

Trinity College

## Trinity College Digital Repository

---

Faculty Scholarship

---

2-2015

### National Demographic Survey of American Jewish College Students 2014: Anti-Semitism Report

Barry A. Kosmin

*Trinity College*, [barry.kosmin@trincoll.edu](mailto:barry.kosmin@trincoll.edu)

Ariela Keysar

*Trinity College*, [ariela.keysar@trincoll.edu](mailto:ariela.keysar@trincoll.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/facpub>

 Part of the Religion Commons

---

**National Demographic Survey  
of American Jewish College Students 2014**

**ANTI-SEMITISM REPORT**

**Barry A. Kosmin & Ariela Keysar**

**Foreword by Kenneth L. Marcus**

**February 2015**



# Contents

Foreword ..... i

**Part I**

Introduction ..... 1

**Table 1:** Experiences with Discrimination by U.S. Jews:  
     Percentage who report that in the past year  
     they have been called offensive names by age..... 2

The Jewish University and College Student Population 2014..... 2

Measuring the Anti-Semitism Problem..... 3

**Chart 1:** Student Encounters with Anti-Semitism ..... 4

Descriptors of the Victims ..... 4

**Table 2:** Percentage of Jewish Students Reporting Anti-Semitism  
     by Selected Social Characteristics ..... 5

Multivariate Analysis..... 6

Anti-Semitism in Social or Co-curricular Contexts..... 6

**A.** Anti-Semitism from individual students ..... 6

**B.** Anti-Semitism in clubs and societies..... 7

**C.** Other Contexts ..... 7

Institutional Anti-Semitism ..... 7

**D.** In a lecture/class..... 7

**E.** In the Student Union ..... 7

**F.** By the University administrative system ..... 7

An International Comparison: U.S. 2014 v. U.K. 2011..... 7

**Chart 2:** Anti-Semitism Rates:  
     U.S. Jewish Students 2014 v. U.K. Jewish Students 2011..... 8

**Chart 3:** Context of Anti-Semitic Incidents in U.S. 2014 v. U.K. 2011..... 9

**Part II**

Anti-Semitic Incidents ..... 10

Jews and the University Problem ..... 10

Jewish Student Voices ..... 11

Jewish Identity and Sensitivity Factors ..... 12

**Part III**

Policy Recommendations for University and College Administrations ..... 13

Policy Recommendation for Jewish Organizations ..... 15

Appendix A: Survey Methodology..... 16

Appendix B: The Authors ..... 17

## Foreword

by **Kenneth L. Marcus**<sup>i</sup>

Ten years ago, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights announced that campus anti-Semitism had become a “serious problem” at many universities around the country.<sup>ii</sup> This finding, which I drafted as the Commission’s then-Staff Director, was based on anecdotal information and witness testimony together with the relatively meager quantitative reporting that was available at the time. Indeed, the Commission also found that more data was needed to determine “the full extent of the problem.” Since then, as a result of further research, we have learned much more about the problem, which has worsened at many institutions over the intervening decade.<sup>iii</sup> But we still do not know enough. Significantly, we did not know, until the completion of Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar’s important work on this report, the startling fact that more than half of Jewish American college students personally experienced or witnessed anti-Semitism during the 2013-2014 academic year.

In some respects, the amount should not matter. If even one Jewish student faces anti-Semitic harassment, hate, or bigotry, her experience should be taken seriously. This much should be self-evident. And it is not unique to anti-Semitism. Each act of bigotry must be condemned for its own intrinsic evil as much as for the broader patterns that it reflects. Even without the valuable data that Kosmin and Keysar provide, it should be obvious that campus anti-Semitism deserves a strong response.

Nevertheless, we know that the amount does matter. It matters to governmental officials, university administrators, civil rights groups, and communal institutions, activists, and funders, all of whom need to decide what resources to dedicate to addressing campus anti-Semitism and how to deploy these resources. And it matters to Jewish students, because it reinforces their experiences of hate and bias in the face of widespread denial and minimization. At the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, we frequently hear from college students who find that their experiences of anti-Semitism are not taken seriously. This report gives substance and data to their experiences. A decade ago, Jewish college students spoke of the vindication that they felt when the Civil Rights Commission gave voice to their concerns. This report should provide a similar vindication, since it indicates that the scope of this problem is greater than most observers had realized.

