Antisemitism in Social Media

Conspiracies, Stereotypes, and Holocaust Denial

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FOI

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Summary

In this report, we have studied different facets of antisemitism on non-password protected social media outlets with user-generated content. Our results show that antisemitic content exists on all social media platforms. However, the amount of antisemitic content seems to vary with the degree of moderation on each platform.

Since 2017, discussions about the ZOG conspiracy narrative have increased, while the Covid-19 pandemic has given rise to new antisemitic conspiracy theories. Conspiracy narratives are closely related to antisemitic stereotypes, which were found in 25% of posts mentioning Jews or Jewishness. The most common stereotypes being that Jews are powerful, deceptive, and manipulative.

In our study, almost 35% of all posts mentioning Jews or Jewishness expressed negativity toward Jews. These posts were found mainly on minimally moderated platforms. Jews are also one of the groups that are targeted by toxic language online. Over 4,000 occurrences of explicit Holocaust denial terminology were found during a three-month period. National legislation is difficult to apply to the global internet. A joint effort by governments and platform companies is important to develop techniques that keeps antisemitic content from the internet, while education is necessary to prevent antisemitism before it goes online.

Keywords: antisemitism, social media, Holcaust denial, stereotypes

Sammanfattning

I denna rapport har vi studerat olika aspekter av antisemitism på öppna sociala medieplattformar som producerar användargenererat innehåll. Resultaten visar att antisemitiskt innehåll förekommer på alla analyserade plattformar. Mängden antisemitiskt innehåll varierar dock i omvänd proportion till graden av moderering på respektive plattform.

Sedan 2017 har diskussioner om en judisk världskonspiration ökat, medan Covid-19-pandemin har gett upphov till nya antisemitiska konspirationsteorier. Konspirationsmyter är nära besläktade med antisemitiska stereotyper, som hittades i 25% av de inlägg som nämner judar eller judiskhet i den data vi analyserat. De vanligaste stereotyperna beskriver judar som mäktiga, bedrägliga och manipulativa.

I den data som vi analyserat uttrycks negativitet mot judar i nästan 35% av alla inlägg som nämnde judar eller judiskhet. Dessa inlägg fanns främst på minimalt modererade plattformar. Judar är också en av de grupper som utsätts för hatbudskap på internet.

Under en tremånadersperiod fann vi över 4 000 förekomster av förintelseförnekande terminologi i de digitala miljöer som ingår i vår studie. Nationell lagstiftning är svår att tillämpa på ett globalt internet. En gemensam insats från regeringar och sociala medieföretag är viktig för att utveckla tekniker som kan hålla antisemitiskt innehåll från internet. Samtidigt behövs utbildningsinsatser för att förebygga att antisemitiskt innehåll produceras online.

Nyckelord: antisemitism, sociala medier, förintelseförnekelse, stereotyper

Preface

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Key Findings

- We have analysed social media platforms and forums that are accessible for everyone. Antisemitic content exists in many places but there is a vast quantitative difference regarding the amount of antisemitic content on the different platforms.
- There are many associations to the words *Jew* and *Jewish* that convey antisemitic slurs, conspiracy narratives, and stereotypes.
- Coded expressions, such as triple parentheses, are used mainly in discussions about Jews and the media or censorship.
- In the forums and platforms included in this study, almost 35% of all posts mentioning Jews or Jewishness express negativity toward Jews. Most of negative posts were found on the minimal moderation platforms Gab and 4chan/pol/, with a notably smaller amount on Twitter and Reddit.
- 25% of posts mentioning Jews or Jewishness contain antisemitic stereotypes, the most common stereotypes being that Jews are powerful, deceptive, and manipulative.
- On the racially and ethnically motivated ideological forums that we have analysed, between 11% and 17% of all posts contain toxic language. Toxic language targeting Jews can be found in two to five percent of the posts. On the minimal moderation platforms, the amount of posts targeting Jews ranges from one to three percent.
- Since 2017, there has been an increase in discussions about the Zionist Occupation Government conspiracy narrative.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has given rise to new antisemitic conspiracy theories. For example, Jews are accused of inventing the virus, spreading the virus, spreading fake news about the virus, and using the virus to make money.
- During a three-month period, we found over 4,000 occurrences of Holocaust denial terminology on the platforms and forums that we have studied.

1   Introduction

Repeated violence and threats specifically targeting Jewish people show that antisemitism is a threat to civil security. Antisemitic attacks have various ideological sources. For instance, in the USA, two synagogue shootings (Pittsburgh synagogue shooting in 2018 and the Poway synagogue shooting in 2019) were perpetrated by attackers with racially and ethnically motivated ideologies.[1] In December 2019, a series of violent hate crimes, including a shooting at a kosher grocery store and the stabbing of a Hasidic rabbi, were committed by people believed to have ties to an antisemitic branch of the Black Hebrew Israelites.[2] In May 2021, there was a surge of verbal and physical antisemitic attacks by supporters of the Palestinian side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[3]

The violent period in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in May 2021 also affected European Jews. For instance, antisemitic hate crime in London quadrupled during this time, according to data from the Metropolitan Police.[4] This sudden surge in antisemitic crime is indicative of how easily dormant antisemitism will flare up when triggered by outside events. For instance, a study of alt-right online communities concludes that the frequency of antisemitic content greatly increases after major political events such as the 2016 US presidential election and the 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville.[5] A more recent example is found in a report from Tel Aviv University that shows the Covid-19 outbreak led to an 18% increase of antisemitic hate in social media.[6]

In 2021, Human Rights Watch warned about antisemitic hatred being on the rise in Europe,[7] and Jennifer F Kelly, president of the American Psychological Association, spoke up about the dangerous physical, psychological, and societal consequences of hate crime. 'Psychological research shows that hate crimes create fear, anxiety and insecurity among victims and others in the community', stated Kelly. 'These acts make people feel unsafe in their homes, their

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[1] Bjørgo, T., & Ravndal, J. A. (2019). *Extreme-right violence and terrorism: Concepts, patterns, and responses*. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism..

[2] Helmore, E. (2019). New York's Jewish community on edge after string of Hanukah attacks. *The Guardian*, 27 December, 2019.

[3] Chavez, N. & Gingras, B. (2021). Anti-Semitic attacks are being reported in US cities as tensions flare over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *CNN Edition*, 21 May 2021

[4] https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/hate-crime-dashboard/

[5] Finkelstein, J., Zannettou, S., Bradlyn, B., & Blackburn, J. (2018). A quantitative approach to understanding online antisemitism. In Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, 14(1), pp 786-797.

[6] Epstein, S. (red). (2020). *The COVID -19 pandemic has unleashed a unique worldwide wave of antisemitism.* Tel Aviv University, The Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry.

[7] Ward, B. (2021). Europe's Worrying Surge of Antisemitism. Human Rights Watch, 17 May, 2021.

communities and their places of worship'.[8] Further, psychological science shows that long-lasting changes at a societal level are to be expected from this rise in hate crime.[9] Besides a rising threat to Jews, antisemitism is also an indicator of a more profound threat to democratic and egalitarian cultures.[10]

The history of antisemitism can be traced at least as far back as to the Hellenistic era of ancient Greece, where the Egyptian priest Manetho published one of the first antisemitic narratives, rebutting the biblical account of the Exodus, instead claiming that the Jews had been expelled from Egypt due to uncleanliness and the devouring of sacred animals.[11] In the establishing of Christianity, similar myths were used as a way of enforcing a positive Christian identity. Since then, a certain degree of antisemitism has prevailed in mostly all of Europe, from where it has spread to North America and the Middle East. It is found in various secular and religious groups, and within various political ideologies. At times, it has flared up in the mainstream society, causing persecutions and pogroms directed at the Jewish people.

Whether expressed in words or deeds, antisemitism is often connected to deeply rooted perceptions that all or most Jews share certain features that either make them dangerous or diminish their human value. Today, internet and social media are the main arenas for spreading antisemitic messages.[12] Antisemitism in digital environments is not limited to extremist or politically biased channels – it also occurs on large social media platforms. It is important to keep in mind that while most violent attacks targeting Jews are perpetrated by sympathisers of right-wing or Jihadi extremism, the narratives that fuel such attacks are much more widespread in mainstream society, especially so on the internet. In this report, we examine the extent and nature of these narratives as they appear in contemporary digital environments.

This report is structured as follows: In Chapter 2, we explain the methodological and ethical choices that form the basis of all analyses presented herein. In

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[8] American Psychological Association (2021). APA calls for end to continued antisemitic violence in US. *Apa news*, 11 June 2021.

[9] Perry, B. (2014). Exploring the community impacts of hate crime. In *The Routledge international handbook on hate crime*(pp. 47-58). Routledge.

[10] Hirsh, D. (2017). *Contemporary left antisemitism*. Routledge.

[11] Moffic, E. (2019). *First the Jews: Combatting the World's Longest-running Hate Campaign*. Abingdon Press, Nashville.

[12] Zannettou, S., Finkelstein, J., Bradlyn, B., & Blackburn, J. (2020). A quantitative approach to understanding online antisemitism. In Proceedings of the 14th International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, ICWSM 2020; FRA, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2018). *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism. Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*. Wien: FRA.

Chapter 3, we discuss how Jews are talked about on our selection of social media platforms; examining synonyms, code speak and toxic language. In Chapter 4, we examine antisemitic conspiracy narratives. In Chapter 5, we examine which Jewish stereotypes that are used today and the extent to which they occur. In Chapter 6, we discuss Holocaust denial and its manifestations in contemporary social media.

2 Methodological Choices

2.1 The Subject of Analysis

Antisemitism is a disputed and highly politicized term that scholars as well as international and governmental bodies have repeatedly tried to define formally. However, there are many differing opinions as to what a definition of antisemitism should include. Thus, an operationalization of the term for academic purposes will undoubtedly seem unsatisfactory to many. The definitions used in this report will be no exception. In this section, we specify what the subject of our analyses is.

The analyses in this report proceed from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, which as of August 2021 is adopted by 32 countries. This definition was developed by the IHRA in cooperation with major Jewish organizations to help law enforcement and intragovernmental agencies to understand and recognize contemporary forms of antisemitism. The non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism was adopted by the IHRA Plenary in Bucharest on 26 May 2016:

> Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.[13]

The definition is supplemented with several examples of how antisemitism may manifest itself, focusing on contemporary forms of antisemitism.

Keeping in mind that the IHRA working definition of antisemitism has been criticized for, among other things, one-sidedly focusing on Middle Eastern antisemitism and labeling criticism of Israel as antisemitic,[14] we do not count criticism of Israel as antisemitic, unless it clearly conflates Israel with 'the Jews' or clearly evokes common antisemitic tropes such as stereotypes or conspiracy narratives (see Chapters 4 and 5). To be as precise as possible, we also need to set out a few boundaries:

First, the subjects of our studies are *messages with antisemitic content*. We cannot observe, neither directly nor indirectly, what someone's 'perception of

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[13] https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism (last visited 2021-09-25).
[14] Sedley, S. (2017). Defining Anti-Semitism. *London Review of Books*, 39(9).

