

# MISUNDERSTOOD, OVERLOOKED, AND MARGINALIZED: THE CONSTRUCTION OF JEWS AND ANTISEMITISM IN EDI POLICIES AND PLANS IN CANADIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Abstract

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is a leading framework for addressing social justice issues in Canadian higher education. After October 7, 2023, occurrences of antisemitic incidents have surged on campuses in Canada. Yet, antisemitism is often not included or minimally mentioned in the existing EDI frameworks. The task of the EDI policies and plans is to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion for all historically, persistently, or systematically marginalized groups. We examine the ways in which current EDI policies and plans include antisemitism and Jewish identity, analyzing EDI policies and plans collected from 28 universities across Canada. The content analysis reveals three patterns: (a) marginalization of antisemitism, (b) construction of Jewishness as a religious identity, and (c) coupling of antisemitism and Islamophobia. We argue that, at a time of growing divisiveness, politicization, and misinformation, universities who are committed to EDI should create a truly inclusive campus for people from diverse backgrounds and positions.

**Keywords:** antisemitism, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), higher education, policy, Jewish identity

## Résumé

Les politiques d'équité, de diversité et d'inclusion (EDI) sont devenues un cadre majeur pour aborder les questions de justice sociale dans l'enseignement supérieur canadien, 89 % des établissements faisant explicitement référence à l'EDI dans leur plan stratégique. Parallèlement, on signale que depuis le 7 octobre 2023, à la suite du conflit entre Israël et le Hamas, les incidents antisémites se sont multipliés sur les campus canadiens. En outre, les sondages d'opinion montrent que l'antisémitisme est un problème sociétal de plus en plus préoccupant en Amérique du Nord. Pourtant, on affirme que l'antisémitisme n'est souvent pas inclus ou même mentionné dans les cadres EDI existants. Le rôle des politiques et des plans d'EDI est d'assurer l'équité, la diversité et l'inclusion de tous les groupes historiquement, constamment ou systématiquement marginalisés. Cet article examine de quelle manière les politiques et plans EDI actuels incluent l'antisémitisme et l'identité juive. Il analyse les politiques et plans d'EDI les plus récents de 28 universités canadiennes. L'analyse du contenu révèle trois tendances : a) la marginalisation de l'antisémitisme, b) la construction de l'identité juive en tant qu'identité religieuse et c) le couplage de l'antisémitisme et de l'islamophobie. À la suite de l'analyse, l'article identifie des moyens d'aborder l'identité juive et l'antisémitisme dans le cadre de l'EDI. Il affirme qu'à une époque où les divisions, la politisation et la désinformation vont croissant, les universités qui se sont réellement engagées dans l'EDI devraient montrer comment s'engager au-delà des différences et créer un campus véritablement inclusif pour des personnes d'origines et de positions diverses.

**Mots-clés :** EDI, antisémitisme, analyse des politiques, identité juive

## INTRODUCTION

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) has become a leading framework for addressing social justice issues in Canadian higher education (higher education [HE]; Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). A survey issued by Universities Canada indicates that “89% of institutions have explicit reference to EDI in their strategic plan” (Universities Canada, 2023, p. 2). The top EDI priorities identified by Canadian universities include: “1. Implement[ing] EDI plans and strategies, policy review and development” and “2. Build[ing] an inclusive culture on campus” (Universities Canada, 2023, p. 2).

In the wake of the Israel-Hamas conflict after October 7, 2023, occurrences of antisemitic incidents have surged on campuses in Canada, the United States, and other Western countries. Claims to this effect can be found in scholarly literature (Bell & Semple, 2024; Brym, 2024a; Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2023; Santos & Yogev, 2024), reports produced by non-governmental organizations (B’nai Brith Canada, 2024; Anti-Defamation League, 2023), and political bodies (The House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights [HCSCJHR], 2024). In Canada, the number of police-reported hate crimes against Jewish people increased by 71% in 2023 compared to the previous year (Statistics Canada, 2024). Although Jewish people make up only a small percentage of the Canadian population, they were targeted more than any other minority group (Statistics Canada, 2024). Jewish students and institutions have experienced physical violence, threats, harassment, and vandalism, with campuses being described as “ground zero” of this problem (HCSCJHR, 2024). Jewish students on campuses reported feeling unsafe, excluded, and experiencing higher-than-usual levels of antisemitism, which has been linked with heightened levels of stress and depressive symptoms (Morstead & DeLongis, 2025). While public opinion polls demonstrate a growing concern about antisemitism as a societal problem across North America (Brym, 2024a; Jedwab, 2024; Jones, 2024), it is argued that antisemitism is often excluded or minimally mentioned in

the existing EDI frameworks (Aschaiek, 2024; Haklai, 2023; Kuper, 2023; Weinfeld, 2023).

