

## Sexism and antisemitism as experienced by canadian jewish women: Results of a national study

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### Synopsis

This paper reports on a national survey of Canadian Jewish women, focussing on their experiences of antisemitism and sexism and the relationship between these experiences and individuals' scores on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II). A random sample of women from across Canada ( $N=364$ ) were interviewed by phone, using a 75-item questionnaire developed by this researcher, and they also completed the BDI. The data reported on here was analyzed quantitatively. The results of this study show that both sexism and antisemitism are painful and problematic for many Canadian Jewish women. However, the two phenomena appear to have different relationships to mental health. Having had many antisemitic experiences in one's life was related to a higher depression score, whereas having had many sexist experiences was not. This underscores the need for further research on intersecting oppressions which elucidates the relative contributions of each kind of oppression to the overall dual (or multiple) oppression that women experience. It also points to the importance of including materials on antisemitism along with those on racism and other forms of oppression when teaching about women and oppression in Women's Studies programs.

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### Introduction

This paper reports on a two-phase project, the purpose of which was to study Canadian Jewish women and their experiences of antisemitism and sexism, the similarities and differences between these two kinds of oppressive experiences, and the impact that these have had on their mental health. The results of Phase One were qualitative findings from seven focus groups of Canadian Jewish women ( $N=47$ ) from Montreal and Toronto (Gold, 1997a, b, 1998).<sup>1</sup> The results of Phase Two, which are presented here, are the quantitative findings of a national survey based on Phase One. This research is the first nationwide study of Jewish women anywhere, and the first to systematically explore, using quantitative social

science methods, Jewish women's experiences of either antisemitism or sexism, the relationship between them, or the connection between either of these and depression.

Conceptually, this research situates itself within the context of Jewish feminist scholarship, which is concerned with delineating the specific experience of being Jewish and female, and the ways these two forms of oppression intersect, and work together to oppress Jewish women and girls (e.g., Beck, 1982, 1988, 1995; Booker, 1991; Cantor, 1995; Chayat, 1987; Epstein, 1999a; Fishman, 1993; Gold, 1993, 1995, 1997a, b, 1998; Henry & Taitz, 1996; Hyman, 2002; Hyman & Dash Moore, 1997; Joseph, 1992, 1997; Kaye/Kantrowitz & Klepfisz, 1986; Medjuck, 1988, 1993; Plaskow, 1990; Pogrebin, 1991;

Schneider, 1984; Siegel, 1986, 1995; Siegel & Cole, 1991; Siegel, Cole, & Steinberg-Oren, 2000). Jewish feminist scholarship, of course, is conceptually a part of the feminist work on women and diversity, which explores and analyzes the dual oppression of being both female and part of a “diverse” ethnic or cultural group (e.g., Bannerji, 2000; Man, 2002; Matthews, 2002; Mukherjee, 2002; Tastsoglou, 2002). This literature is also concerned with the multiple oppressions experienced by women through the various interactions between sexism, racism, ageism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. With reference to Jewish women, the particular intersections between sexism, antisemitism, and these other forms of oppression has been extensively reflected on, as noted above, by Jewish feminists. However, non-Jewish feminists and feminist scholars have rarely recognized or acknowledged the “diversity” of Jewish women in the way that they have recognized the diversity of women from other ethnic backgrounds (Beck, 1995; Gershbain & Rubin, 1994; Gold, 1993). It is hoped that the findings presented here will, among other things, encourage the inclusion of Jewish women’s experiences in Women’s Studies courses and in future discussions of multiple oppression in the feminist community.

## Method

### *Sample*

The participants in this research were a random sample of Canadian Jewish women. These women were located through a Canadian market research firm, which added to 55 of its national telephone surveys a question asking if there was a Jewish woman living in the home, and if so, whether she would be willing to take part in this study. (The phone numbers called by this firm were randomly selected from across Canada.) Ninety-one percent of the Jewish women located in this way agreed to have their names and phone numbers passed on to us; and of these, 95% actually took part when followed up. In total, 364 Canadian Jewish women participated in this study, coming from eight provinces (Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick by chance were not represented). The women ranged in age from 18 to

78 (mean age, 45). Slightly over 50% had a BA or higher. Eighty-two percent of them were Ashkenazi, 59% were married, 98% were heterosexual, 77% lived in large cities, and 54% were from Ontario. Median personal income was between \$30,000 and \$39,999 a year, and household income was between \$60,000 and \$69,999. Ninety-eight percent were working, or had worked at some point in their lives, and 61% considered themselves feminists.

### *Design and measures*

The participants in this study were each interviewed for about an hour by one of five trained interviewers, all of whom were Jewish women. These interviews were all completed prior to September 2000 (the beginning of the second intifada); therefore, the responses in this study are not reflective of the most recent surge of antisemitism related to the current crisis in the Middle East. All interviews were conducted over the phone because of the geographical distances involved, and were structured according to a questionnaire constructed by the author for this research, based on the results from Phase One of this project, as well as on the literature on sexism and antisemitism. There are many different ways, obviously, to define and measure both sexism (Brant, Mynatt, & Doherty, 1999; Campbell, Schellenberg, & Senn, 1997; Conn, Hanges, Sipe, & Salvaggio, 1999; Glick & Fiske, 1997; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995; Masser & Abrams, 1999; McHugh & Frieze, 1997; Swim & Cohen, 1997; Yoder & McDonald, 1997) and antisemitism (Bauer, 1994; Curtis, 1986, 1997; Fein, 1987; Langmuir, 1990; Maccoby, 1996; Zukier, 1999). For the purposes of this research, the questions on sexism were conceptually influenced by Klonoff and Landrine’s (1995) Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE), and the questions on antisemitism were influenced by the B’nai Brith (2001) classification of antisemitic incidents into harassment (regarding people) and vandalism (regarding property). The questionnaire used in this study had 75 questions (some with several parts to them), including questions about demographic data and other personal information, and a series of questions (yes/no, Likert scale, and open-ended) about these women’s experiences of sexism and

antisemitism. (Likert scales measure attributes, feelings or beliefs by asking respondents to rate statements according to numbered categories, e.g., 1 2 3 4 5, on a continuum, such as from “very important” to “very unimportant.”) All in all, there were 14 specific questions about sexism and 12 parallel questions about antisemitism, and the women in the study were asked if each of these had ever happened to them. (For example: Have you ever in your life been harassed because you are a woman? Have you ever in your life been harassed because you are Jewish? Did you ever not get a job, or a promotion, that you were qualified for because of sexism? Did you ever not get a job, or a promotion, that you were qualified for because of antisemitism?).<sup>2</sup> (See Appendix A for a full list of these questions.) The women were also asked to estimate how many times they had had each of these specific experiences, and then how many sexist or antisemitic experiences they had ever had in total. The final question at the end of each of the two series of questions was: “Any or all of the above can be considered sexist/antisemitic experiences. How many times in your life would you say you personally have had a sexist/antisemitic experience?” The answers to these two questions (one regarding sexism, the other regarding antisemitism) were subsequently used to analyze which of the variables in the study were associated with having had many experiences of sexism or antisemitism.