Kosmin and Keysar’s eye-opening findings should awaken authorities to the need to address campus anti-Semitism much more aggressively, comprehensively, and effectively than they are now doing. Moreover, this report should guide more thoughtful, researched-based responses to this problem. It will no longer be possible to characterize anti-Semitism claims as being largely centered in a few geographical regions, namely the East and West Coasts, as some commentators have previously argued. Similarly, it will no longer be possible to advance the canard that campus anti-Semitism is primarily a conservative (or liberal) issue, since it is now

clear that Jewish students of widely differing political perspectives are facing and recognizing the problem. Kosmin and Keysar's report gives us a much clearer sense of the extent and locations of current campus anti-Semitism, and this provides an invaluable basis for future efforts to address it.

This report describes some steps that must be taken. A few deserve further emphasis. University administrators must respond with greater seriousness to anti-Semitic incidents, whether large or small, because they cannot be permitted to fester. The Jewish community must unite and respond forcefully to campus problems, overcoming the divisions that have hampered communal effectiveness. In serious cases, the federal government must step in, just as forcefully as it does with hate and bias incidents facing students from other groups. Federal officials have all the resources that they need already at their disposal. They just need to use those resources more effectively. For example, the U.S. Department of State has developed excellent tools for addressing anti-Semitism in every country other than the United States. The domestic agencies however have not yet made comparable progress. An easy but important step forward would be for domestic agencies to adopt the approaches that the United States applies abroad, such as the State Department's formal definition of anti-Semitism.<sup>iv</sup> Such simple, obvious steps should be undertaken without delay.

Finally, as success breeds success, research begets research. While this report tells us much that we need to know, it also points to the need for further efforts. For example, we need to know which environments are breeding the greatest amount of anti-Semitism, what forms bias takes in each of them, and what universities are doing to address them. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, every federally funded institution of higher learning has an obligation to ensure equal educational opportunity for its students. This includes, among other things, promptly and effectively addressing certain hostile environments for which it is placed on notice. We need to know, better than we currently do, which institutions have this problem, and we must be able to prove it. With additional data, we will be able to help them pinpoint the problems that they must address.

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Kenneth Liebowitz provided helpful comments on this foreword.

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Findings and Recommendations of the United States Commission on Civil Rights Regarding Campus Anti-Semitism* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2005).

<sup>iii</sup> See, e.g., Kenneth Lasson, "In an Academic Voice: Antisemitism and Academy Bias," *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* 3, no. 2 (2012): 349, 401; Eunice G. Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus: Past & Present* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011); Kenneth L. Marcus, *Jewish Identity and Civil Rights in America* (New York and Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Gary A. Tobin, Aryeh K. Weinberg, & Jenna Ferer, *The UnCivil University* (Lanham, MD.: Lexington Books, 2009); Manfred Gerstenfeld, ed., *Academics Against Israel and the Jews*. (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2007).

<sup>iv</sup> This proposal is further developed in Kenneth L. Marcus, *The Definition of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

## Part I

### Introduction

Anti-Semitism is prejudice and/or discrimination against Jews, individually or collectively, that can be based on hatred against Jews because of their religion, their ethnicity, ancestry, or group membership. It assumes that Jews share particular characteristics in common and think and act in special or “different” ways from other people. It manifests itself in a variety of forms – words, ideas and actions. It can involve bigotry, bullying, defamation, stereotyping, hate crime, acts of bias and scapegoating. Over its long history, anti-Semitism has been used to blame all kinds of evil on the Jews. Thus it has a wide repertoire at its disposal and uses deeply rooted and sometimes contradictory tropes – e.g. Jews are materialistic, cheap, greedy, good with money; they control the media, banks, the government, and plot to take over the world; they’re all Communists; they’re all capitalists; they committed deicide; they think they’re chosen and better than everyone else; they are inferior, unpatriotic, disloyal; they are cruel, cowardly, warmongers. Due to a litany of innate faults, anti-Semites believe Jews are not entitled to the same rights or consideration as other people including self-determination.