The parallel developments of enhancements to academic EDI frameworks and the growth of (actual and perceived) antisemitism lead us to pose the following questions: Since the task of the EDI policies and plans is to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion for all historically, persistently, or systematically marginalized (HPSM) groups, are Jews considered in the existing frameworks? Specifically, we ask: In what ways do the current EDI policies and plans include antisemitism and Jewish identity?

This is the first cross-university study of the construction of Jewish people and antisemitism in EDI policies of Canadian HE institutions. The lacuna of this type of examination acquires urgency now, when university campuses have emerged as the front lines of debate over antisemitism in Canada. Presenting unprecedented challenges across HE, such issues draw public and governmental attention to student safety (Allen, 2023; Loury, 2023; Mounk, 2023; Rabson & Karadeglija, 2024) and have an impact on variously situated Jewish members of Canadian academia. Following the analysis, the article offers suggestions regarding how Jewish identity and antisemitism can be more adequately considered by Canadian universities’ EDI policies.

## TERMINOLOGY

We first define key terms on which this article is focused, including “Jews” (and tangentially, “Zionism”) as well as “antisemitism.” The identity of a “Jew” differs across time and space, and can take religious, secular, ethnic, or cultural forms; one can be Jewish by birth or by choice and there is a wide diversity of identities and practices between, and within, Jewish communities in Israel and around the world (Hahn Tapper et al., 2023). This diversity in general notwithstanding, there has been a long-standing attachment to Zion (or the Land of Israel) in religious and cultural texts among the majority of people identifying as Jewish. Zionism, a historically contingent concept, emerged during the 1890s, fusing understanding of Jews as both a religious and a

national group (Engel, 2013). With the creation of the (Jewish) State of Israel in 1948, this multifaceted social movement reached its key (albeit internally contested) programmatic objectives. In the most widely accepted sense, Zionism means the right of Jews to a national self-determination in some portion of their historic homeland. It is worth noting that a recent scholarly study of Canadian Jewry finds that 91% of respondents believe that Israel has the right to exist as a Jewish state, with 3% opposing this view (Brym, 2024c).

Notably for Jewish experience, antisemitism does not follow the same path as other forms of discrimination against the HPSM groups who have experienced less exclusion as their integration in the majority society progressed (Gordon, 1964). Historically, the height of integration coincided with some of the most extreme forms of exclusion. At the core of antisemitism is prejudice and hostility against Jews as Jews, serving as a way of thinking and organizing the world; in other words, it is a theory—a set of explanations about how the social world works, and how it might be changed, including multiple worldviews, attitudes, and behaviours (Ury & Miron, 2023; Waxman et al., 2022).

As part of its anti-racism strategy, the Canadian government (Government of Canada, n.d.-a, n.d.-c, 2024) adopted an understanding of antisemitism formulated by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA; IHRA, 2016). The IHRA definition is widely accepted within Canadian Jewish communities. Yet, in HE this definition is contested because most of the illustrative examples of manifestations of contemporary antisemitism may overlap with anti-Zionism and/or criticism of the State of Israel. Recognizing this contested terrain, Ury and Miron (2023) alert us to the “tension between academic scholarship and the political realm” that scholars grappling with antisemitism as a subject of their study “[need] to acknowledge and come to terms with” (p. 6). Considering the parameters of our research questions, we have opted not to use any of the operational definitions of antisemitism (e.g., IHRA, the Jerusalem Declaration, Nexus). Instead, we draw on a scholarly understanding of

antisemitism as a dynamic phenomenon with deep roots in the culture of monotheistic traditions and multiple reincarnations in modern times (Judaken, 2018; Nirenberg, 2013; Schusterman Center, 2024).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

EDI became a vital tool for Canadian HE starting in the 1980s in order to redress the ongoing effects of historical exclusion and marginalization of people of HPSM groups (Blain, 2022; Bunjun, 2022; Douglas, 2022; Henry et al., 2017; Smith, 2010). In recent years, the Canadian government has strongly pursued the development of EDI action plans and specific anti-racism plans in HE (Campbell, 2021; Government of Canada, n.d.-b; Universities Canada, 2021). Since the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) and its 94 Calls to Action, EDI in higher education has included a deepening consideration of colonialism and a focus on Indigenization and decolonization. Overall, Canadian universities are becoming more active in promoting EDI (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). Often EDI efforts draw on an anti-oppressive theoretical framework, which examines how systems of oppression (such as racism, colonialism, and sexism) and their interactions can result in discrimination and systemic inequalities for certain groups in society (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). The EDI framework in Canadian HE’s primary focus on racism and decolonization (Universities Canada, 2019) is important, given the history of exclusion and marginalization of Black peoples, Indigenous Peoples, and people(s) of colour in Canada (Li & Marom, 2024; Marom, 2023b; Thobani, 2022). Yet, we argue that this framing inadequately addresses the historical and ongoing antisemitism in Canada because, as Feldman (2024) explains, anti-Jewish prejudice is reinvented throughout history, adapting to the political context of a given moment, so that “in antisemitic discourse, Jews are always made to exemplify what a given group of people considers to be the worst feature of the social order in which they live” (para. 12).

