wrongly accusing it of apartheid and genocide). A new insult, 'morons' is used to explain their saying the Jewish mourning prayer (Kaddish) for (supposed) terrorists. (The use of this word strongly implies that 3 is also Jewish and considers this a discussion amongst Jews of differing opinion). Na'amod's call for a ceasefire is presented as working in Hamas' favour, rather than being based on moral grounds. Further category work is then employed to suggest that they are not representative of British Jews ('fringe extremists', 'enemies of Israel and Jews'), which is a clear case of the policing of what counts as (and who is and who is not) Jewish. Na'amod are presented as not supporting their own in-group and, through

the use of an extreme case formulation, supporting the 'murder [of] every Israeli'. Marching against antisemitism therefore becomes a marker of support for Israel and its actions, which conflates support for Palestine with antisemitism. Not doing this is grounds for the final insult of the post: 'disgrace', which is based on the lack of appropriately Jewish behaviour.

2 responds to 3 without taking up any of the substantive points and instead orients only to the insults. This patronising comment presents the post containing the insults as not worthy of a full response because it is only based on name-calling. 1 then responds to 2, picking up the point about proving claims (three posts ago) qualifying what would count as evidence for 2's quoting of the IDF and turns the claim of 'libellous' on behalf of the IDF.

### 2.2.1.7 | Part Seven: Self-Hatred Psychopathologies and Anti-Israel Slogans.

Next in the sequence, 1 responds to 3, this time in a supportive post that builds up a collaborative critique of Na'amod. 1 picks up the 'sick group' tag used earlier and asks if this refers to Na'amod. Some distancing is accomplished through claiming some ignorance (with an honesty tag, 'To be honest, I don't know'). This ignorance is used to allow the following conjecture on what Na'amod are, but two negative possibilities are offered: (1) that they are self-hating Jews (here pathologised, Finlay 2010) and (2) that they are stupid (again using a psychological concept of a flaw, here groupthink) outliers from the ingroup 'our tribe' (which again signals that all speakers are treating each other as Jewish). Both 'possibilities' are presented as involving antisemitism and support for Hamas (genocidal terrorists) signalled through anti-Israeli sentiment and so a clear link is made where being anti-Israel therefore means supporting antisemitism and terrorism, even if it is Jews doing this, who are pathologised for doing so.

The remainder of this part of the thread relates to the factual nature of 1 and 2's claims. 2 responds to 1's earlier post about libel, rather than any substantive point, by returning the accusation of libel to 1. 1 then responds to 2, here addressing 2 with their title 'Rabbi', calling for answers to two questions relating to earlier posts regarding the trustworthiness of the IDF. The 'thanks ever so much' at the end presents a veil of politeness that may be expected when speaking, as a Jew, with a Rabbi. 2 responds (to 1) denying that they overlooked the questions and instead throws it back to 1. 1 responds to 2, claiming that their lack of a direct answer proves that 2's earlier claim was not true. 2 responds to 1 here by calling 1 a liar. This post is ended with a question challenging the behaviour of someone (Jewish) who accuses a rabbi of lying. There is no direct response to this, so this signals the end of the conversation/ argument, until 2 follows up their own post with a link to a news article reporting on the IDF's killing of hostages. This is directed to 3 with an emphasis on telling 3 that the IDF would do this.