In practice, anti-Semitism hurts the individual Jew who experiences it directly and personally but it also hurts other Jews emotionally when they witness an incident. Nevertheless, defining a particular incident or event as an instance or case of anti-Semitism is open to interpretation and discussion. Just as the pain threshold varies within populations so sensitivity to hostility and incivility also varies among people. Whereas some Jews will ignore jokes in poor taste others will be highly offended. Given this variance this report focuses on responses to a question, phrased in a particular way and addressed to a specific target population (American Jewish students), covering a six-month time period (September 2013-March 2014) at a specific location (university and college campuses):

*Although different people have different views as to what constitutes anti-Semitism, would you say that you have witnessed or personally been subjected to anti-Semitism in any of the following contexts since the beginning of the academic year (September 2013).*

According to the Pew Research Center’s 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews, anti-Semitism in the U.S. today is a problem mainly facing the younger generation of American Jews. Among Jews aged 18-29 years, 22% reported being called offensive names during 2012. By comparison, 6% of those ages 50-64 years and only 4% of those 65 or older said this happened to them in the past year (Table 1). Name-calling and insults on the street are unlikely to enter the crime statistics or be reported by the media. Yet this troubling societal incivility statistic suggests that young Jewish adults are more than five times more likely to be the targets of this form of anti-Semitism than older Jews. Since the vast majority of young American Jews spend four or more years studying at universities and colleges, an important public policy question is to know to what extent anti-Semitic victimization is associated with the social climate on the nation’s university and college campuses today.

The college experience happens at a formative point in the life of young people in which they separate from their parents and family and develop their own identities. They are exposed to peers from diverse backgrounds while being removed from the roots that have provided them with stability. This environment amplifies their vulnerability.

**Table 1. Experiences with Discrimination by U.S. Jews**

**Percentage who report that in the past year they have been called offensive names by age**

Age	%
18-29	22
30-49	16
50-64	6
65+	4

*Source: Pew Research Center, 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews, Q. G21a*

## The Jewish University and College Student Population 2014

In spring 2014 a team from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, conducted an in-depth on-line survey on a variety of topics with 1,157 self-identified Jewish students at 55 university and four-year college campuses.<sup>1</sup> This Jewish student body was found to have a very similar age profile to that of the overall student body found in the Trinity College 2013 National Survey of College Students.<sup>2</sup> Both samples were 59% female and 41% male and their choices of majors or courses of study were also almost identical. Jewish students are almost indistinguishable from other American students except that more Jews report as non-Hispanic whites (90% v. 72% nationally) and fewer as minorities or immigrants. Jewish students are more likely to be U.S.-born than the college population as a whole and in fact 73% are third or more generation Americans.

One feature that makes Jewish students unique is the American Jewish community's long-standing commitment to higher education for both men and women and its above average investment in human capital. As a result, only 6% of Jews on campus today are first generation students. In fact 75% of the Jewish students reported having a grandparent who was a college graduate. Thus our Jewish sample is not composed of strangers to the college campus. They are also not as easily distinguishable as previous generations of Jews<sup>3</sup> since 36% reported some non-Jewish ancestry as a result of intermarriage in their families. This is an interesting finding because the sample was constructed using distinctive Jewish

<sup>1</sup> For the survey methodology see Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> Barry A. Kosmin & Ariela Keysar, *Religious, Spiritual & Secular, ARIS 2013: The National College Student Survey*, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard D. Savitz & Richard F. Tomasson, "The Identifiability of Jews," *American Journal of Sociology*, 64, 5, (1959), 468-475.

surnames, i.e. the paternal line. However, the surname identifier is also relevant to this topic since for some anti-Semites even someone devoid of a current Jewish identity and affiliation but who has a 'Jewish' name i.e. ancestry is a target.