If we understand antisemitism as a dynamic phenomenon that reemerges in different times

and contexts in new forms, EDI discourses, by virtue of this definition, are not safeguarded from ignoring antisemitism as long as they remain static and unreflective of the actuality of Jewish lived experience. Therefore, we need to critically examine the construction of Jewish people and antisemitism within EDI frameworks and their interactions with other forms of oppression. To this end, we situate antisemitism within the framework of critical theories, as postulated by Judaken (2024), that “only through an assessment of the parallels and overlaps with other targeted groups can the singularities of Judeophobia emerge with clarity”<sup>1</sup> (pg. 3).

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The project team analyzed the most recent EDI policies and plans collected from 28 universities across Canada, applying two inclusion criteria: (1) English (or bilingual) research universities with a student body over 15,000 (Universities Canada, n.d.), and (2) universities that had adopted EDI policies/institutional plans and/or EDI in research reports (see Table 1). The EDI progress reports are made in response to the Canada Research Chair (CRC) program (the most prestigious research funding program in Canada) demand that “all institutions that accept agency funding...make concerted efforts to meet their equity and diversity targets and provide a supportive and inclusive workplace” (Canada Research Chairs, n.d.-b, para. 6). In a few cases (i.e., Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Manitoba, British Columbia), we included universities of fewer than 15,000 students to ensure representation from all Canadian provinces and across urban and rural settings. This broad sample allows us to understand whether and how HE in Canada represents and addresses antisemitism on policy and discursive levels.

In the first stage, we conducted a textual analysis in which we searched for the frequency

of the terms “Jewish,” “Judaism,” “Israel/i,” “antisemitism,” and “antisemitic,” as well as the section in policies in which the terms appeared (Table 2). We then compared the findings with the frequency of the terms “Indigenous-based racism” and “anti-Black racism,” which are centred in Canadian HE EDI policies (Appendix 1). While coding the initial findings, we found that if reference to antisemitism appeared, it was in proximity to the mention of Islamophobia. While neither term was mentioned frequently, this proximity seemed worth exploring. Therefore, we expanded our search to include the terms “Islamophobia,” “Muslim,” and “Arab.” Our aim was not to position antisemitism in comparison or contrast to Islamophobia, but rather to better understand the discursive construction of antisemitism.

In the second stage, we conducted content analysis on the sections in which the terms “antisemitism” and “Jewish” were mentioned. The content analysis was guided by the framework of critical policy studies in education (Ball, 1993; Orsini & Smith, 2007; Ozga, 1999; Young & Diem, 2018). Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) aims “to discover and/or question the complexity, subjectivity, and equity of policy as well as to illuminate intended and unintended consequences of the policy implementation process” (Diem et al., 2014, p. 1083). This type of analysis is useful in looking at the intentions and possible outcomes of EDI policies. We further draw on Critical Discourse Analysis ([CDA]; Fairclough, 2013), which focuses on how ideologies are transmitted to policies and how language captures the construction of certain ideas over others (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). The content analysis revealed three patterns: (a) marginalization of antisemitism, (b) construction of Jewishness as a religious identity, and (c ) coupling of antisemitism and Islamophobia.

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1 Judaken (2024) uses the term Judeophobia, but within the context of Canadian policies, antisemitism is used.