2.2.1.8 | Part Eight: Jewish Ethics and Appropriate Behaviour. There was one more, shorter (three-reply) thread that also follows 1's earlier ("useful idiots") post and includes the same three contributors as the first thread and appears to be picking up a point from earlier in the first thread (1's 'do you mean Na'amod?') and contains some of the clearest discussion of what is considered appropriate behaviour for a Jew.
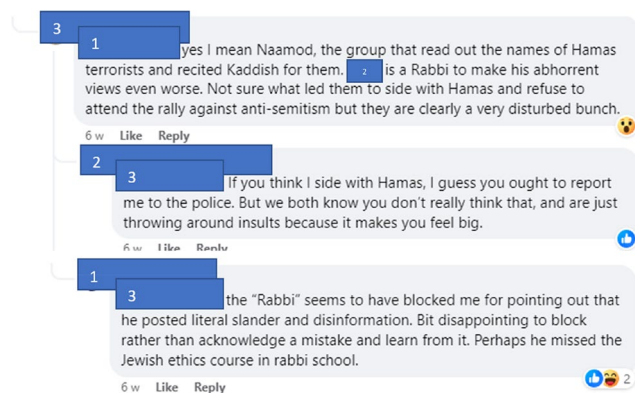
This thread begins with 3 agreeing that they are referring to Na'amod in the earlier, critical post and goes on to explain their opposition to them on the grounds of them supporting terrorists (and saying a Jewish mourning prayer 'Kaddish' for them). 2 is then referred to as a Rabbi which is presented as making their comments all the more of a problem ('abhorrent') because of its deviation from the category-bound expectations of a Rabbi (i.e., that they should support Israel). The post then turns to Na'amod, suggesting that they have no rational reason for supporting Hamas (which is how their support of Gaza/Palestine is glossed) or for not attending the antisemitism march, describing them as disturbed, which again pathologises Jews that deviate from the pro-Israeli hegemonic position.

2 then replies directly to 3 (although 2 was not named in 3's post), rejecting support for Hamas. This shows that supporting Hamas is not acceptable for either Israel or Palestine supporting Jews (which is why support for Hamas works as an accusation by Israel supporters towards Palestine supporters, who are forced to deny it). Such support is presented by 2 as criminal, but the association is presented as an insult, rather than a genuine belief, which works to attempt to sever the link between supporting Palestine and supporting Hamas.

1 then replies, but responds to 3, who they are agreeing with, rather than 2, who wrote the previous post. Here the title Rabbi is put in quotation marks, which serves to question their authenticity as a rabbi, generally for supporting Na'amod (and not the antisemitism march) and specifically for blocking 3 and lying (although the word lie is avoided here). The rabbi's actions are presented as disappointing and a failure to learn. 2's credentials (as a Jew generally and a rabbi specifically) are then challenged for lacking appropriate Jewish ethics, which works again to present 2, as a Na'amod/Palestine supporting Jew, as deviant and not appropriately Jewish. This also means that Jewish ethics are presented as incompatible with support for Na'amod and Palestine, so that only those supporting Israel and the march are deemed properly Jewish.

3 | Discussion

This analysis demonstrates that there is both some support and criticism of Na'amod generally and their statement on the march against antisemitism specifically. Some of the support comes in the form of displaying gratitude or claiming that their work is important. Even these comments can be seen to be about identity, for example, with one supportive contributor making an explicit display of not being Jewish (part one). That Na'amod's statement is presented as 'brave' and 'principled' (part two) also orients to the identity relevance of the post, as it is presented as standing against the dominant (Jewish) viewpoint that supports Israel.

There is also criticism of the post; for example, part one finishes with a display of Israel flags, which both challenges Na'amod and also demonstrates that the wider debate *is* about Israel rather than antisemitism. Other points of opposition include describing a problem with Na'amod's donation page as 'common sense', which presents supporting Na'amod as irrational. Na'amod's statement is also described as 'incredibly

disappointing' (part four), which also critiques it. This thread therefore contains some limited features for aligning and critiquing online posts that have been identified in other Facebook threads (see Goodman and Locke 2024).

More noteworthy than these more simplistic points of alignment and criticism is the longer debate over exactly what it means to be Jewish. Throughout much of the discussion is the category-bound assumption that (British) Jews must, and do, support Israel and that they must also participate in the march against antisemitism. This can be seen, for example, in the display of Israel flags (part two) but is much more clearly visible in the longer discussion (parts five-eight) where it is implied that because they do not support Israel and did not attend the march, Na'amod is inherently un-Jewish. In addition to, and because of this, there are other ways in which Na'amod is presented as un-Jewish, in particular (1) that they are self-hating and (2) that they and their supporters lack Jewish ethics. The first of these is the well-recognisable trope of the self-hating Jew (e.g., Lewin 1941), which is first explicitly referred to in part five "Self-hating Jew are the worst of the worst". The supposed self-hating Jews are pathologised as being "sick" and psychologised as "self-hatred psychopathologies" and "very disturbed". This shows that Lewin's ideas (as critiqued by Finlay 2010) remain in use today in lay discourse about Jewish behaviour. As well as being pathologised, Na'amod and other Jewish supporters of Na'amod are simply presented as stupid, which is a commonly used insult in internet discussions (Goodman and Locke 2024).