In addition to the questionnaire described above, a second research instrument was used, in order to explore the relationships between sexism/antisemitism and depression (in other words, between oppression and depression). Following the telephone interview, all participants received in the mail a copy of the Beck Depression Inventory (the BDI-II), which they then filled out and sent back. The BDI is the most widely used self-report measure of depression (Beck, Steer & Garbin, 1988) and its psychometric properties are very well-established (Arnau, Meagher, Norris, & Bramson, 2001; Beck et al., 1988; Leigh & Anthony-Tolbert, 2001). It has 21 questions with a possible score of 0–3 on each, and the higher the total score on the BDI-II, the greater the depression. The women in this study were mailed the BDI-II, rather than having the questions in it asked over the phone, because the psychometric properties of the instrument have been established only in relation to the written form. All the

women took part voluntarily and signed letters of informed consent.

### *Data analysis*

The data was analyzed using quantitative statistical analyses, including frequencies, crosstabs, *t*-tests, analyses of variance, and multiple regressions. The multiple regression analysis in this study was conducted in two stages (the variables were initially analyzed in groups of about 10), because of the large number of variables involved.

### **Results**

The central questions of this research were: (1) How often, and where, do Canadian Jewish women have experiences of sexism or antisemitism? (2) What factors are associated with Canadian Jewish women having a greater (or lesser) number of sexist or antisemitic experiences in their lives? And (3), Is there a relationship between having had many sexist or antisemitic experiences and scoring higher on depression? The findings on each of these questions are presented below.

### *Frequency and location of sexist and antisemitic experiences*

In response to the question “How many times in your life would you say you personally have had a sexist experience?” Three hundred and sixty-four of the participants in this study reported a total of 1,917,054 sexist experiences (mean 5355, median 20, mode 0).<sup>3</sup> Twenty-nine of these women (8% of the sample) answered this question with a “zero,” indicating that they had never in their lives had a sexist experience. The mean number of sexist experiences over the previous 12 months, for the entire sample, was 897 (median 1, mode 0).

In response to the same question, but this time about antisemitism (“How many times in your life would you say you personally have had an antisemitic experience?”), 362 of the participants in this study reported a total of 196,798 antisemitic experiences: mean 544 (median 6, mode 0). Forty-two women (12% of the sample) answered this question

with a "zero," indicating that they had never in their lives had an antisemitic experience. The mean number of antisemitic experiences over the previous 12 months, for the entire sample, was 49 (median 0, mode 0).

Regarding the various specific manifestations of sexism and antisemitism, Tables 1 and 2 show the number and percentage of women who reported having had each type of sexist or antisemitic experience, and the frequencies of each. As evident in these tables, because they are Jewish, 21% of the women in this study have been harassed, 12% did not get a job or promotion for which they were qualified, 10% had their homes, offices, or personal property vandalized or defaced, and 9% have been assaulted, chased, physically hurt, or beaten. Similarly, because they are female 47% have been harassed, 18% did not get a job or promotion for which they were qualified, 32% have been sexually assaulted, and 27% have been physically assaulted, hurt, chased, or beaten by a man.

Interestingly, the two sexist experiences and the two antisemitic experiences that occur the most frequently are the same, although in different order. The sexist experiences that occurred most often were hearing someone tell a sexist joke ( $N=346$ , 96%) and reading or hearing someone say something that expressed a negative stereotype about women ( $N=338$ , 93%). The antisemitic experiences that occurred most often were reading or hearing someone say something that expressed a negative stereotype about Jews ( $N=357$ , 99%), and hearing someone tell an antisemitic joke ( $N=332$ , 92%). The implications of the verbal nature of these most frequent occurrences will be discussed later on.

With reference to the location of these experiences, the women in this study were asked the open-ended multiple response question, "Where did these [sexist or antisemitic] experiences most often occur?" In terms of sexist experiences, 47% identified work as the place where these experiences happen most frequently, followed by social situations (parties,

Table 1

Participants who have had specific types of sexist experiences ( $N=364$ ), and the frequencies with which they have experienced each of these

| Type of sexist experience   | <i>N</i> | %  | Mean no. of times | Median | Mode   | S.D.   |
|---|----------|----|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Heard someone tell a sexist joke  | 346      | 96 | 5205              | 50     | 100    | 21,325 |
| Read or heard someone say something that expressed a negative stereotype about women              | 338      | 93 | 7346              | 50     | 100    | 24,872 |
| Has been talked down to by a man  | 304      | 84 | 7162              | 30     | 5      | 22,412 |
| Been in a work situation where sexist comments or behaviours were tolerated                       | 200      | 56 | 4870              | 12     | 1      | 20,916 |
| Been called a degrading or sexist term for a woman  | 172      | 47 | 1435              | 12     | 10     | 11,005 |
| Been harassed because of being female   | 170      | 47 | 3788              | 15     | 1      | 18,654 |
| Has had a service provider ignore her input because she was a woman                               | 170      | 47 | 1303              | 6      | 1      | 10,853 |
| Felt at work that she had to prove herself as a woman   | 169      | 47 | 15,052            | 48     | 99,999 | 34,123 |
| Been sexually assaulted by a man  | 115      | 32 | 901               | 2      | 1      | 9448   |
| As a woman been physically assaulted (not sexually), or chased, hurt, or beaten by a man          | 99       | 27 | 1047              | 1      | 1      | 10,099 |
| Did not get a job or promotion she was qualified for because of sexism                            | 63       | 18 | 2                 | 1      | 1      | 2.68   |
| Been excluded from something because of being a woman (organizations, activities, networks, etc.) | 60       | 17 | 3359              | 2      | 1      | 17,945 |
| Received sexist or misogynist literature on the street or at home                                 | 24       | 7  | 4344              | 5      | 5      | 20,634 |

Table 2

Participants who have had specific types of antisemitic experiences ( $N=364$ ), and the frequencies with which they have experienced each of these

| Type of antisemitic experience  | <i>N</i> | %  | Mean no. of times | Median | Mode | S.D.   |
|---|----------|----|-------------------|--------|------|--------|
| Read or heard someone say something that expressed a negative stereotype about Jews           | 357      | 99 | 2643              | 19     | 10   | 15,729 |
| Heard someone tell an antisemitic joke  | 332      | 92 | 1896              | 12     | 5    | 13,376 |
| Heard the expression to "jew" or to "jew someone down" used in their presence                 | 244      | 67 | 42                | 5      | 1    | 266    |
| Been called an antisemitic name, such as a dirty Jew, a cheap Jew, a kike, or a Christ-killer | 146      | 40 | 736               | 6      | 1    | 8275   |
| Been in a work situation where antisemitic comments or behaviours were tolerated              | 129      | 36 | 1781              | 5      | 1    | 12,714 |
| Received antisemitic hate literature on the street or to their home                           | 95       | 26 | 7                 | 2      | 1    | 11     |
| Been harassed because they were Jewish  | 77       | 21 | 55                | 3      | 1    | 174    |
| Been insulted by a stranger in public because they were somehow identifiable as a Jew         | 61       | 17 | 93                | 2      | 1    | 646    |
| Been excluded from something because they were Jewish (organizations, teams, schools, etc.)   | 49       | 14 | 2216              | 2      | 1    | 14,308 |
| Did not get a job or promotion they were qualified for because of antisemitism                | 44       | 12 | 1.5               | 1      | 1    | 1      |
| Had their home, office, or personal property vandalized or defaced because they were Jewish   | 38       | 10 | 4                 | 1      | 1    | 6      |
| Been assaulted, chased, physically hurt, or beaten because they were Jewish                   | 31       | 9  | 272               | 1      | 1    | 270    |

gatherings, etc.) (31%), home (23%), and school (18%). Regarding antisemitism, work was again identified as the most frequent site (34%), followed by school (31%), in public (e.g., the supermarket, movie, buses, street) (27%), and social situations (25%).

