

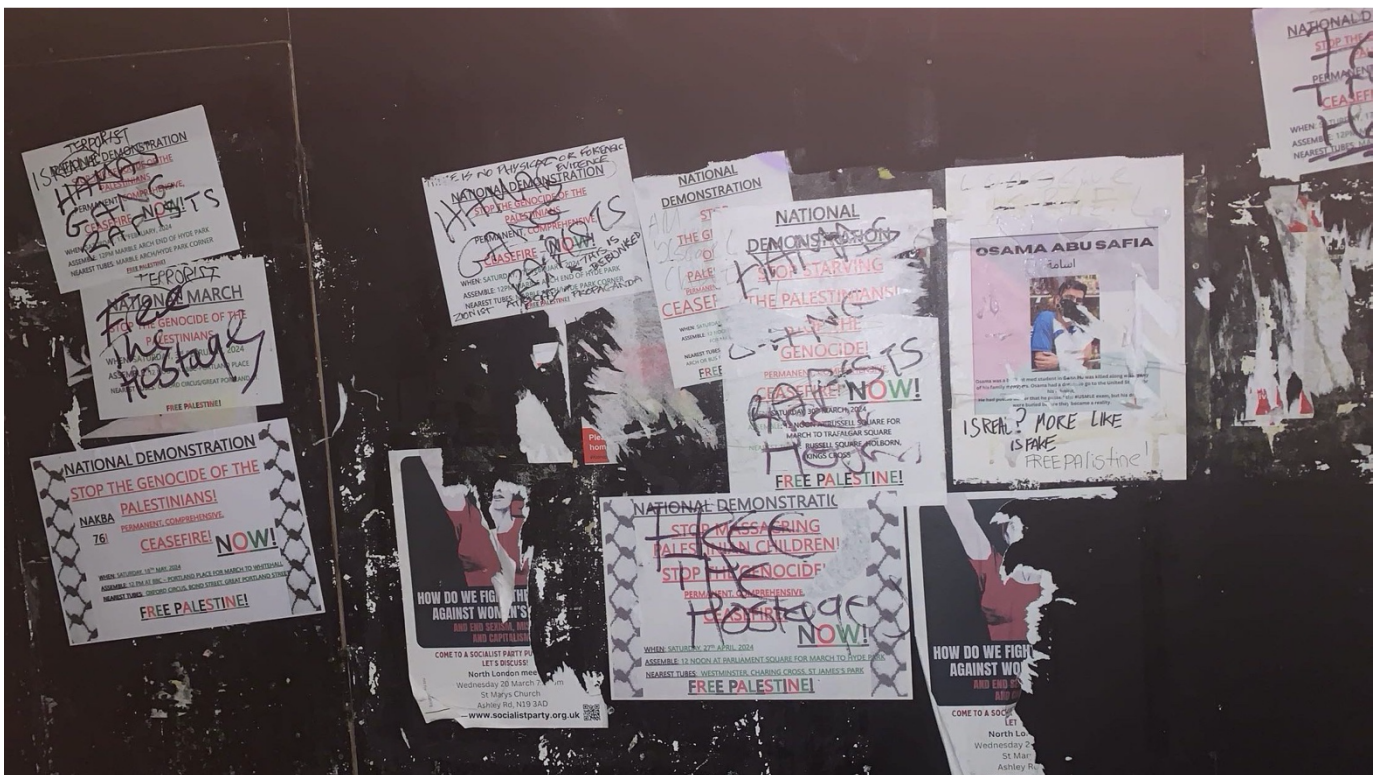
Crisis, Coping and Identity: The Experience of London Jewish Individuals After October 7th 2023

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This image was taken by Zev Lesnik Oberstein

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Abstract

This thesis aimed to analyze and tell the story of London Jewish individuals and their experiences in the aftermath of the October 7th attack by Hamas in Israel. The research focuses on Jewish individuals in London, analyzing how they coped with the increase of anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7th and how this influenced their Jewish identity. The thesis focuses on individuals within the London Jewish community and not a specific sub-group within this community. Jewish individuals in this thesis are people who identify as being Jewish. I chose not to study a particular sub-group because I was interested in the experiences of individuals who self-defined as Jewish in any way. The data collection was conducted during four months of fieldwork in London, doing ethnographic research comprising participant observation, a semi-structured interview, social media analysis, and discourse analysis. This research gives new insights into how London Jewish individuals have coped with the antisemitism and also with the under-researched element of anti-Israel sentiments after October 7th. Some of the main findings include that Israel has become a more central factor in their Jewish identity and their coping with both antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiments. Some individuals have become more critical of Israel, joining, for example, Israel-Palestine co-existence marches and asking questions like “Should I support the Israeli government as a Jew?” while others have become more supportive of Israel, for example, by singing the Israeli national anthem after every service in their synagogue. The attack also led to some individuals moving closer to their Jewish identity and seeking social support in the Jewish community. In contrast, others have coped by withdrawing. In conclusion, this study shows that the October 7th attack had a profound impact on the Jewish identity of the respondents in this study.

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List of Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAA	Campaign Against Antisemitism
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
JRAL	Jewish Runners Association London
MET	Metropolitan Police Service
MHL	Melekh Ha'olam London
SIT	Social Identity Theory
U.A.E	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom

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Chapter 1: Introduction

‘My brother, he came back home completely shocked, it was horrible.’ What had happened? I asked after she muttered this. ‘Well, you see, my brother is visibly Jewish, wearing a Kippah and Tzitzit while going outside. He was walking on his way back home from school, two months after the October 7th attack, when a person came up to him and yelled, “You are a disgusting baby killer!” and “Dirty Yid!” at him. He came home in tears, and we were shocked when he told us what had happened.’ After she explained what happened, we were quiet for a few moments. She then went on, ‘This did not only impact him, my entire family is more wary about going outside now; we are all easily recognized as Jewish.’

1.1 October 7th 2023

Before delving into the events of the October 7th attack on Israel by Hamas, it is essential to provide the necessary context leading up to it. Between 2008 and 2023, there have been four significant clashes between Israel and Hamas.¹ The reason why 2008 is a relevant year is because that year was the first major clash between Hamas and Israel after Israeli disengagement from Gaza in 2005. The operation in 2008 was named Operation Cast Lead by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).² From Operation Cast Lead onwards, there were three other significant clashes, namely, Operation Pillar of Defense (2012), Operation Protective Edge (2014), and Operation Guardian of the Walls (2021).³ However, it is essential to note that the conflict has been an ongoing protracted war throughout this period.⁴

What made Operation Guardian of the Walls different than the previous three conflicts was that during the conflict, there were riots in Arab-Jewish mixed cities inside Israel.⁵ This created a lot of tension within Israel, which had only just started to recover from the Balfour protests (protests against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu), which took

¹ Avner Barnea. “Israeli Intelligence Was Caught off Guard: The Hamas Attack on 7 October 2023—a Preliminary Analysis.” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 37, no. 3 (March 26, 2024): 1056–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2024.2315546>, 1061.

² Avner Barnea. “Israeli Intelligence Was Caught off Guard: The Hamas Attack on 7 October 2023—a Preliminary Analysis.”, 1061.

³ Avner Barnea, 1061-1065.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1065.

⁵ Shai Feldman. “The Impact of the May 2021 Hamas-Israel Confrontation.” *The Impact of the May 2021 Hamas-Israel Confrontation | Crown Conversations | Publications | Crown Center for Middle East Studies | Brandeis University*, 2021. <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/crown-conversations/cc-10.html>, Last accessed on 17/07/2024.

place from the summer of 2020 till April 2021, a month before Operation Guardian of the Walls.⁶ Furthermore, Operation Guardian of the Walls is regarded by some, such as Yoel Guzansky and Yohanan Tzoreff, to be the first real test of the Abraham Accords, which was an accord of normalization between Israel and the U.A.E, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan.⁷

The Abraham Accords form an essential backdrop for the October 7th attack, with the president of the United States, Joe Biden, trying to include Saudi Arabia as part of the accords a month before the attack, in September 2023.⁸ However, the Biden administration has failed to reach an agreement with Saudi Arabia thus far, which has not yet joined the Abraham Accords. Abbas Zaki, a member of the Central Committee of Fatah, the political faction that controls the Palestinian Authority, stated that the Abraham Accords represented one of the reasons for the October 7th attack.⁹ However, the Abraham Accords are just one of the many explanations for why the October 7th attack happened. Others include Hamas wanting revenge ‘for what it saw as past Israeli attacks and the constant Israeli occupation of the West Bank, arrest of Hamas leaders, isolation, and bombing of Gaza.’¹⁰ Also, the decrease in Hamas’s popularity in Gaza before the October 7th attack has been attributed as a significant reason for the attack.¹¹

On October 7th, 2023, the most violent attack in perhaps Israel’s history occurred.¹² Hamas, recognized as a terrorist organization by countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, perpetrated the attack, resulting in the death of 1.200 Israeli lives and

⁶ Daphna Ben-Shaul. “Performing Civic Spheres: Aesthetic-Political Public Appearance in the Balfour Protest in Israel.” *Social Movement Studies*, June 7, 2024, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2024.2362228>, 2.

⁷ Yoel Guzansky, and Yohanan Tzoreff. “Gaza, Qatar, and the UAE: The Abraham Accords after Operation Guardian of the Walls.” *The Washington Institute*, June 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/gaza-qatar-and-uae-abraham-accords-after-operation-guardian-walls>, Last accessed on 17/07/2024.

⁸ Jon B. Alterman. “Biden’s Efforts to Bring Saudi Arabia into the Abraham Accords.” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, September 22, 2023. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/bidens-efforts-bring-saudi-arabia-abraham-accords>, Last accessed on 17/07/2024.

⁹ Isaac Stanley-Becker. “How Trump Advanced Arab-Israeli Peace but Fueled Palestinian Rage .” *The Washington Post*, 2024. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/02/10/trump-israel-gaza-war/>, Last accessed on 19/07/2024.

¹⁰ Daniel Byman and Mackenzie Holtz. “Why Hamas Attacked When It Did.” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, December 6, 2023. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-hamas-attacked-when-it-did>, Last accessed on 25/07/2024.

¹¹ Daniel Byman and Mackenzie Holtz. “Why Hamas Attacked When It Did.”

¹² Daniel Byman, Riley McCabe, Alexander Palmer, Catrina Doxsee, Mackenzie Holtz, and Delaney Duff. “Hamas’s October 7 Attack: Visualizing the Data.” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, December 19, 2023. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hamass-october-7-attack-visualizing-data>, Last accessed on 17/07/2024.

leaving thousands more injured.¹³ Furthermore, at least 240 people were taken hostage and kidnapped to the Gaza Strip.¹⁴ This attack on the Jewish state has been one of the deadliest attacks on Jewish people since the Holocaust.¹⁵ The attack began at 6:30 am, Israel time, when Hamas launched a massive rocket barrage, targeting civilian areas in the south and the center of Israel.¹⁶ Following this barrage, roughly 1,000 Hamas terrorists penetrated Israel from the land, air, and sea, storming military bases, cities, kibbutzim, moshavim, and a music festival.¹⁷ Some of the atrocities committed by Hamas were ‘...massacres of innocent civilians and unprepared soldiers that involved brutal actions such as beheadings, immolation of the elderly and infants, setting entire homes ablaze with their occupants inside, torture, amputations, rapes, and numerous other atrocities.’¹⁸

After October 7th and, to some extent, on the same day, Israel retaliated. Having failed to stop the Hamas attacks, the IDF responded to the October 7th attack with overwhelming force, killing tens of thousands of Palestinians and razing entire Gazan neighborhoods to the ground.¹⁹ Furthermore, Israel's retaliation has led to a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza, with food and health systems having collapsed.²⁰ The retaliation has been continuing during the writing of this thesis. On the 26th of January 2024, South Africa took Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging that Israel has been committing genocide against the Palestinian population.²¹ The court's ruling will only commence in the next couple of years. However, the ICJ has obligated Israel to ensure that no genocide is committed and to enable essential services and humanitarian assistance.²² As the court has not released its verdict on the case of Israel vs. South Africa, this thesis will not engage in the debate that is now occurring on whether Israel is committing genocide or not.

¹³ Omer Dostri. "Hamas's October 2023 Attack on Israel- The End of the Deterrence Strategy in Gaza." *Military Review Online Exclusive*, November 2023, 1–13, 1.

¹⁴ Avner Barnea, 1066.

¹⁵ Omer Dostri. "Hamas's October 2023 Attack on Israel- The End of the Deterrence Strategy in Gaza." 1.

¹⁶ Avner Barnea, 1066.

¹⁷ M.T Samuel. "The Israel-hamas War: Historical Context and International Law." *Middle East Policy* 30, no. 4 (December 2023): 3–9. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12723>, 4.

¹⁸ Omer Dostri, 1.

¹⁹ Aluf Benn. "Israel's Self-Destruction." *Foreign Affairs*, March 19, 2024.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/israels-netanyahu-self-destruction>, last accessed on 17/04/2024.

²⁰ Avner Barnea, 1067.

²¹ Miłosz Gapsa. "Broadening the Bindingness of the Provisional Measures Order in South Africa V. Israel at the ICJ?" *Chinese Journal of International Law* 23, no. 1 (February 29, 2024): 191–96. <https://doi.org/10.1093/chinesejil/jmae007>, 191.

²² Miłosz Gapsa. "Broadening the Bindingness of the Provisional Measures Order in South Africa V. Israel at the ICJ?", 191.

1.2 The Significance of this Thesis and its Aims

Though the people in Israel and Gaza are the primary people who have been impacted by this horrible conflict, there is also another group that has felt the strains of the conflict, the Jewish diaspora around the world. According to a vast number of reports, such as *Antisemitism World Wide Report For 2023*, constructed by The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University, The Irwin Cotler Institute at Tel Aviv University, and the Anti-Defamation League, antisemitism against the Jewish diaspora has risen a worrying amount since October 7th, 2023.²³ In another report by Nordic Judaistik Scandinavian Jewish Studies, it is stated that in the aftermath of October 7th, 'antisemitism has gained renewed strength worldwide.'²⁴ Antisemitism is an essential aspect of how October 7th has impacted the Jewish diaspora, with many diasporic Jews feeling less safe than before October 7th, with some organizations, such as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, reporting an increase of antisemitism by 400%.²⁵ So, antisemitism will also play an important role throughout this thesis. However, there is another equally important story to tell, which is barely touched upon in the media, reports, academia, or international organizations. It is the story of how Jewish individuals have been coping with the crisis that unfolded on and after October 7th. This crisis includes complex feelings towards Israel created due to an increase in anti-Israel public opinion (do I need to pick sides? Can I have my own opinion? Is it self-defense or going too far?), which is often closely tied to their Jewish identity.²⁶ Furthermore, the crisis also includes antisemitism that resulted from the October 7th attack. How has this crisis impacted their Jewish identity, specifically individuals within the London Jewish community?

Despite attacks on Israel and Israel's retaliations occurring relatively frequently throughout the past two and a half decades and widespread coverage of the heightening antisemitism during such periods, surprisingly, there has been little scholarly attention to how

²³ The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University. "Antisemitism Worldwide Report for 2023." *Antisemitism World Wide Report For 2023*. Accessed July 5, 2024. https://cst.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/AntisemitismWorldwide_2023_Final.pdf, Last accessed on 5/07/2024.

²⁴ Nicola Karcher, and Kjetil Braut Simonsen. "The Rise and Impact of Conspiracist Antisemitism:" *Nordisk judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 35, no. 1 (June 28, 2024): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.30752/nj.142243>, 10.

²⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. "Jews in Europe Still Face High Levels of Antisemitism." *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*, July 11, 2024. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2024/jews-europe-still-face-high-levels-antisemitism>, Last accessed on 18/07/2024.

²⁶ Stephen Miller. "Changing Patterns of Jewish Identity among British Jews ." *Essay*. In *New Jewish Identities*, 45–60. Central European University Press, 2003, 48.

Jews cope with these times of crisis and how these crises impact their identity. This is especially interesting, as I realize that nearly every country has a Jewish community. One could argue that this is because, logically, the large amount of the research after such events is dedicated solely to antisemitism. Even articles such as *Antisemitism Is Just Part of My Day-to-Day Life* by Maya Flax focus on coping, but only on how people cope with antisemitism.²⁷ This research provides one of the first insights into the coping mechanisms of individuals within the London Jewish community regarding the October 7th attack and how this attack influenced their identity.

Thus, this thesis attempts to create an ethnographic account that explores the themes emerging from the London Jewish experience when pressure against their identity rises due to the rise in anti-Israel opinions and an increase in antisemitism in Britain after the October 7th attack and how they cope with this.²⁸ This thesis tries to add additional layers of analysis on the Jewish experience and build upon the traditional aspect of the existing research, namely antisemitism, which will always be an essential aspect of the discussion, which is also the case for this thesis. Instead of looking at how Jews cope only with antisemitism and how this leads to a crisis in their identity, this thesis will add the under-researched element of how Jews cope with the anti-Israel sentiment that erupted on and after October 7th and how this impacts their Jewish identity. Therefore, the research question that will guide this thesis is: *How have Jewish individuals within the broader London Jewish community coped with the anti-Israel opinions and antisemitism after the October 7th attack, and how have the anti-Israeli sentiments and antisemitism influenced their Jewish identity?*

Why did I go to London and not any other city with a large Jewish community? This is an important question, as every Jewish community and individual within these communities worldwide has felt the impact of October 7th and its aftermath, and every Jewish community has its own distinct identity. Firstly, the general media had painted a living hell in London that Jews, for example, could no longer go to the center of London whenever they wanted and

²⁷ Maya Flax. “‘Antisemitism Is Just Part of My Day-to-Day Life’: Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Orthodox Jews in North London.” *International Review of Victimology*, April 22, 2021, 026975802110066. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02697580211006663>.

²⁸ Matthew Smith. “British Attitudes to the Israel-Gaza Conflict: February 2024 Update.” *YouGov*, February 15, 2024. <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/48675-british-attitudes-to-the-israel-gaza-conflict-february-2024-update>, Last accessed on 19/07/2024.

that antisemitism in London was rampant.^{29 30 31} Reading this interpretation in the media, I immediately wondered how the London Jewish community felt about this, as the press was functioning as their mouthpiece without them talking themselves. Secondly, I have two aunts who live in or near London, who both offered to let me stay at their place while doing research. This was not only compelling for financial reasons of not having to find a place to stay but also because they have connections with London Jewish individuals to whom they were more than willing to introduce me. Some of the stories of the people they introduced me to will be used throughout this thesis.