Jews' is.[15] Hence, we do not classify a message as antisemitic based on what we believe the poster's intent or purpose to be. Rather, we judge a message based on how it is likely to be received, i.e., interpretation and impact. Thus, a person may reproduce antisemitic messages without deliberately being antisemitic. Historian Deborah Lipstadt calls this phenomenon 'clueless antisemitism', meaning that individuals may be blind to certain kinds of antisemitism that have gone so deep into the roots of society that they fail to recognize their own actions as antisemitic.[16]

Second, we need to handle the grey area of very subtle antisemitism and borderline-antisemitism. If we include too much in our definition of antisemitism, we lose specificity, i.e., we will get an exaggerated measure. If we include too little, we lose sensitivity and fail to report some of the existing antisemitism. In trying to balance specificity against sensitivity as far as possible, we have chosen to err on the side of sensitivity. With this strategy it is unavoidable that we end up with an amount of unrecorded antisemitism and an even larger number of borderline cases.

Third, understanding the context is crucial for recognizing antisemitism. A complete exposition of the context of antisemitism in social media is not possible to fit into this report, but we will briefly describe certain aspects of it, and base all our studies on solid knowledge about how certain expressions or narratives are used in different social media.

2.2 Selection of Digital Environments

On the internet, there are several different kinds of meeting places, such as social media platforms, websites, forums, and chatrooms. We refer to these meeting places as *digital environments* since they all tend to develop their own social biotope of behavioural and linguistic norms. For the analyses presented in this report, we have selected a small fraction of the existing online environments.

The environments analysed in this report have been selected to represent a wide range of digital environments that are accessible for automated content processing. The selection ranges from large social media platforms (Twitter and Reddit), platforms with a low level of moderation, also called minimal moderation platforms, (Gab, 4chan and 8kun), and forums devoted to racially and ethnically motivated ideologies (Stormfront and VNN Forum). While it

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[15] Vidgen, B., Harris, A., Nguyen, D., Tromble, R., Hale, S., & Margetts, H. (2019). Challenges and frontiers in abusive content detection. In Proceedings of the third workshop on abusive language online, pp. 80-93.

[16] Lipstadt, D. E. (2019). *Antisemitism: here and now*. Schocken.

would have been preferred to include ideologically motivated digital environments promoting other ideologies, other ideologies are not well-enough represented on accessible platforms.

All included digital environments use English as the major communication language. Also, they are public insofar as anyone can easily access and read what is published on them (see also Section 2.4).

Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service where users post and interact using messages called *tweets*. In 2021, Twitter hosted 192 million daily active users. Due to the size of Twitter, we are not using all published data, but a representative sample consisting of one percent of the messages posted each day.

Reddit is a discussion forum that calls itself 'the front page of the internet'. Reddit is open to all kinds of discussion topics. Users can start so-called *subreddits* where specific topics are discussed. Currently, there are over one million subreddits. Discussions on Reddit are moderated, which means that many of the most offensive or provocative posts are removed. Reddit has 1.7 billion visitors every month and is one of the most visited sites on internet.[17]

Gab is a social network where users can write messages of up to 300 characters called *gabs*. Gab, which was created in 2017 as a 'free speech' alternative to Twitter, welcomes users who have been banned from other social networks. Approximately 10 million posts are made on Gab per year. In 2021, Gab had 18.3 million visitors per month.[18]

'The Chans' are a set of imageboards that allow users to post images and comments anonymously. The two most well-known Chans are *4chan* and *8chan*, but there are several other Chans. To publish on a Chan, it is not necessary to have an account, which means that users can be completely anonymous. This, and the fact that most posts are deleted after a few days, makes these boards challenging to analyse since it is difficult to estimate the number of active writers. 4chan has over 43 million unique visitors per month and around one million posts are made to the forum daily. One of 4chan's most active subforums is */pol/* (*politically incorrect*), where almost 5 million posts are made every month.[19]

In 2013, 8chan was launched as an alternative to 4chan by a user who considered 4chan too restrictive. The idea with 8chan was that it should allow any kind of content as long as it was legal. In 2019, the suspected shooters of at least three mass shootings posted manifestos on 8chan, which forced 8chan offline for a period since internet providers refused to host the site. In November 2019, 8chan

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[17] Statistic from the web analysis tool SimilarWeb, retrevied 2021-09-25.
[18] Cohen, K., Kaati, L., & Pelzer, B. (2021) Heroes and Scapegoats. Right-wing extremism in digital environments. EU publications. ISBN 978-92-76-40320-3.
[19] Ibid.

re-appeared under the name *8kun*. 8kun has around 1.5 million monthly visitors. In this report we have focused on the politically incorrect boards 4chan/pol and 8kun/pnd.

Stormfront is the oldest existing white supremacy forum (launched in the mid 1990s). Stormfront describes itself as a community of 'racial realists, idealists and white nationalists'. The discussion forum contains around 13 million posts and consists of a wide range of subforums. The number of registered members is around 360,000, and there are 319,000 monthly visitors to the forum.[20]

The Vanguard National News Forum (VNN Forum) was launched as an uncensored forum for 'white' people. VNN Forum hosts content that promotes violence and celebrates mass murderers and terrorists as heroes. VNN Forum is known to host antisemitic content, for example, in 2019 there was a discussion thread where pictures and names of Jewish students and staff at two American universities were published.[21]

2.3   Computational Technologies

Using computational technologies to analyse social media data makes it possible to survey large amounts of data, but there are also limitations. All text analysis technologies lack a fundamental understanding of the meaning of text and therefore automatic analysis should be complemented with manual analysis. In our analysis we have used a number of different technologies. Distributional semantic models (or word embeddings) allowed us to get a deeper understanding of how words are used in the different environments. The basic idea with distributional semantic models is that words that are used in the same context tend to have similar meanings. This can be measured using a metric called semantic similarity which represents the distance between two words based on the similarity of the contexts they are used in. Distributional semantic models can be trained largely unsupervised with unstructured text, for example from different internet forums. The trained model can be used to analyse the overall characteristics of the language in a digital space, for example to learn more about what words we use in similar contexts. This is done via *keyword expansion*: The model receives a list of words we are interested in, and then it delivers the words most similar to the input in a given context/forum.[22] That way the same input words can be expanded into different longer lists depending on the chosen

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[20] Cohen, K., Kaati, L., & Pelzer, B. (2021) Heroes and Scapegoats. Right-wing extremism in digital environments. EU publications. ISBN 978-92-76-40320-3.

[21] McDonald, L. (4 September, 2019) Universities contact FBI after hundreds of photos of Jewish students and staff are published on white nationalist website that calls for 'extermination' of Jews. Daily Mail.

[22] In the studies presented here, we have used Word2Vec a distributional semantic model described in Mikolov, T., Chen, K., Corrado, G.S., & Dean, J. (2013). Efficient Estimation of Word Representations in Vector Space. ICLR.

forums, representing differences in how each forum understands and uses the input words.

We have used a machine learning model to estimate the level of toxic language that is used in the different environments.[23] Our system is based on a deep learning-based language model that has been trained on several thousand examples of toxic language, enabling it to recognize toxic language with an accuracy approaching human specialists, at considerably higher speeds. While this approach is more complex than scanning forum posts for lists of toxic words and phrases, the machine learning method is more flexible and human-like in its recognition, as it evaluates text holistically, rather than relying on exact matches of specific words. Overall, our system achieves a performance in line with the state of the art, but like all text analysis methods it is sensitive to texts that drastically differ in style compared to the training examples. Human oversight of the result presented by the model is therefore recommended.

Our classifier identifies toxic language based on a combination of different datasets that were created using definitions of toxic language. This makes the classifier more likely to overestimate rather than to miss occurrences of toxic language. The classification is done it two phases. In a first step, all toxic posts are identified. To assure that the classification works according to our expectations, a second phase were the posts (or a statistically representative sample of the posts) that are classified as toxic are reviewed manually is included to assure that they contain toxic language according to our definition.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

All kinds of research on others' communication, even when the communication is made public such as on social media, must be performed with consideration for the individual's right to integrity and privacy. The conflict between the individual's right to privacy and the individual's need for protection from the potentially harmful consequences of certain digital interactions must be taken seriously, and careful deliberation should precede the collection and analysis of internet data.

We have analysed large amounts of social media data without consent from the individuals who have produced the data, since otherwise we would not have been able to perform large scale quantitative data analysis. To protect the integrity of the text producers (i.e., the posters on the analysed platforms), we have taken certain measures: We have only collected data from sources that are open and accessible to all, i.e., sources where the content can be viewed without any login

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[23] Berglind,T., Pelzer, B., & Kaati, L. (2019). Levels of Hate in Online Environments. In IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining (ASONAM), Vancouver, BC, Canada, 2019 pp. 842-847

or membership. No data has been collected from password-protected pages, closed Facebook pages, or other types of websites or social media where the user has taken any measure to keep posted material within a closed circle. Measures have been taken to protect potentially sensitive personal data that might be included in the downloaded data. All research results are reported in anonymised and aggregated form to protect the individual's right to integrity and privacy. No data will be passed on to another party.

3 Framing Jews in the Online Discourse

After the Holocaust, antisemitism has been widely condemned in European societies. Yet, it did not disappear, but it had to be expressed more covertly. The practice of dog whistling, i.e., using coded or suggestive language, is a common way to express antisemitic attitudes to like-minded peers, while avoiding the criticism that would ensue if one spoke openly. Thus, there have been several code words for Jews, such as *globalists*, *cosmopolites*, or *Zionists*. In digital environments, the coded speech is also used to bypass moderation algorithms as well as to maintain a paranoid fantasy about being monitored by Jewish interests.

3.1 What Jews are Called

In biblical Hebrew the word *Yehudi* denotes the people of Judah, i.e., the Israelites. This term (or its translation to other languages, i.e., *Yid*, *juif, Jude* etc.) has historically been used by Jewish people to refer to themselves. Thus, the term *Jew*, unlike some other terms historically used to denote ethnic minorities, is not imposed upon the people by others, nor does it bear any associations to colonialism or oppression. However, centuries of antisemitic persecution have skewed the value of the term toward the offensive. Therefore, it is sometimes avoided in everyday discourse and replaced by the more cautious *Jewish person*. The reluctance to use the word may be partly attributed to its offensiveness when used as an adjective (as in 'Jew banker' or 'Jewboy'), or a verb (as in 'The car dealer jewed me down'). While people who do not want to be regarded as antisemitic avoid the term in favour of less offensive-sounding synonyms, for those who wish instead to convey antisemitic attitudes, there is a plethora of slurs to choose from. Using keyword expansion from the term *Jew*, we found which words that are used today to refer to Jews (see Table 1).

Table 1. Some of the words used synonymously with *Jew* that appear on social media, found using keyword expansion.

