Semantics, scales and solidarities in the study of antisemitism and Islamophobia

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Version of record first published: 09 Nov 2012.

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Abstract

This article delineates a number of conceptual-normative, analytical and political concerns, characterized as matters of (1) 'semantics', (2) 'scales' and (3) 'solidarities', in the ways in which we can approach an understanding of the relationships between antisemitism and Islamophobia. As such it takes its cue from Goldberg's (2009) insistence that in addition to comparativist methodologies employed in the study of race and racism, we also need relational methodologies. That is to say that where the former compares and contrasts, the latter also seeks to *connect*. In so doing, the article harnesses the explanatory power of long-established organizing concepts within the study of race and racism, to explore how racial categories of religious minorities continue to be formed. Taking its cue from the introduction to this special issue (Meer this issue), this article explores what purchase the ideas of 'cultural racism' and 'racialization' can bring to bear on our conceptualization of each.

Keywords: racialization; antisemitism; Islamophobia; Jews; Muslims; Europe.

Introduction

In their wide-ranging reader on theories of race and racism, Back and Solomos (2000, p. 257) remark that 'one of the regrettable features of much contemporary theorising about race and racism has been the tendency to leave the question of antisemitism to one side, treating it as almost a separate issue.' Over a decade later one could make the same lament of the discussion of Islamophobia. One reason for the oversight on both counts is that there remains, as Rana (2007, p. 150) describes, 'a lingering question as to the place of the race concept in relation to religion', something that bears both a historical and contemporary dynamic.

Routledge
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As elaborated earlier (Meer this issue), the overlap of race and religion is evident prior to the formation of modernity; an overlap that subsequently proliferated through an 'emphasis on epistemology and the knowing subject' (Amin 2010, p. 8). This conceptual intermingling is supported by Thomas's (2010) challenging critique of the omission of historical Jewish–Christian relations from understandings of race and racism, and so is consistent with the thrust of the argument developed here. This is that Jews and Muslims have been important subjects in the emergence of race; yet it is a provenance that is frequently ignored in theories of racism as modern and premised upon biology – over and above religion – as *the* principle marker of difference.

This historical background assumes a contemporary political significance. For at the beginning of the twenty-first century a number of cross-national data sets, including the Pew Global Attitudes Project (PGAP 2008), report sharp increases in antisemitic and Islamophobic sentiment across Europe (in terms of both attitude and behaviour as discussed below). More specifically, while the two phenomena sometimes appear to be shadowing each other across different national contexts, there remains a distinct lacuna of characterizations in the similarities and differences between the two.

The purpose therefore of this article is, first, to delineate a number of conceptual-normative, analytical and political concerns, characterized as matters of (1) 'semantics', (2) 'scales' and (3) 'solidarities', in the ways in which we can approach an understanding of the relationships between antisemitism and Islamophobia. As such it takes its cue from Goldberg's (2009, p. 1274) insistence that in addition to comparativist methodologies employed in the study of race and racism, we also require relational methodologies. That is to say that where the former compares and contrasts, the latter also seeks to *connect* racial logics in the manner set out earlier (Meer this issue). However, this article is not solely a methodological intervention, for, second, it seeks to harness the explanatory power of long-established organizing concepts within the study of race and racism, to explore how while 'critical race theorists busily deconstruct and debunk race concept, racial categories continue to be formed' (Mobasher 2005, p. 2; cf. Amin 2010). It is striking to observe the virtual absence of an established literature on race and racism in the discussion of Islamophobia, something that is only marginally more present in the discussion of antisemitism. To begin to redress this and the anomaly identified by Back and Solomos (2000), the article will make a theoretical contribution exploring what purchase the ideas of 'cultural racism' and 'racialization' can bring to bear on the conceptualization of these matters.