Furthermore, one of these aunts, whose house I stayed at while researching and writing my thesis, lives in Hampstead, which has a relatively large Jewish community, making up 11% of the Hampstead population.³² The chance to live in a relatively Jewish neighborhood in London also made for the perfect circumstances for me to do my research, as it would provide easier access to Jewish individuals. Finally, one of my parents' closest Jewish friends said that he coincidentally had Jewish family members who lived in Hampstead who might be willing to partake in my research and did. This provided a good starting point for my research and helped me with the possibility of further contact with other Jewish individuals.

1.3 The Approach

When I started researching for this thesis, I had a specific plan for collecting my data and what my thesis would look like. However, this plan quickly changed once I arrived in London, as the circumstances differed from what I had expected. I had anticipated that people wanted to talk about their experiences with me, but people weren't as willing to talk about their experiences through interviews as I had thought. Furthermore, I quickly discovered that the diversity within the London Jewish community was vast, so I could not research the

²⁹ Angela Epstein. "Rampant Anti-Semitism Is a Problem for Us All Says Angela Epstein." Express.co.uk, March 8, 2024. <https://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/1875437/antisemitism-problem-uk-jewish>, Last accessed on 16/06/2024.

³⁰ Kate Whannel. "Adviser Warns London a 'No-Go Zone for Jews Every Weekend.'" BBC News, March 8, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68508351>, Last accessed on 19/07/2024.

³¹ Oliver Price, and Lettice Bromovsky. "British Jews Feel Central London Is Not Safe for Them during Protest Marches Says Board of Deputies as Demonstrators Prepare to Fill Capital Again Today." Daily Mail Online, March 9, 2024. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13176559/British-Jews-central-London-not-safe-protest-Board-Deputies.html>, Last accessed on 19/07/2024.

³² Office for National Statistics. "Religion - Census Maps, Office for National Statistics ." Home - Office for National Statistics, 2021. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/religion/religion-tb/jewish?geoLock=msoa&msoa=E02000167>, Last accessed 19/07/2024.

London Jewish community as a homogenous group. Therefore, I underwent various planning stages, such as changing the data collection methods and deciding to do inductive research. The vision I had at the beginning of my research for the result of my thesis and the actual result are two completely different entities.

When I started my research, I intended to use an analytical framework to test against the data I would gather. I tried to use the Social Identity Theory (SIT), constructed by Henry Tajfel and John Turner. I thought SIT would be a valuable tool for my thesis because SIT believes that identity group formation is answered by looking at the human need for categorization, order, and self-esteem (for instance, optimal distinctiveness).³³ At the start of my research, I deemed the “London Jewish community” as one entity. Therefore, I thought this theory would help me explain how the Jewish community of London as a group coped with the October 7th attack. However, the London community is not homogeneous. It, therefore, cannot be considered as “one group,” which would be necessary if I wanted to use the SIT. So, I changed the focus of my research to Jewish individuals in London rather than a specific group, which I will explain further in my methodology. This makes SIT unapplicable for this thesis, as the theory focuses on why groups react to violence rather than individuals. So, instead, I decided to use an inductive research approach. This switch was also made because I wanted my data to speak for itself and let the stories explain the situation of the individual London Jews rather than drawing from a theory to describe and explain their experiences. Despite my decision not to use a specific theory, this thesis still follows specific ontological and epistemological stances. Firstly, this thesis adopts an individualist ontological stance. This perspective posits that individuals may react uniquely to events independently of their group.³⁴ For example, Jews have diverse responses to the events of October 7th. This

³³ Jolle Demmers. *Theories of Violent Conflict An Introduction* Second edition. Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2017, 52.

³⁴ Andrew Vincent. “The Ontology of Individualism .” *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, May 1995, 127–49, 128.

is illustrated by, for example, Jews who support Palestine,³⁵ Jews who align more strongly with Zionism and Israel,³⁶ and Jews who conceal their Jewish identity out of fear.³⁷

Secondly, this thesis adopts an epistemological stance centered on "understanding," known as interpretivism. In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, meanings must be studied within their historical and cultural contexts.³⁸ Each person affected by the conflict has a unique perspective that resists generalization. Consequently, no single explanation can encompass all behaviors. This research aims to acquire knowledge by academically interpreting how actors understand their social world.³⁹ In this regard, I have drawn inspiration from Greg Beckett in his book *There Is No More Haiti, Between Life and Death in Port-au-Prince*, who aims to 'make present for readers how people think and talk about something profound that has happened to them.'⁴⁰ I will further explain how Greg Beckett's work has influenced this thesis in the methodology section of this thesis.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis and Sub-research Questions

In chapter two, *Methodology*, I will describe and explain how I have conducted my research. The research for this thesis was conducted through one primary data collection method, participant observation, which was conducted throughout London but mainly in the Borough of Hampstead. I have also used three other minor research methods accompanying the participant observation: one semi-structured interview, discourse analysis, and social media analysis. In this chapter, I will also explain why I have chosen to research Jewish individuals in London rather than a Jewish sub-group. This includes discussing the questions: What does it mean to be Jewish, and what is Jewish identity? These questions are essential, as they form the backdrop for understanding how Jewish identity has been impacted by anti-Israel sentiments and antisemitism after October 7th. I will also describe the ethical considerations

³⁵ Emily Schneider. "Pathways to Global Justice: Turning Points, Media, and Palestine Solidarity among Diaspora Jews." *Arab Media & Society*, no. 32 (2021): 1–20, 2.

³⁶ Evyatar Friesel. "Zionism and Jewish Statehood as Expressions of Jewish Modernisation." *Israel Affairs* 30, no. 3 (April 17, 2024): 381–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2024.2342130>, 397

³⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. "Jews in Europe Still Face High Levels of Antisemitism." European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, July 11, 2024. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2024/jews-europe-still-face-high-levels-antisemitism>, Last accessed on 18/07/2024.

³⁸ Jolle Demmers. *Theories of Violent Conflict An Introduction* Second edition, 17.

³⁹ Jolle Demmers, 17.

⁴⁰ Greg Beckett, *There is no more Haiti: Between life and death in Port-au-Prince*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2020, 11.

that need to be considered, such as the emotional impact of researching antisemitism. Finally, I will explain the vital role of the Waterstones bookstore on Hampstead High Street in this thesis and how I found participants for my research there. At the end of this chapter, I will also discuss some limitations.

In chapter three, *Literary Review and Conceptual Framework*, I will highlight the current debate about coping mechanisms in recent literature. The discussion includes looking at coping mechanisms through a traditional lens and a de-colonial lens. This will then lead to the defining of coping mechanisms. Examples of such coping mechanisms are withdrawal, Isolation, and acceptance. I will then delve into more relevant literature, including historiographical and anthropological research on Jewish communities worldwide. One of these includes a discussion of another thesis that researched the impact of October 7th on young Jews in Sweden, which mainly focuses on antisemitism and community.

In chapter four, *Jewish Organizations and the Impact of October 7th*, I will analyze participant observation data I collected from individuals at three different Jewish companies located in London, namely Jewish Runners Association London (JRAL), Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA), and Melekh Ha'olam London (MHL). In the chapter, I explain what these organizations entail and why I researched individuals within these organizations. The sub-question that will form the backbone of this chapter is: *how have Jewish individuals at the Jewish companies JRAL, CAA, and MHL coped with the increase of anti-Israeli sentiment and antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7th, and how has this impacted their Jewish identity?* Throughout this chapter, it will become clear that the individuals within each company have coped differently. For example, my data suggests that individuals within CAA use active coping mechanisms relating to empowerment, which can also be traced to the nature of the organization. While Individuals within the organization JRAL seem to use more inverted coping mechanisms, such as withdrawing while initially seeking social support.

In Chapter Five, *Shabbat Dinners, Jewish Traditions, and Family*, I first immerse myself in Jewish life by attending Shabbat dinners organized by my aunt's family friends. At these dinners, I take a more distant approach to participant observation, letting the people present guide the conversation, which often involved talking about the October 7th attack. These experiences gave me concrete insights into how people have been impacted by the increasing anti-Israeli sentiment and how they coped with it, with one individual telling me she doesn't listen to her favorite news outlet anymore, the BBC, because of how they report about the

conflict. Secondly, in this chapter, I also analyze a conversation with my aunt about her experiences with October 7th, her Jewish identity, and how this changed and became more strongly connected to Israel. This provides essential insights into how the October 7th attack impacted an individual's Jewish identity. Finally, I also analyzed my experience with a messianic Jew, a Jew who believed in Jesus Christ. I met her by fluke on the Tube and went to lunch with her. This experience also further highlights the vast amount of different Jewish identities and how she was impacted by the October 7th attack. This chapter was guided by the sub-research question: *How has the religiousness of Jewish individuals in London played a role in how they coped with the anti-Israel sentiments and antisemitism after the October 7th attack?*

In chapter six, *The Waterstones Jews*, I analyze my experiences with two individuals I met in the book store, The Waterstones. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how these respondents coped with the increase in anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism and how this influenced their Jewish identity. The first respondent provides insights into normalization as a coping mechanism. Through her experience, it becomes clear that she implements this coping strategy to soften the impact of victimization. After that, I analyze her Instagram page, where she very actively posts about October 7th, Israel, and antisemitism. This provides a much more detailed picture of how she has been coping with October 7th, the increased anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism, and how this influenced her Jewish identity. Secondly, I will analyze the experiences of the second individual I met at The Waterstones in this chapter. Her experiences are not related to anti-Israel sentiments but instead her family's extreme support of the state of Israel and her struggles with this. She explains how she is in favor of the two-state solution and tries to talk to her family about her point of view, with them staying adamant in their support of Israel. This provides the critical insight that Jewish individuals don't just struggle with anti-Israel sentiments but also pro-Israel sentiments. Finally, I will analyze how this girl explains why she is not attending university next year. Going to Israel instead, relating to the fear of antisemitism that might be caused by the pro-Palestine encampments. This chapter was guided by the main research question, specifically focusing on the individuals I met in the Waterstones.

In chapter seven, *Antisemitism in London and the Discourse of Posters*, I first specifically focus on antisemitism and the experiences of one of my respondents and his acquaintance that highlight antisemitism in London in the aftermath of the October 7th attack

on Israel. The chapter also highlights how antisemitism has become more prominent in the aftermath of October 7th, highly impacting Jewish individuals. I also tell one of my own experiences with antisemitism I had while in London, which shows that antisemitism has become very much a part of everyday life in London. Finally, this chapter also analyzes the discourse on posters and how they play a role as coping mechanisms for Jewish individuals. This part of the chapter shows that anti-Israel sentiments have become part of everyday life in London for everyone on the streets to see. It is argued in this part of the chapter that Jewish individuals coped through remembrance and keeping the hostages part of the public discourse. This chapter was guided by the two sub-research questions: *How has antisemitism in London evolved post-October 7th?* and *What role does the discourse of (hostage) street posters play in the coping mechanisms of Jewish individuals?*

In chapter eight, *Interview with Jewish Individual*, I analyze a semi-structured interview that I conducted with a Jewish individual living in London, Hampstead. This interview deserved its chapter, as it is densely packed with insights about anti-Israel sentiments, antisemitism, and personal experiences after October 7th. Furthermore, various coping mechanisms are identified, such as social support mechanisms. In this chapter, it is argued that the individual is experiencing cognitive dissonance and has tried to reduce the feeling of discomfort created because of anti-Israel sentiments and her idea of what Jewish identity is by going to co-existence events, which support co-existence between Israel and Palestine. This chapter was also guided by the main research question of this thesis.

Then, in chapter nine, *Reflections and Conclusion*, I draw conclusions from my data analyzed throughout the thesis, give suggestions for further research, and discuss some of this research's limitations.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Respondents of this Thesis

This thesis is based on six months of research and four months of fieldwork in London, from the 18th of March 2024 to July 2nd, 2024, primarily in the borough of Hampstead, where I also lived. However, some stories and people I met took place in other parts of London, such as Hendon and Golders Green. The respondents throughout my thesis come from various aspects of London Jewish life. Religiously, my respondents include a Modern Orthodox Jew, atheist Jews, secular Jews, cultural Jews, and a Messianic Jew. My research also includes individuals from various Jewish organizations based in London, such as CAA, JRAL, and MHL. Therefore, my thesis does not research one specific sub-group of Jewish people like “the Orthodox Jewish community in London” but focuses on individuals from various aspects of Jewish London. Why did I do this instead of concentrating on one component of Jewish life in London?

I decided to collect data from individuals who self-defined as Jewish because I was interested in the experiences of individuals rather than pre-defined (sub-)groups. This, in turn, is connected to the intersectionality of Jewish identity. Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, which she stated is ‘... just a metaphor for understanding how multiple forms of inequality or disadvantages sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles often not understood within conventional ways of thinking.’⁴¹ For example, being Jewish and a woman or being Jewish and a member of the LGBTQ+ community. A critical aspect of intersectionality is, as Crenshaw argues, that ‘the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite—that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences.’⁴² This is also the case for Jewish identity, which has many different elements, which I will explain further in this chapter. A lot of ethnographic work on Jewish communities has, for example, increasingly focused on ultra-

⁴¹Kimberlé Crenshaw. “Kimberlé Crenshaw: What Is Intersectionality?” YouTube, June 22, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViDtnfQ9FHc>, Last accessed on 24/07/2024.

⁴² Kimberle Crenshaw. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>, 1242.

orthodox Jews.⁴³ Furthermore, Crenshaw also states that ‘...ignoring difference within groups contributes to tension among groups...’⁴⁴ Because of the intersectionality of the Jewish identity and this thesis focusing on Jewish individuals, the questions of what it means to be Jewish and Jewish identity are fundamental to this thesis.

So, what does it mean to be Jewish? Jewish identities differ per individual, as Michelle Friedman, Myrna Friedlander, and David Blustein discussed in their article *Toward an Understanding of Jewish Identity: A Phenomenological Study*.⁴⁵ According to them, despite similarities among the various branches of Judaism, each is unique in principles, customs, and ritual practices.⁴⁶ Furthermore, they also state that there are a lot of people who are not affiliated with a religious branch of Judaism yet have a solid sense of Jewish identity.⁴⁷ They also mention the essential aspects of Israel and how some people identify strongly with Israel. Contrastingly, others have less political interest and live like their ancestors did hundreds of years ago.⁴⁸ Also, they state that some Jews ‘mix traditional and contemporary values, and others, whether by choice or by circumstance, have only a peripheral connection to Jewish culture.’⁴⁹ However, this covers only part of the question of what it means to be Jewish, done from a religious standpoint. Many Jewish people don’t only see Judaism as a religion but also as an ethnicity, culture, or history.⁵⁰ This also ties into the question of what Jewish identity is.

So, what is Jewish identity now that we know that what it means to be Jewish differs for each individual? As stated before, people see Judaism not only as a religion but also as an ethnicity, a culture, and a history, amongst many other things. Carla G. Naumburg calls Judaism a hidden diversity, as people cannot identify who is Jewish based on, for example,

⁴³ Ben Kasstan. “Positioning Oneself and Being Positioned in the ‘Community’: An Essay on Jewish Ethnography as a ‘Jew-Ish’ Ethnographer.” *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 27 (April 26, 2019): 264–83. <https://doi.org/10.30674/scripta.66579>, 265.

⁴⁴ Kimberle Crenshaw. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” 1242.

⁴⁵ Michelle L. Friedman, Myrna L. Friedlander, and David L. Blustein. “Toward an Understanding of Jewish Identity: A Phenomenological Study.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52, no. 1 (January 2005): 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.1.77>.

⁴⁶ Michelle L. Friedman, Myrna L. Friedlander, and David L. Blustein. “Toward an Understanding of Jewish Identity: A Phenomenological Study.” 77.

⁴⁷ Michelle L. Friedman, Myrna L. Friedlander, and David L. Blustein, 77.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁰ Lynn Davidman. “Beyond the Synagogue Walls.” *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, August 18, 2003, 261–75. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511807961.019>, 266.

their skin, the language they speak, or any other recognizable features.⁵¹ According to Stephen Miller, who writes about British Jewish Identity, their identity seems to be made up of three main components, namely: practice (their level of observance), belief (strength of religious belief, ethnicity (strength of one sense of belonging/identification of other Jews) and sometimes commitment to Israel is also a factor.⁵²

I conclude that there is no one answer to the questions “What does it mean to be Jewish?” and “What is Jewish identity?” Jewish identity consists of many factors, ideas, feelings, and beliefs. It is once again essential to stress that for every individual, being Jewish means something else. Every Jewish identity is different, even within families, which is an element that will be discussed in chapter six. Therefore, I argue, through the lens of intersectionality, it is necessary to research Jewish individuals in London from various backgrounds to try and create a broader understanding of how different Jewish individuals in London have coped with the impact of anti-Israel sentiments and antisemitism after the October 7th attack and how this influenced their Jewish identity.

While researching, I encountered various situations in which I came in contact with people others might not consider Jewish. Still, they did, such as people with a Jewish dad but not a Jewish mom or Messianic Jews. Therefore, I have included their stories, as they self-identify as Jewish.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

This thesis is compiled using one primary data collection method and three minor strategies, forming a broader ethnographic research approach.⁵³ Firstly, I conducted participant/listening observations, including spontaneous discussions and conversations with Jewish people I met in various situations, which comprise most of my data. Most participant observation occurred in the bookstore The Waterstones and social events organized by Jewish organizations such as MHL. I also joined a Jewish runner’s group, JRAL, in London and interned at the Jewish charity CAA. The relevance of these organizations to this research is explained in chapter four. Spontaneous talks with Jewish people occurred in the Waterstones

⁵¹ Caria G.Naumburg. “Judaism a Hidden Diversity.” *Smith College Studies in Social Work* 77, no. 2–3 (July 25, 2007): 79–99. https://doi.org/10.1300/j497v77n02_06, 79.

⁵² Stephen Miller. “Changing Patterns of Jewish Identity among British Jews .” *Essay*. In *New Jewish Identities*, 45–60. Central European University Press, 2003, 48.

⁵³ Jennifer Mason. *Qualitative researching*. London, England: Sage Publications Ltd, 2018, 137.

café with Jewish customers, people on the Tube who I had identified as Jewish, and people I had just met and found out they were Jewish during our conversation. I also talked with people who worked at the CAA charity about their experiences.