Anglozionist	joo
Chosenite	zio
Hebe	schlomo
hook nose	shyster
hymie	yid

Replacing a descriptive word with a slur has the function of attaching an evaluation to a concept, and depending on which slur is used, it can also be used to evoke a stereotype (see Chapter 5).[24]

3.2 Antisemitic Associations

The word *globalist* is not a slur in itself, yet when used about Jews, it conveys an antisemitic message. It is an example of a coded word that can be used to promote antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories, such as Jews being disloyal to the countries they live in, instead engaging in 'internationalism' that will enhance their control over banks and governments. The word *globalist* in this context is a double entendre, making it possible to cloak antisemitic statements in an air of benign concern about one's nation. Another, more contemporary, coded word is the alternate spelling 'joo'. This is not a double entendre, since in a context it is perfectly clear what it means. Rather, its function is to avoid moderation filters, where the word *Jew* is likely to halt. By conveying the perception that one needs to speak in code to discuss Jewish influence, one implicitly conveys that there are Jewish interests that can and will censor you if you criticize them. That notion is the premise of a well-known meme: '*The goyim know, shut them down*', an imagined Jewish response to noticing that Jewish conspiracies are about to be revealed, implying that truth-tellers are regularly silenced.[25]

To find out more specifically which words were used about Jews on social media, we expanded a very short wordlist containing the words *Jew*, *Jews* and *Jewish*. Since Jews are perceived as both a religious and an ethnic group, the expansion mainly yielded names of other ethnic or religious groups. When we removed these, along with proper nouns and non-words, a set of associated words remained. Table 2 contains examples of words associated to the word *Jew*.

Several of the words in Table 2 allude to stereotypes (for instance *banker* and *communists*) and conspiracy narratives (for instance *zog emperor* and *deep state*). These will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

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[24] Jeshion, R. (2013). Slurs and stereotypes. *Analytic Philosophy*, *54*(3), 314-329.
[25] See Einstein Schorr, R. (2017). Goy; Origin, Usage and Empowering White Supremacists. *Forward*. 21 August 2017.

Table 2. A selection of words that are semantically similar to *Jew, Jews* and *Jewish* on some social media platforms.

Reddit	4chan/pol/	8kun/pnd/	Gab
bigot	banker	banker	banker
communist	billionaire	billionaire	billionaire
dictator	communist/ marxists	bolsheviks/communist/marxist/leftist	bolshevik/ communist/ marxists
disabled	devil	deep state	deep state
extremists	elites	devil	devil
gangs	extremists/ terrorists	elites	elites
immigrant	freemason	freemason	freemason
nazis	globalists	globalists	globalist
rabbi	kikes	hollywood	hollywood
raping	nazis	kikes	nazis
refugees	pedophile	liberal/ socialist	pedophile
satanist	pharisees	nazis	rothschild
statues	rothschild	pedophile	satanic
sympathizer	raped by/raping	rothschild	shabbos goy
terrorists	satanic	satanic	terrorists
tories	traitor	subversive	tribe
zionists	zionist	zog emperor	zog emperor

3.3   Speaking in Code: The Case of (((coincidence)))

One of the most ubiquitous code expressions is the so-called *echo*, or triple parentheses, the use of which peaked in 2016. The triple parentheses originates from the 2014 American ethnonationalist alt-right podcast *The Daily Shoah*[26] where any mention of something 'Jew-related' was followed by a sound effect repeating the word three times as an echo. This sound effect was later transcribed as triple parentheses on the alt-right blog *The Right Stuff*, from where it spread to

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[26] The mixing up of the words *show* and *Shoah* (the Hebrew word for the Holocaust) is a kind of pun typical for the kind of contemporary antisemitism made popular by the alt-right movement, relying on irony and double entendre to trivialize the Holocaust and other effects of antisemitism.

other social media such as Twitter.[27] Between 2014 and 2016, the symbol functioned as an antisemitic dog whistle, its meaning hidden from all but the initiated. In 2016, a Google Chrome plug-in called Coincidence Detector[28] was released and downloaded more than 2,500 times in a few months before it was discovered and removed from Google. The function of the coincidence detector was to make all names of purportedly Jewish people or organisations appear within triple parentheses to 'educate' or 'inform' the reader. It was based on a list of 9,000 names.

Due to some media attention following the Coincidence Detector, along with reports that people whose names had been mentioned within triple parentheses on social media had been threatened or otherwise harassed[29] the triple parenthesis was listed as a hate symbol by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).[30] Also, activists on Twitter started using them on their own names as a gesture of Jewish pride or solidarity. Thus, the triple parentheses has lost its appeal as dog whistle, yet it is used, mainly as an identity marker for those who believe in Jewish conspiracies, but also to make communication more efficient. It is simpler to write (((Hollywood))) than to explain that you believe Hollywood to be under Jewish control.

By studying which words commonly appear within triple parentheses, we gain an insight into which functions of society are associated with Jews. To find out which words are used with triple parentheses in social media today, we have extracted words that frequently appear within triple parentheses on two of 'the Chans', Gab, and Reddit during the period 1 November 2020 – 31 January 2021. The result is shown in Table 3. The fact that any word at all is written within triple parentheses indicates a belief in antisemitic conspiracy theories (see Chapter 4).

The most common words used within triple parentheses were *people* and *they/them*. Otherwise references to *media* or *mainstream media (MSM)* were common on all of the platforms, indicating a belief that Jews control the media (see Chapter 5).

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[27] Magu, R., Joshi, K., & Luo, J. (2017). Detecting the hate code on social media. *Eleventh International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*.

[28] The term *'Coincidence'* comes from the narrative that an unproportionate amount of people in power are Jewish, and that *'liberals'* falsely claim this to be a mere coincidence.

[29] Williams, Z. (2016) (((Echoes))): beating the far-right, two triple- brackets at a time. *The Guardian*, 12 June, 2016.

[30] Hate on display, Hate symbols database. Anti-Defamation League.

Table 3. Some of the words that most commonly appear within triple parentheses.

4chan/pol/	8kun/pnd/	Gab	Reddit
they/them/their	they/them/their	they/them/their	they/them
media/msm	Government	media/msm	media/msm
White	Trump	pedohile	globalist/s
democracy	Anon	globalist/s	bankers
Science	banks	fake news	white
Vaccine	Elite	tribe	elite
Experts	vaccine	deep state	deep state

3.4 Toxic Language Targeting Jews

The term *toxic language* refers to blatantly aggressive and demeaning messages about a group or person, such as dehumanization, incitement of hatred or discrimination, or justification of violence.[31] Toxic language includes but is not limited to hate speech. To gain a deeper understanding of the content in digital environments, we have measured the levels of toxic language and analysed the targets of the toxic language. We regard a text as toxic if it seems to be intended to harm or offend its targets, that is, specific groups or individuals. Toxic language can take the form of openly abusive, disparaging, or hateful remarks, or more veiled comments that nevertheless communicate the harmful intent (e.g. *'I wonder what would happen if someone pushed X down on the train rail?'*). In the environments that we have analysed, openly abusive and hateful remarks form the majority of toxic comments most likely due to the lax moderation in several of the environments.

To identify toxic texts on different platforms, we have used a toxicity classifier based on a machine learning language model (see Chapter 2.3). The proportion of toxic posts were measured on Gab, Stormfront, VNN Forum, 4chan/pol/, 8kun/pnd/, Reddit and Twitter during a time period from 2016 to 2020. Since some of these environments have many millions of posts, some even billions, the classifier was used on a representative sample of the posts that was extracted to assure a confidence level of at least 99% and a margin of error of at most 1%. Since the result contained thousands of toxic posts for each forum, we selected 400 posts from each environment that were inspected manually. These posts are

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[31] Cohen, K., Kaati, L., & Pelzer, B. (2021) Heroes and Scapegoats. Right-wing extremism in digital environments. EU publications. ISBN 978-92-76-40320-3.

a statistically representative sample of the toxic posts from each environment with a confidence level of at least 95% and a margin of error of at most 5%. The results of the toxic language classification (after verifying the results manually) are shown in Figure 1.
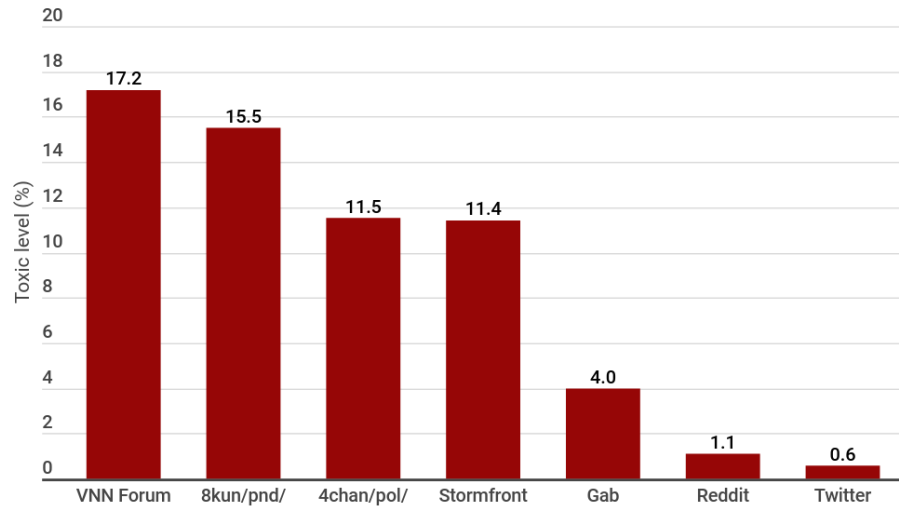

Figure 1. The share of posts with toxic language on seven different digital environments.

Posts that were classified as toxic were subsequently manually analysed to see which groups that were targeted. On VNN Forum, 8kun/pnd/, 4chan/pol/, and Stormfront, the most targeted group were non-whites, while on Gab the most targeted group was mainstream society. Jews were the second most targeted group in several environments. Figure 2 shows the level of toxic language targeting other groups than Jews and the level of toxic language targeting Jews.