Regarding geographical locations in Canada, there was no significant relationship between the number of sexist or antisemitic experiences that women reported and the provinces in which they lived.

#### *Factors associated with having a greater number of sexist or antisemitic experiences*

In order to identify which factors were correlated with having a higher number of sexist or antisemitic

experiences, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. This analysis included all the personal and demographic variables on the questionnaire as well as participants' scores on the BDI-II, with the dependent variable being the total number of sexist or antisemitic experiences they reported having had. As evident in Table 3, out of all the variables in this study, there were only five that emerged as significantly correlated with these women having had a greater number of sexist experiences in their lives: being younger, having a relatively low household income, considering themselves feminists, having a relatively high level of (secular) education, and not having attended a Jewish day school (day schools being arguably the most intensive kind of Jewish education). Regarding antisemitism (Table 4), only four variables emerged as

Table 3

Multiple regression on correlates of having a greater number of sexist experiences

| Variable                                | <i>B</i>  | S.E. <i>B</i> | Beta      | <i>T</i> | Sig <i>T</i> |
|---|-----------|---------------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| Being younger                           | −0.050664 | 0.013278      | −0.204093 | −3.816   | 0.0002       |
| Having lower household income           | −0.130883 | 0.058026      | −0.125081 | −2.256   | 0.0248       |
| Considering oneself a feminist          | 0.986184  | 0.371713      | 0.143463  | 2.653    | 0.0084       |
| Having more education                   | 1.198429  | 0.258180      | 0.260507  | 4.642    | 0.0000       |
| Not having attended a Jewish day school | −1.028581 | 0.434357      | −0.126602 | −2.368   | 0.0185       |

 $R^2=0.16518$ .

significantly correlated with these women having had a greater number of antisemitic experiences in their lives: living in a city rather than in a town or in the country, having a relatively high level of (secular) education, having had some formal Jewish education (when asked “What kind of Jewish education did you receive?” and given a number of yes/no options, they answered “no” to the option “nothing formal”), and having a relatively high score on the BDI-II (indicative of more depression). From these findings, it is apparent that there are two quite different profiles for the women in this study who reported many experiences of sexism, and those who reported many experiences of antisemitism. The group reporting a lot of sexism can be pictured as young, feminist, not well-off financially, and not Jewish day-school-educated, but as well-educated secularly. In contrast, the group reporting a lot of antisemitism lives in the city, is well-educated secularly, is at least somewhat educated Jewishly, and scores relatively high on The Beck Depression Inventory. (They are also somewhat more likely to be feminists: At a level approaching significance [ $p=0.056$ ], having a greater number of antisemitic experiences was also correlated with considering oneself a feminist.) None of all the other variables in this study were significantly related to participants’ reporting a higher number of either sexist or antisemitic experiences. These varia-

bles included marital status, personal (as opposed to household) income, ethnic background, sexual orientation, physical health relative to others their age, mental health relative to others their age, access to social support, identification with a particular religious stream within Judaism, extent of religious observance, involvement in Jewish organizations, the religion (Jewish/not Jewish) of their partners, or having a part of their bodies that they thought of as Jewish.<sup>4</sup>

#### *The relationship between depression and antisemitism or sexism*

The above results demonstrate that there is a statistically significant relationship between having had a greater number of antisemitic experiences in one’s life and scoring higher on the BDI-II; yet no such relationship exists regarding sexism. The implications of this finding will be discussed later. However, two points should be noted here. First, the mean score on the BDI in this study was 9 (median 7, mode 4, S.D. 7.9), which indicates that this sample as a whole is not depressed (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996). Secondly, multiple regressions demonstrate associations between different variables, but not the directionality or causality of a relationship. Regarding the relationship found in this study between antisemitism

Table 4

Multiple regression on correlates of having a greater number of antisemitic experiences

| Variable   | <i>B</i> | S.E. <i>B</i> | Beta     | <i>T</i> | Sig <i>T</i> |
|--|----------|---------------|----------|----------|--------------|
| Having more education                                | 0.432412 | 0.189459      | 0.142610 | 2.282    | 0.0233       |
| Having some formal Jewish education                  | 1.083363 | 0.329293      | 0.197646 | 3.290    | 0.0011       |
| Living in a large city                               | 1.080671 | 0.505005      | 0.125596 | 2.140    | 0.0333       |
| Having a higher score on the BDI-II (more depressed) | 0.057683 | 0.017264      | 0.211631 | 3.341    | 0.0010       |

 $R^2=0.14982$ .

and depression, the dependent variable was the number of antisemitic experiences one said one had had in one's life. However, one might postulate that the higher depression score "led to" the identification of having had many antisemitic experiences, rather than the other way around. It is well known that "on a bad day," or if one is depressed, one tends to exaggerate the negative; and with reference to this study, some women might perhaps have identified more antisemitic experiences than they would have "on a good day." However, two facts mitigate against this interpretation. (1) Having a higher BDI score was not related to saying one had had many *sexist* experiences in one's life (which it should have been, if the depression were just a generalized negative response).

(2) When a multiple regression analysis was conducted with the BDI-II scores as the dependent variable, here too having had many antisemitic experiences in one's life emerged as a significant variable, and once again the number of sexist experiences did not. This indicates that there is a relationship of some power and mutuality linking antisemitism and depression.

*The sub-group of women who reported having had no antisemitic experiences*

In light of this connection between depression and antisemitism, the sub-group of women in this study ( $N=42$ ) who reported having had no antisemitic experiences in their lives became of particular interest,

Table 5

Chi-square analyses on all of the specific antisemitic experiences and on other characteristics where there are significant differences, by group<sup>a</sup>