This begs the question, how are the anecdotes that evolve from the impromptu and planned conversations with my respondent's relevant data, and how do they help me answer my research question? Pat Thomson, professor of education at the University of Nottingham, argues that anecdotes are an integral part of research, that it is not all of the research, nor the end of the research, but that it is simply a step in your research.⁵⁴ Once an anecdote is written, '... we can ask questions of an anecdote, opening out what it might have to say to our research.'⁵⁵ It is essential to note that 'an anecdote doesn't provide answers, it offers a particular and specific entrée into critical thinking, and into a conversation with our data.'⁵⁶ Furthermore, Michael Wood states that 'the use of the word anecdote is often taken to imply that they are amusing or unreliable, but my use of the term here presupposes only that anecdotes are interesting from the perspective of the research. The key property is that they focus on particular incidents or cases.'⁵⁷ Which is also what the anecdote will do throughout this thesis. Wood also focuses on the critique of anecdotes, saying, 'They are also of limited value for supporting universal laws which assert that something is always the case.'⁵⁸ However, this is not what my thesis intends to do. Instead, it intends to show London Jewish individuals' experiences in the aftermath of October 7th. As Wood says, 'The main value of anecdote in social science is that it can illustrate what is possible.'⁵⁹

Secondly, one of the minor strategies I used was a semi-structured interview, in which I only conducted one lengthy interview. This was a conscious choice, as I had prior contact with the individual, where she had stated she would be willing to talk to me about her experiences but that this would not be possible through participant observation. I wanted to speak to this individual as she has contacts within Israel, including family members. Therefore, I wanted to see how she specifically coped with the anti-Israel sentiment in London, as the

⁵⁴ Pat Thomson. "Doing Field Work? Don't Ignore the Anecdote." patter, October 10, 2016. <https://patthomson.net/2016/10/10/doing-field-work-dont-ignore-the-anecdote/>, Last accessed 24/07/2024.

⁵⁵ Pat Thomson. "Doing Field Work? Don't Ignore the Anecdote."

⁵⁶ Pat Thomson.

⁵⁷ Michael Wood. "Anecdote, Fiction, and Statistics: The Three Poles of Empirical Methodology." *Possibility Studies & Society* 2, no. 1 (January 10, 2024): 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231222379>, 38.

⁵⁸ Michael Wood. "Anecdote, Fiction, and Statistics: The Three Poles of Empirical Methodology.", 39.

⁵⁹ Michael Wood, 39.

attack directly influenced people she knew, not just Israel in general, adding an extra layer of connection, which also further shows the intersectionality of Jewish identity. Also, Jennifer Mason states that participant observation is often part of a broader ethnographic approach involving various other research methods.⁶⁰ Therefore, the interview complements the participant observation and other research methods, which will be discussed next.

Thirdly, another minor strategy I used was analyzing the discourse I observed on posters on London streets. For example, I analyzed pictures of Israeli hostages being torn down, but also of pro-Israel individuals writing texts on Palestinian posters. This method is crucial to this research. I have added it because it shows how the Israel-Gaza conflict has become part of public discourse, including anti-Israel sentiments, and is now also part of everyday life on the streets in London. So, this discourse analysis further adds to my overall ethnographic method. Unlike the protests, which primarily occur in the city centers, posters from both sides can be found everywhere in London.

Finally, the fourth minor strategy I used was social media analysis, conducted on the Instagram of one of the respondents I met in The Waterstones. According to Mason, social media analysis can enable us 'to be with our participants without always having to be bodily co-present with them.'⁶¹ In this respondent's case, this was a beneficial tool, as we did not get to talk for a long time during our first meeting, and while we had a second meeting lined up, this never ended up happening. I noticed they were very active on their Instagram account and asked permission if I was allowed to use what they posted for my thesis to analyze their experience further, which they agreed to.

These four methods combined form my ethnographic research approach. They each help answer my research question in different ways. Each method helps to connect different aspects of how Jewish individuals within the broader London Jewish community have coped with the impact of anti-Israel opinions and antisemitism after the October 7th attack and how this has influenced their Jewish identity.

⁶⁰ Jennifer Mason. *Qualitative researching*, 137.

⁶¹ Jennifer Mason, 155.

2.3 Methodological Limitations

As a Jewish individual, I can be considered an insider to the community I have been researching, despite not being from London and recognizing the diverse range of Jewish identities present there. Although this has helped me gain the confidence and trust of my respondents, there are limitations to doing ethnographic research in a community you are, in a way, part of. For example, 'Insider researchers have long been challenged by the difficulty of separating their personal experiences, feelings, and ideas from those of the researched, and hence they are often confronted with problems of undue bias.'⁶² However, it is essential to note that there is always a bias. I don't believe that this is necessarily a bad thing. For example, with "insider" ethnographic research, "insiders" have more knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural characteristics of the local institutional community than outsiders because they share the same social background, culture, and language.⁶³

2.4 How to Write About Crisis

Understanding how to write these stories and through what lenses is essential. This thesis tells the story of a crisis, how people cope with it, and how this, in turn, impacts their identity. But how does one write about a crisis? How do you write about coping with a crisis? How do you write about changing identities due to crisis? Firstly, I will explain how I write about crises. Here, it is essential to state that Greg Beckett's work heavily influences this thesis, *There Is No More Haiti: Between Life and Death in Port-au-Prince*, and many of the ideas used in this research are theorized by him. Though our research topics are very different, many themes are similar. While writing about crisis, Beckett aims to give an account of "life as lived," a term coined by anthropologist Michael Jackson.⁶⁴ "Life as lived" urges us to focus on the intimacies of lived experience and how people encounter the world.⁶⁵ This is a phenomenological and existentialist approach to anthropology. As Beckett states: 'What unites the various kinds of

⁶² Xu Liu and David Burnett. "Insider-Outsider: Methodological Reflections on Collaborative Intercultural Research." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 9, no. 1 (September 15, 2022): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01336-9>, 3.

⁶³ Xu Liu and David Burnett. "Insider-Outsider: Methodological Reflections on Collaborative Intercultural Research.", 2.

⁶⁴ Greg Beckett. *There is no more Haiti: Between life and death in Port-au-Prince*, 10.

⁶⁵ Greg Beckett, 10.

phenomenological approaches in anthropology is a concern to dwell in the lived experience of others as they encounter the world...' and pay attention to the character of everyday life.⁶⁶

Beckett argues that to do this, one needs to "do" vulnerable ethnography, an idea developed by Ruth Behar in her book *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*.⁶⁷ Vulnerable ethnography is radically open to how people live in the world.⁶⁸ In her work, Behar argues that ethnography has emancipatory potential because it can present other ways of living for us in richly nuanced ways that ethnographers metaphorically refer to as thick, deep, and intimate.⁶⁹ In other words, as Beckett puts it, ethnography makes us vulnerable by exposing us to a world of difference.⁷⁰

For this thesis, I wanted to tell the story of Jewish individuals within the London Jewish community, but I did not know how. Beckett provided me with this framework that complements my research perfectly. I will tell their story through a series of stories as he does. Therefore, vulnerable/intimate ethnography fits best with the stories that will be told, as it helps us understand the lived experiences of others and also '...helps us get away from the common understanding of crisis as a discrete event...' '...to focus instead on how crisis can be an everyday experience.'⁷¹ So, as Beckett theorizes, crisis and how to write about it will form the backdrop of this story. Beckett's goal is to 'make present for readers how people think and talk about something profound that has happened to them.'⁷² However, my goal is to present how people cope with this crisis, how it impacts their identity, and how this differs for each individual in this story. I believe that identity and coping are critical aspects of a crisis, as when there is a crisis, people (try) to cope with it, and it will also impact their identity. Therefore, I will apply the same writing style described by Beckett to discuss identity and coping in a crisis.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁷ Ruth Behar. *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1997.

⁶⁸ Greg Beckett, 10.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁷¹ Ibid., 11.

⁷² Ibid., 11.

2.5 The Importance of Listening

While doing participant observation, listening is one of the most important tools that the observer possesses.⁷³ Martin Forsey argues, based on Anthony Cohen, ‘...that an ethnographic self-consciousness can stimulate a sensitivity to the self-consciousness of those we study.’⁷⁴ Forsey then adds to the idea proposed by Cohen, saying, ‘I would like to add that such self-awareness can help us better appreciate our fellow researchers and the products of our work.’⁷⁵ Forsey goes on to say that it is also essential to acknowledge that researchers may be more aural or visual, influencing the way research is pursued, what is pursued, and, eventually, what is found.⁷⁶

In his article *Ethnography as Participant Listening*, the aim of Forsey is ‘...to consider the importance of listening to the ethnographic project and to open up the possibility of placing engaged listening on a similar footing to participant observation in our conceptualization of ethnographic practices.’⁷⁷ Forsey also suggests that ‘listening is at least as significant as observation to ethnographers. Ethnography is arguably more aural than ocular, the ethnographer more participant listener than observer.’⁷⁸ Forsey argues that, instead of seeing hearing as separate from the visual, we should recognize how hearing operates in key visual practices.⁷⁹

So, Forsey does not argue for moving away from participant observation but rather for acknowledging the importance of listening, which he terms engaged listening.⁸⁰ Engaged listening will be an essential aspect of this research, which will help towards my aim of, just as Forsey states, to: ‘... listen deeply to and/or to observe as closely as possible the beliefs, the values, the material conditions and structural forces that underwrite the socially patterned behaviors of all human beings and the meanings people attach to these conditions and forces.’⁸¹ So, my work is not solely based on participant observation, which is essential to highlight, but will also include participant listening. This is also a significant differentiation

⁷³Martin Gerard Forsey. “Ethnography as Participant Listening.” *Ethnography* 11, no. 4 (November 29, 2010): 558–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138110372587>, 560.

⁷⁴ Martin Gerard Forsey. “Ethnography as Participant Listening.”, 560.

⁷⁵ Martin Gerard Forsey, 560.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 560.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 560.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 561.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 562.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 567.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 567.

between my work and that of Beckett, who also listens and does interviews but does not do this through the framework provided by participant listening.

Finally, I am aware that an intellectual discussion underlines Forsey's work. For instance, are human behaviors socially patterned? Are the conditions and forces there before the meanings that people attach to them? However, these questions are impossible to answer, especially in this thesis, but I wanted to highlight that these are questions and discussions that play a vital role in the backdrop of this kind of research. It is also important to note that Forsey mentions the other senses and deems them valuable and essential for research but focuses explicitly on listening in his work.

2.6 Positionality of the Researcher

As a researcher, I must write about my background because I am so heavily involved and part of the topic researched in this thesis. So, I am Jewish. To show how this impacts my work in this thesis, I think it is essential to write about my experience as a Jew and how I feel about my Judaism. When I was young, between the ages of 13 and 18, I felt vastly ashamed of my Judaism. Why is this the case? One of the main reasons is that I was different than the other kids. Why did I need to do a Bar Mitzvah, but my best friend did not? Why did I need to attend Jewish lessons every Sunday while my friends were free? Why was I part of the group that I felt was disliked so much? My parents also sent me to a Jewish children's summer/winter camp, which I went to every year. It was incredibly awkward for me to explain where I was going to my friends, with jokes such as "You're going to Jew camp?" often being made.

I also always felt this significant presence in my life, which I can now only describe as the Second World War. I think that a lot of Jews have this, especially Jews who have relatives who were victims of the Holocaust. Everyone deals with this in their own way, and mine was to become highly interested in the history of the Second World War, which led me to read many books on the subject and study history at university after high school. So, even though I was ashamed, my Judaism became an essential part of my studies and who I was. During my Bachelor's degree, I slowly became prouder of my Judaism, as the more I learned about its history, the more I understood the feelings I had when I was younger. I wasn't ashamed of being Jewish in itself; I was embarrassed about the fact that I didn't know what it was. I couldn't explain to anyone what my identity was because I didn't know or understand myself.

When I started to understand what it meant to be Jewish, I started feeling pride instead of shame. Then, at the beginning of this Masters of Conflict Studies and Human Rights, which I also chose to enlarge due to my wanting to understand why people hate other people and how conflicts arise, the October 7th attack on Israel happened. It felt like the whole world was swept from under me, and I was shocked for the following months and still am. This is a large part of the backdrop of my research and has undoubtedly influenced my writing, research, and how I have listened and spoken to people.

2.7 The Waterstones Jews

One experience led me to do participant observation instead of my original idea of conducting interviews. This was my meeting with a bookstore called the Waterstones in Hampstead, where most, if not all, of this thesis's writing took place. This Waterstones is located on Hampstead High Street, roughly a seven-minute walk from where I lived.

My first encounter with the Waterstones was typical; I sought books to help with my research. However, the second time I came to the Waterstones, I was trying to find a place to study. The first place I thought of to find a study place was the Waterstones, as a bookstore is quiet and lively, two components I greatly appreciate. It turns out I could not have been more right. When I walked into the Waterstones, I noticed a sign saying a cafeteria was on the second floor, which I had not seen the first time. So, I walked up and found this lovely, big, open-spaced cafeteria with tables with charge holes and loads of people studying like I wanted. Furthermore, there is a small bar where you can get coffee and hot chocolate, which is all I need while researching. I decided then that this would be my place to study, and from then on, I would go every Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and sometimes Sunday to study between 11:00 and 17:00. But why did it change my mind to switch from interviews to participant observation? It was my first proper encounter with what I would later perceive to be some kind of hub for many Jewish residents of Hampstead to enjoy a coffee or come to read and study. Though my thesis won't revolve solely around the Waterstones Jews, it played a big part in this critical switch. I could hear them talk about life, and sometimes, I would also speak to them, which made me realize I wanted to allow them to tell their own story without me guiding them with questions, as an interview would have done.

2.8 Ethical Considerations:

Informed consent:

Participant observation and other forms of ethnographic research involve consent from the subject, an essential element of research ethics. Much of my research included a form of covertness, where the person did know I was a researcher but did not necessarily know that I was researching them. This was primarily the case with impromptu conversations with people, where I told them I was a researcher and what I was researching. Still, I did not necessarily tell them at the time that I was also researching them. However, what I did was that after I had finished observing them and had gathered my data, I asked for their consent on whether I could use the data I had gathered from our conversations and my observations. If they said yes, I would use it in my thesis; if they said no, I would not.

However, there have been situations where I have been unable to ask individuals, for example, when we parted ways before I got to ask people for their contact details. In this case, I have decided to use the data I gathered from these experiences and make the people involved anonymous by giving them a different name or referring to them only by gender or they/them. I also made the setting anonymous so that no one could recognize them. After a conversation, I often got vocal confirmation that I was allowed to use them as part of my thesis, which I deemed as enough, especially because I have made everyone in this thesis anonymous. I decided to anonymize everyone as all of the stories told are very personal and because I do not want to put my participants at any risk, even if the chance of this is minimal.

Therefore, I have also chosen to change the names of the Jewish-running and religious organizations to ensure total anonymity for these individuals. However, I chose to keep the organization's original name, CAA, as the event I analyzed had comprehensive media coverage, and the story was already known to the regular British public. Furthermore, they are an organization that is often featured in the media and news.

The emotional impact of researching antisemitism:

Antisemitism is often a very emotional topic for the participant researched, as it was usually committed against them, or their fear of it being committed against them is significant. Furthermore, talking about your identity when it is under such strain can be very stressful and tiring but also saddening. However, most of the time, people were eager to talk

about their experiences and let their voices be heard. How have I dealt with these difficulties as a researcher? How did I ensure that my participants weren't harmed in any way?

It is essential to state that at no point did I force any of my participants to talk about this topic, and often, when they did not want to talk about it any longer, they changed the topic by themselves, especially in group settings. What I noticed with most of my participants when I told them about my research subject was that they were very interested and often started talking about their experiences without me initiating it. This could also be related to the Jewish tradition of discussing past sufferings, with many festivals commemorating past crises.⁸²

Furthermore, I think many of my participants felt much more at ease once I told them that I was Jewish, which made it easier for them to converse with me. When talking to my participants, I also ensured that they could tell their stories, trying not to interrupt them while talking and mainly listening, with only sometimes asking them a question, often to clarify. I did this so that they could tell me their story authentically and comfortably.

When I noticed that someone got upset about the topic, which only happened a couple of times, I would talk with them about other things, diverting the topic while trying to comfort them. This is also difficult, as often, when in a setting with Jewish people, the conversation goes to October 7th, often without my steering the conversation in this direction, as it is a very contemporary and relevant topic for Jews. Therefore, sometimes, it was hard to prevent emotions from running high, as it was not my initiative in the first place. But I always tried to ensure that the people felt comfortable by, once again, letting them talk about their experiences without asking too many questions or interrupting.

⁸² Ilse Josepha Maria Lazaroms. "Suffering as Identity: The Jewish Paradigm." In *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire*, (October 5, 2011): 621-623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2011.591115>, 621.

Chapter 3: Literary Review and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Defining Coping:

To answer my research question, it is crucial that the term coping is defined. According to Charles Carver in the *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*, coping is ‘efforts to prevent or diminish threat, harm, and loss, or to reduce the distress often associated with those experiences.’⁸³ Carver also states that ‘A person who must deal with adversity is engaged in coping. Thus, coping is inextricably linked to stress.’⁸⁴ Carver states that adversity has several forms: threat, harm, and loss.⁸⁵ He states that people respond to perceptions of threat, harm, and loss in various ways, many labeled as coping.⁸⁶ Finally, as Carver states, coping is a broad concept with a long and complex history.⁸⁷ In this history, coping mechanisms (or responses, as Carver calls them) play an important role in explaining how and why people cope.⁸⁸ Therefore, the next section of this thesis will discuss coping mechanisms and the various ways they can be researched and perceived.

Literary Review: Coping Mechanisms

In this part of the literary review, I will explore coping mechanisms and the evolving academic debate on what they are, how they should be thought about, and how they should be implemented. The first two articles I will discuss are *Antisemitism Is Just Part of My Day-to-Day Life* and *A Systematic Review of Black People Coping with Racism: Approaches, Analysis, and Empowerment* by Maya Flax and Grace Jacob et al.^{89 90}

⁸³ Charles Carver. “Coping.” Essay. In *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*, 496–500. New York, New York: Springer, 2013. https://link-springer-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_1635, Last accessed on 17/07/2024, 496.