Based on information from the annotation of our sample (400 toxic posts per environment), the proportion of posts targeting Jews ranged between 4.5% and 0%. VNN Forum has the highest share of posts targeting Jews, followed by 8kun/pnd and Stormfront. Notably, 8kun/pnd/ exhibits a higher proportion of antisemitism than Stormfront, although part of the reason may be the tighter topical focus of 8kun's /pnd/-subforum, whereas Stormfront also includes areas for discussing topics such as hobbies and dating. On the other hand, 4chan/pol/ is thematically similar to 8kun/pnd/, yet it has less than half of the share of toxic posts targeting Jews.
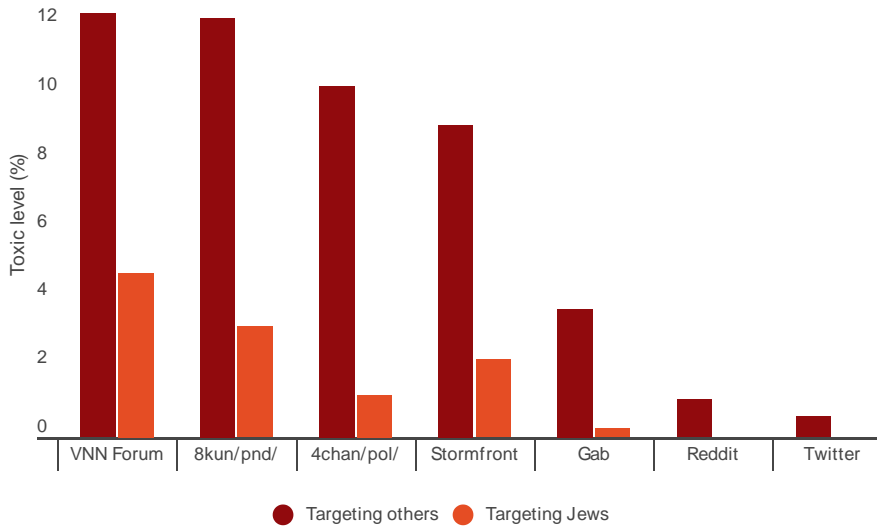
Figure 2. The share of posts with toxic language targeting Jews and toxic language targeting other groups or individuals on a set of different digital environments

The proportion of posts containing toxic language targeting Jews on Gab is significantly lower with 0.3%, while Reddit and Twitter had no toxic posts targeting Jews in our sample. However, it is important to keep in mind the differences in scale between the environments: In absolute numbers, 4chan/pol/ produces more antisemitic posts per day than Stormfront does in a month.

4 Conspiracy Narratives

During the 'Unite the Right' rally on the 12th of August 2017 in Charlottesville, the protesters chanted a slogan that had become popular among white supremacists earlier the same year: *'You will not replace us!'* [32] The slogan refers to a conspiracy theory called 'The Great Replacement', stating that a powerful secret elite is about to replace traditional culture and/or 'white' people in Europe and the USA with 'alien' cultures and people. As the rally went on, the chanting of '*You will not replace us'* suddenly and seamlessly morphed into *'Jews will not replace us'*.[33] It was no longer the liberals and progressives that were blamed for the alleged replacement, but the Jews.[34] This incident is representative for the way that Jews tend to be cast as the main villains in conspiracy narratives, regardless of whether the conspiracy narrative featured Jews to begin with. In this chapter, we explore antisemitism in conspiracy narratives.

4.1 Antisemitism and Conspiracy Narratives

A conspiracy narrative (also referred to as conspiracy theory, conspiracy myth or conspiracy fantasy) is an explanation of important events in terms of some secret plot staged by a constellation of powerful and malevolent actors.[35] In conspiracy narratives, the existence of chance is overlooked or rejected, and the complexities of important events are neglected, all in favour of easy labelling and categorizing. The appeal of conspiracy narratives lies in their potential to satisfy fundamental epistemic, existential, and social needs. They provide explanations that seemingly bring coherence into an otherwise chaotic world,[36] while simultaneously providing a positive self-image and a sense of belonging to a social group (the group that knows the truth and sees through 'the system').[37]

Research about the mechanisms of conspiracy narratives finds that an individual's belief in one conspiracy narrative predicts belief in other conspiracy

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[32] ADL, 2017. White Supremacists Adopt New Slogan: 'You Will Not Replace Us,' *Anti-Defamation League*, 9 June, 2017.

[33] Gabbatt, A. (2017). 'Jews will not replace us': Vice film lays bare horror of neo-Nazis in America. *The Guardian*, August 16, 2017.

[34] Green, E. (2017). Why the Carlottesville Marchers Were Obsessed With Jews. *The Atlantic*, 15 August, 2017.

[35] Bartlett, J., & Miller, C. (2010). The power of unreason: Conspiracy theories, extremism and counter-terrorism. London: Demos.

[36] Douglas, K. M., Sutton, R. M., & Cichocka, A. (2017). The psychology of conspiracy theories. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 26, 538-542.

[37] Imhoff, R., & Lamberty, P. K. (2017). Too special to be duped: Need for uniqueness motivates conspiracy beliefs. European Journal of Social Psychology, 47, pp. 724-734.

narratives as well.[38] Thus, conspiracy narratives seem to reflect a certain mode of thinking and reasoning rather than belief in a distinct explanation of events. Further, belief in conspiracy thinking seems to be connected to a general mistrust of the political establishment.[39] People who believe in conspiracy theories have been shown to be more likely to act 'outside the democratic norm', and less likely to partake in democratic activities such as voting or authorized strikes.[40] Other research suggests a link between belief in conspiracy narratives and increased support of violent political action.[41] For many people, political extremism and violence become justified by the notion that powerful actors are deliberately causing harm to the people, and that change by democratic means is impossible.[42] For instance, the lone actor attacks at synagogues in Pittsburgh, Poway and Halle in 2018 and 2019 were all perpetrated by activists who have referenced antisemitic conspiracy thinking in their online writings or statements.[43]

There is an undeniably strong tie between antisemitism and conspiracy narratives.[44] Antisemitic conspiracy theories have been intermittently prevalent in European culture for several hundred years. For instance, the European plague pandemic in the mid-14th century was considered a result of Jews having conspired with the Devil against Christianity. Violent massacres destroying several Jewish communities ensued. Since the late 1800's, a nationalistic strain of antisemitism has given rise to several conspiracy narratives featuring Jewish plots. In these, the Jewish dispersion is interpreted as a deliberate move, providing the Jewish conspiracy with 'tentacles' into many different nations to facilitate a takeover from the inside.[45] As will be examined in Section 5, many Jewish stereotypes are used in and enforced by conspiracy narratives. Many conspiracy narratives are built around the Jewish banking family Rothschild or businessman and philanthropist George Soros, who are made into embodiments of Jewish stereotypes. The Rothschilds have for instance been accused of

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[38] Goertzel, T. (1994) Belief in conspiracy theories. Political Psychology 15(4): 731–742; Brotherton R, French CC and Pickering AD (2013) Measuring belief in conspiracy theories: the generic conspiracist beliefs scale. Frontiers in Psychology 4(279):1–15.

[39] van Prooijen, J. W., & Douglas, K. M. (2018) Belief in conspiracy theories: Basic principles of an emerging research domain. European journal of social psychology, 48(7):897-908.

[40] Bartlett, J., & Miller, C. (2010) The power of unreason: Conspiracy theories, extremism and counter-terrorism. London: Demos.

[41] Imhoff, R., Dieterle, L., & Lamberty, P. (2021) Resolving the puzzle of conspiracy worldview and political activism: Belief in secret plots decreases normative but increases nonnormative political engagement. Social Psychological and Personality Science, 12(1), pp 71-79.

[42] Bartlett, J., & Miller, C. (2010). The power of unreason: Conspiracy theories, extremism and counter-terrorism. London, UK: Demos.

[43] Counter Extremism Project (2020) Violent Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism – Transnational Connectivity, Definitions, Incidents, Structures and Countermeasures.

[44] Hirsh, D. (2017) Contemporary Left Antisemitism. Abingdon: Routledge.

[45] Bergmann, W. (2008) Anti-Semitic attitudes in Europe: A comparative perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(2), 343-362.

interfering with the American Revolution, financing the Bolshevik Revolution, creating the state of Israel, and orchestrating the 9/11 attacks. The generalized assumption that all Jews share a common goal is an important element in antisemitic conspiracy narratives. If many film producers are Jewish, the fact is generalized to a narrative of Jews controlling Hollywood, spreading destructive propaganda through Hollywood films. Headlines of a Jewish pedophile gives rise to narratives about Jews being pedophiles and so on.

The most common antisemitic conspiracy narrative is about Jews owning and controlling media, and thus publishing and censoring at their own discretion. This conspiracy narrative occurs in the notorious treatise *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fraudulent document describing a cabal of Jews conspiring for world domination by means of manipulation of public opinion through control of the media.[46] First published in 1903 in Russia, the document is still available as a book in many countries throughout Europe, North America and the Middle East, and has even gained a renaissance on the internet.[47] *The Protocols* has been repeatedly proven to be a forgery, yet it appears regularly as an argument against Jews, for instance is has been cited in the Hamas charter[48] and endorsed on Twitter by a member of the advisory board of then president Trump's re-election.[49]

An often-used way of classifying conspiracy narratives is to distinguish between *systemic* and *event* conspiracy narratives. The former entails conceptions about conspiracies infiltrating different institutions to gain control over large regions of, if not the whole, world, while the latter is claiming alternative explanations of single events, i.e., the moon-landing, 9/11 or AIDS.[50] In this chapter, we will provide examples of antisemitic conspiracy theories of both kinds.

[46] Volpato, C., & Durante, F. (2009). Empowering the "Jewish threat": The protocols of the elders of Zion. *Journal of US-China Public Administration*, 6(1), 23-36.

[47] Lipstadt, D. (2012). The Protocols of the Elders of Zion on the Contemporary American Scene: Historical Artifact or Current Threat? In Landes R. & Katz S. (Eds.), *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred-Year Retrospective on The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (pp. 172-185). NYU Press.

[48] Bartlett, J., & Miller, C. (2010). *The power of unreason: Conspiracy theories, extremism and counter-terrorism*. London: Demos.

[49] Whitfield, S. (2020). Why the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' is still pushed by anti-Semites more than a century after hoax first circulated. *The Conversation*, 2 September 2020.

[50] Barkun, M. (2013). *A culture of conspiracy*. University of California Press.

4.2 The Zionist Occupation Government

Antisemitism can be applied to almost any existing systemic conspiracy theory, as long as it is not clearly stated that the malevolent actors behind it are something different than 'the Jews'. Thus, theories such as The Great Replacement, that are not antisemitic in their original formulation, can easily become so by substituting the 'secret elite' for 'the Jews'.

The most generic systemic conspiracy narrative is the New World Order (NWO), a narrative from the 1950's claiming that an authoritarian global state is being established via front organizations such as banks and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO:s). The NWO conspiracy narrative is evoked by nationalist groups as an argument against foreign aid, international cooperation, immigration, and multiculturalism, all of which are regarded as steps toward the one-world globalist government. In the original formulation of NWO, the ones responsible for the conspiracy were communists, although many of the following formulations cast Jews as conspirators.[51] In the 1970's, the concept of a 'Zionist Occupation Government' (ZOG) was developed by American white supremacists who maintained that the US government was merely a front-organization for a Jewish cabal. The ZOG narrative has since spread from the very fringe of white supremacism to other parts of the ideological spectrum.[52]

We have measured the prevalence of ZOG-related words on 4chan/pol/ between 2016 and 2020, in order to examine how it changes over time and if it is sensitive to political or media events. The overall trend was a steady increase over time since March 2017 (see Figure 3). An earlier study of several conspiracy theories showed that the changes in mentions of ZOG did not co-vary with changes in mentions of other examined conspiracy theories.[53] The method used does not allow us to determine how many people actually believe in antisemitic conspiracy narratives, although by the choice of board (i.e. politics), we assume that the use of conspiracy words reflects at least an interest in them.