**Table 1**  
*Universities with EDI Policies/Institutional Plans and/or EDI in Research Reports*

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Document Name</b>
Brock University	CRC	Brock's CRC EDI Action Plan (2020)
Carleton University	EDI Plan	EDI Action Plan (2021)
Concordia University	CRC EDI Plan	EDI Action Plan for the CRC Program (2020) Report of the Working Group on EDI (2020)
Dalhousie University	EDI Plan	Belong: Supporting an Inclusive and Diverse University (2015)
Guelph University	CRC	Guelph EDI Action Plan for the Canada Research Chairs Program (2020)
McGill University	EDI Plan	EDI Strategic Plan 2020–2025 (2020)
McMaster University	EDI Plan	Towards Inclusive Excellence: McMaster's EDI Strategy (2019)
Memorial University	EDI Plan	EDI and Anti-Racism Strategic Planning Report: What We Heard and What We Learned (2024)
Queen's University	CRC EDI Plan	CRC EDI Action Plan (2019) Annual Report 2022–23: Indigenization – EDI, Accessibility, and Anti-Racism (2023)
Simon Fraser University (SFU)	EDI Plan	Equity Compass (2024)
University of Alberta (UofA)	CRC EDI Plan	EDI in Research: An Action Plan (2023) Strategic Plan for EDI (2019)
University of British Columbia (UBC)	CRC EDI Plan	UBC's Dimensions Action Plan for EDI in Research (2023) Strategic Equity and Anti-Racism (StEAR) Roadmap for Change (2024)
University of Calgary (UofC)	CRC	Dimensions EDI in Research Action Plan (2022)
University of Manitoba (UofM)	CRC EDI Plan	EDI Action Plan for the CRC program at the UofM (2021) President's Task Force on EDI Final Report (2020)
University of New Brunswick (UNB)	EDI Plan	UNB Institutional EDI Action Plan (2019)
University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)	CRC EDI Plan	UNBC CRC EDI Action Plan (2023) UNBC EDI Action Plan (2023)
University of Ottawa (UOttawa)	CRC EDI Plan	EDI in Research: Continuing our Journey (2021) Final Report: Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence (2022)

Institution	Document Type	Document Name
University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI)	CRC EDI Plan	UPEI CRC EDI Action Plan (2023) UPEI EDI Strategy (2021)
University of Regina (URegina)	EDI Plan	URegina EDI Anti-Oppression Strategic Plan (2020)
University of Saskatchewan (USask)	CRC EDI Plan	USask CRC EDI Action Plan (2020) A University for Everyone: EDI Framework for Action (2020)
University of Toronto (UofT)	CRC EDI Plan	UofT – CRC Program Institutional EDI Action Plan (2019) EDI Report 2023 (2023)
University of Victoria (UVic)	EDI Plan	Equity Action Plan (2024)
University of Winnipeg (UWinnipeg)	CRC	UWinnipeg CRC EDI Action Plan (2017)
University of Waterloo	EDI Plan	Organizational Review of the Office of Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion at the University of Waterloo (2021)
University of Windsor	CRC	CRC EDI Action Plan Windsor (2019)
Western University	EDI Plan	Western’s CRC EDI Action Plan (2023)
Wilfred Laurier University	EDI Plan	Strategic Plan for EDI Office of the Associate Vice President, EDI Wilfrid Laurier (2021)
York University	EDI Plan	Decolonizing, EDI Strategy 2023–2028 (2023)

## FINDINGS

### Textual Analysis

Out of the 28 universities’ documents analyzed, only six mentioned “Jewish” or “Judaism,” and six referred to antisemitism in their EDI documents<sup>2</sup> (Table 2). The minimal reference to these terms does not allow for identifying patterns as, in most cases, there is no mention or very marginal mention. For reference, anti-In-

digenous and anti-Black racism and identity are mentioned in 38 and 25 university documents, respectively, and at a much higher frequency (Appendix 1).

2 Prior to October 7th, 2023, only two universities had a task force on antisemitism: University of Toronto (University of Toronto, n.d.), and McGill. The latter addressed both issues of antisemitism and Islamophobia (Manfredi, 2022). We focus our analysis on general, university-wide EDI policies.

**Table 2**  
*References to “Jewish,” “Judaism,” and “Antisemitism” in EDI Documents*

Term	% Found in Text	# of References	Institution	Document Date	Document Type
antisemitism [anti-Semitism]	0.01	1	Carleton	2021	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	UofC	2022	CRC
	0.01	1	UofM	2020	EDI Plan
	0.06	5	UofT	2023	EDI Plan
	0.02	3	Laurier	2021	EDI Plan
	0.02	3	York	2023	EDI Plan
Israel	0.01	1	UofT	2023	EDI Plan
Jewish	0.01	1	Carleton	2021	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	Concordia	2020	CRC
	0.01	1	UofT	2023	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	York	2023	EDI Plan
Judaism	0.01	2	Memorial	2024	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	UofM	2020	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	UofT	2023	EDI Plan

## Content Analysis

### *Marginalization of Antisemitism*

The few analyzed documents that included the term “antisemitism” placed it as an item on a longer list of various “isms.” For instance, the University of Calgary (2022) *Dimensions EDI in Research Action Plan* states: “Incorporate existing UCalgary commitments to combat all forms of racism, including, but not limited to, antisemitism, anti-Asian racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and Islamophobia” (p. 28). The University of Manitoba (2020) *President’s Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Final Report* states:

The overwhelming positioning, experiences, views, and values embedded

within our institutions are male, White, euro-centric, Christian, able-bodied, rational, affluent, and heterosexual. This has led to the institutional and systemic under-representation, marginalization, discrimination, and othering that has resulted in sexism, misogyny, racism, colonialism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, ableism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia. (p. 325)

While many EDI policies use critical terminology that points to the oppressive underpinning of racism and colonialism in Western HE institutions as demonstrated above, a similar perspective is not adopted when addressing the unique manifestations of antisemitism. Instead, antisemitism is superficially blended within other forms of marginalization. Unlike the focus and specific action

plans and recommendations around anti-Black racism in EDI documents (e.g., Universities Canada, 2021) or Indigenous-based racism (e.g., Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020), antisemitism remains on the margins of EDI policies and functions as an example of “another issue” in a long list of social wrongs.