⁸⁴ Charles Carver. “Coping.” Essay. In *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*, 496–500. New York, New York: Springer, 2013, 496.

⁸⁵ Charles Carver, 496.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 496.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 496.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 497.

⁸⁹ Maya Flax. “‘Antisemitism Is Just Part of My Day-to-Day Life’: Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Orthodox Jews in North London.” *International Review of Victimology*, April 22, 2021, 026975802110066. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02697580211006663>.

⁹⁰ Grace Jacob, Sonya C. Faber, Naomi Faber, Amy Bartlett, Allison J. Ouimet, and Monnica T. Williams. “A Systematic Review of Black People Coping with Racism: Approaches, Analysis, and Empowerment.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 18, no. 2 (August 25, 2022): 392–415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916221100509>.

There are some similarities between the arguments of Flax and Jacob et al., who both emphasize the importance of community and strong identity in coping with discrimination. For instance, Flax argues one of the reasons why the Orthodox Jewish community uses the normalization of being a victim as one of their main coping mechanisms is a result of close community ties and social cohesion.⁹¹ In Flax's article, normalization means the victim merely accepts their victimization.⁹² She then relates this to SIT, stating that 'Individuals seek a secure sense of self by 'striving to achieve or maintain positive social identity.'⁹³ The Orthodox Jews were able to do this through normalization because of their strong religious identity.⁹⁴ Jacob et al. argue that social support is one of the most beneficial and effective coping mechanisms used to counter racial trauma.⁹⁵ They also claim that social networks contribute to external positive affirmation, stating that positive affirmation from a source external to oneself is profoundly therapeutic and, therefore, very effective.⁹⁶

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences between the two authors' works. Firstly, Flax researched one specific community through ethnographic work and which coping mechanisms they used. Jacob et al. did a literary review on all coping mechanisms black people used and, based on what they found, claimed which would be most beneficial for them. Furthermore, one of the most important differences is the approach to victimization. Flax finds that the Orthodox Jewish community uses normalization as a coping mechanism, showing agency by accepting it as part of daily life.⁹⁷ She states that accepting victimization is 'A coping mechanism, a choice, intended so as not to allow the abuse to escalate.'⁹⁸ Contrastingly, Jacob et al. argue for the importance of proactive strategies such as using social support networks like talking to friends and family.⁹⁹ So, instead of merely accepting, they say that actively confronting and addressing racism is essential for coping, and they argue for empowerment through understanding racism's mechanisms and history to

⁹¹ Maya Flax. "'Antisemitism Is Just Part of My Day-to-Day Life': Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Orthodox Jews in North London.", 305

⁹² Maya Flax. 299.

⁹³ Ibid., 305.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 305.

⁹⁵ Grace Jacob, Sonya C. Faber, Naomi Faber, Amy Bartlett, Allison J. Ouimet, and Monnica T. Williams. "A Systematic Review of Black People Coping with Racism: Approaches, Analysis, and Empowerment." 407.

⁹⁶ Grace Jacob, Sonya C. Faber, Naomi Faber, Amy Bartlett, Allison J. Ouimet, and Monnica T. Williams, 407.

⁹⁷ Maya Flax, 295.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 302.

⁹⁹ Grace Jacob, Sonya C. Faber, Naomi Faber, Amy Bartlett, Allison J. Ouimet, and Monnica T. Williams, 400.

cope and make meaningful changes effectively.¹⁰⁰ It is crucial to state that despite Flax discussing how the Jewish Orthodox community copes and Jacob et al. discussing how a minority should cope, they are still comparable, as Flax also argues that a more effective way of coping should be developed for the Orthodox Jewish community.¹⁰¹

One criticism of Jacob et al.'s work is that they argue that people can choose how they cope with racism. They suggest that individuals can empower themselves by selecting coping mechanisms and highlighting the effectiveness of specific strategies, particularly emphasizing social support networks.¹⁰² By doing so, they imply a level of agency and choice that might not fully account for the internal constraints, external constraints, and socio-cultural contexts that limit the coping options available to individuals.

There is one other significant difference between the articles of Flax and Jacob et al., namely, how they view the role of empowerment and social change. Jacob et al. advocate for empowerment and social change as essential components of coping mechanisms. They suggest that while personal coping strategies are crucial, they are insufficient without broader efforts to address and reduce racism itself.¹⁰³ They, for example, state that 'An understanding of the history, source, and nature of racism is a necessary prerequisite for remedying the stress experienced by Black individuals caused by racism because it can be difficult to come up with solutions when the core nature of the issue is incompletely grasped.'¹⁰⁴ It is important to note that Flax does not emphasize the role of empowerment and social change but instead focuses more on internal and communal acceptance and coping strategies, stating that 'This research suggests that choosing to accept the victimization was a form of agency.'¹⁰⁵ 'Deciding to ignore the abuse was a form of resistance in itself.'¹⁰⁶ So, it all depends on how agency is defined and understood, as seen in the prior quote about acceptance.

Besides Flax and Jacob et al., who mainly discuss coping mechanisms through social identity and community bonds or advocate for them, in their article *Beyond Adaptation: Decolonizing Approaches to Coping with Oppression*, Nia Phillips et al. argue that instead of focusing on promoting adaptation of oppressive social structures like Flax and Jacob et al. do

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 408.

¹⁰¹ Maya Flax, 307.

¹⁰² Grace Jacob, Sonya C. Faber, Naomi Faber, Amy Bartlett, Allison J. Ouimet, and Monnica T. Williams, 409.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 410.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 408.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 408.

¹⁰⁶ Maya Flax, 302.

through their research of coping mechanisms, the focus should rather lie on the transformation of these oppressive social structures.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, instead of focusing on coping mechanisms through social theories like Flax and Jacob et al., Phillips et al. primarily draw upon liberation psychology to form an alternative paradigm.¹⁰⁸

The critical points of liberation psychology focus on ‘an emphasis on what subsequent scholars have referred to as the coloniality of knowledge: the extent to which conventional accounts of social reality in mainstream sites of knowledge production (i.e., academia or news media) are not objective or neutral, but instead reflect perspectives of the powerful, pathologize experiences of the oppressed, and serve to reinforce domination.’¹⁰⁹ Phillips et al. state that it is, therefore, crucial that there is a process of mental decolonization and the production of liberatory knowledge, arguing that the broader context of racism and oppressive structures also needs to be considered¹¹⁰. Phillips et al. conclude, ‘An emphasis on the recovery of historical memory and development of critical consciousness constitutes a shift away from strategies that implicitly or explicitly advocate adaptation (i.e., to oppressive systems) toward strategies that focus on social transformation.’¹¹¹ So, instead of focusing solely on coping mechanisms as a manner to deal with the status quo, Phillips et al. emphasize the critical consciousness of racial oppression and focus on de-ideologization of status quo realities.¹¹²

A critique of Phillips et al.’s work is similar to what I gave for Jacob et al.’s article. Phillips et al. argue that the recovery of historical memory, the de-ideologizing of everyday experience, and utilizing people’s virtues are tasks of liberation psychology.¹¹³ This seems like a rather large expectation. I am not arguing that this is impossible, but I am merely saying that it is easier said than done as it would require a lot of mental effort, recourse, and information/education. Furthermore, how do you convey to oppressed groups that this is how they could best deal with their oppression? Perhaps more importantly, how is it your

¹⁰⁷ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter. “Beyond Adaptation: Decolonizing Approaches to Coping with Oppression.” *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 3, no. 1 (August 21, 2015): 365–87. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v3i1.310>, 365.

¹⁰⁸ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter. “Beyond Adaptation: Decolonizing Approaches to Coping with Oppression.” 366.

¹⁰⁹ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 371.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 371.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 376.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 365.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 372.

right to tell an oppressed group how to cope? I am also part of an often-oppressed minority and only discovered the strategy discussed by Phillips et al. through research.

In this review, I have examined some of the discourse within the academic community about coping mechanisms, how minorities have coped, how coping mechanisms should be implemented, and how minority groups can best cope with crises. Throughout this review, I have looked at the article by Flax, which researched how an Orthodox Jewish community coped with antisemitism, linking their primary coping mechanism of acceptance to SIT and the importance of social cohesion within the community.¹¹⁴ I have also looked at the article by Jacob et al., which discusses coping mechanisms through social cohesion but argues for more empowerment and the importance of proactive strategies such as using social support networks.¹¹⁵ Finally, I also looked at the article by Phillips et al., which emphasizes the critical consciousness of racial oppression and the de-ideologization of status quo realities instead of only focusing on coping mechanisms.¹¹⁶ Here, it is essential to state that the three articles focus on how minorities cope with racism/antisemitism but do not touch upon how they cope with events that happen to them, events that might also cause racism/antisemitism, such as the October 7th attack on Israel.¹¹⁷ While Jacob et al. state that it depends on what type of situation the individual is in matters what kind of coping mechanism they use, they do not touch upon one specific event but rather focus on the types of events they identify: cultural, interpersonal, and institutional.¹¹⁸

Therefore, while my research examines not only how a minority copes with racism but also how they manage a specific event, the October 7th attack, understanding coping mechanisms in this context remains crucial. The events of the October 7th attack have exacerbated racism against the Jewish minority population.¹¹⁹ Therefore, I will also be using the discussion evolving around coping mechanisms to see how Jewish individuals of London have coped with October 7th itself, as it is often intertwined with their experiences of antisemitism.

¹¹⁴ Maya Flax, 305.

¹¹⁵ Grace Jacob, Sonya C. Faber, Naomi Faber, Amy Bartlett, Allison J. Ouimet, and Monnica T. Williams, 400.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 365.

¹¹⁷ Linda Maizels. "Antisemitism in the Aftermath of October 7: How Did We Get Here?" Program on Extremism, March 2024, 1–22, 7.

¹¹⁸ Grace Jacob, Sonya C. Faber, Naomi Faber, Amy Bartlett, Allison J. Ouimet, and Monnica T. Williams, 400.

¹¹⁹ Linda Maizels. "Antisemitism in the Aftermath of October 7: How Did We Get Here?" Program on Extremism, March 2024, 1–22, 7.

To look at how Jewish individuals in London have coped with the October 7th attack on Israel and how this has impacted their identity, all three perspectives in this review are essential. I will, however, primarily discuss coping through the mechanisms discussed by Flax and Nia Phillips et al. to operationalize the coping mechanisms.

3.2 Operationalizing Coping Mechanisms

In her article, Flax discusses four coping mechanisms individuals adopt to limit the risk of further victimization, in her case, antisemitism perpetrated against Orthodox Jews.¹²⁰ These coping mechanisms are withdrawal, isolation, limiting the expression of individual identity, and acceptance/normalization.¹²¹ These mechanisms will also be important throughout this thesis. However, Flax uses them exclusively for the Orthodox Jewish community and antisemitism.¹²² In contrast, this thesis will use them to analyze how London Jewish individuals have coped with the impact of anti-Israel opinions and antisemitism after the October 7th attack.

The first coping mechanism Flax identifies is withdrawal.¹²³ According to her, withdrawal can take various forms, such as limiting social activities, withdrawal, and emigration.¹²⁴ Furthermore, 'Victims create 'personal safety nets'; reduce their social circles; view most relationships with wariness and build a small social network consisting of trustworthy friends and family members.'¹²⁵ Individuals do this in an attempt to limit victimization and reduce negativity in their lives.¹²⁶

The second coping mechanism Flax identifies is isolation, which is strongly connected to withdrawal; however, victims don't only withdraw; they choose to remove themselves altogether.¹²⁷ According to Glynis Breakwell, in her book *Coping with Threatened Identities*, isolation is an interpersonal coping strategy in the form of an inaction strategy.¹²⁸ Breakwell states that the rationale behind self-isolation is easy to fathom; the individual does not need

¹²⁰ Maya Flax, 298.

¹²¹ Ibid., 298-299.

¹²² Ibid., 295.

¹²³ Ibid., 298.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 298.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 298.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 298.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 298.

¹²⁸ Glynis Breakwell. *Coping with Threatened Identities*. London, England: Methuen, 1986, 109.

to confront the rejection, pity, or aggression appended to the stigma.¹²⁹ With “the stigma,” Breakwell refers to where the threat constitutes an attack on self-esteem.¹³⁰

The third coping mechanism Flax identifies is limiting the expression of individual identity.¹³¹ With this coping mechanism, individuals take steps to become less visibly identifiable, such as not wearing a Kippah (skullcaps) in public.¹³² This coping mechanism also involves the concept of physical safety, where, for example, many religious Muslim women have questioned their choice to be covered by the hijab and have been forced to give priority to their safety over the expression of their religious identity.¹³³

The final coping mechanism that Flax identifies is acceptance/normalization.¹³⁴ This includes simply accepting a negative event to get over it and continue with life.¹³⁵ However, Yuka Maya Nakamura and Ulrich Orth also argue that acceptance could mean ‘achieving closure on a matter and moving on in life, thus supporting an individual’s adaptation and thereby enhancing psychological well-being.’¹³⁶

However, in her article, Flax does not discuss two groups of coping mechanisms: problem-focused strategies and community-based strategies.¹³⁷ Phillips et al. criticize these two strategies, along with the other “conventional” coping strategies analyzed by Flax, for ignoring the critical consciousness of racial oppression to operationalize coping mechanisms; they will be included in this thesis to identify which coping mechanisms London Jewish individuals have used.¹³⁸ The critique by Phillips et al. is not about the individuals using these coping mechanisms. Still, instead, their critique is that psychology promotes adaptation to, rather than transformation of, oppressive social structures.¹³⁹ Therefore, I will use the coping mechanisms they discuss solely to identify coping mechanisms.

¹²⁹ Glynis Breakwell. *Coping with Threatened Identities*, 109.

¹³⁰ Glynis Breakwell, 109.

¹³¹ Maya Flax, 299.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 299.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 299.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

¹³⁵ Yuka Maya Nakamura and Ulrich Orth. “Acceptance as a Coping Reaction: Adaptive or Not?” *Swiss Journal of Psychology* 64, no. 4 (December 2005): 281–92. <https://doi.org/10.1024/1421-0185.64.4.281>, 281.

¹³⁶ Yuka Maya Nakamura and Ulrich Orth. “Acceptance as a Coping Reaction: Adaptive or Not?”, 281.

¹³⁷ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 365.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 365.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 365.

An example of a problem-focused coping strategy is empowerment.¹⁴⁰ According to Nia Phillips et al., ‘...empowerment of people from historically oppressed groups leads to increased psychological well-being and better coping with daily oppression.’¹⁴¹ Empowering coping mechanisms include self-efficacy, skill development, connection building, and taking collective action.¹⁴² Furthermore, according to Lorraine Gutiérrez, empowerment coping involves ‘the process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families, and communities can take action to improve their situations.’¹⁴³ According to Gutiérrez, it can also be described as ‘the development of feelings of increased power or control without an actual change in structural arrangements.’¹⁴⁴

Finally, community-based coping strategies include social support and collective identification.¹⁴⁵ Social support ‘is to seek support from similar others who share one’s negative experience.’¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, ‘Social support requires the presence of other, like-minded people with whom to share one’s experience of oppression.’¹⁴⁷ However, if social support is not available for an individual, the absence of it may itself constitute a stressor that compounds the effects of oppression.¹⁴⁸ Collective identification is similar to social support; however, it instead relates to identification with an oppressed group, which can lead to greater well-being in the face of adversity.¹⁴⁹ Collective identification, unlike social support, does not require the physical presence of others.¹⁵⁰

3.3 Relevant Literature: *Anthropological/Historical Works on Jewish Communities*

When I started this research, I was very aware of the amount of research that had been done on the Jewish people throughout the world. While there is a lot of contemporary work, most of these works focus on the history of the Jews and their extermination or

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 369.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 369.

¹⁴² Ibid., 369.

¹⁴³ Lorraine M. Gutierrez. “Beyond Coping: An Empowerment Perspective on Stressful Life Events.” *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare* 21, no. 3 (September 1, 1994): 2012–2220. <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.2168>, 202.

¹⁴⁴ Lorraine M. Gutierrez. “Beyond Coping: An Empowerment Perspective on Stressful Life Events.”, 203.

¹⁴⁵ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 370.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 370.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 370.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 370.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 370.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 371.

expulsion from countries. Examples include *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of the German Jewish Epoch* by Amos Elon and *Britain's Jews in the First World War* by Paula Kitching.^{151 152} These two works are great examples of most academic works researching Jewish history, delving into a specific event or event that significantly impacted the community. In *The Pity of It All*, Amos Elon discusses the German Jewish story of their attempt to integrate into German society from 1743 to 1933.¹⁵³ In *Britain's Jews in the First World War*, Paula Kitching shows and researches the Jewish contribution to Britain's war efforts during World War One. These types of works are essential to understanding how people write about Jews and also offer perspectives on how Jewish communities change over time due to national or international crises.

Various ethnographic works have studied Jewish communities worldwide, perhaps one of the first being Ruth Landes's studies on black Jews in Harlem, New York, in the 1930s, which was her master's thesis. However, more contemporary ethnographic works include *The Miracle of Intervale Avenue* by Jack Kugelmas, who writes about Jews in the Bronx, and *Polish Jews in Paris: The Ethnography of Memory* by Jonathan Boyarin. Both of these works, written in the late 1980s and early 1990s, impacted people's understanding of how different Jewish communities are in the diaspora and how each community goes through their hardships.¹⁵⁴

However, more crucially for this research, I have, as of July 7th, 2024, found another ethnographic work, another master's thesis, written by Idun Wiberg, titled "*Super-duper Classical Jew in Sweden*": *An Ethnographic Study of Young Jews*. In her thesis, Wiberg "follows young Swedish Jews as they navigate their lives before and after October 7th, 2023."¹⁵⁵ In her thesis, Wiberg discusses antisemitism, community, and what it is like to be a Jew in Sweden before and after the October 7th attack. Throughout her research, Wiberg, contrary to this thesis, had a theoretical framework she used as a starting point. These theories were the lived religion theory and the insider-outsider theory.¹⁵⁶ She uses the lived religion theory because, as Wiberg states, it is important to understand religion as a flexible framework in which

¹⁵¹ Amos Elon. *The Pity of it All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch 1743-1933*. New York: Picador, 2002.

¹⁵² Paula Kitching. *Britain's Jews in the First World War*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2019.

¹⁵³ Amos Elon. *The Pity of it All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch 1743-1933*.