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[51] Green, E. (2017). Why the Charlottesville Marchers Were Obsessed With Jews. *The Atlantic*, 15 August, 2017.

[52] Bartlett, J., & Miller, C. (2010). *The power of unreason: Conspiracy theories, extremism and counter-terrorism.* London: Demos.

[53] Cohen, K., Kaati, L., & Pelzer, B. (2021) Heroes and Scapegoats. Right-wing extremism in digital environments. EU publications. ISBN 978-92-76-40320-3.
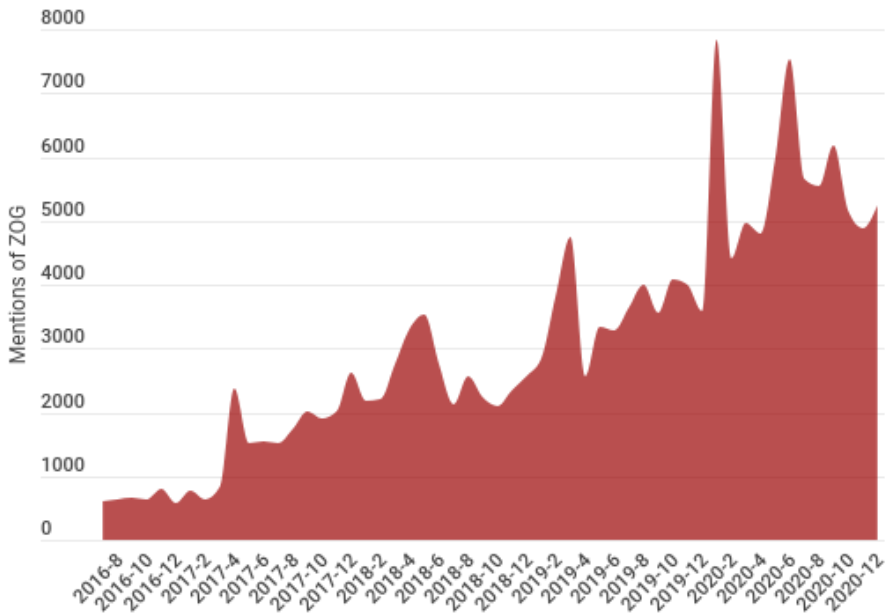
Figure 3. ZOG-related word mentions on 4chan/pol/.

4.3　　Jews and Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic led to a rise in antisemitic conspiracy narratives that populated social media as soon as news emerged of a new virus spreading across the world. A study of Covid-19 related online antisemitic content in French and German on Twitter, Facebook, and Telegram shows an increased use of antisemitic keywords during the Covid-19 pandemic.[54] The study compared the first two months of 2020 with the first two of 2021 and showed a seven-fold increase in antisemitic content on Twitter, Facebook and Telegram in French, and over a thirteen-fold increase in antisemitic content in its German counterpart.

To gain knowledge about the nature of the conspiracy narratives involving Covid-19 and Jews, we analysed 4chan/pol/, the home of several conspiracy theories including QAnon.[55] To identify posts containing conspiracy narratives, we used two wordlists helping us to extract all posts mentioning both Jews and Covid-19 between January 1, 2020, and January 31, 2021.[56] This resulted in more than 45,000 posts of which a random subset was selected for manual

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[54] Comerford, M. & Gerster, L. (2021) The rise of antisemitism online during the pandemic. A study of French and German content. European Commission. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. ISBN 978-92-76-38013-9

[55] Wendling, M. (January 6, 2020) QAnon: What is it and where did it come from? BBC News.

[56] The posts were identified using two dictionaries containing words related to Jews and Covid-19.

inspection. Some of the most often found conspiracy narratives in our analysis are listed below.

1. Jews created the corona virus

One of the most common conspiracy narratives involving Jews and Covid-19 was the idea that Jews have manufactured the corona virus, either themselves or with the help of some front organization such as WHO, CIA, or the U.S. military. The reason for the Jews to create the virus is generally stated to be the killing of white people, or the killing of everyone who is not Jewish.

2. Jews are spreading the corona virus

A related conspiracy narrative is that Jews, whether they invented the virus or not, are spreading it on purpose, using it as a bioweapon to exterminate all perceived enemies. The claim is often accompanied by statements about how the Jews have spread other diseases such as measles and the plague.

3. Covid-19 is fake, a conspiracy invented by Jews

Some of the posts expressing doubt about the corona virus being real contained stories about it being part of a Jewish conspiracy used to mislead the public and create fear. This conspiracy narrative identifies 'Jewish-owned media' as an important part of the hoax.

4. Jews are immune to Covid-19 or Jews are already vaccinated

Some posts expressed ideas that all Jews are immune to Covid-19 or that Jews started to work on a vaccine for Covid-19 even before the corona virus was discovered. Both views are used to claim that Jews, unlike the rest of the world, are not affected by Covid-19. This conspiracy narrative is often used to support the idea of Jews inventing and spreading the corona virus.

5. Jews are the only ones dying of Covid-19

Opposingly to the previously described conspiracy narrative, some posts express the idea that Jews are the only ones that die from Covid-19. This notion is generally combined with an amount of Schadenfreude at the thought of Jews not being 'God's chosen people' after all. It is also said that Jews are dying from Covid-19 due to their immune system being weakened from HIV.

6. Jews use the corona virus to make money

The idea that Jews use the corona virus to make money is expressed in some of the posts. Jews are accused of making money off people's lives, mainly through the pharmaceutical industry and by reselling overpriced medical equipment. Supposedly Jewish organizations like the freemasons are also accused of exploiting the virus to make money.

5   Antisemitic Stereotypes

The presumption that Jews are a homogenous group who share a set of negative features is a defining feature of antisemitism.[57] Thus, the narratives used to frame Jews as collectively responsible for diseases, financial crises and terrorist attacks, draw heavily on *stereotypes*, i.e., simplified and overgeneralized perceptions of a person's traits and behaviour based on his or her perceived group identity (e.g., age, gender or ethnicity) rather than on direct observation.[58] Stereotypes are often used in propaganda, as a way of enhancing the difference between groups and exaggerating perceived negative attributes of an enemy group. The history of antisemitism provides a stunningly solid example of the tenacity of stereotypes. In this chapter, we study the quantity of six Jewish stereotypes on four different social media platforms.[59]

5.1   The Functions of Stereotyping

The practice of stereotyping is not exclusive to racists, bigots, or political extremists, but a natural human cognitive function. The cognitive function of stereotyping plays an important role in human social lives since it offers a relatively simple way to process information about strangers. Given that knowledge about how to approach a stranger can be lifesaving for humans, it is not surprising that within almost all, if not all, social groups there are norms about how to categorize other people into groups and how to use first impressions to apply generalized assumptions onto individuals. Neither is it surprising that stereotypes about other social groups are more often negative than positive[60] given that an amount of suspicion toward others is beneficial for our own survival. What is remarkable about stereotypes is that they tend to stick in people's minds, regardless of whether they consciously believe in them or not.

While stereotyping is a normal social function, developed to facilitate our social lives, the very fact that a tendency to stereotype is inherent in all of us makes it all the more dangerous. When a group feels threatened by another, negative stereotypes about the other tend to become activated and enhanced, sometimes

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[57] Bergmann, W. (2008). Anti-Semitic attitudes in Europe: A comparative perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(2), pp 343-362.

[58] Marx, D., & Ko, S. J. (2019). Stereotypes and Prejudice. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*.

[59] The results of this study have previously been published in Swedish. See Cohen, K., Kaati, L., Peltzer, B., & Akrami, N. (2020). *Antisemitiska stereotyper i sociala medier*. [Antisemitic Stereotypes in Social Media]Swedish Defence Research Agency, FOI Memo 7292, 2020.

[60] Brewer, M. B. (1999). The psychology of prejudice: Ingroup love and outgroup hate?. *Journal of social issues* 55.3 (1999): pp 429 - 444; Hilton, J. L., & Von Hippel, W. (1996). Stereotypes. Annual review of psychology, 47, pp 237-271.

pushing rational deliberation to the side. When individuals are judged based upon their group belonging, they are subject to prejudice, which may lead to discrimination, ostracism and sometimes abuse.[61]

Many scholars have noticed that stereotypes about Jews in contemporary Western societies tend to differ from stereotypes about other ethnic and religious groups.[62] Jews are more commonly associated with international finance and world domination than with poverty, social security benefits, or street crime.[63] The commonly accepted stereotypes about Jews as parts of a powerful and potentially threatening collective are the foundations of such conspiracy narratives as mentioned in Chapter 4.

Stereotype content is based on how we judge the intentions and capabilities of the stereotyped group.[64] An outgroup that is well integrated and resourceful, yet different enough to elicit 'othering', may generate a different emotional response than an outgroup that is considered weak.[65] In the predominantly white European culture, most ethnic groups that suffer consequences of racism do so on account on being considered less cultured and educated than the majority.[66] This is generally not the case for the Jewish group. The generic Jewish stereotype contains elements of superiority. For several historic reasons, Jews in our time have come to be predominantly stereotyped as an envied group, a competent competitor for resources.[67]

Belonging to an enviously stereotyped social group can be beneficial in a healthy and wealthy society without need for competition or scapegoating. During good times, it is acknowledged that the enviously stereotyped group contributes to society, thus their presence is tolerated and sometimes they are admired. However, during bad times, it is the competent competitors that become the most

[61] McConnell, A. R., & Leibold, J. M. (2001). Relations among the Implicit Association Test, discriminatory behavior, and explicit measures of racial attitudes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *37*, 435–442.

[62] See for instance Lipstadt, D. E. (2019). *Antisemitism: here and now*. Schocken.

[63] Wodak, R. (2018). The radical right and antisemitism. *The Oxford handbook of the radical* right, 61-85.

[64] Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2008). Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The stereotype content model and the BIAS map. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 40, 61-149.

[65] Cuddy, A. J. C., Fiske, S. T. & Glick, P. (2007). The BIAS Map: Behavior from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*(4), pp 631-648.

[66] Fiske, S.T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P. & Xu, J. (2002). A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow From Perceived Status and Competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878-902.

[67] Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2008). Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The stereotype content model and the BIAS map. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, *40*, 61-149, and Wodak, R. (2018). The radical right and antisemitism. *The Oxford handbook of the radical right*, 61-85.

likely scapegoats.[68] This would help to explain the flare-ups of antisemitism that have occurred in times of adversity, such as the great plagues of the 14th century, or the economic depression in the 1930's.[69]

5.2 Stereotypical Representations of Jews

Even though the scope and expressions of antisemitism have varied between different historical, economic, and political circumstances, many of the stereotypical traits that are associated with Jews have been very persistent through history and can be traced back several hundred years. Stereotypes are very flexible insofar as they can be framed to adapt to any current circumstances or zeitgeist.[70] Stereotypical representations of Jewish people often display a combination of different stereotypical traits, most commonly involving a combination of moral inferiority and intellectual superiority. In this section we provide examples of some of the most common stereotypes.