Semantics

Beginning with conceptual-normative issues in the semantic characterizations of these phenomena, we can look to the ways in which some authors differentiate between the 'anti-' components oriented against religious doctrine per se, and the people characterized as followers of that doctrine. In this respect Klug's (2004) work on antisemitism is most helpful, particularly where he maintains that the logic of antisemitism is 'a priori' in so far as antisemites do not generalize from instances but are disposed to see Jews in a certain negative light. That is to say that our working definition of antisemitism as hostility towards Jews *as Jews* should be understood as hostility towards Jews 'as Jews', 'in which Jews are perceived as something other than what they are. Or perhaps, more accurately, hostility towards Jews as *not* Jews' (Klug 2003, p. 123). He elaborates:

> For the "Jew" toward whom the anti-Semite feels hostile is not a *real* Jew at all. . . . Antisemitism is best defined not by an attitude to Jews but by a definition of the "Jew". . . . Wilhelm Marr, who founded the Antisemitism Liga in Germany in 1879, described Jews as . . . "a flexible, tenacious, intelligent, foreign tribe that knows how to bring abstract reality into play in many different ways. Not individual Jews, but the Jewish spirit and Jewish consciousness have conquered the world." . . . In short, antisemitism is the process of turning Jews into "Jews".

So the emphasis is not on religion or religious doctrine per se – on Judaism – but on an imagined and generalized 'collective Jew'. While this allows us to differentiate antisemitism from what Iganski and Kosmin (2003) term Judeophobia, it should not confer the impression that the anti-Jewish sentiment commences with antisemitism. For as Jacobson (2009, p. 305) reminds us, 'the history of racial Jewishness is not merely the history of antisemitism; it encompasses the ways in which both Jews and non-Jews have construed Jewishness . . . over time.' Indeed, on surveying the nineteenth century, Hannah Arendt (1966, p. xiv) quipped that 'whereas anti-Jewish sentiments were widespread among the educated classes of Europe throughout the nineteenth century, antisemitism as an ideology remained, with very few exceptions, the prerogative of crackpots in general and the lunatic fringe in particular.' What this article is insisting is that we need to understand the role of racial mechanics in how 'the move from *Judenhass* (Jew hatred) to antisemitism marks a crucial turning point of the late 19th century . . . as a shift in alterity from religion to race' (Bunzl 2005, p. 537).

How then can this relate to a semantic characterization of anti-Muslim sentiment? A not dissimilar description of the logic invoked by Klug may be found in Levey and Modood's (2008, p. 239) account of 'shifts from inductive to deductive negative generalisations'. In the case of Muslims, they maintain that where 'inductive negative stereotyping can be seen clearly in the security policies of "racial profiling", [in which] security services concentrate their attention on people who look or behave a certain way', this crystallizes into negative deductions about Muslims that are then applied to Muslims in general. These delineations are tentative but I am going to proceed with this distinction a little further in arguing that Islamophobia – like antisemitism – is rarely a purely religious discrimination.

This view is not universally shared, which is why the very term 'Islamophobia' is challenged by otherwise sympathetic commentators who maintain that the phenomenon in question has, in a binary fashion, less to do with a theological conflict than a secular and modern (perhaps even postmodern) antipathy. To others meanwhile, both terms would neglect 'the active and aggressive part of discrimination' (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 6) by conceiving discrimination as a collection of pathological beliefs, inferred through the language of 'phobias'. This more *general* complaint need not be specific to Islamophobia for, as Bleich (2011, p. 1586) observes, 'with parallel concepts such as homophobia or xenophobia, Islamophobia connotes a broader set of negative attitudes and emotions directed at individuals or groups because of their perceived membership in a defined category.' The more *specific* complaint is that the term does not adequately account for the nature of the prejudice directed at Muslims (see Halliday 1999). For example, Erdenir (2010, p. 29) champions the idea of 'Muslimophobia' over 'Islamophobia', because 'the former targets Muslims as citizens or residents of European countries rather than Islam as a religion'. One response is that this tends to ignore the messy nature of race, in that the majority of Muslims who report experiencing street-level discrimination recount – as testimonies to the 2004 Runneymede Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI 2004) bear witness – that they do so more when they appear 'conspicuously Muslim' than when they do not. We have elsewhere stated that 'since this can result from wearing Islamic attire it becomes less relevant – if it is even possible – to separate the impact of *appearing Muslim* from the impact of *appearing to follow Islam*' (Meer and Modood, 2009, p. 74). The mixed compositions implied here are also expressed in by Amin's (2010, p. 8) observation that:

[A]s the scrutiny of Muslim bodies intensified after 9/11 and 7/7 in the so-called "War on Terror", the "phonotypical" evaluations – new upon old – returned to typecast the Asians ... along with

Muslims elsewhere in Britain, as cultural aliens and national threats. Pinning new aversions such as anxiety, suspicion, fear and hate to local Muslims has relied ... on linking vicariously constructed phenotypes (including prayer caps, beards, baggy trousers, rucksacks, Yorkshire accents, loud music, shiny cars and shabby dwellings) to terrorism, radical Islam, sexual slavery, drug trafficking and cultural backwardness.