### ***Jewishness as a Religious Identity***

The use of terms such as “Jewish” and “Judaism” in EDI policies is limited to the realm of religious self-identification. Judaism is mentioned four times, always in the context of religion. In the University of Manitoba’s (2020) *President’s Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Final Report*, Judaism is included under the category of “religious identity” (p. 103). The University of Toronto’s (2023) *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Report 2023* places Judaism under the category of “religious or spiritual affiliation” (p. 33), similarly to the *Memorial University Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Strategic Planning Report: What We Heard and What We Learned* (Mullings & Adalakun, 2024). The terms “Jewish” or “Jewishness” that would point to the understanding of Judaism as a form of self-identification, collective belonging, ethnicity, and/or cultural expression are not included. Such construction of Judaism allows for separation of Jews from other equity-seeking groups and overlooks the intersections of Jewish identity and other positionalities. For instance, we found no reference to LGBTQ+ Jews or racialized Jews. In comparison, Queen’s University’s (2019) *Canada Research Chairs Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan* states: “Faith and Spiritual Life works within the university environment to facilitate a welcoming, peaceful and safe space for trans, Muslim, Indigenous and other equity seeking students, faculty and staff” (p. 17), placing Muslim identity alongside other intersectional identities. Jews are not mentioned, which illustrates a limited understanding of Jewishness as a form of identity beyond religious identity and overlooks the diversity of Jewish identities. This might impact any efforts (or underwrite a lack thereof) to include Jews among other groups that seek equity and are vulnerable to discrimination.

## **Coupling Antisemitism and Islamophobia**

When antisemitism is mentioned in EDI policies, it is almost always in close proximity to Islamophobia. For example, Carleton University’s (2021) *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan* states that:

Discrimination, harassment and hate crimes on the intersecting grounds of “creed and race” (including Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia) form part of our societal context as do ostracizing and dehumanizing practices on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and identity. (p. 13)

While this policy is unique in acknowledging antisemitism and Islamophobia at the intersection of “creed and race” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.), it is not unpacked beyond a statement of causality. Similarly, York University’s *Decolonizing, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023–2028* points out that “external events can also amplify discriminatory behaviours, as was evident...[with] the rise in 2022 of Antisemitism and Islamophobia” (The President’s Advisory Council on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, 2023, p. 6).

We propose that the proximity of antisemitism and Islamophobia is not accidental; a similar pattern is apparent in public statements by university presidents and EDI offices following October 7, 2023 (e.g., Deane, 2023). While antisemitism and Islamophobia are neither similar phenomena nor inherently connected, the polarized political context might induce university leadership to adopt a symmetrical rhetorical positioning to avoid accusations of ignoring one form of prejudice at the expense of another. The discursive effect of such false symmetry suggests a similar ontology of both phenomena, which is neither empirically nor historically accurate. This misconception is particularly relevant as geopolitical events in the Middle East often lead to an increase in both antisemitism and Islamophobia (Hersh & Lyss, 2024). This might lead to a perception that they are inherently op-

posed or against each other (Feldman & Volovici, 2023). Even when universities aim to look at antisemitism and Islamophobia in a more in-depth way, they tend to proceed always in tandem, as our research indicates. For instance, McGill University (Manfredi, 2022) created an Initiative Against Antisemitism and Islamophobia, while University of Toronto (n.d.) created two parallel task forces. Importantly, we do not aim to elevate antisemitism, or downplay Islamophobia, but rather to highlight the discursive pattern and its reflection in practice that gets universities mired in false symmetries that exacerbate rather than address the underlying issues.

Several documents mention Islamophobia and do not include antisemitism. University of Alberta's *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity in Research: An Action Plan* calls to "minim[ize] the impact of settler colonialism, racism, Islamophobia, citizenship, discrimination, and poverty on historically excluded groups" (Office of the Vice-President Research, 2023, p. 21). The Memorial University *Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Strategic Planning Report* (Mullings & Adalokun, 2024) and Brock University's (2020) *Canada Research Chairs Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan* include a list of events that address Islamophobia but do not mention similar resources concerning antisemitism. While this is anecdotal evidence, it might reflect a perception of antisemitism as a past occurrence and/or of Jewish people as a privileged group (Boyarin, 2023; Brodtkin, 1998) that, therefore, occupy positions of a lower priority in EDI resources and practices.