¹⁵⁴ Jessica Kraft. "Judaism and Anthropology." *My Jewish Learning*, April 3, 2015.

[https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/judaism-and-anthropology/#:~:text=Notable%20studies%20include%20Jack%20Kugelmas,Jews%20in%20Paris%20\(1991\),](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/judaism-and-anthropology/#:~:text=Notable%20studies%20include%20Jack%20Kugelmas,Jews%20in%20Paris%20(1991),) Last accessed on 7/07/2024.

¹⁵⁵ Idun Wiburg. "'Super-Duper Classical Jew in Sweden': An Ethnographic Study of Young Jews," 2024, 3.

¹⁵⁶ Idun Wiburg. "'Super-Duper Classical Jew in Sweden', 14-15.

various beliefs and practices contribute to meaning-making.¹⁵⁷ Wiberg uses the insider-outsider theory, which is very similar to the SIT, to show the uniqueness of the Jewish communities' experience as an out-group in some Swedish contexts.¹⁵⁸ Though Wiberg and I researched the same event on October 7th, we took different approaches. She started from a theoretical position, and this thesis is inductive research. Furthermore, her research is based on interviews, while this thesis is almost solely based on participant observation. Finally, she researched a Jewish community, while I research Jewish individuals.

¹⁵⁷ Idun Wiburg, 14.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

Chapter 4: Jewish Organizations and the Impact of October 7th, 2023

In this chapter, I will tell the story of individuals within three Jewish organizations I was involved in during my four-month stay in London. These organizations are CAA, JRAL, and MHL. I will analyze the impact that anti-Israel sentiments and antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7th had on individuals within these organizations. Each of these organizations has a separate reason why I researched them. I joined CAA because they are an organization that deals with antisemitism, and individuals within the organization come into very close contact with the consequences of October 7th. I joined JRAL because I had learned that they were set up after the 2021 tensions between Israel and Hamas so that Jewish individuals could get together and connect with fellow Jews from where they live, which it was also promoted to do after the October 7th attack. Finally, I joined MHL because it is a religious Jewish organization with strong ties to Israel, and many London Jewish youth know about them and have gone to participate in their activities. The sub-research question guiding this chapter is: *how have Jewish individuals at the Jewish companies JRAL, CAA, and MHL coped with the increase of anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7th, and how has this impacted their Jewish identity?*

The first organization I mentioned briefly in the introduction is CAA. I interned there from March 18, 2024, to June 30, 2024. As they put it themselves, CAA ‘consists of eight directorates which collaborate closely to expose and counter antisemitism through education and zero-tolerance enforcement of the law.’¹⁵⁹ CAA is a non-governmental organization and charity that organizes rallies, educates the public on antisemitism, and conducts and publishes research, which is what I did. Importantly, I want to disclose that I cannot write about all my experiences at CAA. Much of their information and activities are classified until they are released or turned into action. The story that will be told here is thus of an event that has already happened and information that has been made public.

The second organization I was a member of was JRAL. JRAL is a Jewish running group created so that Jewish people can meet in times of adversity to support each other and meet

¹⁵⁹ Campaign Against Antisemitism. “How We Fight Antisemitism.” Campaign Against Antisemitism, September 8, 2020. <https://antisemitism.org/about/>, Last accessed on 8/08/2024.

other Jewish individuals. I became a member of JRAL on April 4th and went on my first run on April 7th, exactly six months after the attack on Israel.

Finally, the last organization I joined in London was MHL. MHL is a religious Jewish organization that focuses on sharing Jewish wisdom and organizes events for Jewish individuals in London. MHL connects with people from all backgrounds, welcoming all individuals as long as they are Jewish, such as non-religious Jews like myself. At MHL, I only attended one event, discovering its existence relatively late in my research, and spoke to several people who shared fascinating stories.

4.1 Campaign Against Antisemitism:

During my stay at CAA, the pro-Palestinian protests on the weekends in the center of London were an important focus of the organization. The focus of CAA was on antisemitic incidents occurring during these protests. The chief executive of CAA believes that Jews can no longer walk through London without being somehow stigmatized or some antisemitic event occurring since October 7th. In my second month there, to take action against this antisemitism, the chief executive had the idea to walk through these protests with a Kippah on, a head covering worn by religious Jewish men. He would do this together with four other individuals from CAA to see how the protesters would react, how the police would respond, and whether any antisemitic incidents would take place.¹⁶⁰ From this idea that the chief executive had, the coping mechanism he and the other individuals applied to cope with the antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7th is a form of empowering coping mechanism. This is the case because, as described by Gutiérrez, empowerment coping involves increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that communities can take action to improve their situations.¹⁶¹ The chief executive's idea was that by showing the police did not have the situation under control and were understaffed, they would have to ban, or at least take more action against, the protests, improving, in his eyes, the situation of the London Jewish community.

¹⁶⁰ My Jewish Learning. "Yom Hazikaron: Israel's Memorial Day." My Jewish Learning, May 13, 2024. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/yom-hazikaron-israels-memorial-day/>, Last accessed on 10/07/2024.

¹⁶¹ Lorraine M. Gutierrez, 202.

The Chief Executive and four others had walked through the protest several times without getting any significant reaction from the protestors. However, after a short while and walking through the protests again, some police officers stopped them, and one of them said: "You are quite openly Jewish; this is a pro-Palestinian march. I am not accusing you of anything, but I am worried about the reaction to your presence."¹⁶² and then proceeded to say that if the people of CAA did go back into the route looking this openly Jewish, they would invoke section 14 conditions back to the "pen," meaning they would not be allowed to walk there anymore, as they would agitate the protestors too much by being there.¹⁶³

This is the reaction that the chief executive had expected, with his active empowerment coping style bearing fruits, with the media questioning what was going on with the police during these protests and why they could not protect the Jewish individuals walking there.¹⁶⁴ Other reactions that people and the media had were uproar and anger; how could a MET police officer say that being openly Jewish would agitate people? That would imply Jews would not be able to practice their Judaism anywhere they wanted.¹⁶⁵ This would mean that Jews who wear a Kippah openly would not be able to do so anymore around the protests, not only having a significant impact on their identity but also having a significant impact on their religious practices.

So, the point that the Chief Executive tried to make by taking action in this manner was made, though some critics said he sought this reaction of the police too much.¹⁶⁶ The counter-response was that, even if that was the case, it still happened and shouldn't have. After the event, CAA took further action by making a social media campaign based on footage from these events.¹⁶⁷ It also pressured the MET police to fire the Commissioner of Police.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² Campaign Against Antisemitism. "Campaign against Antisemitism on Instagram: Stopped by Police at Palestine Protest." Instagram, 2024. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C6CCD2hKOSx/>, Last accessed on 10/07/2024.

¹⁶³ Campaign Against Antisemitism. "Campaign against Antisemitism on Instagram: Stopped by Police at Palestine Protest."

¹⁶⁴ Andre Rhoden-Paul, Damian Grammaticas, and Francesca Gillett. "Met Police: PM Appalled by Way Police Treated Jewish Man, Says No 10." BBC News, April 22, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd130lp70x5o>, Last accessed on 28/07/2024.

¹⁶⁵ Campaign Against Antisemitism.

¹⁶⁶ Amy-Clare Martin. "Gideon Falter Accused of 'Provoking' Incident to Halt pro-Palestine Protests." The Independent, April 22, 2024. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/gideon-falter-met-police-palestine-protest-b2532679.html>, Last accessed on 10/07/2024.

¹⁶⁷ Campaign Against Antisemitism.

¹⁶⁸ Andre Rhoden-Paul, Damian Grammaticas, and Francesca Gillett. "Met Police: PM Appalled by Way Police Treated Jewish Man, Says No 10."

This did not happen, but it did gain serious media traction.¹⁶⁹ This shows that the chief executive used empowerment coping mechanisms to cope with the antisemitism in the pro-Palestinian marches through the process of increasing political power by putting the MET police under pressure, trying to, in his eyes, improve the situation of his community.

This story shows a different aspect of how Jewish identity has been impacted, or could be impacted, by the October 7th attack. It shows how the crisis is affecting, for example, police behavior, which in turn could have an impact on Jewish people who genuinely walk past such protests by fluke, having the police tell them they cannot wear their Kippah or it might agitate the protestors. Telling Jewish people they cannot be openly Jewish or wear their Kippah is a threat to their identity. This story again shows that CAA copes with the crisis by taking action, with individuals forming a group to employ collective action against the situation they face as a community.

4.2 Jewish Runners Association London Part 1:

At about 9:00 a.m. on April 7th, 2024, I walked towards Regents Park for my first run with JRAL. When I arrived, I had expected a relatively large group, as on their social media videos, 50 people were running together in cities worldwide. However, when I showed up at the allocated meeting destination at Regents Park, there was only one other person named Sam. I was slightly baffled by this. However, Sam stated that this was “due to the situation in London,” which we discussed after our run.

While running, I told him I was in London to write my thesis and do an internship. I told him that my thesis topic was Jewish identity in London, withholding that this included October 7th. I wanted to be as ambiguous as possible so as not to scare him away, as October 7th could be a topic he might not want to discuss. By telling him my research topic, I prompted him to speak about his Judaism, coincidentally heavily related to October 7th.

Before October 7th, I had not felt any significant connection with my Judaism, But after the attack happened, I joined a synagogue to feel closer to my Jewish identity, as I was so devastated. I think it is important to be proud of being

¹⁶⁹ Reemul Balla. “Police Threaten to Arrest ‘openly Jewish’ Man Yards from pro-Palestine March as His Presence Was ‘Antagonising.’” Sky News, April 19, 2024. <https://news.sky.com/story/police-threaten-to-arrest-openly-jewish-man-yards-from-pro-palestine-march-as-his-presence-was-antagonising-13118467>, Last accessed on 10/07/2024.

Jewish, and this feeling of pride that I have felt has also increased throughout the Jewish diaspora after October 7th. Also, it is my opinion that Jews need Israel as a form of protection, as antisemitism against the diaspora has been rising significantly, even before October 7th. I think that Israel has the right to defend itself once it has been attacked, but I am deeply saddened by what is happening in Gaza, and the civilian casualties inflicted by the IDF are horrible. I think the casualties are a result of Israel going into Gaza without a real plan besides getting rid of Hamas and saving the hostages.

Here, it becomes clear that Sam's Jewish identity has taken an entirely new form after October 7th. Instead of coping by withdrawing or isolating himself from the Jewish community after the October 7th attack, he coped by seeking social support, joining the synagogue and organizations like JRAL, and looking for people who had shared his experience.¹⁷⁰ He feels pride in his "newfound" identity and has a significantly more substantial connection to his Jewish background. It also becomes clear that, as discussed in the introduction about Jewish identity, Israel and its right to exist form an integral part of Sam's Jewish identity, as it was a decisive factor in him becoming "more Jewish."

Further on in our run, Sam stated:

I am also very frustrated by some of my friends who did not stand up for Jewish people on social media, while they did stand up for Black Lives Matter and other Lives Matter events. This is upsetting as it shows that they hold antisemitism to a lower standard than other forms of racism. People have double standards when it comes to Jews, and because they are perceived as white, racism against them cannot be as bad as other forms of racism.

Here, the impact of antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7th that Sam describes strongly resembles the point that David Badiell makes in his book *Jews Don't Count*.¹⁷¹ That people, in Badiell's argument progressives, deem antisemitism as a lesser racism because, for example, Jews are seen as white.¹⁷² This has heavily impacted Sam, as his friends did not stand up for Jews on the October 7th attack but did stand up against other forms of racism.

¹⁷⁰ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 370.

¹⁷¹ David Badiell. *Jews don't count: How identity politics failed one particular identity*. London, England: TLS Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2022.

¹⁷² David Badiell. *Jews don't count: How identity politics failed one particular identity*, 22.

During the last part of our run, he concluded that antisemitism has risen significantly in London and that it impacts many people. This led to the following discussion: why he thinks people don't want to attend JRAL runs in London, which we discussed after our run. We sat down at a café near Regents Park. Sam kindly got me a cup of tea, and we sat outside, enjoying the weather. Here, we started talking about why he thinks people don't want to attend JRAL runs, listing several "normal" reasons, such as that the runs are too early in the morning, but then also talked about more serious reasons:

I think that one of the primary reasons why people do not show up to JRAL runs is that people are scared of publicly showing that they are Jewish, which they would be doing when running with a Jewish running group. I think this is because of what people in the other diaspora are saying about London and what is said in the news: London is not safe for Jews. This greatly scares them. This has significantly impacted the community, which is now more scared to show its identity. Some of the people who are in the group chat and part of JRAL in London are also quite religious and run, for example, in skirts to cover their knees, which makes them quite easily identifiable as Jews. This adds to the fear, as it is harder for them to hide their identity.

From this quote, several coping mechanisms can be identified that some JRAL members who weren't present used. One of the coping mechanisms used is withdrawal, where the members of JRAL limit social activities by not joining the runs.¹⁷³ This quote by Sam also indicates that these individuals are reducing their social circles, which is also a part of withdrawal coping mechanisms.¹⁷⁴ Another coping strategy used is limiting the expression of individual identity by not joining a Jewish running group run and not wanting to show their Jewish identity.¹⁷⁵ This also shows how October 7th has impacted some of these runners' Jewish identity, not daring to show their Jewishness out in the open anymore. Some of these reasons mentioned by Sam were confirmed during my second run with JRAL.

¹⁷³ Maya Flax, 298.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 298.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 299.

4.3 Jewish Runners Association London Part 2:

On the 21st of April, I went on my second run with JRAL. Unlike the first run I went on, in which only Sam was present, seven people turned up. A few days before the run, I cautiously but proactively sent a message in the group chat asking if people wanted to run in Hampstead Heath instead of Regents Park. There was a lot of enthusiasm for this idea. This corroborates Sam's theory that people did not want to visit Regents Park because it was too far away. Interestingly, even when running closer to everyone's location, with more than 30 runners in the group chat, only seven people wanted to go on a run. As discussed with Sam on my previous run, I suspect they did not want to join the runs because they think it is unsafe, even in a larger group.

While on the run, I talked with the only other man who had joined the run. He told me this was his first time on a JRAL run, so I asked him, "Why did you join JRAL?" He had told me that he was getting fit for a bike trip that he was going to do, but mainly because "I just wanted to join a running group and found this; I wouldn't mind running with anyone, but running with Jews is just something extra fun, it is my tribe. Especially in times like this." The coping mechanism that this individual used for, in his own words, "times like this" was social support, where he joined a group with people like himself, Jews, who might have had similar experiences relating to the October 7th attack.¹⁷⁶

While on the run, I had told people that I was studying Jewish identity, but like with Sam, I hadn't told them that it was concerning the October 7th attack. This steered the conversation toward Israel and what had happened on October 7th. One of the women had said:

I would love to make Aliyah. I just got back from Israel, and it is incredible there. I realized when I was there that it is a lot easier to live there than to live in London, as antisemitism here is getting so bad it is making it less safe for Jews to live here. [I then asked her if she had wanted to make Aliyah before October 7th as well.] My love for Israel and connection to the country has significantly increased since October 7th, which has been a big reason why I want to make Aliyah in the first place. The only thing that is truly holding me back is the fact that it costs so much money to make Aliyah.

¹⁷⁶ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 370.

Making Aliyah entails becoming an Israeli citizen and living in Israel as someone who was once part of the diaspora.¹⁷⁷ From this conversation, it becomes clear that the coping mechanism the individual wants to apply but cannot is withdrawal. Emigration is one of the elements that Flax describes as part of the withdrawal coping mechanism.¹⁷⁸ The woman wants to completely change her social surroundings by moving away to a different country where she feels her identity would not be under threat by, for example, antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiments. Furthermore, here, it becomes clear that Israel is an integral part of her Jewish identity, as she thinks it is a lot easier to live there as a Jew, and it is a place where she feels safe to be what she is, Jewish.

After this woman had said how horrible antisemitism had gotten in London, two younger runners of my age, roughly twenty-two, joined the conversation. One said, "I would not feel comfortable wearing the JRAL merchandise, as it had a large Star of David. This would make us even more visible as a Jewish runner's group." This shows that, firstly, she is scared of showing her Jewish identity in the open, and secondly, that she is coping with the situation by, as Flax describes, limiting the expression of individual identity.¹⁷⁹ However, they joined in a group picture with the JRAL flag and joined JRAL in the first place, showing that they also coped through social support.

Another woman mentioned that she used to go for runs in Hyde Park but does not dare to do this anymore by herself as there are a lot of Muslims. She runs visibly Jewish in a skirt covering her knees and a shirt covering her elbows. She was scared that if she ran there, agitators might confront her and inflict antisemitism against her, so now she only runs in her neighborhood or other parks where there is not such a prevalent Muslim community. The coping mechanism that this individual has implemented to minimize the chance of antisemitism being committed against her is withdrawal. She is creating a personal safety net by not running in Hyde Park anymore, where she is afraid that antisemitism might be committed against her.¹⁸⁰ Interestingly, she did not opt for another option, namely that of limiting the expression of individual identity by not wearing identifiable clothing, showing that

¹⁷⁷ Deena Yellin. "What Is Aliyah? What to Know about Immigration to Israel and Why Interest Is on the Rise." North Jersey Media Group, January 26, 2024. <https://eu.northjersey.com/story/news/2024/01/26/what-is-aliyah-what-to-know-immigration-israel/72354740007/>, last accessed on 21/06/2024.

¹⁷⁸ Maya Flax, 298.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 299.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 298.

she was not willing to sacrifice that part of her Jewish identity to be able to continue running in Hyde Park.¹⁸¹

Finally, it is essential to mention that two weeks after this run happened, the leader of JRAL London sent a message in our group's app stating:

“Thank you for all your effort and enthusiasm over the past few months. After careful consideration, we have made the decision to pause the London chapter of JRAL. We hope to potentially re-establish a presence in London again down the road. For now, please feel free to use this chat to engage with other runners in your area. We hope that you will join us at future runs!”.

This shows how impacted the London Jewish community has been by the aftermath of October 7th. Why would the community of London not be able to set up a Jewish runner's group while it had been successful in every other city they are active? Why had this failed in one of the biggest cities in the world with a large Jewish community? One of the reasons is that Jews are scared to show openly that they are Jewish, even when running in a larger group.