I therefore contend that instead of trying to neatly delineate social tendencies that are intertwined, they should instead be understood as a composite of cultural racism that facilitates the racialization of Jewish and Muslim minorities. What is remarkable, however, is how little there is by way of an exposition of the relational mechanics of cultural racism and racialization in antisemitism and Islamophobia.[1]

We have elsewhere tried to elaborate this and so refer readers there in order to avoid repetition (Meer and Modood 2009, 2010), but the core argument is that we can further develop a reading of racialization pioneered by Robert Miles. This is a reading that is reminiscent of the traditions of W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, and in Miles's (1989, p. 75) conception of racialization he seeks to capture the ways in which *racial processes* can attribute 'meaning to somatic characteristics' in a way that 'presumes a social psychological theory that explains the nature and dynamics of the process' (Miles 1989, p. 75). As I argue in the introduction (Meer this issue), this characterization captures several of the core components of antisemitic and Islamophobic sentiment.

A perhaps competing formulation that has been offered by others is the conception of cultural racism, referring to the assumption that cultural difference functions like nature, through the ways in which '*cultural* demarcations are often drawn and used in a form that *naturalizes* them by implying that they are more or less *immutable*' (Rattansi 2007, p. 104, original emphasis). It is a phenomenon that has been characterized as a 'new racism' (Barker 1981), 'neo-racism' (Balibar 1991) and 'differentialist racism' (Modood 1997), among others, and broadly as 'a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences' (Balibar 1991, pp. 21–2). Some see the two as mutually reinforcing, where 'the "new racism" coexists with and can easily slip into hard biological conceptions of stock and even species' (Rattansi 2007, pp. 100–1), something that helps us guard against temporally locating cultural racism as a recent phenomenon. This is complemented by Goldberg's (2006, p. 331) study 'mapping the racial contours of contemporary European self-conception, historically understood'. In this he traces 'the European imaginary of the European, the Black, the Jew, and the Muslim' (Goldberg 2006, p. 331) to argue that while 'the

relational frame for thinking through race in the European context has usually been ordered in dualistic terms . . . there is a third major artery' (Goldberg 2006, p. 362). This is comprised of 'The Muslim' (Goldberg 2006, p. 344), which, in Bleich's (2006, p. 17) terms, 'has all the earmarks of classic racialization', namely 'the classification of such a group as inherently dangerous and inferior' (Bleich 2006, p. 17). What these examples make manifest are the compositions contained in working references to racial and religious antipathy, but also that modern biological racism has some roots in pre-modern religious antipathy.

Scales

I want now to turn to two more analytical issues of 'scale'. The first meaning of scale refers to the frequency of antisemitism and Islamophobia; the second meaning is more geopolitical in referring to the contemporary European landscape in which they occur. A good place to begin a discussion of the former is with the ongoing PGAP (2008) survey of almost 25,000 people across twenty-four countries. This reported that antisemitism had more than doubled in Spain over the previous three years, with a rise from 21 per cent to 46 per cent, and that more than one in three Poles and Russians also held unfavourable opinions of Jews. In the same period antisemitism also rose from 21 per cent to 25 per cent in Germany and from 12 per cent to 20 per cent in France among those saying that they had unfavourable opinions of Jews. Even in Britain, where extreme right-wing political parties have never flourished in the sorts of ways familiar on the continent, partly due to an electoral system that squeezes out smaller parties, survey evidence compiled by Field (2007) reports that hostility to British Jews continues to exist and often stems from the view that 'the loyalty of British Jews to Israel transcends their allegiance to Britain' (Field 2007, p. 465).