| Variable   | Reported zero antisemitic experiences |     | Reported many antisemitic experiences |     | Chi-square statistic and significance |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|
|  | N                                     | %   | N                                     | %   |                                       |
| Had some formal Jewish education   | 36                                    | 88  | 28                                    | 65  | $\chi^2=5.92$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.014$    |
| Attended Jewish day school   | 12                                    | 30  | 5                                     | 12  | $\chi^2=4.29$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.038$    |
| Attended synagogue only on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur                          | 11                                    | 26  | 4                                     | 9   | $\chi^2=4.17$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.041$    |
| Considered herself a feminist  | 20                                    | 49  | 31                                    | 72  | $\chi^2=4.78$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.029$    |
| Has been called an antisemitic name, such as a dirty Jew...                      | 3                                     | 7   | 29                                    | 67  | $\chi^2=32.9$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.000$    |
| Has heard an antisemitic joke  | 35                                    | 83  | 42                                    | 98  | $\chi^2=5.13$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.030$    |
| Has been insulted by a stranger in public  | 0                                     | 0   | 12                                    | 28  | $\chi^2=13.6$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.000$    |
| Heard "jew" or "jew down"  | 20                                    | 48  | 36                                    | 84  | $\chi^2=12.3$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.000$    |
| Been in a work situation where antisemitic comments or behaviours were tolerated | 3                                     | 8   | 29                                    | 67  | $\chi^2=31.4$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.000$    |
| Did not get a job or promotion she was qualified for                             | 0                                     | 0   | 9                                     | 21  | $\chi^2=9.85$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.002$    |
| Been excluded (school, club)   | 0                                     | 0   | 12                                    | 28  | $\chi^2=13.6$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.000$    |
| Been harassed  | 0                                     | 0   | 23                                    | 53  | $\chi^2=30.8$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.000$    |
| Been assaulted   | 0                                     | 0   | 8                                     | 19  | $\chi^2=8.62$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.005$    |
| Has had home, office, or personal property vandalized                            | 1                                     | 2.4 | 9                                     | 21  | $\chi^2=7.04$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.015$    |
| Other important experience of antisemitism she wants to tell                     | 14                                    | 35  | 31                                    | 74  | $\chi^2=12.5$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.000$    |
| Received antisemitic hate literature on street or home                           | 6                                     | 14  | 10                                    | 23  | NS                                    |
| Read or heard a negative stereotype about Jews                                   | 42                                    | 100 | 43                                    | 100 | NS                                    |

<sup>a</sup> Group 1=the women who answered that overall they had had zero antisemitic experiences in their lives. Group 2=those who reported the greatest number of antisemitic experiences (the top 10%) in the sample.

and were examined further in order to learn what personal or demographic variables were associated with total exemption from antisemitic experiences. This sub-group was first compared with the rest of the sample, and other than the expected differences on the specific antisemitism questions, only two significant differences between the groups emerged: The “zero” group had a lower level of (secular) education ( $\chi^2=5.93$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.02$ ), and fewer of these women had a part of their body that they thought of as Jewish ( $\chi^2=5.55$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.018$ ). The zero group was then compared with the other end of the sample: the women in the study who reported the most antisemitic experiences (the 10% highest numbers), each a minimum of 100 such experiences (mean=4498, mode=200, median=500). Tables 5 and 6 show the chi-square and *t*-test results for the variables where there were significant differences between these two groups. Of particular interest are the differences pertaining to Jewish education and religious observance, and the findings that the zero group had significantly fewer women who considered themselves feminists as well as significantly lower scores on the BDI-II (i.e., less depression). Not surprisingly, the zero group also reported significantly fewer antisemitic experiences on 10 of the 12 specific questions on antisemitism than did the top 10%. However, this does not mean that the zero group had no such experiences at all. Looking in Table 5 at the frequencies for this sub-group, it is striking that although these women answered on the overall question that they had never in their lives had an antisemitic

experience, out of the 12 specific questions, they did answer positively on seven of them. One hundred percent said that they had read or heard someone say something that expressed a negative stereotype of a Jew. Eighty-three percent had heard someone tell an antisemitic joke, 8% had been in work situations where antisemitic comments or behaviours were tolerated, 7% had been called an antisemitic name, and 2.4% (one woman) had had her home, office, or personal property vandalized or defaced. Furthermore, when asked after this series of questions, “Is there any other important experience of antisemitism that you feel you want to tell me about now in a sentence or two?” 35% answered yes. In other words, these women may have answered zero on the overall question, but they cannot be viewed as a particularly fortunate sub-group that for some reason has been exempt from antisemitism all their lives.

## Discussion

There are a number of important findings in this study.

### *1) Evidence of dual oppression—violence against Canadian Jewish women both as women and as Jews*

The first of these is the high level of violence, verbal, physical, and general, to which the women in this study were subjected. As previously noted, the two sexist experiences and the two antisemitic expe-

Table 6  
*t*-Tests on BDI-II scores and on questions about Canadian society, by group<sup>a</sup>

| Variable   | Reported zero antisemitic experiences | Reported many antisemitic experiences | <i>t</i> -Score    | Significance    |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
|  | Mean                                  | Mean                                  |                    |                 |
| Total score on the BDI-II <sup>b</sup>                                   | 4.8                                   | 12.1                                  | <i>t</i> (53)=5.25 | <i>p</i> =0.000 |
| How would you rate Canadian society on antisemitism? <sup>c</sup>        | 3.5                                   | 6                                     | <i>t</i> (83)=5.57 | <i>p</i> =0.000 |
| Overall, how safe do you feel as a Jew in Canadian society? <sup>d</sup> | 8.5                                   | 7.2                                   | <i>t</i> (82)=2.60 | <i>p</i> =0.011 |

<sup>a</sup> Group 1=the women who answered that overall they had had zero antisemitic experiences in their lives. Group 2=those who reported the greatest number of antisemitic experiences (the top 10%) in the sample.

<sup>b</sup> The higher the score, the more depressed.

<sup>c</sup> 0=not at all, 10=extremely antisemitic.

<sup>d</sup> 0=not at all safe, 10=completely safe.

periences that occurred the most frequently were the same, although in different order. The sexist experience reported most often (consistent with Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) was hearing someone tell a sexist joke, followed by reading or hearing someone say something that expressed a negative stereotype about women. The most frequently reported antisemitic experience was reading or hearing something that expressed a negative stereotype about Jews, followed by hearing someone tell an antisemitic joke. Davies notes that on the antisemitic continuum from “verbal insults to public discrimination and physical persecution,” verbal insults may be considered relatively minor (Davies, 1992a, p. 2). However, verbal insults are not insignificant. Abella (2002) points out that in Canada, the old institutionalized antisemitism familiar to previous generations has now been replaced with a new kind of antisemitism, one that is often verbal in nature: This is “the growing acceptability of anti-Jewishness among intellectuals, students, academics, the media, and politicians...[a form of antisemitism that is] more subtle but no less pernicious” (Abella, 1994, p. 53). Ongoing verbal denigration can have a powerful “dripping tap” effect in terms of creating an overall hostile climate that is deleterious to Jews, or women. Furthermore, there are many examples of violence against women, and against Jews, that began verbally and then escalated into physical violence. So the importance of these very frequent verbal insults should not be underestimated.

That being said, it is noteworthy that there were also in this study quite a few women who had experienced what Epstein (1999b, p. 241) terms the “more extreme” forms of antisemitism. Because they were Jewish more than 20% reported that they had been harassed, 10% experienced vandalism, 12% did not get a job or promotion they were qualified for, and 9% were physically assaulted. Similarly, in terms of sexism, because they were female more than 47% reported that they had been harassed, 18% did not get a job or promotion they were qualified for, and 27% were physically assaulted. There are, unfortunately, no Canadian statistics on antisemitism or sexism against which to compare these findings.<sup>5</sup> However, these percentages are higher than anticipated. In addition, there is the issue of when these experiences took place. On two of the specific questions about sexism and antisemitism (re: not getting a job or promotion,

and re: social exclusion) participants were asked if they had had either of these experiences, and if so, in what years the first, second, and third such experiences had occurred. The responses to these questions suggest that whereas social exclusion due to antisemitism is to some extent a thing of the past (median years: 1966, 1968, and 1976, and only seven such incidents during the 1990s), being denied a job or promotion because one is Jewish is something that has persisted into more recent times and is still continuing to occur (median years: 1981, 1989, and 1990, and 22 such incidents during the 1990s). With reference to sexism, the median years for being denied a job or promotion and for being socially excluded all fall between 1981 and 1987, are therefore quite recent phenomena, and also appear to be continuing to occur (33 and 35 experiences, respectively, in the 1990s). It is therefore clear that both antisemitism and sexism are alive and well in Canada, and that Canadian Jewish women experience dual oppression in their everyday lives.