These young American Jews who responded to the survey are quite conscious of their Jewish identity and heritage: 90% said they are proud to be Jewish and 71% agreed they "have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people." Nevertheless, as might be expected given the profile described above, Jewish college students are a socially well-integrated minority; 62% report that most of their friends are non-Jewish. This situation is not surprising given their small percentage of the national student population despite the fact that Jews are over-represented in institutions of higher education.<sup>4</sup>

Religion plays very little part in most Jewish students' lives today. Only 23% report they are religious. The consensus view within the Jewish community today is that it is primarily a "cultural group." When asked "When you think what it means to be a young Jew in America today, would you say that it means being a member of ...?" 80% chose cultural group compared to 57% for religious group, 57% a people and 42% an ethnic group. Only the small minority among the students (8%) which is currently Orthodox is visibly identified as Jewish by dress.<sup>5</sup> This lack of identifiable outward markers among the Jewish student body makes the responses presented in Chart 1 particularly surprising.

## Measuring the Anti-Semitism Problem

A majority (54%) of Jewish students in the sample reported having been subject to or witnessing anti-Semitism on their campus. The data in Chart 1 provide a snapshot for the first six months of the academic year 2013-14 of the types, context, or location of anti-Semitism as experienced by a large national sample of Jewish students in both academic and co-curricular contexts. It maps the broad contours of anti-Semitism during the academic year as perceived by its target population, the 631 students, i.e. 54% of the sample, who reported they were victims or witnesses of anti-Semitism. Any individual student could have encountered anti-Semitism in more than one context, which makes the aggregate of incidents per student to be greater than 54%. It is important to reiterate that this survey was undertaken during March-April 2014 and covers a six-month time period before the summer conflict in Gaza that led to a worldwide flare-up in anti-Semitism.

That a majority of Jewish students felt that they had suffered or witnessed incidents of anti-Semitism on the college campus in only one academic year was an unexpected finding which requires very serious investigation. However, it is necessary to make clear that anti-Semitism was self-defined by the respondent and the survey instrument did not question or investigate any particular incident. The data suggest there is under-reporting of anti-Semitism through the normal campus channels. One reason might be a belief that the authorities are not sympathetic to such complaints; another perhaps might be fear of worrying parents and family; or that some students simply are unaware of the process for reporting such incidents. On the other hand, Jewish students are not just being paranoid, because if they were, then we would expect each of them to identify more than one incident of anti-Semitism per year. In fact, the data indicate that there are very few cases of reports of victimization in multiple contexts (an average of 1.15).

---

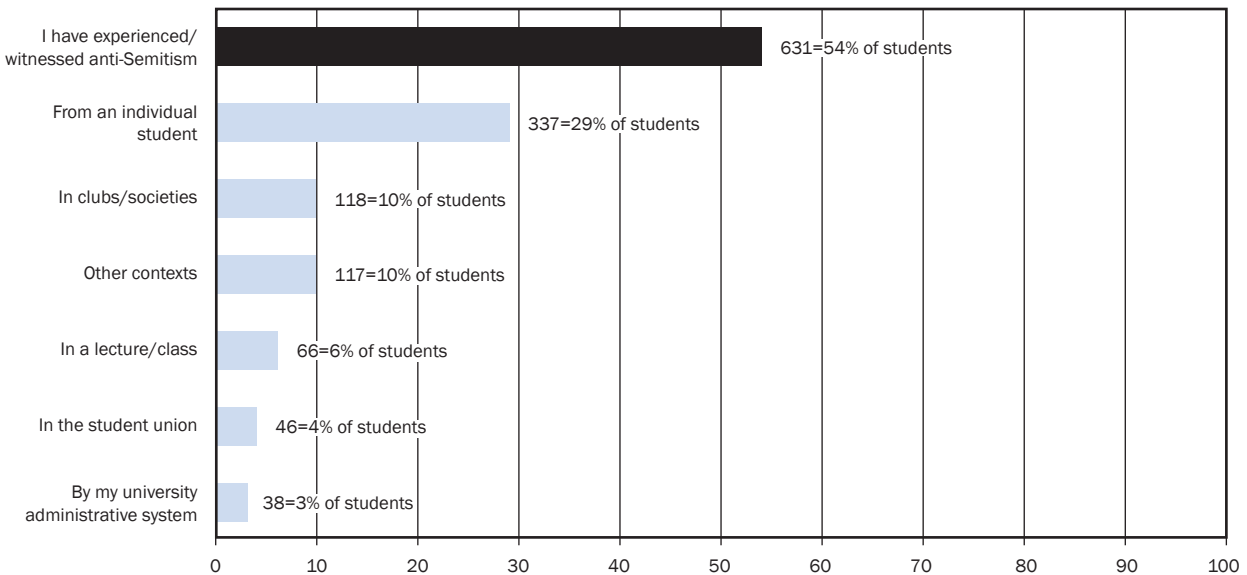
<sup>4</sup> Jews comprised 5% of the sample in the 2013 national college student survey.