4.4 Melekh Ha'olam London 13th of May 2024:

On the evening of May 13th, 2024, one of my work friends and I arrived at a house where we would commemorate Yom Hazikaron, organized by MHL. Yom Hazikaron is the Israeli Memorial Day to remember all the fallen soldiers in Israel during all wars.¹⁸² Of course, this year was extra charged and sad but memorable. As it was a moment for mourning, I didn't take constant notes but jotted down some observations and quotes. However, right after leaving the event, I wrote everything in detail.

We had made our introductory round and got to know everyone a bit, and roughly 50 people were present. Then I started talking with a woman about the October 7th attack, which was often the topic of conversation during this evening, who had said:

“Everything changed for me after October 7th; I feel more connected to Judaism, but at the same time, I feel less safe being Jewish.” [I then asked how she felt about Israel and whether her opinion of the country had changed.] “I

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 299.

¹⁸² My Jewish Learning. “Yom Hazikaron: Israel's Memorial Day.” My Jewish Learning, May 13, 2024.

have become prouder of being Jewish and of having a connection with Israel, which is also one of the reasons I attend events like this one.”

The coping mechanism that she used to cope with the October 7th attack was social support by joining events where people who have a similar mindset are present.¹⁸³ Furthermore, her Jewish identity was also impacted by the October 7th attack, with her feeling more connected to her Judaism. However, she did not only feel more connected but also an increased feeling of unsafety of being Jewish, which increased after the October 7th attack.

However, I did not speak to her for a long time, as another woman joined our conversation when she started talking about her Jewishness. They already knew each other, and the woman I had just spoken to told me that the woman who had joined us had a fascinating story regarding her Judaism and October 7th. This woman proceeded to tell me her story, which turned out to be one of conversion:

It was interesting; I have always felt a connection to the Middle East and Israel, but that was primarily because I was raised as a Christian. However, a few months before October 7th, God had been sending me messages. I had visited Israel, and a Rabbi had stopped to talk to me on the streets, asking whether I was religious and if I was Jewish. I had thought nothing of it then, but Hashem sent me more signs. For example, I came to realize that all of my three ex-boyfriends had been Jewish as well. However, none of this would have led me to convert. But then, on October 7th, I felt extremely shocked and sad, and I felt like I was so strongly connected to the Jewish faith and people in that moment that I felt like I had to convert. Of course, the process took longer than the way I just told it, but that is roughly how it went.

Though she was still busy converting when we had this conversation, as converting to Judaism can take a long time, it still shows an interesting aspect of Jewish identity and how she coped with October 7th. She was coping with October 7th through empowerment, action, and social support by building connections with people she felt she had a connection with, namely Jewish people, and becoming part of them. Though she is still building her Jewish identity, she has a strong connection with Israel, which strengthened even more after October 7th.

¹⁸³ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 370.

Finally, an hour into the event, after everyone had settled, one of the hosts asked everyone to be quiet and listen to a speech a young man would give about Yom Hazikaron. He said started:

My grandparents were saved by the IDF as they were being held hostage in Uganda in July 1976 in Entebbe, Uganda, at an airport. There were 106 hostages, a lot of them being Jewish. At the airport where the hostages were being kept, they were separated into Jewish and non-Jewish groups. The non-Jewish hostages were being freed one by one through payments, but this did not happen for the Jewish hostages, including my grandparents. The IDF had to choose to save them or let them die. They decided on the first. The commander who led the rescue mission was the elder brother of Benjamin Netanyahu, namely Yonatan. In the process of rescuing the hostages, Yonatan was killed. When I first heard this story, Yonatan became my role model, and we have lived a similar life. After the October 7th attack, I decided that I wanted to join the IDF, also in memory of Yonatan. I will be joining the IDF in three weeks.

This speech shows that this man has been coping with October 7th through action and empowerment, joining the IDF to what he sees as fighting for his identity and his people. Another coping mechanism this individual used was social support, such as joining MHL events. Furthermore, his Jewish identity is strongly connected to Israel, but also a particular part of Jewish and family history, where the IDF saved his Jewish family from Uganda and went on to live in Israel afterward.

Chapter 5: Shabbat Dinners, Jewish Traditions and Family

In this chapter, I will be telling the stories of the people I met through Shabbat dinners organized by family friends of my aunt and the stories told by family members of mine, at whom I stayed for four months during my research in London. My aunt's friends invited me to two Shabbat dinners during my stay in London. Furthermore, I had several impromptu conversations with my aunt about her Jewish identity, with her telling me how October 7th had impacted her, telling her story through an atheist Jewish perspective. Finally, in this chapter, I also tell the story of a Messianic Jew, a Jewish individual who believes in Jesus, and her experiences after the October 7th attack. This chapter aims to show how individuals were affected by October 7th and how they coped with this new crisis from a more religious standpoint and setting. Therefore, the sub-research question that will guide this chapter is: *How has the religiousness of Jewish individuals in London played a role in how they coped with the anti-Israel sentiments and antisemitism after the October 7th attack?*

5.1 First Shabbat Dinner:

My first Shabbat dinner was on April 5th, 2024, the second week I was in London. Ten people were present, including myself. There were three families: my aunts, our hosts, and her sister's family. The Shabbat was more religious than I am used to in my household, but I could follow along with all the prayers. It is also important to note here that this dinner had taken place before I knew I was doing participant/listening observation, so I had to make do with my memory and notes that I did take because I thought they were essential for this research.

One of the women who were present at the dinner had said:

Antisemitism in London has gone up by massive amounts; it is pretty tricky for religious Jews to be openly Jewish and, for example, wear their Kippah. Harassment towards the Jewish people has also significantly increased since October 7th; many people are wary about showing their Jewishness.

Though she did not discuss her own Jewish identity, she did paint a picture of the situation that Jews in London have to deal with. Interestingly, she differentiated between religious Jews and non-religious Jews about being able to show they are openly Jewish, as non-religious Jews also have ways of visibly identifying themselves as Jewish without wearing

a Kippah. Like myself, I wear a Star of David necklace, which is sometimes visible. Furthermore, her remark does touch upon a coping mechanism for London Jews in general, which is their limiting expression of individual identity, with her stating that many people are wary about showing their Jewishness, which, as she suggests, would not have been the case before October 7th. It is important to note I cannot draw a conclusion from what she said, but that these are merely the observations this woman had made, which is still essential, as she is embedded within the (religious) community.

During the dinner, a man had also said:

October 7th has brought more Jews together. I have noticed that many more people go to our synagogue, and they say that their reason for going is to feel associated and part of the group, not necessarily any religious reasoning. At the end of every service, we even sing the Hatikvah now, which we did not do before October 7th.

Again, here, the person is talking about a collective rather than his own identity, and again, I am aware I cannot make conclusions about the collective. Still, these observations by these people are essential. As seen from the previous quote, it seems like the people in their community have coped with the October 7th event through social support by joining the synagogue to feel more connected to their identity and to be with similar people.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, Israel plays an essential role in their Jewish identity. They sing the national anthem after every service, which they had not done before, showing how the community has consciously added this new element to their identity.

Finally, somewhere around the start of the main course, someone said that we should discuss a different topic because there were kids present who would like to discuss a different subject. Though undoubtedly true, I could also sense that the conversation upset people. They were visibly getting worked up about, for example, people protesting in favor of Hamas and being frustrated at the fact the recognition of the 7th of October attack already seems to be fading away in public memory, which is a comment one of the people present had made.

¹⁸⁴ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 370.

5.2 Second Shabbat Dinner:

Six people were present at the second Shabbat dinner a month after my first dinner: my aunt, two younger kids, the woman who invited us, and their grandma. Everyone was extremely kind and open when we arrived, a theme that continued from my first dinner. This dinner was interesting, or rather, the discussion before the dinner with the grandma. She was extremely kind and very interested in me and who I was. We talked a bit about my research and how it was going. After that, she gave me some of her insights on the impact of October 7th on Jewish people in London and specifically talked about herself:

I am distraught at what is happening here in the UK, especially with the news agency BBC. I have listened to the BBC with much pleasure ever since I can remember, and they have always been my favorite news outlet. However, since October 7th, this has changed, with the BBC not giving a diverse perspective on what happened but only focusing on the suffering of the Palestinians and not mentioning the sufferings of the Israeli people enough or not at all. This truly upsets me, as listening to the BBC was a tradition and part of my daily ritual. I cannot do this anymore, as they have become too biased.

Here, we see an interesting, particular way a Jewish individual has been impacted by October 7th, with an aspect of her life that she deemed essential having changed. What she said also shows that her Jewish identity is strongly connected to Israel, with her deeply caring about its representation in the news and about how the Israeli people and their suffering are being ignored. Also, she has been coping with October 7th by withdrawing herself from the news instead of, as typical for withdrawing coping mechanisms, from social circles and groups.¹⁸⁵ She has done this to create a personal safety net so that she can no longer be disappointed by the news, which has greatly upset her.¹⁸⁶

Furthermore, the grandma had said:

I have become oversensitive to everything, something I was not before. As I said, I cannot listen to the news anymore. I think that London and UK Jews, not only myself, have now become hyper-aware of everything that is going on around them. We are constantly on alert. This is due to the rise of

¹⁸⁵ Maya Flax, 298.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 298.

antisemitism, which, in my perception, has never been this bad since the Second World War.

Here, she shows how worried she is about antisemitism in London and the UK in the aftermath of the October 7th attack. It directly impacts how she goes about her day, being more alert, watchful, and aware of what is happening around her. She also believes that this is the case for Jewish individuals in the UK and London in general. The coping mechanism that she has used to cope with the increase in antisemitism is hypervigilance, where the individual is on high alert and ready for when something might happen to them.¹⁸⁷ Hypervigilance has been conceptualized as part of the stigma-related stress process, which in this case is caused by the antisemitism after the October 7th attack on Israel.¹⁸⁸

5.3 My Aunt and Her Experiences:

In the first week of my visit and research, my aunt and I decided to walk in Hampstead Heath. My aunt wanted to show me the heath, an intricate part of London and Hampstead life where people go for runs, walks, and rest. Our walk was two hours long, and we discussed many different things. One of the topics that came to hand was her and my own Jewishness and how we differ in our ways of being Jewish. We started discussing this, as she knew about my research topic, and I was generally curious because we had not spoken about it before. She began by saying:

First and foremost, I am an atheist and an adamant one at that. I do not believe in religion in the strictly religious sense; I do not believe in God. How can there be a god when he is supposed to be all good, and there is so much violence in the world? However, I do identify as Jewish, but from a cultural perspective. I go to Shabbat when my friends invite me, though I do not celebrate it when I do not get invited. I also don't celebrate any of the Jewish holidays. My mom and dad had raised me with the idea that I could choose whatever I wanted to be or do religion-wise.

¹⁸⁷ Sharon S Rostosky Matthew T. Richardson, Sara K. McCurry, and Ellen D. Riggle. "LGBTQ Individuals' Lived Experiences of Hypervigilance." *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 9, no. 3 (September 2022): 358–69. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000474>, 358.

¹⁸⁸ Sharon S Rostosky Matthew T. Richardson, Sara K. McCurry, and Ellen D. Riggle. "LGBTQ Individuals' Lived Experiences of Hypervigilance.", 358.

From this anecdote, it becomes clear that my aunt has her way of identifying with her Judaism, just like every other Jewish individual, with atheism being an essential part of the intersectionality of her (Jewish) identity. After she had outlined what her Jewish identity was and what she perceived what it meant to be Jewish through the culture, she proceeded to tell me how October 7th had impacted her and her Jewishness as well:

As soon as I heard about the October 7th attack, I started crying and cried the entire day. I was extremely shocked and upset by what had happened. It profoundly impacted me, and I felt a strong connection with Israel for the first time in a long time. In a way, the October 7th attack ensured that my Jewishness had come forward more through Israel and its struggle against Hamas to get the hostages back. I also greatly sympathized with the Israelis who suffered because of the attack.

It is important to note that she did say that this had not changed much about how she viewed Judaism or how she practiced her Judaism, except that she now follows Israel and the conflict closely. Furthermore, once again, it can be seen that after October 7th, Israel has become an essential factor in the Jewish identity, making my aunt feel closer connected to her Judaism as well. Thus, one of my aunt's coping mechanisms is collective identification, where she identifies with the Israeli people who were murdered and taken hostage on October 7th. Collective identification coping mechanisms are an attempt by the individual to distract the focus away from the shared negative experience(s) to a sense of belonging in communities of meaning and value.¹⁸⁹

5.4 Experiences of a Messianic Jew:

On the 24th of April 2024, I was returning home from CAA. I was getting onto the Tube when I saw a woman in an electric wheelchair. I thought she might struggle to get onto the Tube, so I offered her a hand, which she kindly declined, as her machine could get onto the Tube by itself. So, we both got on, and I stood in the aisle while she sat near me. After a while, as I was a bit bored, I asked her where she was going. She told me she was going to the end of the line, Edgware. She then asked me what I was doing in London, and I told her that I was a student from Holland and was there to write my thesis. She asked me what my

¹⁸⁹ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 371.

research was about. I told her that I was studying Jewish identity in London and the effects that October 7th had on this identity. Surprised, she looked at me and said she was Jewish. I told her I was also, which she thought was delightful. She then started to say to me about her experience:

The attack on Israel has heavily impacted me; I thought it was horrifying. It was a gruesome attack. [I had then asked her whether it had affected her opinion about Israel]. My connection to Judaism and Israel has increased since October 7th, and I believe that Israel is an essential aspect of Jewish life.

This shows how Israel is also an integral part of her Jewish identity, relating her Jewishness and connection to the religion through how Israel is fairing. Sadly, at this point, our conversation was cut short because I had to leave the Tube. I would have carried on to Edgware for research, but I was so hungry that I needed to head home. Before I left the Tube, she very quickly told me her name, which I had written down in my notes, and she told me to find her on Facebook so we could discuss a date to meet again.

We met again on May 5th, 2024, in a kosher restaurant outside London. The restaurant was named Sababa, meaning “cool” in Hebrew. When we talked about October 7th and my research, she had offered to put me in contact with some of her friends who were Messianic Jews. She kept asking me this, but I had no idea what that meant and what Messianic Jews were. I thought that they were perhaps a group of Lubavitch Jews. At a certain point, she asked me if I minded Messianic Jews, and I said no, also because I don’t know what they are. So, she explained to me that Messianic Jews believe in Jesus and the New Testament. I was baffled and asked her, but aren’t you Christian then? She said that she wasn’t and that she was a Jew who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. She said that she hoped this did not shock me, and I said it did not, as I did not want to offend her. I asked her how this played into her Judaism, and she said that she felt it was a completion of Judaism and that it helped her connect to God. She said that she had always felt like something was missing, and this was it.

After discussing her Jewish identity, which is very different from anything I had ever heard of, we shortly reverted to discussing October 7th. She stated that the conflict had a significant impact on her surroundings, mainly on her Messianic circles, which all feel very connected to the state of Israel, also through their religion. However, this conversation took little time; we both needed to leave for home.

Although my experience with this Messianic woman profoundly differs from anything else in this thesis, it is still a critical edition, as it highlights how different Jewish identities are. She also discussed how the October 7th attack had impacted her. Her connection to her Jewishness and Israel had increased after October 7th, with it being an integral part of her Jewish Messianic identity. Furthermore, her intense feeling of being Jewish, despite both Christian and Jewish groups recognizing them as Christian, is also interesting, with October 7th strengthening that feeling even more.

Chapter 6: The Waterstones Jews

In this chapter, I will tell the story of the Waterstones Jews and their experience in London after the October 7th attack on Israel. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how my respondents in the Waterstones have coped with the October 7th attack and its aftermath and how this impacted their Jewish identity. Throughout my stay in London, the Waterstones on Hampstead Highstreet was my primary studying location, and I conversed there with other Jewish people who frequented the bookstore. This chapter will focus primarily on two individuals I met in the Waterstones, their experiences, and the observations I made. My first interactions with the two central individuals in this chapter were through impromptu conversations; however, after my first encounter with them, I arranged further meetings and saw them multiple times. I did this to improve my understanding of their experiences following the October 7th attack, following up on things they had said at our first meeting. I also analyzed the Instagram of one of my respondents, on which she posted a lot about Israel and October 7th, but also about being Jewish.

6.1 My First Encounter with a Waterstones Jew:

During my second study session in the Waterstones, I was sitting next to an older woman who was painting. I decided to compliment her. I said: "Excuse me, I would like to tell you I think your painting is lovely." She looked up, slightly startled, but a big smile immediately emerged. She said, "No, no, I am no good." I told her that was nonsense and that I thought, again, that it was beautiful. From there, we got talking. She asked me what I was doing in the Waterstones, and I told her that I was writing my thesis on Jewish identity in London. She looked at me in utter surprise and said, "Oh, I am Jewish!" Surprised, I said, "Oh, so am I!" We had a great laugh at that. After that, we started talking about October 7th, naturally. She said:

After October 7th, my whole world had turned upside down. I am no longer naïve about the fact that people like and protect Jews; this is not the case. I had thought this was the case before October 7th, but sadly, it was not. I can tell based on what I have witnessed, for example, through the number of friends I have lost since the attack. I cannot believe this anymore.

This quote reveals that this woman's coping mechanism is the opposite of what Flax describes as acceptance/normalization.¹⁹⁰ According to Flax, an essential aspect of coping through acceptance/normalization is that 'the community will assist and support a targeted individual.'¹⁹¹ Furthermore, victimization is then normalized in the individual's life.¹⁹² So, as can be seen from the quote, the woman changed her coping with the Jewish situation before October 7th, where she was relying on protection and relative acceptance of other people, which, after October 7th, changed to rejection, not able to accept the circumstances anymore due to the number of friends she lost in the aftermath of the attack.

She then went on to tell me about her origins and compared them to her experiences in London, saying, "What is very important is that in London, it is somewhat safe to identify as Jewish openly; this is not the case in France, where I am originally from." Though this quote does not discuss the woman's Jewish identity or how she coped with October 7th, it does give the insight that, even after October 7th, she thinks it is relatively safe in London to identify as openly Jewish. This is interesting, as it contradicts the news reports about London being unsafe for Jews, which I had referred to as one of the reasons for coming to London and researching the experiences of London Jewish individuals in the aftermath of October 7th. It shows that whether it is safe for Jews in London to identify openly as Jewish depends on your perspective and what you are used to; as for her, being in France and showing your Jewish identity is more unsafe than in London.