There is evidence also of intersecting multiple oppressions in the findings regarding sexism in this study. The women who reported having many sexist experiences in their lives were poorer than the other women in the study, and younger, as well. This is consistent with Klonoff and Landrine's (1995) results, which found a connection between being younger in age and experiencing more sexism, and also between experiencing frequent sexist events and belonging to an ethnic sub-group. The heightened vulnerability of the young, poor Canadian Jewish women in this study is consistent, as well, with other feminist scholarship on intersecting oppressions related to age, class, and ethnicity (e.g., Bannerji, 2000; Man, 2002; Matthews, 2002; Mukherjee, 2002; Tastsoglou, 2002), and attention should be paid to addressing the particular vulnerability of this sub-group of Jewish women.

## *2) Locations where sexism and antisemitism most frequently occur*

For both sexism and antisemitism “at work” was identified as the location where these kinds of experiences most often occur, which implies the need to improve on the setting and/or enforcement of Canada's current human rights policies for the workplace. The second most frequent location for antisemitic

incidents was “at school.” This led this researcher to wonder whether Canadian Jewish girls growing up today also experience antisemitism at their schools, and to initiate a research study on this topic.<sup>6</sup> As for sexism, the third most frequent location of sexist incidents (after social situations) is the home; however, the home does not figure significantly vis-a-vis antisemitism (even though 32% of the women in the study were married to, or living with, non-Jewish partners). This suggests that, being devoid of antisemitism, the home is in one respect a relatively safe place for Jewish women. However, in another sense (because of the sexism), it is not. This echoes the Jewish feminist literature (including the findings from Phase One of this project), which documents not only the sexism and antisemitism in the society at large, but also the sexism which Jewish women experience in their homes and in the Jewish community (e.g., Beck, 1995; Cantor, 1995; Epstein, 1999a; Gold, 1997b, 1998; Henry & Taitz, 1996; Hyman & Dash Moore, 1997; Kaye/Kantrowitz & Klepfisz, 1986; Medjuck, 1993; Plaskow, 1990; Pogrebin, 1991; Schneider, 1984; Siegel, 1986), and of course is also consistent with the general feminist literature on sexism in the family (e.g., Atwood, 2001; Luxton & Rosenberg, 1986).

In terms of the geographical distribution of these experiences, it is interesting to note that no significant provincial differences emerged for either sexism or antisemitism in this study. Previous research (Brym & Lenton, 1993; Sniderman, Northrup, Fletcher, Russell, & Tetlock, 1993) suggests that Quebec in particular might have been associated with a disproportionately high number of antisemitic experiences; however, this was not found to be the case here. Similarly refuting a frequently held assumption, the finding that one of the correlates of having had many antisemitic experiences was living in a city (rather than a town or in the country) contradicts the widespread belief (e.g., Curtis, 1997, p. 322) that rural settings are more antisemitic than urban ones.

### *3) Factors associated with having had many sexist or antisemitic experiences*

#### *A. Antisemitism and depression*

One of the most important findings of this study is that although the women who took part in this

research reported many more sexist experiences than antisemitic ones (approximately 10 times as many, using the mean numbers: 5355 vs. 544), the psychological impact of sexism appears to be less than that of antisemitism, at least in terms of depression. The women taking part in this research who had had many antisemitic experiences in their lives also had significantly higher scores on the BDI-II than the other women in the study. Yet, no such relationship was found regarding sexism.

There are several possible explanations for this. One possibility suggested by the focus groups in Phase One is that antisemitism is simply experienced as being much more pernicious than sexism. Antisemitism was experienced by many of the focus group women as a threat to physical survival (“they want us dead,” as one woman put it), as opposed to sexism, which to them was about being second-class, denigrated, and exploited, but did not generate the same level of fear.<sup>7</sup> Several of them said that although antisemitism may happen less often than sexism, it frightens them more, at least partly because it is still not openly discussed in Canadian society. One woman gave the example of a TV show about women who go to buy or repair a car, and how patronizingly they are treated by mechanics. As this woman watched this show, she felt supported and validated not just by this individual TV interviewer, but by the society at large. This rarely, if ever, happens with antisemitism. “With antisemitism, we’re still cowering, we’re still afraid,” she said. “How much progress have we really made with antisemitism?” It should be noted, as well, that all the women taking part in this study are living in the post-Holocaust period, and this of course almost certainly influences their level of fear regarding antisemitism (e.g., Brown, 1999).

At a more theoretical level, however, it is likely that the finding in this study about a link between antisemitism and depression is related to the nature of antisemitism itself. Antisemitism has been called “the longest hatred” (Wistrich, 1991), and despite its similarities in some ways to other forms of oppression, antisemitism has a uniquely “sacral” quality (Wistrich, 1999, p. 2). The Jews have for 2000 years been viewed not only as outsiders, aliens, and a political, social, and moral threat; they have been seen as the devil incarnate, the embodiment of the anti-Christ and all that is evil in the world (Fackenheim,

1997; Poliakov, 1965; Smith, 1996; Wistrich, 1999). People who hold these views also have images of the Jew that are completely paradoxical (for example, Jews are superhuman but subhuman, they are weak but they run the world, they are overly cerebral but also overly lascivious). But this is not problematic for the antisemite because, according to Langmuir (1990), neither truth nor reality have anything to do with antisemitism. Many different theories have been put forward to explain antisemitism (e.g., Bauer, 1994; Curtis, 1986, 1997; Fein, 1987; Maccoby, 1996; Zukier, 1999), but those of Langmuir (1990) and Smith (1996) are particularly useful here. Langmuir distinguishes between the usual kind of xenophobia, which derives from direct contact between different groups, and in this sense (oxymoronic as this may sound) is a reality-based ethnic prejudice, and a second kind, that is not. To describe this second kind, Langmuir (1990, p. 334) uses the term “chimeria”:

I have introduced the neologism ‘chimeria’ ...because I wish to make a distinction. ... The ancient use of ‘chimera’ to refer to a fabulous monster emphasizes the central characteristic of the phenomenon I wish to distinguish from xenophobia. In contrast with xenophobic assertions, chimerical assertions present fantasies, figments of the imagination, monsters that, although dressed syntactically in the clothes of real humans, have never been seen and are projections of mental processes unconnected with the real people of the outgroup. Chimerical assertions have no ‘kernel of truth.’