<sup>5</sup> No Jewish religious institutions were covered in the survey.



### Chart 1. Student Encounters with Anti-Semitism

**Although different people have different views as to what constitutes anti-Semitism, would you say that you have witnessed or personally been subjected to anti-Semitism in any of the following contexts, since the beginning of this academic year (since September 2013)? (n=1,157)**



It is important to note that the survey questionnaire for the National Demographic Survey of American Jewish College Students covered a wide variety of topics and was not aimed at an in-depth investigation of anti-Semitic incidents. The high rate of discrimination that was discovered was not expected. Consequently there was also no attempt to inquire about the perpetrators. However, the data does allow us to examine in some detail the distinctive characteristics of students who claim victimhood in particular types of location or situations. This analysis can provide some hints at the forces at play in contemporary anti-Semitism as experienced by our respondents. Particular individuals and campuses will not be named because of assurances given to the respondents about confidentiality. In addition the sample of respondents on any one of the 55 campuses (averaging around 20 students) is insufficient to make categorical statements about the situation at any particular university or college.

### Descriptors of the Victims

Not all Jewish students are victims or witnesses of anti-Semitism. Last year 46% of Jewish students said that they did not experience or witness anti-Semitism on their campus. But the data shows that few types of Jewish students are immune from or can avoid this problem on today's campuses. Table 2 shows the pattern of victimization rates using a variety of individual characteristics relating to socio-demographics, worldview, and indicators of Jewish identity, organizational membership, location and type of campus. The characteristics were chosen on the criterion of having a large enough sub-sample for meaningful results. Among the sample of students the rates for the respective variables vary within a remarkably narrow range from a low of 44% to

a high of 73%. This is an unusual degree of statistical confluence given the sample size and the diversity of the variables under investigation. Probably one of the most important findings is that there is only slight variation in the rates across the regions of the U.S., which strongly suggests that anti-Semitism on campus is a nationwide problem.

**Table 2. Percentage of Jewish Students Reporting Anti-Semitism by Selected Social Characteristics**

<b>Gender</b>	female 59%	male 51%			
<b>College Year</b>	Junior 59%	Senior 58%	Sophomore 58%	Post-graduate 54%	Freshman 53%
<b>Academic Major</b>	Other 57%	social & behavioral Sciences 54%	STEM 53%	arts & humanities 51%	
<b>Type &amp; Region of Campus</b>	public school in South 70%	public school in Midwest 65%	public school in West 60%	private school in Northeast 56%	private school in South 48%
	private school in Midwest 45%	private school in West 44%			
<b>Worldview</b>	Student who is spiritual 59%	religious 58%	secular 51%		
<b>Synagogue Denomination</b>	Conservative 69%	Reform 62%	Orthodox 52%		
<b>Campus Organization</b>	Jewish fraternity/ sorority member 67%	student involved with Chabad 64%		student involved with Hillel 63%	
<b>Political Organization</b>	AIPAC 73%	J Street 49%			
<b>Openness about being Jewish on campus</b>	always 58%	never 59%			

For most types of the characteristics shown in Table 2 the reports are flat across the categories. For example, academic major or college year do not seem to be differentiating factors. Some findings in Table 2 stand out for comment because they appear to be counter-intuitive. Historically, e.g. in the Pew Survey cited in the Introduction, the most likely targets of anti-Semitism are Orthodox Jewish males, who tend to be easily identified by perpetrators because of dress i.e. skullcaps (*yamulkes*). However, this tendency does not seem to be the case on college campuses. Table 2 suggests that Conservative and Reform Jewish women are more likely to be victims than Orthodox men. At first sight Worldview appears important with Secular students reporting an 8% lower rate of than the Spiritual but this is an artifact mainly due to the gender effect as Jewish men are much more likely to report they are Secular and women that they are Spiritual in their outlook.