After our talk, I went back to studying, and she went back to painting. A couple of hours later, when she was done painting and about to leave, I asked for her contact details so that I could stay in touch, and she gave me her Instagram. When I followed her, besides the art she posts, I noticed one other interesting thing about her page: she was very active on her Instagram stories about Israel, the conflict, and her Judaism. I got permission to use what she posts on her Instagram; however, I will not be citing her Instagram page for privacy reasons, so she will remain unidentifiable, which is what she requested.

¹⁹⁰ Maya Flax, 299.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 299.

¹⁹² Ibid., 299.

6.2 The Instagram Page of the Painter I Met in the Waterstones

As I said, she is very active on her Instagram, having posted about Israel and October 7th 104 times from December 2023 onwards, as of 20th July 2024. Notably, she told me she had deleted her social media shortly after October 7th. She said she did not like what people posted about October 7th and needed a break from this. She also had some people she thought were close to her reply negatively to things she had been saying on her Instagram page about the hostages and October 7th. This shows that one of her initial coping mechanisms to cope with October 7th was withdrawal, where she withdrew from her online presence to reduce her social circles and create a personal safety net where her Instagram could not impact her anymore.¹⁹³

This withdrawal lasted until December 26th, 2023, so lasting nearly four months. On the 26th of December, she started posting again, reposting a post about how 1,200 French Jews are thinking of emigrating to Israel, adding the comment: "There is emigration, and there is immigration..." This is where she moved away from her withdrawal coping mechanism and started coping through empowerment, taking action by posting about her feelings again regarding Jews, Israel, antisemitism, anti-Israel sentiments, and the October 7th attack, sharing her opinion with the people following her.¹⁹⁴ Lorraine Gutiérrez states that one way of describing empowerment coping is the development of feelings of increased power or control without an actual change in structural arrangements.¹⁹⁵ Though Gutiérrez discusses this from a group perspective, I think it is also applicable for the individual, who can practice control over certain aspects of their life.¹⁹⁶ This is what the woman was practicing: her control to cope with everything on her social media and her ability to voice her opinion.

Furthermore, the fact that she has posted so much about Israel on her Instagram also says something about its connection to her Jewish identity. During our first encounter, she told me:

I would love to live in Israel, but sadly, it is too expensive... My kids are here [in London], so I cannot take them, but I would love to live there. I cannot leave everyone, especially not my kids and grandkids.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 298.

¹⁹⁴ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 369.

¹⁹⁵ Lorraine M. Gutierrez, 203.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 203.

This shows that her connection to Israel is robust. She also said that this connection had strengthened even more after October 7th but that this connection had always been there for her. The strong connection between Israel and her Jewish identity is also shown by several statements that she made on her social media. For example:

...It is true that before 1948, we Jews were at the total mercy of whatever asshole who suddenly felt like eliminating us... it is also true that since 1948, Israel hasn't known one day of peace. Recognizing our existence and our land, as tiny as it can be, remains a bitter medicine for many many many, too many. Don't you find all this really annoying?

This shows that her Jewish identity and feeling of safety are strongly connected to Israel. Furthermore, she had never posted anything like this before October 7th, showing that October 7th prompted her to talk about her opinions (after a couple of months) and that her connection to Israel had increased. She also has responded to anti-Israel posts and anti-Israel public opinion in her story, when people had called Israel a colonial settlers state, posting:

Don't you find it interesting how the real colonizers (Christians and Muslims...) who outnumber the world population, end up accusing the Jews (who are still less than 16 million worldwide) of colonization??? How could it be? Really?

Showing that her response to the increasing anti-Israel sentiment seems to be to take a protective stance over Israel, accusing Christians and Muslims of hypocrisy. So, she copes with anti-Israel sympathies, which she regards as an attack on Jews, by taking action, once again posting her thoughts and opinions on the subject online.

She also posted another story on her Instagram regarding people with an anti-Israel standpoint, stating:

Truth has never been the obvious thing. Unfortunately, many, many people will join the obvious lie ship... an easier, less lonely trip I assume. Personally, I loooove lonely!

This comment shows that, again, she is coping with the anti-Israel sentiment by being outspoken and showing her opinion about it online, even saying that she loves being lonely but knowing that she holds her truth, namely that Israel should exist and deserves to exist and defend itself, which she stated in a following story post.

Finally, she also posted something about antisemitism in her folder on Israel. She was commenting on a book she had read named *L'homme de Kiev* (The Fixer) by Bernard Malamud. She said:

Best book on antisemitism I have ever read! Highly recommend! Last page of 427: "No one can allow themselves to remain apolitical, even more so a Jew...A Jew cannot just wait quietly to be destroyed... if you don't fight for freedom, freedom doesn't exist... death to antisemites."

In this case, she is referring to anti-Zionists as antisemites, as she put it in her Israel folder. Again, this shows her standpoint on anti-Israel sentiments, relating it to her Jewish identity, as she sees them as antisemites. It also shows, together with her previous posts mentioned on page 63, how relatively black and white her world has become, that if you hold anti-Israel sentiments, you are an antisemite, or you are not and support Israel.

6.3 My Second Encounter with a Waterstones Jew:

A week after encountering the painter in the Waterstones cafeteria, I was there again, researching and studying. Next to me was a girl, whom I presumed to be my age, roughly 20. I had a hunch she was Modern Orthodox Jewish because of how she dressed, completely covered, and a skirt that I recognized as quite typical Modern Orthodox Jewish, which I realize is a generalization. She was studying history, and I was naturally interested in her studies as a former history student. I asked her what she was studying, and she told me that she was studying for her A-level history exam, which meant she was in her last year of high school. After briefly discussing the subject she was studying, she asked me what I was doing. So, I briefly explained that I was studying Jewish identity in London, without any specifics about my study, not mentioning October 7th, because I thought this might scare her away since it's a laden subject, especially for Jewish people.

After I told her that this was my research topic, she confirmed my suspicions, telling me that she was also Jewish. She then asked me about the book I was reading, *Jews Don't Count* by David Baddiel. From there, we naturally started talking about antisemitism and October 7th. She stated that:

I used to feel safe saying the word Israel on the Tube, but now not anymore. I would tell my friends I was going to Israel the following summer, but I no longer say stuff like that because I am scared something might happen.

She stated this in reaction to my question about whether anything had changed because of October 7th. This seemingly small change does show a little bit about the coping mechanism that she has used since October 7th, namely limiting the expression of individual identity. By not talking about Israel on the Tube, she is trying to become less “visibly,” but in this case, audibly Jewish or at least less related to Israel.¹⁹⁷ It also shows that she is trying to make her Jewish identity towards the outside world look less connected to Israel, despite that she is visibly Jewish due to her clothing. She thus responded to the increase in anti-Israel sentiment in London by trying not to talk about the country because she feels safer not doing so.

We also talked about her position on the conflict, with her saying:

It is hard for me; I am more pro-Palestine than most of my family, some of who are also settlers in Israel, in the West Bank. It is tough for me. I am also very much in favor of the two-state solution. I find it problematic that in the face of things, non-Israeli Jews always feel the need to turn and protect Israel, even when they are doing things wrong. I have tried to talk to my family about it, but they are very adamant in their full support for Israel.

Here, unlike her family, this girl thinks that criticizing Israel when they are doing things wrong should be possible, and she does not understand why her fellow diasporic Jews seem incapable of doing so. This quote shows that her Judaism also has a connection to Israel, but in a slightly different manner, as she is more critical of the state than her family. This is part of a trend with young British Jews being most critical of Israel among British Jews.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, her views opposing those of her family show that she finds her principles and opinions more important than communal loyalties.

Also, she tried to cope with her situation, which she said was tough, through conversations with her family to convey her opinions. This is a coping mechanism in the form of seeking social support. The girl tried to converse with her family about the situation between Israel and Gaza to discuss her experiences and opinions. However, her family did not reciprocate her desire to communicate, being adamant in their position. Social support coping mechanisms are when a person responds to an experience by seeking support from similar

¹⁹⁷ Maya Flax, 299.

¹⁹⁸ Jonathan Boyd, and David Graham. Report. Jews in the UK Today: Key Findings from the JPR National Jewish Identity Survey. London, United Kingdom: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2024, 1-119, 92.

others who share one's negative experience.¹⁹⁹ However, in her case, her family, the people closest to her, did not share her opinion or experience and could thus not reciprocate her need to talk about her feelings.

After talking about her family, the topic turned to what she would do next year, and I asked whether she would study. She stated that:

I don't want to start university next year; the current situation caused by the conflict, like the encampments, seems pretty scary. I got into Cambridge, but I am going to Israel for a year, and I hope things will calm down by next year.

This quote shows another of her coping mechanisms: withdrawal. She will emigrate to Israel for a year, which is one example of the withdrawal coping mechanism, especially because she intends to return the following year to go to university.²⁰⁰ This quote also shows how her Jewish identity is strongly connected to Israel, as she chooses to go to Israel in a time of uncertainty.

After this part of our conversation, we decided to continue studying; however, when we were both about to leave, I asked for her Instagram to stay in touch and meet up again to further our conversations. That same day, we made an appointment to meet up the following day in the Waterstones cafeteria to study together and talk more. We had studied from 11:00 till 16:00 when she said she was done studying, and asked if I wanted to go for a walk with her. So, I packed my stuff, and we started our walk.

On our walk, which lasted about two hours, we mainly spoke about Jewish identity, mostly not relating to Israel or October 7th. When I asked her what it was like to be Modern Orthodox in London, she told me it was okay, mainly because the place she lived had a relatively large Jewish community. I then asked her, relating to our previous conversation and disagreements with her family, whether she followed the same religious rules and traditions as her family. She said she did, also because she was still living at home. At the end of our walk, we did return to the topic of Israel, where she stated:

I hope that there can be a two-state solution. Both Jews and Palestinians have a legitimate claim in history to the land, so why can we not both live there harmoniously in two countries? [I told her I thought there might be too many

¹⁹⁹ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 370.

²⁰⁰ Maya Flax, 298.

disagreements for that to happen, though I agreed with her sentiment.] Maybe you are right, also because of the settlements in the West Bank... But I still hope that at some point we can live together.

This was interesting, as this expression for the two-state solution was more potent than when I had spoken to her first the day before. This quote shows her strong connection to Israel as part of her Jewish identity. Furthermore, instead of having a reaction of protection to the state of Israel regarding the shift to anti-Israel sentiments, she recognizes the Palestinian plight for a separate nation and even hopes for this to happen eventually.

Chapter 7: Antisemitism in London and the Discourse of Posters

Firstly, in this chapter, I will analyze various events of antisemitism that my respondents experienced in London in the aftermath of October 7th. Then, I will also write about my own experience with antisemitism in London. Antisemitism has sharply increased after October 7th in London, which is why it is crucial to tell the experiences of London Jewish individuals. Secondly, I will analyze the discourse that is taking place on the streets through hostage posters and the tearing down of these posters by people with anti-Israel sentiments—also, the other way around, with pro-Israel individuals defacing the posters promoting a free Palestine. I will examine these components through coping mechanisms and Jewish identity. The posters and the discourse that they are part of give crucial insights into how some individuals have coped with the anti-Israeli sentiment after the October 7th attack. The sub-questions guiding this chapter are: *How has antisemitism in London evolved post-October 7th?* and *What role does the discourse of (hostage) street posters play in the coping mechanisms of Jewish individuals?*

7.1 Antisemitism in London Following October 7th

One of my colleagues at CAA told me about various experiences he and his friends had with antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7th. He had told me these stories because I asked him whether he had experienced antisemitism. He told me he did and that these events had happened after October 7th. Before the attack, he had not had such experiences. He told me:

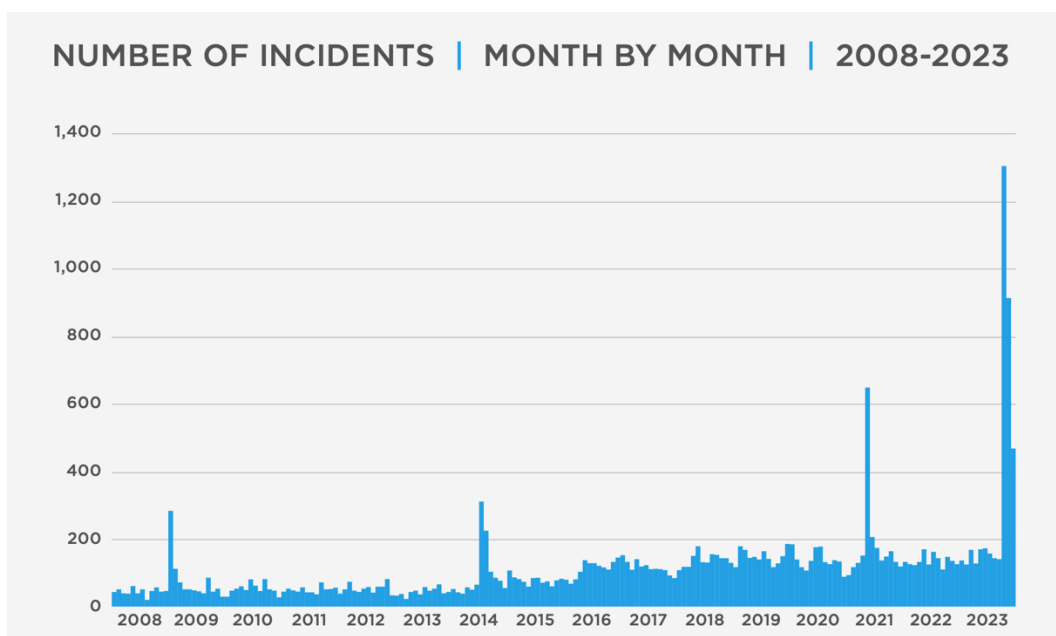
When I was setting up a life-size Menorah with MHL on the street for a Jewish holiday in December [2023], someone walked past me and said yelled “dirty Yid” at me; this is a common swearword in England against Jews. This was so infuriating... I wanted to do something, but I couldn’t.

He then went on to tell me about an experience that one of his Jewish friends had with antisemitism:

My friend was walking through London, and he is relatively religious, wearing a Kippah. He is Orthodox Jewish, so he is easily identifiable. Someone had passed by him on the street and turned his hands into the shape of a gun pointed it, and made the motion of firing it at him.

My colleague at CAA told me that these experiences have increased for Jewish individuals since October 7th. This also corroborates with reports saying that antisemitism in London has increased a significant amount since October 7th, with an increase of 147% from 2022 to 2023, the highest amount ever recorded.²⁰¹ Of the total 4,103 incidents, 66% happened after October 7th.²⁰² Of these incidents, 1,330 were reported in October 2023 alone.²⁰³ Above this, these are only the instances of antisemitism reported to one Trust, the Community Security Trust. In Figure one, it can be seen that the spikes of antisemitism throughout the UK correspond with each major conflict that Israel and Hamas had, which I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis.

Figure 1: Number of Antisemitic Incidents per Month



Yoni Gordon-Teller, *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2023*, (London: Community Security Trust), 5, fig 1.

Although the stories told by my colleague do not relate directly to how Jews cope with the growing anti-Israel sentiment, they do provide insights into how October 7th has affected these Jewish individuals in London. My colleague had told me that antisemitism was something he had not experienced before the October 7th attack. Nor had he heard of so many different people around him that had it perpetrated against them.

²⁰¹ Yoni Gordon-Teller. Report. *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2023*. London, United Kingdom: Community Security Trust, 2024, 4.

²⁰² Yoni Gordon-Teller. Report. *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2023*, 4.

²⁰³ Yoni Gordon-Teller, 4.

7.2 My Own Experience of Antisemitism in London

During the four months that I spent in London, I have had one antisemitic incident perpetrated against me. My best friend from the Netherlands came over to visit me, and we went to a restaurant to grab some food and something to drink. I needed to go to the bathroom and went to the urinal. Right after me, two men stood at the urinals next to me. Then, the one standing next to me just looked to the side, towards me, looked at the man next to him, and started talking, and then I heard one of them say dirty Yahud, which means Jew, and they looked at me and just started laughing. I felt extremely uncomfortable, as, firstly, I was not sure whether they saw my Star of David necklace or whether the guy had genuinely looked at my penis, which is circumcised. Secondly, I was terrified, unsure what they would do. Through my mind went that they could beat me up and I would not be able to do anything. So, I left as soon as I was done, told my friend about it, and was shocked for the next couple of days.

I had thought of not putting this in my thesis because it does not have anything to do with how the Jews of London have coped with the increased anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism or how this impacted their Jewish identity. However, I think this is an essential story for several reasons to tell in my thesis. Firstly, I want to show the pervasiveness of antisemitism in everyday life, especially after the October 7th attack, which I think my personal experience highlights. Secondly, I believe it is essential to show my positionality and that the October 7th attack influenced not only my respondents but also me as a researcher and as a Jewish individual studying in London.

7.3 The Discourse on Street Posters:

During my stay in London, I noticed there was a “conversation” on the streets between pro-Israel and pro-Palestine supporters. By conversation, I mean the discussion that erupted on posters that both sides hung up throughout London. Then, the other “side” would write on/tear down the posters of the opinion opposing theirs. The reason why this is important for this thesis is that this is an impact of October 7th that everyone in London gets to see; it clearly shows, in public spaces, how Jewish individuals have been coping with anti-Israel sentiments. Again, it is crucial to state that this section is about individuals and not London's Jewish community. I have taken pictures of this “conversation,” which I will analyze.

Image 1: Sabotaging Palestinian Posters



This picture was taken by Zev Lesnik Oberstein at Finsbury Park Tube station.

In image 1, we see a wide array of different texts. The original posters with the black, red, and green wording (the colors of the Palestinian flag) originally stated: “National demonstration. Stop the genocide of the Palestinians! Ceasefire! NOW! (Permanent, Comprehensive).” Also, “Stop massacring Palestinian children! Stop the genocide.” Together with the date, time, and place. Under this text, it says Free Palestine and images of barbed wire are on the sides of the poster.

As can be seen in image 1, on these posters, there is text written with a marker by pro-Israel people, but also, less visibly, replies by pro-Palestinians. On the top left poster, a pro-Israel individual wrote, “ Hamas gang rapists.” While a pro-Palestinian person, in smaller writing, replied with “Israeli terrorist.” The text “ Hamas gang rapists” can be found on four of the posters in Image 1 and “Free the hostages” twice. Furthermore, pro-Palestinians have replied with texts like “Israel? More like is fake” and “terrorists” with arrows pointing to the texts written by the pro-Israel people. The pro-Palestinian writer also responded to the text “ Hamas gang rapists” with “there is no physical or forensic evidence, this is debunked. Zionist ... Propaganda.”