In other words, to Langmuir, antisemitism as we know it is not about real Jews; it is about mythical ones. And therefore the phenomenon of antisemitism says nothing about Jews, but much about antisemites and their psychological need to displace and project (Langmuir, 1990; Smith, 1996) the unwanted (dirty, evil) parts of themselves onto some external image, hate it, and in this way be rendered guiltless, pure, and clean.<sup>8</sup> Taking Langmuir’s ideas one step further, Smith (1996, p. 222) views “the Satanic Jew” created through projection as “a socially constructed enemy.” This analysis of antisemitism, among other things, absolves Jews of the responsibility or blame for their own victimization, and in this sense is a positive

thing. On the other hand, it also implies that Jewish attempts to assimilate, to try to make themselves more like non-Jews in an attempt to escape antisemitism, are futile.

This, perhaps, may be at the core of the finding in this study that antisemitism is associated with depression. Previous studies have shown a relationship between depression and feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and lack of control over the environment (e.g., Kiefer, 1990; Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson, & Grayson, 1999). Most oppressed groups (including women) believe that they are able to change discriminatory social attitudes toward them by demonstrating the discrepancy between the preconceived notion of this group, and the reality. With reference to antisemitism, however (at least according to this analysis of it), educating non-Jews about real Jewish people will not effectively eliminate antisemitism. Because antisemitism is about symbols, and myths, and precisely because these are not real, they cannot be lessened, or affected, by “reality.”

This, in any case, is one theoretical explanation for the finding regarding the BDI-II. It may also help to explain the contradictory findings in this study about the group of women who said on the overall question that they had never had an antisemitic experience, yet did identify a number of antisemitic experiences on the 12 specific questions. If antisemitism is a frightening and dangerous phenomenon which one can neither control nor prevent, then one psychological response is denial (Hoxmeier, 2001; Landsman, 2002; Lazarus, 1984)—denying either the existence of the phenomenon, or its personal significance (Hoxmeier, 2001). The women in the zero group did recognize antisemitic experiences that happened around them (e.g., hearing antisemitic jokes, antisemitic stereotypes, and the term “to jew down”), but in another sense, they did not experience them as happening personally (i.e., as happening *to them*). (The overall question asked was, “How many times in your life would you say you personally have had an antisemitic experience?”) Perhaps these women’s responses on this questionnaire were a way of saying, “This happened, but not to me. I’m ok, I’m safe.” If so, this implies a kind of dissociation, which (like denial) is a psychological response used only when something is very threatening or painful. This idea would fit also with the finding that these women scored lower than

the others on the BDI-II and were less likely to see themselves as feminists, since both of these cases might involve denial of an unpleasant phenomenon: depression, sad feelings etc. in the former, and sexism in the latter. This at any rate is one possible interpretation of these contradictory findings. These results, of course, also underscore the pervasiveness of antisemitism in Canada (Abella, 1994, 2002; Abella & Troper, 1982; B'nai Brith, 2003; Brown, 1994a,b; Brym & Lenton, 1993; Davies, 1992a,b; Davies & Nefsky, 1998; Fletcher, 1989; Gold, 1997b, 1998; Levitt & Shaffir, 1987, 1993; Menkis, 1992; Nefsky, 1992; Palmer, 1992; Prutschi, 1992; Sniderman et al., 1993; Speisman, 1992; Tulchinsky, 1992), and the fact that there was not, in fact, a sub-group of women in this study who had not been touched by it in at least some way.

#### *B. The central rôle of education*

In looking at the two most vulnerable sub-groups in this study (the women who reported many experiences of antisemitism, and those reporting many experiences of sexism), one is struck by the salience of the variable of education, both secular and Jewish. Out of all the variables in this study, four of the nine that were significantly associated with participants' reporting many antisemitic or sexist experiences in their lives related to education. Having more secular education was related to higher levels of both antisemitism and sexism; and having more Jewish education was related to higher levels of antisemitism, but lower levels of sexism.

The first association, regarding secular education, may be interpreted in various ways. Having more secular education means having more contact with the academic world, and this is a world where one currently encounters considerable sexism (Koikari & Hippensteele, 2000; Zuk & Baker, 2000) as well as antisemitism (Cotler, 2002b; Kellner, 2002; Petel, 2002; Wente, 2002, 2003; Zoloth, 2002). It may also be that the more education one has had, the greater the conceptual understanding and ability to label something as a social/structural/political problem, rather than merely a personal one. This is particularly likely given that 61% of this sample, a strikingly high percentage, considered themselves feminists. Thirdly, higher education may bring with it an enhanced sense of one's civil and human rights, and a heightened

sense of awareness when these are being violated or threatened.

With reference to the second association, regarding Jewish education, the findings in this study seem to suggest that there is some aspect of Jewish education that either increases the number of antisemitic experiences to which one is exposed (perhaps by encouraging one to be more visible as a Jew), or that sensitizes people to antisemitic experiences and to recognizing and labeling them as antisemitic when they occur. These findings also suggest that there is something about having a Jewish day school education that decreases the number of sexist experiences one identifies having had, either because these schools provide some protection against sexism, or because the traditionalism of most Jewish day schools does not predispose young Jewish women to develop a strong consciousness about sexism. Whatever the exact dynamics at work, the findings in this research that both secular and Jewish education are in significant ways related to participants' defining and quantifying their experiences of both sexism and antisemitism, point to the crucial role played by education in helping women to recognize the oppressions in their lives and be able to define them as such.

#### *4) Implications for Women's Studies*

The results of this study have two main implications for the field of Women's Studies. At the theoretical level, it raises a number of questions regarding the mental health effects of dual (or multiple) oppression, and whether for women from various ethnically diverse backgrounds there are (as there were for the Jewish women in this study) significant differences between the ways they were affected by ethnicity-related vs. gender-related oppression. For example, future research could explore whether there is a racism–depression connection paralleling the antisemitism–depression connection found here, and could also help to elucidate the similarities and differences between racism and antisemitism as experienced by women. Given that this research was rooted conceptually in the feminist literature on diversity and anti-oppression, it lends itself easily to comparisons on a number of different dimensions between the Jewish women in this study and women of other diverse groups.

Consistent with this, a second implication of this research (especially in light of the antisemitism–depression connection that was found) is that the dual oppression experienced by Jewish women needs to be recognized and taught about in Women's Studies programs and in the feminist community at large. The oppression experienced by Jewish women is currently invisible to most non-Jewish feminists (Beck, 1995), and there is a crucial role for Women's Studies programs to play in rectifying this situation. This means taking seriously the oppression of Jewish women, and finding ways to actively support them. One essential part of this is confronting the antisemitism within the feminist community (Beck, 1995, 1988; Gershon & Rubin, 1994).<sup>9</sup> This is particularly urgent in light of the recent dramatic rise in antisemitism both in Canada and the rest of the world (B'nai Brith, 2003; Cotler, 2002a; Jacoby, 2002; Kellner, 2002; Simon Wiesenthal Center, 2002). In Canada, for example, in the five year period leading up to 2001, there was a 35% increase in the number of antisemitic incidents reported, and in 2002 alone, there was a 62.8% increase over the previous year (B'nai Brith, 2003). The women in Phase One of this research spoke at length about the dramatic resurgence of antisemitism in Canada and elsewhere, and were very frightened and disturbed by it, speaking eloquently about the shrinking of the places where they now felt safe (Gold, 1997a, 1998). The “new anti-Jewishness,” sparked by the conflict in the Middle East but transformed into a generalized global anti-Jewishness, overlaps with classical antisemitism but is distinguishable from it, and comes in 10 main forms: existential or genocidal antisemitism, political antisemitism, ideological antisemitism, theological antisemitism, cultural antisemitism, European antisemitism, substantive anti-Jewishness in the international arena, procedural anti-Jewishness in the international arena, legalized antisemitism, and economic antisemitism (Cotler, 2002a,b). Other characterizations of contemporary antisemitism point to its manifestations in negative attitudes toward Jews as expressed in surveys and polls, harassment of Jews, physical violence, vandalism of Jewish property, Holocaust denial, anti-Zionism,<sup>10</sup> bias in the media, and bias in the academe (Abella, 2002; B'nai Brith, 2003; Brown, 1994a, b; Brym & Lenton, 1993; Cotler, 2002b; Davies, 1992a, b; Fletcher, 1989;