The other way that these Jews are presented as deficient as Jews is through a supposed lack of Jewish ethics. This claim is directed at a rabbi for critiquing Israel's behaviour. Exactly what Jewish ethics are is not spelt out; however, it clearly involves support for Israel and a willingness to take part in the march against antisemitism. In this case, a Jewish Facebook user criticises a rabbi for lacking the appropriate ethics, so not only is this an example of a Jew telling another Jew what it means to be Jewish, but in this case, this is directed at a Jewish leader (rabbi, which means 'teacher') who would normally be expected to speak about cases of ethics; here the rabbi is being taught about ethics because of their lack of support for Israel.

There is little else in the discussion about what exactly antisemitism is, and other than support for Palestine, there is no discussion of what else counts as antisemitism, although there are references to blood libel, which is a deeply antisemitic trope. This comment is directed towards the rabbi who is accused of blood libelling Israelis (although exactly who is not clear), so this is again part of the wider self-hatred argument directed towards the rabbi. Only one person involved in the discussion, the rabbi, is directly accused of self-hatred (Na'amod did not get involved in this part of the discussion) and does not directly respond to that specific accusation.

It is clear that the wider debate here is about the actions of Israel and Palestine rather than about Na'amod itself, so the whole discussion is a proxy for the wider topical discussion of the Israel/Palestine conflict. Accusations of antisemitism, which in this discussion are solely directed towards Jewish people, therefore need to be understood as a strategy for supporting Israel's actions rather than as a concern about racism towards Jews (see

Chomsky 1989); this is why a rabbi can be presented as antisemitic. Antisemitism, in this thread, is a way for challenging Jews for thinking the 'wrong' things. In this thread, it is only Jews that are challenged, by other Jews, for behaving in a way deemed un-Jewish. Antisemitism here can therefore be seen as a way of policing (specifically non-Zionist) Jewish behaviour. Antisemitism is not operating to protect Jews; instead, it is policing what it means to be a Jew and pathologising Jewish support for Palestinians. This does harm to both Jews and Palestinians.

While part of the discussion topicalises antisemitism, Islamophobia is also referred to in the initial response; however, no posters directly respond to this, and there appears to be no overt Islamophobia in the discussion, although the Islamophobic linking of terrorism with Muslims is made and much of the talk justifies violence against Palestinians, albeit not on (direct) account of their being (predominantly) Muslim.

This paper has therefore shown how in the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict, debates over antisemitism and what it means to be Jewish all orient to differing positions regarding Zionism, so that for Zionist Jews antisemitism means not supporting Israel and to be Jewish means to support Israel and in the context of this debate, to attend the CAA's march against antisemitism. This is consistent with the discursive approach to identity, which shows that identities are constructed and drawn upon to accomplish practical actions (e.g., Antaki, Condor, and Levine 1996); here those practical actions predominantly involve supporting Israel in its conflict with Palestine. What is evident in this data is some (Zionist) Jews telling other (non-Zionist) Jews how to behave. There is an irony then that antisemitism is used here to police the behaviour of Jews, who are being criticised and insulted for failing to act in a particular way precisely because they are Jewish. This points to challenges for those Jews, like Na'amod, that support Palestinians.

4 | Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how Jewish identity can be constructed and deployed in a debate following a Jewish group's show of support for Palestinians. The most challenging comments directed towards, and about, Jewish people were seen to come from other Jewish people, with the major point of contention being over Jewish support for Palestinians. The Jewish pro-Palestinian group is presented as stupid, self-hating, and lacking appropriate Jewish ethics, which demonstrates that, for some at least, to be Jewish in Britain means to support Israel and to attend the march against antisemitism; anything else is presented as deficient as a Jew. The paper therefore shows how identity work is used to undermine attempts by some Jews to show support for Palestinians.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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