## DISCUSSION

EDI in higher education aims for people of all groups and backgrounds to achieve their potential and engage fully in educational institutions (Universities Canada, 2023). As such, EDI principles behoove us to consider that different groups may experience discrimination differently. Yet there is little attention paid to Jewish lived experience or the development of policies regarding antisemitism in HE, despite the increase in hate crimes against Jews in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2024). While EDI discours-

es are criticized for being performative and not always translating to structural changes (Marom, 2023a; Thobani, 2022), they are still important in formulating universities' priorities, which, in turn, underpin institutional accountability (MacKenzie et al., 2023).

The marginalization of antisemitism demonstrates that it is not considered a core issue to EDI policies in HE. The classification of antisemitism in Canadian law as religious discrimination contributes to this marginality since religious discrimination is not centred in Canadian HE EDI policies (Shaheed, 2019). The classification of Jewish people as solely a religious group leads to the undercounting of Jewish populations and the erasure of key elements of Jewish identity, being also inconsistent with the ways that Jewish people understand their own identities. This undermines an important component of EDI; that is, recognizing the right of HPSM groups to determine for themselves how they are categorized, counted, and what language they use. Not only can such omission contribute to antisemitism, but it also limits the ability to document its presence on campus by reducing antisemitism solely to a form of religious discrimination. It is also worth adding that Jewishness exists within Christian hegemony, whereby Christianity functions as a universal point of reference (Judaken, 2024).

Jewish lived experience is not accurately captured by the categories of race, ethnicity, and religion employed by the existing EDI policies; rather, it is situated "in-between." Yet, since EDI frames race as a social construct (rather than a biological distinction; Oluo, 2018), the absence of Jewishness needs to be interrogated. Anti-racism discourses often ignore the reality of intersectional Jewish difference that is manifested in multiple ways through religious and cultural practices, and identity markers, leading to the lack of recognition in institutional settings.

This omission begins with governmental policy: the *Employment Equity Act* (1995) does not recognize "Jewish" as a category under the four

categories of federally designated groups<sup>3</sup> that form the basis of EDI policies and the CRC EDI program. The goal of the CRC EDI program is to increase the representation of underrepresented groups; yet, focusing on the four federally designated groups means that Jewish people find themselves outside this categorization. While Jewish people might not face the issue of representation in the ways members of other HPSM groups do, painting EDI with a broad brush might miss forms of marginalization beyond representation. Furthermore, the classification of visible minority groups as “non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada, 2021, para. 1) fails to acknowledge Jews as a people. Jewish people are not considered a “visible minority” in Canadian official definitions; yet most Canadian Jews also do not self-identify as White (Statistics Canada, 2022).

This “hybrid” position, or what Baddiel (2021) calls “Schrodinger’s Whites,” where Jews are constructed as White or not White depending on the context, can lead to undetected marginalization. For instance, among the multiple self-identification options for employees and students (regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) in Canadian universities, “Jewish” remains a missing category (e.g., Canadian Association of University Teachers, n.d). Jewishness (that is, identity) tends to be reduced to Judaism (religion), where in fact the two can, but do not have to, overlap (Mendes-Flohr, 2000). Where the increased recognition of gender identities beyond the four federally designated groups is noticeable (e.g., in routine internal surveys conducted by universities), such expansion rarely includes Jewish identity.

The exclusion of Jews and antisemitism from anti-racism discourses also has to do with the “Whitening” of Jews in Canada and the United States (Brodkin, 1998; Koffman, 2021). While “Whitening” may have been desired at

some point in time by Jews who wished to assimilate, the EDI construction of race relations fails to encompass the distinctiveness of the Jewish existence (Brodkin, 1998; Koffman, 2021). Not only does this reduce a multifaceted Jewish sense of collective belonging to mere faith affiliation, but it further erases diverse communities of Jews and the experience of racialization of Jews (Boyarin, 2023; Brodkin, 1998; Ward, 2017; Weinfeld, 2023). Using an overarching category of Whiteness (and privilege) can be harmful to both White-identifying and non-White-identifying Jews. Importantly, much of antisemitic discourse draws on the association of Jews with power to classify Jews as “exemplifying or embodying Whiteness” (Schraub, 2019, p. 384), which animates antisemitic tropes on both the right and the left (e.g., replacement theory and privilege discourses; Herf, 2024; Judaken, 2018). When antisemitic tropes that depict Jews as powerful are meshed with EDI discourses that seek to dismantle unequal power relations and privilege, the result can create a hostile environment for Jews to which the very bodies that ought to be responsible for addressing antisemitism contribute.