Gold, 1993, 1996, 1997a, b; Kellner, 2002; Prutschi, 1992; Rae, 2002; Sniderman et al., 1993; Wentz, 2002; Zoloth, 2002). This last point is particularly disturbing, in light of the finding in this research regarding the central importance of higher education. North American universities, increasingly over the past decade, have become uncomfortable, even dangerous, places for Jewish students and faculty (Ahronheim, 2002; Brown, 1994a; Petel, 2002; Ross & Schneider, 1995; Wentz, 2003; Wisse, 2002), so much so that in the past year the Montreal Jewish community has initiated a special program to help Jewish youth deal with verbal or physical attacks on campus (Yudin, 2003). Within the classroom, as well, antisemitic incidents are occurring with increasing frequency (Petel, 2002), including in classes in Women's Studies (Gold, 1998).<sup>11</sup> Many Jewish women have been silenced by the current climate of antisemitism, and do not dare speak openly in class about their experiences as Jews (Petel, 2002; Zoloth, 2002). So there is a very important role for Women's Studies programs to play in creating a safe space for Jewish women in the academe. This involves taking action at several different levels simultaneously, in terms of teaching, administration, and activism.

### *Teaching*

In the context of the classroom, feminist educators need to begin adding content on Jewish women and girls and on antisemitism to their educational agendas. This content (like that regarding women of other oppressed groups) should be taught not in isolation, but interwoven with content on other oppressions and emphasizing the links between them, in the context of a feminist analysis. For example, when teaching the connections between racism/antisemitism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, and ableism, case examples used in class might involve a 60-year-old Jewish lesbian, or a disabled Jewish girl, or a Jewish welfare mother who emigrated a few years ago with her children from the former Yugoslavia. In addition, feminist educators teaching about Jewish women and girls and antisemitism, will have to deal with the two main stereotypes about Jewish women: the Jewish mother and the JAP (Jewish American Princess), both of which are both sexist and antisemitic (Booker, 1991; Chayat, 1987; Medjuck, 1988; Siegel, 1986).<sup>12</sup> Other antisemitic myths and stereotypes

may refer to Jewish characteristics (such as Jews being pushy, vulgar, dishonest, materialistic, or caring only about “their own”), Jewish influence (e.g., “Jewish money controls the media”), and Jewish wealth. (On this last point, note the modest average incomes of the women in this study, and see Torczyner, 1993, regarding the invisibility of Jewish poverty in Canada.) Antisemitic myths may also include historical inaccuracy or distortions, such as Holocaust denial or trivialization, Jews being portrayed as the killers of Christ and/or of Christian children, and Anti-Zionism or Israel-bashing<sup>10</sup> (Cotler, 2002a; Krauthammer, 1990). Any remarks reflecting these myths or stereotypes must be dealt with the moment they occur in the classroom, in the hallway, or wherever. Such comments should not be allowed to pass without response, whether they be from students or colleagues, as though these are just “personal opinions.” They are as “personal” as any other racist remarks, and have no place in a program of Women’s Studies.

#### *Administration*

From an administrative point of view, a commitment to creating an inclusive feminist environment would translate, among other things, into not scheduling exams or other academic events (e.g., research days, make-up classes, end of term parties, etc.) on the Jewish Sabbath or on major Jewish holidays (something that was repeatedly an issue for some women in Phase One). It would also mean including Jewish women on panels on multiple oppression or “women and diversity” at International Women’s Day celebrations and at other public feminist events.

#### *Activism*

Finally, in terms of activism, feminist scholars and educators need to struggle against antisemitism with the same passion and commitment they have brought to the struggles against sexism, other forms of racism, homophobia, and all kinds of oppression. Given that antisemitism is now rife not only on the right, but also on the left (Cotler, 2002b; Lerner, 1992), feminist activism is essential in order to address the dual oppression experienced by Jewish women, as evidenced in this research. However one theoretically analyzes antisemitism or sexism, at a practical level it is incumbent upon us to respond to the reality of both by combating them as effectively as we can (Bauer,

1994; Bulkin, Pratt, & Smith, 1984; Dinnerstein, 1986, 1994; Mock, 1999; Pharr, 1988). With reference to Jewish women, one goal in the struggle is to decrease the frequency of sexist and antisemitic events these women experience, as well as the damage to their psychological and mental health. It is hoped that this research makes a contribution from this point of view. In the long term, however, we hope for much more than diminished sexism, antisemitism and damage to Jewish women. We hope for the eradication of antisemitism, sexism, and all other forms of oppression, from the world.

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#### **Appendix A**

*The 14 questions about specific types of sexist experiences.*

1. Have you ever in your life heard someone tell a sexist joke?
2. Have you ever read or heard someone say something that expressed a negative stereotype about women?
3. Have you ever been in a work situation where sexist comments or behaviours were tolerated?
4. Did you ever not get a job, or a promotion, that you were qualified for because of sexism?
5. Have you ever been excluded from anything else (other than a job or promotion) because you were a

- woman? (e.g., clubs, volunteer positions, organizations, activities, teams, networks, schools)
6. Have you ever in your life been called a degrading or sexist term for a woman?
  7. Have you received sexist or misogynist (woman-hating) literature on the street or to your home?
  8. Have you ever been harassed because you are a woman?
  9. Have you, as a woman, ever been physically assaulted (not sexually), or chased, physically hurt, or beaten by a man?
  10. Have you ever felt that unless you are sexually attractive to men, you are not a valuable, lovable human being?
  11. Have you ever had a service provider, such as a repairman, a building contractor, an accountant, or lawyer ignore your input because you are a woman?
  12. Have you ever felt at your job that you have to prove yourself as a woman?
  13. Have you ever been sexually assaulted by a man?
  14. Have you ever been talked down to by a man?

*The 12 questions about specific types of antisemitic experiences.*

1. Have you ever in your life heard someone tell an antisemitic joke?
2. Have you ever read or heard someone say something that expressed a negative stereotype about Jews?
3. Have you ever been in a work situation where antisemitic comments or behaviours were tolerated?
4. Did you ever not get a job, or a promotion, that you were qualified for because of antisemitism?
5. Have you ever been excluded from anything else (other than a job or promotion) because you were Jewish? (e.g., organizations, restaurants, teams, parties, schools, clubs, networks)
6. Have you ever in your life been called an antisemitic name, such as a dirty Jew, a cheap Jew, a kike, or a Christ-killer?
7. Have you received antisemitic hate literature on the street or to your home?
8. Have you ever been harassed because you are Jewish?
9. Have you ever been assaulted, chased, physically hurt, or beaten because you were Jewish?