The association of Jews with greed, usury, and wealth is so soaked into the public consciousness that terms such as '*Don't be a Jew'* or '*I got jewed down by the car dealer*' do not even need explaining.[71] During the Middle Ages, moneylending was prohibited for Christians, which thus became an exclusively Jewish trade. Reoccurring accusations of usury aimed at these moneylenders helped build the stereotype of Jewish greed. Also, the story about Jesus's disciple Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, was shaped into a narrative where only Judas was depicted as Jewish, the Jewishness of Jesus and the other disciples conveniently forgotten. Judas, the greedy traitor, became synonymous with Jew. Greed came to be viewed as the driving force behind all sorts of immoral behaviour that Jews were accused of, and the greed for money was thought to indicate greed for other things as well, such as power, sex, or fame. The modern stereotype of the disproportionately wealthy Jew is developed from the stereotype of the greedy Jew.[72]

Closely tied to the perception of Jews as business minded is the perception of Jews as deceptive. Making good business does after all require a certain amount of manipulation skills. The idea that Jews cannot be trusted permeates most antisemitic narratives, especially such conspiracy myths as discussed in

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[68] Glick, P. (2002). Sacrificial lambs dressed in wolves' clothing: Envious prejudice, ideology, and the scapegoating of Jews. I *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust* (L. S. Newman and R. Erber, eds.), pp. 113–142. Oxford University Press, London.

[69] Volpato, C., & Durante, F. (2009). Empowering the "Jewish threat": The protocols of the elders of Zion. *Journal of US-China Public Administration*, 6(1), 23-36.

[70] Wodak, R. (2018). The radical right and antisemitism. *The Oxford handbook of the radical right*, 61-85.

[71] Jeshion, R. (2013). Expressivism and the Offensiveness of Slurs. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 27(1), 231-259.

[72] Zick, A., Küpper, B., & Hövermann, A. (2011). *Intolerance, prejudice and discrimination-A European report.* Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: Berlin.

Chapter 4. In the late 19th century, when European nationalism was on the rise, the presence of ethnic minorities disturbed the ideal of a culturally and religiously cohesive nation state.[73] At that time, several European countries inhabited large Jewish populations that were generally well integrated. This very fact, the high degree of Jewish integration, was held against them as they were accused of being unreliable impostors of loyal citizens. The perceptions of Jews as threats to the nation-state were exacerbated by the fact that many Jews were intellectuals, and as such occasionally presented ideas about secularization and international values.[74] Indeed, *globalist* is an often-used antisemitic slur even in modern time. The 'cosmopolitan' Jews were associated with international finance, communism, and liberal values, ideas that were considered incompatible with nationalism.[75] The stereotype of the internationalist Jew occurs in conspiracy narratives wherein Jews are thought to promote, or even orchestrate, immigration and multiculturalism as a means of a self-serving scheme. The 2018 mass shooting in the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh was motivated exactly by this kind of belief. The perpetrator had previously posted on social media that Jewish interests were behind a wave of immigration that he perceived as threatening to the American nation.[76]

Another worry is that Jewish influence will destroy nations with depravity. This stereotype probably originates from a time when anyone who did not adhere to Christianity was regarded as depraved. As Jews were prohibited from owning land, their survival depended on urban trades. This was used against them as the nationalist movement emerged in the late 19th century and later in National Socialist propaganda. As Jews were associated with an unhealthy, industrial, city-dwelling lifestyle, and an equally unhealthy penchant for intellectualism, they were contrasted against the ideal of a physically strong and hard-working citizen.[77] In our time, decadent Jewish stereotypes includes widespread associations with promotion of pornography, homosexuality, drugs, and prostitution.[78]

The stereotypes of the cosmopolitan intellectual and the deceitful businessman are both connected to a perception of Jews being intellectually superior to non-Jews. At a first glance, the stereotype of the intelligent Jew may seem as a benign one. However, should the other stereotypes be true, a superior intellect is

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[73] Wodak, R. (2018). The radical right and antisemitism. *The Oxford handbook of the radical right*, 61-85.
[74] Bergmann, W. (2008). Anti-Semitic attitudes in Europe: A comparative perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, *64*(2), 343-362.
[75] Bergmann, W. (2008). Anti-Semitic attitudes in Europe: A comparative perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, *64*(2), 343-362.
[76] Amend, A. (2018) *Analyzing a terrorist's social media manifesto: the Pittsburgh synagogue shooter's posts on Gab*. Southern Poverty Law Center.
[77] Wistrich, R. S. (red.). (2013). *Demonizing the other: antisemitism, racism and xenophobia*. Routledge.
[78] Wodak, R. (2018). The radical right and antisemitism. *The Oxford handbook of the radical right*, 61-85.

something to be feared rather than admired: A malevolent actor with superior intelligence makes for a dangerous enemy.

5.3   Demonizing and Dehumanizing Stereotypes

A blatantly antisemitic stereotype is the one about the evil Jew. Using religious arguments to portray Jews as vengeful and bloodthirsty is an old Christian practice that is found today in contexts of delegitimization of Israel, where Jews as a group are accused of genocide and likened to Nazis.[79] The stereotype of Jews' evil and demonic alliances carry a consistent underlying pattern that appears in antisemitic contexts of Christian, Muslim, or secular origins.[80]

The association between Jews and Satan originates from the early Christian idea that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. From this, accusations of satanic rituals including human sacrifice followed. Among the accusations of ritual murder is the *blood libel*, the myth that the blood of non-Jewish children is required for the baking of unleavened bread for the Jewish Passover holiday. As grotesque as it may seem, this myth is actually reproduced today, mainly in the Arab world. For instance, in 2014, Hamas leader Osama Hamdan expressed that it is common knowledge that Jews consume the blood of Christians.[81] Accusations of blood libel have also occurred among Christians in Russia and Poland.[82]

The Christian demonizing of Jews in medieval Europe manifests in a particularly disturbing genre of religious art; namely the *Judensau* (Jews' Sow), images carved into church and cathedral walls picturing three to four Jews in obscene interactions with a large sow. The images usually also featured a goat (a symbol of Satan) and a horned man. Occasionally the *Judensau* appeared together with an image of a ritually murdered child. As pointed out in previous research, the purpose of picturing Jews like that was to raise doubt about humanity of the Jews.[83] The images make apparent the shift from Satan worshippers to Satan's supernatural shapeshifting helpers, to Satan himself. Though most people are not likely to literally believe a supernaturally demonic stereotype, the

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[79] Bergmann, W. (2008). Anti-Semitic attitudes in Europe: A comparative perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(2), 343-362.

[80] Lange, A., & Grossman, M. L. (2019). Jews and Judaism between Bedevilment and Source of Salvation: Christianity as a Cause of and a Cure against Antisemitism. *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, *1*, 133-64.

[81] Moss, C. & Baden, J. (2014). Blood Libel: the myth that fuels anti-Semitism. *CNN Belief Blog*, 6 August 2014.

[82] Weinberg, R. (2012). The Blood Libel in Eastern Europe. *Jewish History*, *26*(3-4), 275-285.

[83] Lange, A., & Grossman, M. L. (2019). Jews and Judaism between Bedevilment and Source of Salvation: Christianity as a Cause of and a Cure against Antisemitism. *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, *1*, 133-64.

dehumanization entailed by the mere association reduces empathy toward the group thus depicted. Reducing a human being to pure evil and perversion is a way to morally justify violence against them.

Dehumanization has repeatedly been observed in connection to wars and genocides, the most striking example being the dehumanization of Jewish people during the Hitler era. The massive National Socialist propaganda campaigns picturing Jews as all kinds of species from dangerous germs to poisonous mushrooms to rats to evil magicians served a purpose of justifying violence. By reformulating one's perception of the other as a human being, one also reformulates one's emotional response as well as the boundaries of what is morally permissible. The dehumanized fall outside the scope of our interpersonal moral code, thus becoming fair game for otherwise immoral behaviour.[84] Dehumanization is also used as post facto justifications of previous violent actions.[85] Thus, demonizing and dehumanizing stereotypes are the most dangerous ones. A study of dehumanization from 2021 showed that dehumanization of Jews occurred not only on explicitly antisemitic platforms such as Stormfront and 8kun, but also on minimal moderation platforms such as 4chan and Gab.[86]

5.4   A Social Media Study of Antisemitic Stereotypes

In order to assess the quantity of Jewish stereotypes in contemporary social media, we have studied posts from 4chan/pol/, Gab, Reddit, and Twitter that mention Jews or Jewishness, and determined how many of them that also contain stereotypes. We have also examined which of the classic stereotypes that are the most prevalent today. The material for the study consists of all posts published on any of the platforms[87] between 1 April 2019 and 30 September 2019. We have only analysed textual messages, no pictures or videos.
Using keyword expansion, we obtained a list of terms used synonymously with *Jew* or *Jewish* and related words.[88] This list was used to extract posts that mentioned Jews and related topics (see Table 4).

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[84] Maiese, M. (2003). Dehumanization: Beyond intractability. *G, Burgess & H. Burgess (Eds), Conflict research consortium.*

[85] Haslam, N., & Loughnan, S. (2014). Dehumanization and infrahumanization. *Annual review of psychology*, *65*, 399-423.

[86] Cohen, K, Kaati, L., Pelzer, B (2021) Heroes and Scapegoats. Right-wing extremism in digital environments. EU publications. ISBN 978-92-76-40320-3.

[87] Twitter is an exception. Due to its size, we have instead used a representative sample of posts published during the same period.

[88] For a description of the method of creating dictinaries using keyword expantion see Kaati, L., Cohen, K., Akrami, N., Shrestha, A., Fernquist, J., Pelzer, B., Welander, F., & Isbister, T. (2019) Digitalt slagfält. En studie av radikalnationalistiska digitala miljöer.[Digital Battlefield. A study of radical nationalistic digital environments]. Swedish Defence Research Agencey, FOI-R--4813--SE.

Table 4. Number of posts in the different sources during the time frame 2019-04-01 -
2019-09-30.

Source	Number of posts	Number of posts about Jews or Jewishness	Percentage of posts about Jews or Jewishness
4chan/pol/	16,443,306	1,063,076	6.50 %
Gab	6,476,517	174,875	2.70 %
Reddit	945,664,063	1,004,823	0.11 %
Twitter (1%)	918,876,857	197,360	0.02 %
Total	1,887,460743	2,440,134	0.13 %

To identify categories of stereotypes, a representative sample of 386 posts was
assessed manually by three annotators.[89] The annotators agreed that six distinct
stereotypes could be found in the sample (see Table 2). Posts that did not contain
stereotypes were coded as either *Negative attitude toward Jews*, *Positive/neutral*
(neither stereotypical nor negative), or *Unsure* (not enough information or
difficult to comprehend).

Table 5. Categories used in the coding.