Membership in a Jewish campus organization such as Hillel, Chabad or a Jewish fraternity/sorority raises the likelihood of reporting anti-Semitism. The fact that members of AIPAC, a vocal pro-Israel organization, report the highest rate of anti-Semitism could be interpreted to support the notion that campus anti-Semitism has a political element. Nevertheless, half of the more liberal-oriented “peacenik” J Street members report anti-Semitism. This finding belies the canard that campus anti-Semitism is perceived primarily by conservative

or right-wing students. On the other hand the current prejudice is inter-personal with elements of ethnic stereotyping as it is just as likely to be reported (probably as a witness) by the small minority of Jewish students who are “never open” about being Jewish.

As regards the data on rates by the Census Region where a campus is located, geography does not appear predictive. However, overall public universities tend to have higher rates than private colleges. Interestingly the pattern is reversed in the Northeast where public institutions have a lower rate than private colleges. Somewhat surprisingly private universities and colleges in the Northeast where Jews are highly represented have a higher rate than private colleges in other regions. This may reflect the more anti-Zionist political climate on these campuses (see Student Voices below). On the other hand the “old” anti-Semitism of social prejudice continues to operate on public campuses in the South (Table 2).

A number of explanations are possible for the public/private gap. Public universities typically have a larger and more diverse student population and less oversight of student activities. They also tend to be less responsive to their “customers” than more expensive private institutions which have high tuition fees and rely more on alumni donations than public universities which rely on funding by state legislatures.

## Multivariate Analysis

A logistic regression using the variables set out in Table 2 found that the odds ratios of the likelihood of encountering anti-Semitism compared to a reference group of organizationally unaffiliated males was statistically significant for students with the following traits. For AIPAC members the odds ratio was 1.80 so an 80% higher likelihood of reporting anti-Semitism than for non-members. For Hillel members the odds ratio was 1.46 or around 50% higher. And for Jewish women the ratio was 1.39 or almost 40% higher than men. These indicators, based on the students’ self-reports, illustrate who is more vulnerable on campus or more likely to report anti-Semitism.

## Anti-Semitism in Social or Co-curricular Contexts

It is necessary to investigate whether Jewish students with particular traits encounter anti-Semitism in different types of context.

### A. Anti-Semitism from individual students

This is the most common form of type of incident reported by Jewish students accounting for half the total (Chart 1). Jewish women on campus were more likely to report being a victim of anti-Semitism than Jewish men. Six in ten women said they were victims or had witnessed anti-Semitism. Nearly all the gender difference was due to this category with 5% more women than men reporting prejudice or harassment from another student. This presumably means that the anti-Semitism Jewish women face is mainly inter-personal such as rude or disparaging remarks and verbal abuse or is politically motivated. This situation may well have some psychological effect because women were 5% less likely to say they “never felt embarrassed about being Jewish” than men (80% vs.85%). The interaction between gender, Jewish identity and reporting of anti-Semitism begs further investigation.

### **B. Anti-Semitism in clubs and societies**

Anti-Semitism in this type of organized campus activity accounts for around 10% of student complaints. Reports showed no particular types of Jews were more affected more than others though there was a regional difference with students on campuses in the Northeast reporting the lowest rate at 6%. Interestingly, this is the region where Jewish students are most concentrated.

### **C. Other Contexts**

This category seems mostly to cover incidents such as graffiti, noticeboards, flyers, social media and emails with hostile content as well as the defacing and tearing down of posters of Jewish student organizations. 10% of students reported such incidents but they were spread equally across all types of students and no particular pattern emerged on the likelihood of victimization.

## **Institutional Anti-Semitism**

### **D. In a lecture/class**

This type of incident relates to bias by faculty and was reported by 6% of Jewish students. There was some suggestion of regional variation with reports from the West at 8% double the rate for Midwest campuses (4%).

### **E. In the student union**

Student Union activities account for 4% of student reports. There seems to be little statistical variation in patterns according to the type of student reporting incidents or by regional location or type of university.