Jews are not a homogenous group; people of various ethnicities, phenotypes, sexual orientations, and levels of social and economic standing are included. About half of the Jewish population of Israel are “Mizrahi”—descendants of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa (Lewin-Epstein & Cohen, 2018). In Canada, about 4.1%<sup>4</sup> (Brym, 2024b) are non-White Jews, including those who identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian, and other (Jews of Color Initiative, n.d.). The absorption into Whiteness (and with it, assumed privilege [Harvard Caps/Harris Poll, 2023]) might prevent EDI scholars and educators from acknowledging the historical,

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3 These groups include women, Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), persons with disabilities (visible and invisible), and visible/racialized minorities (Arab, Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Latin American, Korean, South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Asian).

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4 Canadian census questions have been inconsistent over time with regard to the counting of Jewish identity. For example, “Jewish” was removed as an example of ethnic origin after the 2011 census, which led to a decrease in the reporting of Jewish ethnic identity in the 2016 census (Statistics Canada, 2019). This can contribute to the miscounting or undercounting of Jewish people.

institutional, ideological, and cultural underpinnings of antisemitism (Boyarin, 2023; Brodtkin, 1998; Levy, 2023; Schraub, 2020). The lack of a nuanced and intersectional approach can be harmful to both Jews who, despite their lived experience of difference resulting from Jewishness, are classified as White, and to Jews who are non-White.

The focus on the religious element of Jewish identity might also be a strategic way to avoid discussing Zionism, which presents a challenge for EDI for several reasons. Firstly, Zionism enters into a tension with (mis)conceptions of Jews as non-racialized people within anti-racism discourses (Weinfeld, 2023). Secondly, Zionist Jews feature as colonizers in settler-colonial discourses (Khalidi, 2020). While this is beyond the scope of this article and demands a deeper analysis, we suggest that the construction of Zionism as an enactment of Jewish Indigeneity on the one hand (Figueroa, 2022; Magness, 2012) and as a form of settler-colonialism on the other (Khalidi, 2020; Sabbagh-Khoury, 2023; Veracini, 2013) presents a problem for Canadian EDI discourses (Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization, 2021).

Hidden tensions are further evident in the coupling of antisemitism and Islamophobia, and the marginalization of both phenomena. Unlike addressing anti-Black racism or Indigenous-based racism (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Universities Canada, 2021), which are widely accepted priorities within Canadian HE (Universities Canada, 2023), antisemitism and Islamophobia are subjects of heated debates both in academia and beyond. While navigating this terrain is a complex task, leaving it unaddressed likely leads to superficial engagement and unresolved social issues.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Drawing on Canada's anti-racism strategy (Government of Canada, n.d.-c), we argue that antisemitism should be recognized as a form of racism (Switzer, 2023; Yuval-Davis, 2023) rather than as (only) a form of religious intolerance. Anti-racism discourses must disrupt the

perception of Jews as a homogenous group and interrogate how the "Whitening" of Jews is reproducing antisemitic tropes. The fraught task of parsing claims about antisemitism and anti-Zionism while negotiating political pressures from the left and the right may discourage universities from incorporating the intersecting and contentious expressions of antisemitism into their EDI policies and action plans, even when concerns are raised by Jewish faculty, students, and staff (Mangan & Hicks, 2023). Furthermore, gaps in EDI framing might exclude not only Jews but also other groups who do not "fit" neatly into existing EDI frameworks (Gold, 1996; Hahn Tapper et al., 2023).

How can existing EDI policies and action plans be strengthened by including Jewish peoples' identifications? A few recommendations emerge from this study. Universities must review their EDI policies and action plans to ensure that antisemitism is addressed in a profound way and acknowledge it as an area of real concern (FBI Crime Data Explorer, n.d.). This can be supported by collecting data that recognize Jewishness beyond merely religious affiliation. When Jewish people are collapsed into the "White" category, antisemitism cannot be captured as a distinct form of racism. To include Jews as an HPSM group, one must address the legacy and current manifestations of antisemitism beyond religion-based discrimination (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.). Engagement with diverse Jewish members of academic communities to learn about their experiences and perspectives can be a good starting point. Finally, universities should not shy away from complex and controversial discussions, while at the same time ensuring individuals and communities are included and protected on campus. Addressing complexity does not mean justifying Israeli state politics or shielding Israel from critique; criticism of Israel is not antisemitism. Furthermore, Zionism is in itself not an agreed-upon concept and has multiple strands and interpretations within Jewish communities inside and outside of Israel (Penslar, 2023). Yet, to create well-functioning and comprehensive EDI policies it is important to understand that, because a majority of Canadian Jews feel deep

ties with the State of Israel, many experience exclusion based on their real or perceived Zionism (Gur-Ze'ev, 2010; Schusterman Center, 2024). Finally, the coupling of antisemitism and Islamophobia create a superficial balance that might prevent a deep discussion of both phenomena. At a time of growing divisiveness, politicization, and misinformation, universities that are really committed to EDI should be modelling how to engage across differences and create a truly inclusive campus for people from diverse backgrounds and positions.