10. Have you ever had your home, office, or any of your personal property vandalized or defaced because you were Jewish?
11. Have you ever been insulted by a stranger in public because you were somehow identifiable as a Jew (e.g., wearing a Star of David)?
12. Have you ever heard the expression to “jew” or to “jew someone down” used in your presence?

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> In Phase One of this research project, the women involved expressed 3 specific areas of concern, or themes, regarding the ways that antisemitism and sexism intersect in their lives (Gold, 1997a, 1998). Briefly summarized, these pertain to:

1. Stereotypes of the Jewish woman, such as the Jewish mother and the JAP (Jewish American Princess),
2. Specific issues around Jewish women's relationship to their own bodies, and especially those parts of their bodies that they think of as Jewish; and
3. The triangular relationships and psychosocial dynamics between Jewish women, Jewish men, and non-Jewish women.

<sup>2</sup> The items about sexism and antisemitism in this questionnaire obviously do not encapsulate the totality of potential types of sexist or antisemitic experiences. Nor is there any implication here of equivalency between the different items (e.g., that being denied a job or promotion because of sexism or antisemitism is equivalent to hearing a sexist or antisemitic joke). These particular questions were selected either because these types of experiences surfaced in a salient way during the focus group discussions in Phase One of this project, and were considered by the women there to be of importance; or because the literature on sexism or antisemitism suggested that certain manifestations were worthy of further exploration.

<sup>3</sup> The answers ranged from 0 to 99,999 (higher, in fact, but 99,999 was the upper cut-off). These numbers were arrived at by computing literally what the women said. For example, if a woman said, “Something antisemitic has happened to me every day of my life,” and she was 60 years old, then the number entered by the interviewer was 365 times 60, or 21,900 experiences. Exact numbers were wanted for reasons of precision and accuracy, rather than phrases such as “rarely” or “often” which, as is well known, often mean different things to different people. The interviewer spelled this out to each participant, explaining, “If I translate what you're saying into an exact number (one experience for every day of your life), that would give me 21,900 experiences. Is this what you want me to write down?” If the woman agreed, this is what was recorded.

<sup>4</sup> This last variable derives from the innovative and important clinical work of Rachel Josefowitz Siegel (1995), which postulated that for Jewish women, one's Jewish identity (positive or negative) can express itself through one's relationship to a specific part of one's body that one thinks of as Jewish. Asking Jewish women how

they feel about the “Jewish” parts of their bodies can bypass intellectual responses and is often a useful way to uncover internalized antisemitism. This approach would obviously be relevant, as well, for women from other diverse groups.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding sexism, there are no general statistics on sexism in Canada. Regarding antisemitism, the B’nai Brith annual audits are the only national statistics on Canadian antisemitism, and these are not comparable to this study because the audits deal only with objective incidents that have been subsequently investigated, verified, and ascertained to have antisemitic motives. In contrast, this research focuses on experiences, many of which may never have been reported anywhere or verified. The B’nai Brith audits are valuable and serve some important functions, but it is not possible to compare their data with that of this research.

<sup>6</sup> This project, which in many respects parallels the research reported on here, will study a group of Canadian Jewish girls over time, investigating (among other things) their experiences of sexism and antisemitism, and how these shape their emerging identities as Jewish and female.

<sup>7</sup> A similar point was once communicated to this author by a colleague at a conference (Zamparo, 2000), who said that she had heard a group of Native women say that the racism directed at their people was to them much more worrying than sexism.

<sup>8</sup> There is an obvious parallel here to some men’s misogynistic projections onto women.

<sup>9</sup> In the words of Evelyn Torton Beck (1995), a Jewish feminist psychologist and lesbian: “Jewish invisibility is a symptom of antisemitism as surely as lesbian invisibility is a symptom of homophobia.”

<sup>10</sup> Anti-Zionism is not the same as being critical of the policies of the Israeli government (Abella 1994, 2002; B’nai Brith, 2003; Brown, 1994a; Cotler, 2002a,b; Kellner, 2002; Rae, 2002; Wentz, 2002; Zoloth, 2002). This author has been critical of the policies of every Israeli government, including the present one, and has also been involved in feminist dialogues with Palestinian women and numerous other initiatives to promote peace in Israel. Of course, one has the right to critique the Israeli government, just as one has the right to criticize the government policies of any country, including Canada, with which one happens to disagree. But this is not anti-Zionism. Anti-Zionism questions Israel’s intrinsic right to exist, a direct extension of the belief that Jews as individuals do not have the right to exist or survive, and which therefore is a form of antisemitism (Abella, 2002; B’nai Brith, 2003; Cotler, 2002a,b; Kellner, 2002; Krauthammer, 1990; Rae, 2002; Wisse, 2002; Zoloth, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> To offer but one example of many: In the Phase One focus groups, when asked where they felt most comfortable, and safest, as Jews, the women responded almost uniformly with “among Jews...[in Yiddish] *indzere*...among our own.” A number of the feminists in this study, however, qualified this by saying that given the sexism in the Jewish community, they felt really safe only among Jewish women; and some were even more specific, saying only among Jewish feminists. Several commented sadly that a few years back, they would also have included as a safe place the feminist movement at large, and being among other feminists

Jewish or non-Jewish, but that this is no longer the case. One woman said:

I was in a Women’s Studies class, it was feminist theory, and...I watched this black woman say, ‘Well, how could you compare a black, poor, single mother with a wealthy Jewish woman?’ And it’s a very bizarre thing to deal with, because on the one hand, I don’t want to get up there and start saying, ‘Well, I’m Jewish, and you know, and I’m like, well, I’m white and Jewish, but I could be Sephardic [a Jew of Oriental—rather than central or Eastern European—origin, and often with darker skin] and I could be having to deal with being both a woman of colour and Jewish...’ You know, it’s ranking the oppressions which is a terrible thing, but it’s difficult. It’s difficult to come to terms with, ‘Oh, you’re just a little, white Jew, a middle-class Jew, who’s opening your mouth.’ Anti-semitism’s there, in the feminist movement... it’s in my safe little hold.

In none of the situations where these kinds of incidents occurred was the dichotomizing challenged (poor/Black/Christian vs. rich/white/Jew), nor was the (inaccurate, obviously) confounding of ethnicity and class (as it likely would have been regarding any other ethnic group), thereby conveying the distinct impression to the students that the professor was persuaded that this characterization of Jewishness and/or Jewish women was essentially correct. Of course it is not, and is rooted in two classic antisemitic myths (the Jew as rich, and the Jew as powerful).

It should also be noted that it is not only in Women’s Studies that antisemitism is generally invisible. In social work, for example, teaching about racism or oppression almost never includes teaching about antisemitism (Gold, 1993, 1996; Soifer, 1991), and the same is true of academia in general throughout North America (Alexander, 1992; Brown, 1994a; Gutman, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, not all Jewish women are aware of the connotations of these two stereotypes. In this study, when asked “Do you use the term JAP (or Jewish American Princess) in your everyday speech to describe a certain kind of Jewish woman?” 73% said “no,” but 13% said “yes, with regret,” and 15% said simply “yes.”

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