So, the individuals writing these texts have politicized the posters, using them as a voice to counter each other’s opinions. From the responses by these pro-Israel individuals, I cannot know if they are Jewish or not; however, they coped with this anti-Israel sentiment in a public space by taking action. Their writings on the posters are a form of empowerment

done by individuals who act to improve their situation and clarify their political position.²⁰⁴ It can be perceived as “taking a stand” against anti-Israel opinion.

Image 2: Kidnapped Posters Torn Down and Written on



This picture was taken by Zev Lesnik Oberstein at Hampstead High Street.

Image two shows “Kidnapped: Bring them home now” hostage posters, which were created by Israeli artists Nitzan Mintz and Dede Bandid shortly after the October 7th attack and the hostages were taken.²⁰⁵ Image two is different from image one, where in image two, the posters themselves form part of how Jewish/pro-Israel individuals have dealt with the October 7th attack. For example, although not British or from London, the artists said they did not create the posters for political reasons but to work through their “fear in a dark time” by keeping public attention on the hostages.²⁰⁶ It is argued by Greg Grandin that ‘Even as some Israeli hostages begin to come home, the posters remain flashpoints of global polarization.’²⁰⁷ Furthermore, Grandin states that ‘the posters have become rallying points in what is shaping

²⁰⁴ Lorraine M. Gutierrez, 202.

²⁰⁵ Greg Grandin. “How to Read the Israeli ‘Kidnapped’ Posters.” *The Intercept*, December 5, 2023. <https://theintercept.com/2023/11/28/kidnapped-posters-israel-latin-america/>, Last accessed on 22/07/2024.

²⁰⁶ Greg Grandin. “How to Read the Israeli ‘Kidnapped’ Posters.” *The Intercept*, December 5, 2023.

²⁰⁷ Greg Grandin.

up to be a global war for hearts and minds.²⁰⁸ This becomes apparent with the videos that have surfaced online, with pro-Palestinian individuals tearing down the hostage posters in London and pro-Israel/Jewish individuals confronting them.²⁰⁹

The hostage posters suggest to us a lot about how Jewish/pro-Israel individuals in London have been coping with the October 7th attack, but also other places around the world (the posters have been translated into 22 different languages as of November 2023).²¹⁰ It suggests that the individuals who have hung up these posters try to cope with what happened on October 7th through remembrance and keeping the hostages part of the public discourse. This is part of community-based strategies for coping, namely collective identification, where research suggests that identification with an oppressed group may lead to greater well-being in the face of adversity.²¹¹ Also, Nyla Branscombe et al. argue that the experience of oppression can lead people to identify more with an oppressed group.²¹² Furthermore, the posters also indicate that the individuals placing them are using empowerment coping mechanisms, where in their eyes, they are promoting ‘awareness of the systemically embedded nature of inequality and mobilize people to collective action.’²¹³ The posters mobilize people through the QR code: "Scan to join the global efforts." As can be seen in image two.

²⁰⁸ Greg Grandin.

²⁰⁹ Richard Ferrer. "Smiling People Rip Down Posters of Kidnapped Israeli Children in London's Leicester Square." YouTube, October 25, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2e5qe5ZcxPI>, Last accessed on 22/07/2024.

²¹⁰ Greg Grandin.

²¹¹ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 370.

²¹² Nyla R Branscombe, Michael T. Schmitt, and Richard D. Harvey. "Perceiving Pervasive Discrimination among African Americans: Implications for Group Identification and Well-Being." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 1 (July 1999): 135–49. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.1.135>, 137.

²¹³ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 369

Chapter 8: Interview with Jewish Individual

In this chapter, I will analyze one semi-structured interview I conducted in London. The interview was pre-arranged through a family friend who has family that lives in Hampstead. This interview is an addition to my participant observation throughout this thesis. It shows in detail how the interviewee has coped with anti-Israel sentiments after October 7th and how this has impacted their Jewish identity. Though not part of the primary research method of participant observation that this thesis has so far conducted, the interview still provides valuable insights for this research.

8.1 The Interview:

While conducting my participant observation, I dressed as a regular civilian and did not care about my outfit more than usual. However, with this interview at their workplace, I realized what I would wear would matter more. I chose a neat blouse and my best pants, which I deemed appropriate for their work setting and also to try and show that I was a serious researcher.

When I arrived at their office, they let me in and led me to the room. When I entered, there were only two chairs and a small table. The chairs faced each other at a 45-degree angle. After a short talk of me explaining what exactly I was doing, where I was studying, and what my intent was with my research, I asked if I was allowed to record our conversation, which they agreed to. They did, however, ask to stay anonymous, which is why I will refer to them with they/them, but it was only one individual. I told them I would start recording and asked whether they could start by telling me about their experience with the October 7th attack. They began by telling me how they had heard of the attack, after which they stated:

I remember thinking, oh gosh, I wonder what will happen in retaliation. It is tragic and predictable in a way and disappointing. I find what's going on disappointing because there could have been another way, and I don't know quite what. But that feeling of, I don't know quite what, has gotten bigger and bigger. Over the months, seeing people becoming very polarised, taking positions, and being pulled one way or another has been difficult.

From this quote, their stance on the situation regarding the aftermath of October 7th and how polarizing it has been becomes apparent. It also becomes clear that they are critical

of what Israel is doing in retaliation to the October 7th attack, stating that they find it disappointing in a way. Furthermore, although they did not formulate it clearly, their feelings towards the situation increased. They went on by discussing how they coped with the aftermath of October 7th, also regarding the polarization that they felt was growing:

So, the one thing I have been pulled towards was organizations focused on co-existing. A month after October 7th, they organized a rally in Whitehall. The bereaved families forum organized it. It was two or three organizations of co-existence projects. Then, there were representatives from synagogues, the church, the archbishop, and Islam. And there was a young man from Israel whose parents had both been murdered. And then there was a Palestinian whose family he'd managed to get out, but his family was in danger.

The coping mechanisms apparent in this quote are community-based strategies, mainly connected to the social support strategy. They have sought support from others who share their opinion on the conflict.²¹⁴ To cope through social support, a requirement is the presence of other like-minded people to share their experiences, which they have found through co-existing organizations and rallies.²¹⁵

They then went on talking about antisemitism and coping mechanisms, stating: "I've had a very interesting time. I haven't had any personal experience with antisemitism at all, but I think I've been more on the lookout for it." This statement shows that they are much more worried about what is going on in their surroundings, more worried that something antisemitic might happen to them in the aftermath of the October 7th attack. The following sentence she went on saying:

However, there was one thing on this online forum that kicked off a lot of problems. It ended with a group of Israeli group analysts leaving the forum because they felt people didn't understand what it was like in Israel. And that was awful. And I felt sorry for them, but I also felt angry that they left and didn't stay. But I understood sometimes you feel so vulnerable that you can't stay and argue, which is, you know, so very mixed feelings about that. I understand it, on the one hand, but I do not like it. It is this impulse to withdraw. I have felt

²¹⁴ Nia L. Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia S. Salter, 370.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 370.

uncomfortable sometimes. I have definitely felt uncomfortable, but I have not withdrawn.

The frustration that they felt with the Israeli group withdrawing is very interesting, as withdrawing is a coping mechanism for when you find yourself in a difficult position where you are a victim of oppression.²¹⁶ They even specifically stated that they would not withdraw themselves despite being uncomfortable. Instead, they sought people of similar opinion to them to cope. They then went on to talk about an experience that they had regarding the pro-Palestinian protests that happen every Sunday in London:

One of the horrible experiences was that we were in town, really near the beginning, within the first month, and there were already demonstrations, but we were walking down Kingsway, and I saw three ultra-Orthodox men with Palestinian men. And I thought that was just horrible, really, really horrible. it was awful. I felt awful seeing that. I thought this was awful.

This quote shows that her Jewish identity is strongly connected to Israel, especially after the October 7th attack. This is not mutually exclusive to the sentiment of the two-state solution, which she had expressed earlier. She was upset about Ultra-Orthodox Jews going to pro-Palestinian marches, which often have an extreme anti-Israel sentiment. She also said right after that, "I feel, I do feel a sense of betrayal when people tell me about so many Jewish people on the marches, on the Gaza, and I think, and I hate it." This sense of betrayal that she feels again shows how much her Jewish identity is connected to Israel and how October 7th has impacted her identity by feeling a sense of betrayal when her own "tribe" goes against what she believes in.

They then went on to talk about Israel's retaliation against Hamas in Gaza, stating: "Yeah, it's crazy. It is. And to me, it's not Jewish. It's not according to my sense of what Jewish ethics is. This also relates to their Jewish identity and what they believe it means to be Jewish." They believe that the retaliation is against Jewish values, which is a big statement and shows that their Jewish identity is once again impacted by October 7th because they have become more critical of the Israeli state than before the October 7th attack, as can be seen through their earlier statements.

²¹⁶ Maya Flax, 298.

They also talked about what it was like for them that some people hold Jewish people, in general, as responsible for what is happening in Gaza and not just the Israeli government:

I don't know what I feel. I have felt very uncomfortable and torn between, you know, do I have to support everything Israel does? Or what is my responsibility as a Jew? I'm not an Israeli. Even if I were an Israeli, I'm not responsible for my government. It throws up questions all the time, which makes me very uncomfortable. But I can see that other people are confused about it. Non-Jews here are confused about me being Jewish and about Jews here.

Here, they are addressing precisely an element of the crisis that evolved after October 7th for Jewish individuals as described in Chapter One, the Introduction. Do I need to pick sides? Can I have my own opinion? Here, it is shown how torn this individual is between what she feels might be her duties as a Jewish individual and her values and beliefs. Here, the feelings this individual is experiencing can be interpreted as cognitive dissonance, which is when an individual encounters 'psychological discomfort when they simultaneously have thoughts that are in conflict with each other. Cognitive dissonance often serves as a motivational force as it often drives them to seek to reduce discomfort.'²¹⁷ As in the quote above, the individual I interviewed feels torn between the belief that they might have to support Israel because they are Jewish and, at the same time, holding the belief that they are not responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, especially since they are not an Israeli citizen. Also, there is tension between their Jewish identity and what the Israeli government is doing, with discomfort being created because they feel like their identity is being conflated with the actions of the Israeli government, a government they do not control. Moreover, they feel uncomfortable and torn, which suggests there is a form of internal conflict and stress, which are signs of cognitive dissonance.²¹⁸

As stated above, 'Cognitive dissonance often serves as a motivational force as it often drives them to seek to reduce discomfort.'²¹⁹ This is precisely what this individual has done, dealing with this feeling of discomfort by going to marches that are organized by organizations that support co-existence between Israel and Palestine. This would allow them to support

²¹⁷ Sam Goldstein and Jack A. Naglieri. "Cognitive Dissonance." In *Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development*, 380–81. New York, New York: Springer, 2011, 380.

²¹⁸ Sam Goldstein and Jack A. Naglieri. "Cognitive Dissonance.", 380.

²¹⁹ Sam Goldstein and Jack A. Naglieri, 380.

Israel as a Jewish individual but also enable them to be critical of the Israeli government and its policies in Gaza.

Chapter 9: Reflections and Conclusion

9.1 Concluding Data and Analysis

As stated in the research question of this thesis: *How have Jewish individuals within the broader London Jewish community coped with the anti-Israel opinions and antisemitism after the October 7th attack, and how have the anti-Israeli sentiments and antisemitism influenced their Jewish identity?* this thesis aimed to analyze and tell the story of London Jewish individuals and their experiences relating to anti-Israel sentiments and antisemitism after the October 7th attack on Israel. Throughout this thesis, I have looked at how the October 7th attack influenced their identity and how they coped with these elements in the aftermath of October 7th. I was curious about London Jewish individuals and how they coped, not just Jews, as a 'homogenous' group. So, I looked at as many different types of Jewish individuals as possible to tell and analyze their stories, ensuring that I also considered the intersectionality of the Jewish identity.

This thesis has attempted to add a new layer of analysis on the Jewish experience and build upon the traditional aspect of the existing research on antisemitism. In addition to this important aspect, I have analyzed the neglected element by academics, the media, and research organizations of how Jews coped with the anti-Israel sentiment after the October 7th attack and how this impacted their Jewish identity.

Throughout this thesis, it has become clear that the Jewish individuals researched have coped in various ways. For example, Jewish individuals have coped by seeking social support, such as joining a synagogue or a Jewish runner's organization, attending co-existence marches, and attending religious organizations' activities like MHL to find people with similar ideas and reconnect to their Jewish identity. An example of reconnecting to their Jewish identity in this research was Sam from JRAL. He had said that his connection to Judaism had significantly increased after the October 7th attack. Therefore, he wanted to reconnect with this part of his identity and joined a synagogue and the runner's group. Other coping mechanisms deployed by individuals include withdrawal, such as emigrating, not going to social events anymore, like the Jewish running group, and withdrawing from social media.

Furthermore, individuals have also used the coping mechanism of limiting the expression of individual identity by, for example, not joining a Jewish running group run at all while being a member and not wanting to wear the merchandise because they don't want to

show their Jewish identity. Another individual also spoke about the worry some Jewish individuals are now feeling about wearing their Kippah on the streets of London. Other individuals have acted more anonymously by partaking in the discourse evolving on the streets of London through the posters, coping by remembrance, and keeping the hostages part of the public discourse, thus coping through collective identification. Collective identification means these individuals identified themselves with the hostages and Israeli people who suffered because of October 7th, with the experience of oppression leading to people identifying more with an oppressed group.

Interestingly, individuals have also had multiple different coping mechanisms, not only relying on one but sometimes also switching between coping mechanisms. For example, the woman I met in The Waterstones who was painting withdrew from her social media for months but then returned as she felt that she needed to voice her opinion, moving to empowerment strategies to regain power and control over her situation. Also, the other girl I met at the Waterstones used withdrawing coping mechanisms such as emigrating but also sought social support by talking to her parents, even though this was not a success. Individuals at JRAL also had this duality of coping mechanisms, deciding to sign up and seek social support but then not joining in for runs, withdrawing, and minimizing their social circles.

So, it has become clear that every individual has coped in their own manner, even with differences in the same group, such as JRAL, where one individual stated that running with Jews was the best, coping through social support by running with other Jews, while a lot of other individuals don't show up, thus coping through withdrawing. As the Jewish individuals that I have analyzed have coped in such a variety of different ways, with differences also being apparent within similar circles, this begs the question: Is it solely their Jewish identity that makes the Jewish individuals cope a certain way, or is it due to the further intersectionality of their identities such as their age, political affiliations, and gender? This thesis has only looked at the intersectionality within the Jewish identity but not at the further intersectionality of the individual's "whole identity." This could be subject to crucial further research to see how Jewish identity and coping relate to other aspects of an individual's identity.

However, throughout this thesis, there have not only been differences among the individuals researched, but also some patterns have emerged. For example, throughout this thesis, Israel as part of individual Jewish identity has emerged as an essential factor relating to both how people have coped and how the October 7th attack has impacted their identity.

Many of the Jewish individuals who were researched have moved closer to their Judaism and feeling of connection to Israel. For example, Sam, from JRAL said that since October 7th, he has been relating more to his Jewish identity, which he had not been before October 7th. His pride towards Israel also significantly increased and was, in a way, newly found. Also, the woman from JRAL who wanted to make Aliyah said it would be easier to live there as a Jewish person and that living in London was becoming more difficult for Jewish individuals due to antisemitism. Furthermore, people partaking in the discourse on the streets are trying to keep the hostages in public discourse, with Israel being an essential factor as well, playing a vital role in this discussion. Also, the woman who stopped listening to the BBC because she couldn't stand the one-sided reporting was frustrated at the lack of reporting on the suffering of the Israeli people. However, Israel also played an important role for other individuals, but in a different manner. They have been more critical and involved in, for example, co-existence marches or confrontations with adamantly pro-Israeli family members and speaking about their favor of the two-state solution with them. So, none of the individuals I have talked to have stated that the anti-Israel sentiment did not impact them.

So, simply put, there is no direct answer to the research question guiding this thesis. Individuals have coped with anti-Israel sentiments and antisemitism after the October 7th attack in different ways, and the attack also often influenced their Jewish identity.

9. 2 Limitations and Reflections:

Firstly, one limitation is that I was not able to speak to anti-Israel Jewish individuals. I tried to contact various organizations and some individuals, but they weren't interested in participating in my research or did not have time. The inclusion of individuals with such feelings would have possibly added essential perspectives, such as perhaps how they would have coped with pressure from within the Jewish community to support Israel, which the woman that I did the semi-structured interview with also already addressed, although from a two-state solution perspective.

Secondly, my research could have benefited from more interviews to accompany the participant observation, adding further depth to the data. However, this was also one of the problems I encountered. I tried to get more people to do interviews, but many were only willing to talk to me, not interview style and ensuring complete anonymity.

Finally, this thesis contains some selection bias, as I initially relied on my aunt's Jewish connections at the start of my research. Furthermore, I also went to the Waterstones bookstore and met Jewish people there, with the bookstore mostly only attracting Jews from Hampstead. However, I joined additional groups, went to different areas in London, and spoke in an impromptu manner to many individuals outside of this initial selection to try and minimize this selection bias. There would have been no ideal representative sample for this research, as it was focused on individuals.

9.3 Further Research Suggestions:

As briefly discussed above, one of the main questions that resulted from my research is: Is it solely their Jewish identity that makes the Jewish individuals cope a certain way, or is it due to the further intersectionality of their identities, such as their age, political affiliations, and gender? This question could further help to formulate how Jewish individuals have coped with the October 7th attack and perhaps for what reasons, but also to see how October 7th has influenced their entire identity, if at all, or if it was only the Jewish identity that got impacted. This could be analyzed through ethnographic research, which follows, for example, Jewish males and females and then compares their coping strategies and the impact October 7th had on their identity.

Another avenue for further research could involve a deeper exploration into how the public discourse surrounding the posters has been leveraged by both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine individuals to cope with the October 7th attack. This could include conducting interviews with those who have displayed the posters around London, offering valuable insights into their coping mechanisms and the objectives behind the posters. Additionally, interviews could be conducted with London Jewish individuals to gather their perspectives on the posters, including how they have influenced their daily lives and potentially intensified the impact of the conflict.

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