1	Unhealthy values
2	Deceit
3	Power
4	Money
5	Devilishness
6	Jewish looks
7	No stereotype – negative attitude toward Jews
8	Unsure
9	Positive/neutral

A total of 2,600 posts mentioning Jews were categorized according to the
categories in Table 5. The categories 1 - 6 are not mutually exclusive, meaning
that a post that contains more than one stereotype can be coded into more than
one category. The study yielded four results.

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[89] A total of 386 posts are enough to get a representative view (with a confidence level of 95%) of the 2.4
million posts about jews or Jewishness. There is no overlap between these 386 posts and the 2600 posts
that were coded in the study

The first result concerns how much Jews are even discussed in the different media outlets. As seen in Table 4, there was a notable variation between the outlets. On 4chan/pol/ and Gab, the percentage of posts mentioning Jews reached 6.5% and 2.7% respectively. On Reddit and Twitter, the corresponding figures are less than 0.2%. The vast difference in the degree of mention of Jews can be partly explained by the degree of specialisation on 4chan/pol/ and Gab on the one hand, and Reddit and Twitter on the other. The two former platforms tend to focus on news, politics, and current events, while the two latter cover a wide range of discussion topics. Another reason for the difference, which will be more obvious in the next graph, has to do with different moderation policies.

The second result concerns the degree of Jewish stereotypes in the sample of posts mentioning Jews. Almost 35% contained either hostility toward or negative stereotypes about Jews (see Figure 4). Out of the posts that mention Jews, 25% contained at least one negative Jewish stereotype, while 9.4% contained hostility toward Jews without stereotyping. Thus, almost 35% of all posts mentioning something related to Jews contain some kind of negative attitude toward Jews. However, the vast variance between the different sources makes generalization precarious. There is no true figure expressing the universal degree of antisemitism on the internet. To put it bluntly, some platforms are more antisemitic than others.
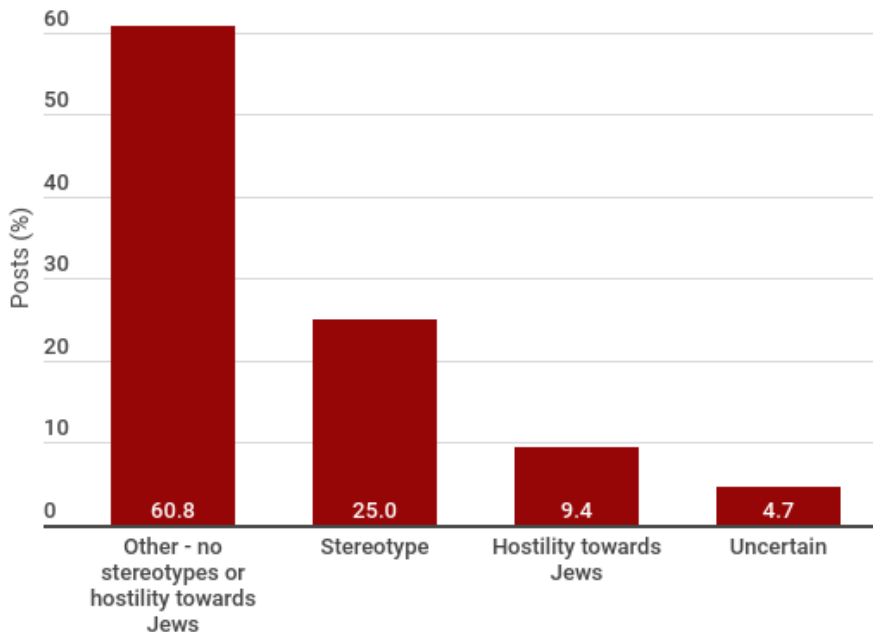

Figure 4. Amount of posts about Jews or Jewishness that contains negative stereotypes or hostility towards Jews.

The third result concerns the distribution of stereotypes and hostility over the outlets. The differences partly correspond with the differences in frequency of mentions (see Figure 5). The greatest part of stereotypical or hostile posts were found on Gab (49.6%) and 4chan/pol/ (37.7%). These differences can be attributed partly to the differences in user rules and moderation which are far less restrictive on 4chan and Gab. Perhaps as a function of the user rules, there are also differences in the conversational climate or atmosphere on the different outlets. An earlier study on hateful content revealed that there are significantly more hateful posts on 4chan and Gab than on Twitter and Reddit.[90]
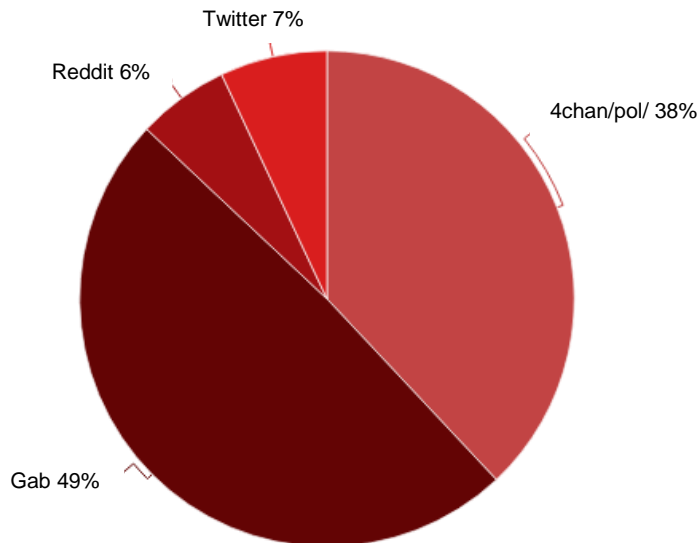
Figur 5. Distribution of the posts that contained stereotypes and hostility toward Jews.

The fourth result concerns the stereotypes that were most common in the sample. The analysis suggests that stereotypes about power are the most

[90] Kaati, L., Cohen, K., Akrami, N., Shrestha, A., Fernquist, J., Pelzer, B., Welander, F., & Isbister, T. (2019) Digitalt slagfält. En studie av radikalnationalistiska digitala miljöer.[Digital Battlefield. A study of radical nationalistic digital environments]. Swedish Defence Research Agencey, FOI-R--4813--SE, Zannettou, S., Bradlyn, B., De Cristofaro, E., Kwak, E., Sirivianos, M., Stringhini, G., & Blackburn, J. (2018). What is Gab? A Bastion of Free Speech or an Alt-Right Echo Chamber? *WWW '18 Companion.* IW3C2 2018, Lyon: France.

common (more than a fourth of the posts with stereotypical content), closely followed by deceit, unhealthy values, and demonization. (see Figure 6). Stereotypes about money and physical attributes appeared much less than the other stereotypes.
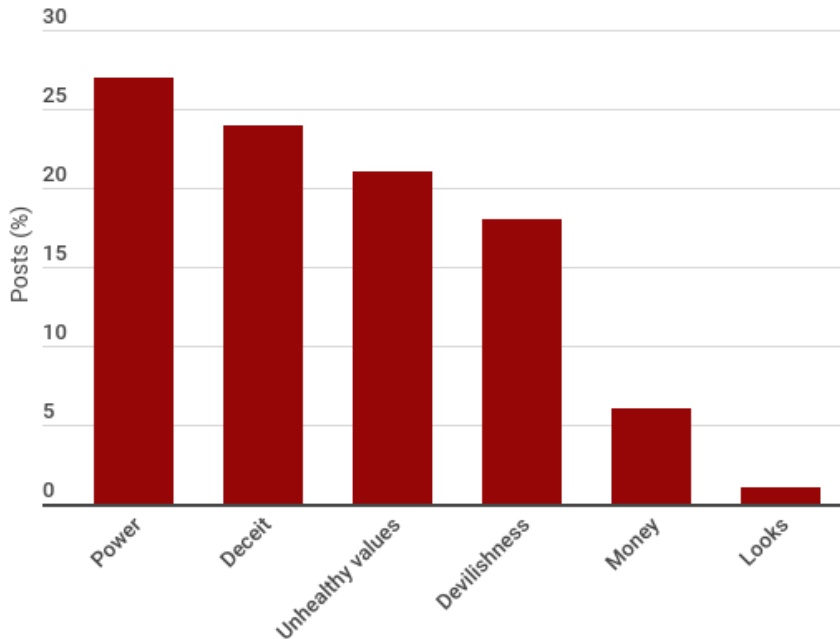

Figur 6. The distribution of the different stereotype descriptions of Jews in the posts.

The stereotypes of Jewish power and of deceit and manipulation are always present in conspiracy narratives. Most of the posts that were coded as deceit were about self-serving censorship and trying to impose limitations on the freedom of speech. Such assertions are closely tied to the narrative of Jewish power, since only the powerful can impose censorship. More than 20% of the stereotypical posts expressed a stereotype about Jews as spreading unhealthy values. This stereotype also appears in antisemitic conspiracy narratives, asserting that Jews spread chaos and conflict to weaken society in preparation for their takeover.[91] The demonising stereotypes often occurred together with other stereotypes.

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[91] Volpato, C., & Durante, F. (2009). Empowering the "Jewish threat": The protocols of the elders of Zion. *Journal of US China Public Administration*, 6(1), pp 23-36.

6   Holocaust Denial and Distortion

Holocaust denial, i.e., efforts to deny established facts about the genocide of the Jews during World War II, encompasses a range of assertions: for instance, that there was no centralized plan for the mass murder of European Jews, that death camps or gas chambers did not exist, or that the Jews who lost their lives during World War II were not murdered but regular victims of war. As of today, Holocaust denial is illegal in 17 countries, and it is recommended by *The European Union's Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia* that denying or grossly trivializing 'crimes of genocide' should be made punishable in all member states.

In the 20th century, Holocaust denial (which sometimes goes under the euphemisms 'historical revisionism' or 'negationism') was mainly spread in far-right circles. The Holocaust denial of the 21st century is spread all over the ideological spectrum and usually does not take the form of complete denial, but rather leans toward distortion and trivialization. The term *Holocaust distortion* is used to denote a position that does not deny that Jews were murdered during World War II but denies historical records of the numbers of people killed or the methods used. Holocaust distortion and denial both imply that survivors and witnesses are lying, and often make use of the stereotypes about Jewish deceit and greed to explain why someone would fabricate such lies.[92] In this respect they adhere to the same pattern as so-called antisemitism denial, i.e., the belief that Jews as a group falsely accuse others of antisemitism or even commit false flag attacks to make antisemitism look exaggerated, either for financial gains or to silence any criticism against themselves.[93]

Holocaust denial and distortion is generally accompanied by promotion of antisemitic stereotypes, such as greed, power, and deceptiveness. In this chapter, we examine if Holocaust denial, despite current legislation, occurs on social media platforms.

6.1   The Internet and the Holocaust

In the early days of internet, many active Holocaust deniers found a way to easily distribute their often lengthy arguments. Reviews, essays and even books were published on dedicated websites. One of the oldest and most central Holocaust-denying organisations is the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), which was founded in 1978 in the United States with the aim of spreading 'historical

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[92] Bergmann, W. (2008). Anti-Semitic attitudes in Europe: A comparative perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(2), 343-362.