Such findings have been added to others in support of the view that Britain is experiencing a resurgence of antisemitism. For example, the Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 629 antisemitic incidents in 2010 – the second-highest annual total since it began recording anti-Semitic incidents in 1984. These incidents include cases of extreme violence, assault, damage and desecration of property, threats and abusive behaviour.[2] Such ongoing concerns have resulted in a high-profile All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism (APPIA 2006), which has also been taken up in public and media discussion in a way that has incorporated the concerns of leading Jewish spokes-people and intellectuals.[3]

Islamophobia, meanwhile, according to a number of surveys, has also risen.[4] The same European-wide Pew data, for example, reported

that opinions of Muslims in almost all of the twenty-four countries surveyed were more negative than they were of Jews, with more than half of Spaniards and half of Germans stating that they did not like Muslims, while the figures for Poland and France were 46 per cent and 38 per cent for those holding unfavourable opinions of Muslims. Indeed, while Americans and Britons displayed the lowest levels of antisemitism, one in four in both countries was hostile to Muslims. This means is that in the USA, France and Germany unfavourable views of Muslims are roughly at twice the rate of unfavourable views of Jews, while in Poland and Spain the former are only a few percentage points more.

While quantitative surveys do not always provide the best accounts of prejudice and discrimination, they can be useful in discerning trends – alerting us in this case to the widespread prevalence of an anti-Muslim feeling. In the last British Attitudes Survey, for example, Voas and Ling (2010, pp. 80–1) report that one fifth of the total population responds negatively only to Muslims, and that relatively few people feel unfavourable towards any other religious or ethnic group on its own. Across Europe meanwhile, Zick, Kupper and Hövermann (2011, pp. 62–3) too conclude:

> [I]t is conspicuous that Europeans are largely united in their rejection of Muslims and Islam. The significantly most widespread anti-Muslim attitudes are found in Germany, Hungary, Italy and Poland, closely followed by France, Great Britain and the Netherlands. The extent of anti-Muslim attitudes is least in Portugal. In absolute terms, however, the eight countries [Britain, France, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Hungary] differ little in their levels of prejudice towards Muslims.

The visibility of Muslims, especially of the display of what are sometimes termed 'contested signifiers' in terms of dress and appearance, is frequently the means through which this Islamophobic feeling is turned into Islamophobic behaviour (Meer, Dwyer and Modood 2010). A good European-wide illustration may be found in the summary report on Islamophobia published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia shortly after 9/11. This identified a rise in the number of 'physical and verbal threats being made, particularly to those visually identifiable as Muslims, in particular women wearing the hijab' (Allen and Nielsen 2002, p. 16). What is of particular note is that despite variations in the number and correlation of physical and verbal threats directed at Muslim populations among the individual nation states, one overarching feature that emerged among the fifteen EU countries was the tendency for *Muslim women* to be attacked because of how the *hijab* signifies an Islamic

identity (Allen and Nielsen 2002, p. 35). This is precisely how Miles (1989, p. 87) elaborated that the social dynamics of racialization can in practice become mixed up with a host of different kinds of '-isms', and frequently overlap in 'sharing a common content or generalised object which allows them to be joined together or interrelated, to be expressed in ways in which elements of one are incorporated in the other' (Miles 1989, p. 87).

This returns us to the earlier discussion concerning the distinction between antipathy towards Muslims and antipathy towards those appearing to follow Islam, these *overlapping* and *interacting* 'articulations' of Islamophobia can be illustrated further in the attitude polling of non-Muslim Britons one year after 9/11, in which reference to religious doctrine, practitioners of a religion and violent extremism is intertwined. For example, Field (2007, p. 455) reports that:

> ... there could be little doubt that 9/11 had taken some toll. Views of Islam since 9/11 were more negative for 47%, and of Britain's Muslims for 35% (almost three times the first post-9/11 figure).... Dislike for Islam was expressed by 36%, three in four of whom were fearful of what it might do in the next few years. One quarter rejected the suggestion that Islam was mainly a peaceful religion, with terrorists comprising only a tiny minority ...