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## APPENDIX 1

Term	% Found in Text	# of References	Institution	Document Date	Document Type
[anti-]Indigenous	0.28	52	Brock	2020	CRC
	0.09	9	Carleton	2021	EDI Plan
	0.38	66	Concordia	2020	CRC
	0.15	13	"	2020	EDI Plan
	0.13	17	Dalhousie	2015	EDI Plan
	0.23	41	Guelph	2020	CRC
	0.08	14	Laurier	2021	EDI Plan
	0.46	31	McGill	2020	EDI Plan
	0.13	5	McMaster	2019	EDI Plan
	0.2	76	Memorial	2024	EDI Plan
	0.2	58	Queen's	2019	CRC
	0.68	63	"	2023	EDI Plan
	0.37	35	SFU	2024	EDI Plan
	0.12	8	UofA	2019	EDI Plan
	0.5	48	"	2023	CRC
	0.25	14	UBC	2024	EDI Plan
	0.17	24	"	2023	CRC
	0.48	81	UofC	2022	CRC
	0.46	510	UofM	2020	EDI Plan
	0.14	8	"	2021	CRC
	0.06	5	UNB	2019	EDI Plan
	0.22	8	UNBC	2023	EDI Plan
	0.11	8	"	2023	CRC
	0.12	7	UOttawa	2021	CRC
	0.17	29	"	2022	EDI Plan
	0.07	3	UPEI	2021	EDI Plan
	0.09	21	"	2023	CRC
	0.13	1	URegina	2020	EDI Plan
	0.21	24	USask	2020	CRC

Term	% Found in Text	# of References	Institution	Document Date	Document Type
	0.11	4	“	2020	EDI Plan
	0.29	45	UofT	2019	CRC
	0.26	26	“	2023	EDI Plan
	0.32	20	UVic	2024	EDI Plan
	0.33	11	UWinnipeg	2017	CRC
	0.47	54	Waterloo	2021	EDI Plan
	0.59	9	Western	2023	CRC
	0.08	29	Windsor	2019	CRC
	0.4	94	York	2023	EDI Plan
[anti-]Black	0.04	16	Brock	2020	CRC
	0.02	4	Carleton	2021	EDI Plan
	0.01	2	Concordia	2020	EDI Plan
	0.03	7	Dalhousie	2015	EDI Plan
	0.01	2	Guelph	2020	CRC
	0.01	5	Laurier	2021	EDI Plan
	0.04	6	McGill	2020	EDI Plan
	0.04	29	Memorial	2024	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	Queen’s	2019	CRC
	0.11	22	“	2023	EDI Plan
	0.04	7	SFU	2024	EDI Plan
	0.02	5	UofA	2023	CRC
	0.04	12	UBC	2023	CRC
	0.14	16	“	2024	EDI Plan
	0.06	20	UofC	2022	CRC
	0.03	74	UofM	2020	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	UNB	2019	EDI Plan
	0.01	2	UNBC	2023	CRC
	0.16	53	UOttawa	2022	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	UPEI	2021	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	USask	2020	CRC
	0.02	5	UofT	2019	CRC

Term	% Found in Text	# of References	Institution	Document Date	Document Type
	0.3	61	“	2023	EDI Plan
	0.02	6	Waterloo	2021	EDI Plan
	0.08	37	York	2023	EDI Plan
Racism	0.02	5	Brock	2020	CRC
	0.05	8	Carleton	2021	EDI Plan
	0.02	3	Concordia	2020	EDI Plan
	0.03	7	Dalhousie	2015	EDI Plan
	0.09	29	Laurier	2021	EDI Plan
	0.03	2	McMaster	2019	EDI Plan
	0.36	236	Memorial	2024	EDI Plan
	0.01	7	Queen’s	2019	CRC
	0.12	21	“	2023	EDI Plan
	0.07	11	SFU	2024	EDI Plan
	0.05	9	UofA	2023	CRC
	0.05	12	UBC	2023	CRC
	0.32	30	“	2024	EDI Plan
	0.02	7	UofC	2022	CRC
	0.04	83	UofM	2020	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	UNBC	2023	CRC
	0.02	2	UOttawa	2021	CRC
	0.64	184	“	2022	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	UPEI	2021	EDI Plan
	0.01	1	“	2023	CRC
	0.06	1	URegina	2020	EDI Plan
	0.02	1	USask	2020	EDI Plan
	0.01	3	UofT	2019	CRC
	0.21	35	“	2023	EDI Plan
	0.05	5	UVic	2024	EDI Plan
	0.15	31	Waterloo	2021	EDI Plan
	0.04	1	Western	2023	CRC
	0.11	44	York	2023	EDI Plan