[93] Wodak, R. (2018). The radical right and antisemitism. *The Oxford handbook of the radical right*, 61-85.

revisionism'.[94] Until 2002, IHR published *The Journal of Historical Review*, and hosted several conferences, although now they mainly operate through their website and e-mail. IHR has also distributed books by the British Holocaust denier David Irving, who has been involved in several legal proceedings and also served a prison sentence in Austria for denying the existence of Auschwitz gas chambers. [95] Another example of early online Holocaust denial are the websites of German Holocaust denier Germar Rudolf and his retailer Castle Hill Publishers, who provide *The Holocaust Handbooks*, a series of books written by Rudolf. While Rudolf's Holocaust denial has had him sentenced to prison at least twice, all his books and films remain accessible online.

Although old-school Holocaust deniers like David Irving and Germar Rudolf were early adopters of the internet, they do not seem to have adapted equally well to the new generation of digital media. The activity on Holocaust denying websites has lessened notably during the last decades. Aside from legislative changes, the prominent profiles of the movement have aged or passed away, while their style of argumentation has become obsolete. The old-school Holocaust denial movement was based on, and gained some credibility from, lengthy argumentations in a pseudo-scientific tone. This does not adapt well to the digital scene of today, where text is preferred short and ephemeral.[96] While adhering to the ideas of the older generation, a new generation of Holocaust deniers choose instead to disseminate their views using memes and jokes to mock the notion of the Holocaust. This practice manifests itself for instance by a specific vocabulary with words like *hollowhoax*, *holohoax*, and *lolocaust*, or by using scare quotes (quotation marks placed round a word or phrase to draw attention to purportedly inaccurate use) on words like *'holocaust'* or *'survivor'*.

6.2   A Study of Holocaust Denial on Social Media

Holocaust denying content can be found on almost all social media platforms. In 2020, The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) conducted a study on the presence of Holocaust denial content on Facebook, Twitter and Reddit. They found that at least 36 Facebook groups with a total of 366,068 followers were specifically dedicated to Holocaust denial or reproduced Holocaust denial content. They also found that when following public Facebook pages that

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[94] IHR claim not to question the Holocaust itself, rather they question the way it is described in current historiography.
[95] BBC (2006) Holocaust denier Irving is jailed, BBC News, 20 February 2006.
[96] Lynch, M. P. (2016). *The internet of us: Knowing more and understanding less in the age of big data*. WW Norton & Company.

contained Holocaust denial content, Facebook recommended further similar content.[97]

Holocaust denial content can also be marked with hashtags for example #HolocaustNeverHappened, #Holohoax, #HolocaustIsFake, and #HolocaustIsALie. On Twitter posts tagged with the some of the hashtags above can be found, although to a very limited extent.

To get an estimate of the presence of holocaust denial in some of the digital environments, a list of Holocaust denial terminology was created, and occurrences of such words were measured in some of the digital environments during a specific time period. The list of Holocaust denial words can be found in Table 6.

Table 6. Holocaust denial words.

"holocaust"/ 'holocaust'
'survivor'/"survivor"/ 'survivors'/"survivors"
alleged holocaust
so-called holocaust
"six million"/ six million lie/ six-million-lie/ Sixmillionlie
Lolocaust
Hollowhoax/ holohoax
holocaust ™/ holoco $ t
muh holocaust

We have used a dataset consisting of all posts that were made between 1 November 2020 and 31 January 2021 on VNN Forum, Stormfront, the Chans and Gab. During that time period Holocaust denial words occurred 2,624 times on 4Chan/pol, 1,311 times on Gab, 47 times on Stormfront, 42 times on VNN Forum, 39 times on 8Kun/pnd/, 16 times on Twitter (1% sample), and 147 times on Reddit. Since the sizes of the environment differs, the results are presented as the proportion of posts containing a Holocaust denial word together with the number of occurrences. The result is shown in Figure 7.

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[97] Guhl, J. & Davey, J. (2020) Hosting the 'Holohoax': A Snapshot of Holocaust Denial Across Social Media. ISD briefing.
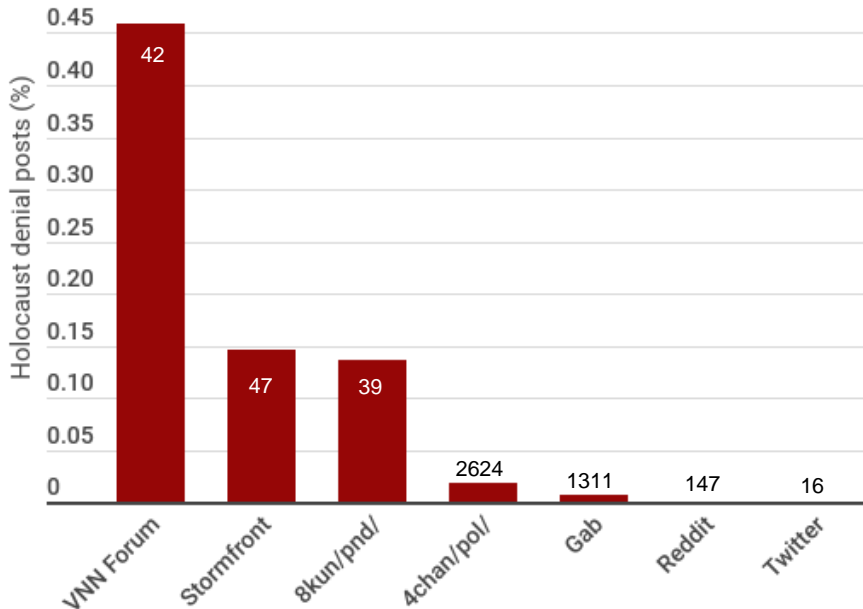
Figure 7. The proportion of Holocaust denial posts in the different environments. The number of Holocaust denial posts during the 3 month period is also written for each environment.

The most common holocaust denial word in all the environments was *Holohoax*. It was also common to put words like *survivor* within quotation marks as a way to cast doubt on the reality of the holocaust. As expected, VNN Forum and Stormfront have the largest proportion of Holocaust denial words, followed by 8kun/pnd/. 4chan/pol and Gab had the largest amount of Holocaust denial posts in absolute numbers, but the size of the platforms makes the proportion of such posts lower than on VNN Forum, Stormfront and 8kun/pnd/. The proportion of Holocaust denial postings on Reddit and Twitter occur very sparsely, however, it is remarkable that they occur at all on these platforms.

7 Concluding Remarks

In this report, we have studied a set of different facets of antisemitism in social media. First, we have described how Jews are targeted online, by examining which synonyms, metaphors and codes that are used, and by measuring the amount of toxic language targeting Jews in relation to toxic language targeting other groups. Second, we have discussed antisemitism in conspiracy narratives and antisemitic stereotypes. Third, we have examined the prevalence of Holocaust denying content on social media platforms.

To summarize the results of our different studies, we can conclude that antisemitic content exists on all the social media platforms that we have analysed. However, there is a vast quantitative difference regarding the amount of antisemitic content on the different platforms.

In the forums and platforms include in this study, almost 35% of all posts mentioning Jews or Jewishness express negativity towards Jews. Most of these negative posts were found on the minimal moderation platforms Gab and 4chan/pol/, with a notably smaller amount on Twitter and Reddit.

Toxic comments targeting Jews appears in two to five percent of all posts on racially and ethnically motivated ideological forums. On the minimal moderation platforms, the amount of toxic comments targeting Jews varied between one and three percent. On the large social media platforms, the amount of toxic comments targeting Jews was very small.

Explicit Holocaust denial occurs very sparsely on the large social media platforms. During a three-month period, we found all in all over 4,000 occurrences of Holocaust denial terminology on the different environments included in our study. The largest proportion of Holocaust denial content was found on ideologically profiled radical nationalist forums, though the largest number of Holocaust denial content was found on the minimal moderation platforms.

The fact that Holocaust denial, which is a crime in several countries, can be found on the open internet exemplifies the difficulties of applying national legislations to the global internet. It seems instead that the onus needs to be put on social media platform companies to provide safe digital environments.[98] Indeed, there are ongoing efforts, including several organizations and companies, to reduce the presence of antisemitism in digital environments. Sometimes, this can be done using small means, as when Google in 2016 altered their

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[98] Gillespie, T. (2018). Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media. Yale University Press.

autocomplete function so that the search phrase 'Are Jews' was no longer autocompleted by the word 'evil'.[99]

One precedential example concerns the social media accounts of British rapper and activist Wiley, who in July 2020 published a thread of antisemitic tweets. This elicited reactions that eventually got him permanently banned from Twitter.[100] Wiley's Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok accounts, with a total of 940,000 followers, were subsequently shutdown, as was his Facebook account. Because of the Wiley incident, Facebook's user rules were changed so as not to permit the spreading of antisemitic stereotypes or conspiracy theories.[101]

At EU-level, the European Commission together with Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Microsoft have agreed on a 'Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online',[102] with the aim of preventing and countering the spread of illegal hate speech online. Since then, Instagram, Snapchat, Dailymotion, Jeuxvideo.com, and TikTok have also joined the initiative. The Code of Conduct requests the platforms to implement rules and community standards that forbid hate speech and to have systems and teams to review any possible violative content that is reported to them.

Detection and removal of antisemitic content will help in limiting its spread. Banning or suspending members who publish such content may also have an effect on reducing the reach, yet the banning of users has been shown to sometimes cause migration to less moderated platforms.[103] Thus, while detection and removal of antisemitic content, as well as constantly updated user rules, will make antisemitic content less accessible for a larger audience, it will not be enough. There will remain fringe platforms that the most avid spreaders of antisemitism are likely to use instead, meaning that we will have to accept that not all antisemitic content can be removed from the internet without impinging on fundamental rights and freedoms. To obtain maximal reduction of antisemitic content online, cooperative efforts involving platform companies and governments, such as the 'Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online' are pivotal. To tackle the problem of the remaining antisemitic content online, educational efforts to increase the public's resistance to destructive conspiracy narratives and hateful language may be helpful.

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[99] Gibbs, S. (2016). Google alters autocomplete to remove 'are Jews evil' suggestion. The Guardian, December 5, 2016.

[100] White, A. (2020). Wiley permanently suspended from Twitter over antisemitic posts. *The Independent*, 29 juli 2020.

[101] CAA, Campaign Against Antisemitism (2020) *Wiley finally banned from Youtube following appeal by CAA*. 2 August 2020.

[102] https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-code-conduct-countering-illegal-hate-speech-online_en

[103] Ali, S., Saeed, M. H., Aldreabi, E., Blackburn, J., De Cristofaro, E., Zannettou, S., & Stringhini, G. (2021). Understanding the Effect of Deplatforming on Social Networks. In 13th ACM Web Science Conference 2021 (WebSci '21). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 187–195.

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