If these examples and the preceding discussion begin to make manifest a number of confusions contained within contemporary references to racial and religious antipathy towards Muslims and Islam, then – as debates concerning racism and other religious minorities, not least with respect to antisemitism, betray (Meer and Noorani 2008) – this is not uniquely problematical in the conceptualization of anti-Muslim sentiment. But it is also related to a second issue of 'scale' that goes beyond frequency per se and relates directly to Bunzl's (2007) observation that we have progressed from the 'Jewish question' that haunted the continent throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This cyclically facilitated episodes of persecution and genocide. In contrast there is evidence to suggest that the contemporary representation of Jewish minorities within European public discourses has undergone a process of 'normalisation', perhaps exemplified by 'the ways in which leaders today champion the preservation ... of Europe's Jewish communities' (Bunzl 2005, p. 502). And so it comes as some relief to learn that 'no European party of any significance and this includes the various extreme right-wing movements on the continent, currently champions a specifically antisemitic agenda' (Bunzl 2005, p. 502). An optimistic interpretation of this state of affairs would be to emphasize the existence of something like a

mainstream consensus on the current unacceptability of public articulations of antisemitism (Benbassa 2007).

Of course, and as we have already noted, this does not mean that European societies are free from antisemitism. Far from it. The point instead is that while it is sociologically documented that Jews have historically been accused of interfering with the alleged purity of nation states (Arendt 1966, pp. 11–53), from the vantage point of a supranational Europe, Jewish minorities are 'in'. That is that they have moved on from being the perpetual 'historical outsiders'; as Bunzl (2005, p. 502) elaborates:

> ...consider Europe's realities against the backdrop of antisemitism's political project. That project sought to secure the purity of the ethnic nation-state, a venture that has become obsolete in the supranational context of the European Union. There, Jews no longer figure as the principal Other but as the veritable embodiment of the post national order.

Irrespective of whether or not Bunzl is too optimistic (e.g. in Werbner's (2005) account it is *precisely because* Jews are assimilated that they are portrayed as a threat), the concern for this article, following Goldberg (2009), is how the problematic he identifies relates to Muslims. For according to Valery Giscard d'Estang (former president of France and head of the Convention on the Future of Europe), their status is rightly more uncertain because they have 'a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life' (quoted in Bunzl 2007, p. 32). Pertinent here is the late Pim Fortuyn's (1997) insistence on the need to defend European 'Judeo-Christian humanistic culture' and the ways in which he characterized Judaism as 'a creative and constructive element in society' (quoted in Bunzl 2007, p. 38). Or as his most natural heir Geert Wilders (2010) has it, as long as Europe is unwilling to defend 'the ideas of Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem', it will 'lose everything: our cultural identity, our democracy, our rule of law, our liberties, our freedom'. Hence Jean Marie Le Pen characterized himself as the defender of European Jewry, arguing that 'the Jews understand who is truly responsible for antisemitism' (quoted in Bunzl 2007, p. 32). I return to this below, but such sentiments may be contrasted with the same European political parties' attitudes towards Muslims. See, for example, statements made by the Austrian Freedom party on the prospect of Turkey's accession to the EU, the Flemish Interest/Flemish Block's statement that 'Islam is now the no. 1 enemy not only of Europe but of the world', as well as the La Front Nationale literature on the 'Islamization of France' (Bunzl 2007, pp. 1–47). Parallels can be found in the less mainstream far-right British National Party (BNP) and the

English Defense League (EDL), which frequently campaigns on what it describes as 'the Muslim problem'.[5]

This returns us to the saliency and political force of the Eurabia panic set out in the introduction and elsewhere (Meer 2012, this issue), and it is worth noting here how the visceral cultural response to the prospect of Turkish accession to the EU, and the very notion of an 'Islamized Europe' ushered in through such a prospect, bears a remarkable similarity to Matar's (2009, p. 215) description of how the relationship between Ottoman and Habsburg empires was transformed into 'a cosmic conflict of Christianity against Islam, of the Christian cross versus the Muslim crescent'. Thus from the first decades of the sixteenth century onwards it became difficult to dislocate Islam and Muslims from the Ottoman Empire. In the present climate, this translates into roughly two-thirds of respondents in Western Europe (ranging from 59 per cent in Belgium to 70 per cent in Denmark) perceiving greater cooperation with the Muslim world as a threat (WEF 2008, p. 139). It is in this context that the charter of *Cities Against Islamization* has risen to warn that the 'fast demographic increase of the Islamic population in the West threatens to result in an Islamic majority in Western European cities in a few decades.'[6] In addition to the Eurabia literature outlined earlier, we could include here Emmanuel Brenner's incendiary thesis on France's 'lost territories' – lost to its antisemitic Muslim inhabitants – which was warmly received in sections of the French intelligentsia (see Peace 2009).

Solidarities

These developments bring me on to the third relational issue in exploring what purchase the ideas of 'cultural racism' and 'racialization' can bring to bear on the conceptualization of antisemitism and Islamophobia. This concerns the matter of 'solidarities' and is therefore political in orientation. By solidarities I do not refer to the relationships or non-relationships between Jewish and Muslim groups. Despite many positive enterprises and initiatives, one fears that Ansari and Cesarani (2007, p. 1) are unfortunately correct when they state that 'all around the world, antisemitism and Islamophobia, in wider society as well as among Muslims and Jews themselves, is poisoning relationships and any chance of mutual tolerance.' The situation of Israel–Palestine is of course central to this configuration (Klug this issue), epitomized in Britain by the dispute over what is and is not included within Holocaust Memorial Day (Cesarani 2005; Khadijah 2007; Bourne 2011). One irony here of course is that 'current Muslim expressions of antisemitism quite clearly reflect the absorption of Western prejudice against Jews' (Firestone 2010, p. 49).

By solidarities I refer instead to the status of the one-time consensus among anti-racists that it is an issue of race and racism that minorities

are disproportionately disadvantaged, challenged or ridiculed. This it appears no longer holds sway. One apparent source of this 'break-down' of solidarity, from liberal secularists in particular, and a point of departure between the perception of Jewish and Muslim minorities, is that 'Jews had a history of hiding their Jewishness whereas, on the whole, Muslims had not' (Cesarani 2007, p. 7).[7] Of course, this type of 'liberal compromise' did not prevent episodes of antisemitism for, as We show of Britain, whenever there was a national crisis, the place of Jews and their status as British was questioned in a way that is not totally dissimilar to the questioning of Muslim loyalties today Meer and Noorani (2008). In Parekh (2006, pp. 180–1) we find a summary of common complaints against Muslims for being:

> ...collectivist, intolerant, authoritarian, illiberal and theocratic.... They have turned out to be not just more religious but are so in a particularly unacceptable manner....Their Islam thus is...a self-conscious public statement, not quietly held personal faith but a matter of identity which they must jealously guard and loudly and repeatedly proclaim lest anyone else or even they themselves should ever be in doubt about it. It is not one component of their identity but its sole basis. It is intended not only to remind them of who they are but also to announce to others what they stand for. And since it performs political functions, it has a collective political character.[8]

There are several relevant features to Parekh's description that are worth unpacking. This includes the ways in which religion per se is frowned upon among contemporary intelligentsia and invites the ridiculing of Muslims as healthy for intellectual debate and not, therefore, an issue of discrimination (Modood 2006). One particular implication is that while curbs on defamation of Jewish minorities may be seen as progressive, the mocking of Muslims is seen as a sign of intellectual vitality and emancipation (for a discussion of these sentiments in the Danish cartoon affair, see Levey and Modood 2008). This tendency is heightened when the religion in question is perceived to take a conservative line on topics of gender equality, sexual orientation and progressive politics generally, leading some commentators who may otherwise sympathize with Muslim minorities to argue that it is difficult to view Muslims as victims when they may themselves be potential oppressors.

An exemplary case here is the social commentator Polly Toynbee (2005) who insists that she should not be prevented from confronting Muslim minorities on matters of faith because while 'race is something people cannot choose and it defines nothing about them as people... beliefs are what people choose to identify with...The two cannot be

blurred into one which is why the word Islamophobia is a nonsense.'
Toynbee's position is based on the distinction between 'voluntary' and
'involuntary', so it is frequently stated that while gender, racial and
sexuality based identities are ascribed or involuntary categories of
birth, being a religious minority is about chosen beliefs, and that
religious groups therefore need or ought to have less legal protection
than these other kinds of identities.

In the UK Jewish minorities have long been considered an ethnic
or racial group for the purposes of Race Relations legislation, and
therefore theoretically protected by law in a way that Muslims have
not (see Meer 2008). As Modood (2006) elaborates, what this ignores,
however, is that people do not have a choice over the conditions of
discrimination into which they are born. One frequent reaction to
this complaint is the charge that Muslim minorities are quick to
adopt a 'victim mentality'. This means that while Muslims are
increasingly the subject of hostility and discrimination, as well
as governmental racial profiling, surveillance and targeting by
intelligence agencies, their status as victims of racism is frequently
challenged or denied (e.g., Hansen 2006; Joppke 2009). Indeed, it
would be no exaggeration to suggest that instead of highlighting and
alleviating anti-Muslim discrimination, the complaint of and Islamo-
phobia has conversely, but frequently, invited criticism upon Muslims
themselves.

Conclusions

In understanding antisemitism and Islamophobia we need to be able to
distinguish between the right to practise religion in accordance with
religious beliefs from the way in which discrimination against Jewish
and Muslim minorities picks out individuals on the basis of
supposedly discernible characteristics. The latter may in an a priori
or inductive way involve the attribution to those individuals of an
alleged group tendency, or it may emphasize those features that are
used to stigmatize or to reflect pejorative or negative assumptions
based on his or her real or perceived membership of the group. These
conceptual distinctions are critical, especially for the principled
operation of anti-discrimination legislation.

Although they are not passive objects of racism, Jewish and Muslim
identities are not free of external pressures, objectification and
racialization. What is required therefore are conceptions of antisemit-
ism and Islamophobia that are able to explain how prejudice
simultaneously draws upon signs of race, culture and belonging in a
way that is by no means reducible to hostility to a religion alone, and
compels us to consider how religion has a sociological relevance
because of the ways it is tied up with issues of community identity,

stereotyping, socio-economic location, political conflict and so forth (Modood 2005). This is not an unproblematic cluster of issues to hold together, but it is as much an empirical as a theoretical activity. (Bleich 2011, p. 1587).

This article has sought to contribute an understanding of issues of semantics, scales and solidarities, in connecting what a reading of racism directed at one minority can tell us about another. This is a tentative contribution and I do not wish to deny the ways in which this may lead to mixed outcomes; I therefore encourage further investigation and development of these issues. Such investigation should seek to eschew crude politico-legal distinctions between antisemitism and Islamophobia, and pay closer attention to the ways in which cultural racism is invoked in the racialization of religious minorities.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. In commenting on an earlier draft, one *Ethnic and Racial Studies* reviewer offered the following observation: 'The author likens the silence on Islamophobia in the literature on race and racism to that on antisemitism. However, the latter silence is in large part a product of antisemitism being treated by Jewish scholars as sui generis in much the same way they have analysed the Holocaust as not simply a case of genocide. Where (many) Muslim scholars have been concerned to have Islamophobia recognised as a form of racism, (many) Jewish scholars have been concerned to distinguish antisemitism from racism simpliciter.' I am not entirely persuaded by this account as it does sufficiently explain why non-Jewish scholars of race have refrained from making these connections.
2. See CST anti-Semitic incidents reports (2010), available from: http://www.thecst.org.uk/docs/Incidents%20Report%202010.pdf
3. See 'The War on Britain's Jews', Channel 4, 9 July 2007.
4. Compiled by Field (2007, Appendix I pp. 472–5).
5. For examples of less flagrant, more coded, but equally alarming comments made by British politicians and intellectuals, see Meer (2006, 2008) and Meer and Noorani (2008).
6. See http://www.citiesagainstislamisation.com
7. See Summary Report of Comparative Study of Jews and Muslims in the UK Workshop: Wednesday 29 November 2006, Royal Holloway, University of London, available from: http://

pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/muslimjewish-dialogue-in-a-21st-century-world(259691-c5-1802-4338-a723-462f4cead39a).htm

8.   These suspicions are repeated in attitude polling that reports anxiety over the intensity of Muslim religiosity (Field 2007, p. 457).

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