### **F. By the university administrative system**

Only 3% of the Jewish students reported that their university administration discriminated against them or was biased. No particular pattern was statistically significant given the small number of cases but the same 3% rate was reported for both public and private universities. However, the members of Israel-oriented political organizations reported higher rates of complaint at 7%.

## **An International Comparison: U.S. 2014 v. U.K. 2011**

It is useful to place this phenomenon in an international context. The 2014 U.S. survey replicated the anti-Semitism question fielded to a national sample of 985 self-identified British Jewish students in 2011 by the London-based think-tank the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR).<sup>6</sup> The Jewish population of the U.K. numbers around 300,000 and Jewish students are only 0.5% of the U.K. national student body. The British Jewish students evidence a higher degree of religiosity since a majority are Orthodox adherents. They are clustered, with half resident at eight of the most prestigious English universities. In terms of general campus climate it is relevant to note that in comparison with the U.S., British universities have a larger proportion of left-wing students and faculty and a larger proportion of Muslim students.

---

<sup>6</sup> David Graham and Jonathan Boyd. 2011. *Home and away: Jewish journeys towards independence. Key findings from the 2011 National Jewish Student Survey*, London, Institute for Jewish Policy Research

**Chart 2.**

**Anti-Semitism Rates  
U.S. Jewish Students 2014 v. U.K. Jewish Students 2011 by Percentage**

**Would you say that you have witnessed  
or personally been subjected to anti-Semitism?**

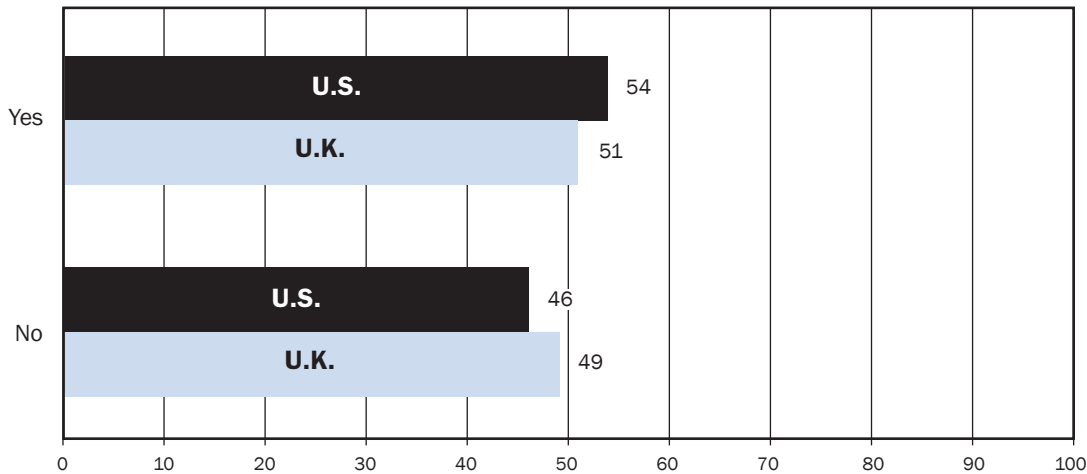


Chart 2 reveals that reported rates of anti-Semitism were almost identical between the two countries and university systems, with a slightly higher rate in the U.S. Given the common narrative about anti-Semitism being more pervasive in Europe than the U.S. these figures raise intriguing questions. Does the fact that British Jewish students are geographically clustered mean they have better support structures? Is there something qualitatively different about the discourse around Jews between the two countries? Do young American and British Jews understand anti-Semitism differently? Are they experiencing similar phenomena but British Jewish students are less likely to label it anti-Semitic? More importantly, in this globalized world, are U.S. campuses simply catching up with Europe?

Insights into some of the answers can be found by analyzing the data in Chart 3. The data relates to 421 British students and 625 American students who reported victimization. Though the Jewish students in the U.K. report lower rates of victimization, they report a higher rate of multiple contexts, i.e., 1.57 contexts per student compared to 1.15 contexts per U.S. student. This suggests a more intense degree of anti-Semitism when it occurs against British students.

Chart 3.

## Context of Anti-Semitic Incidents

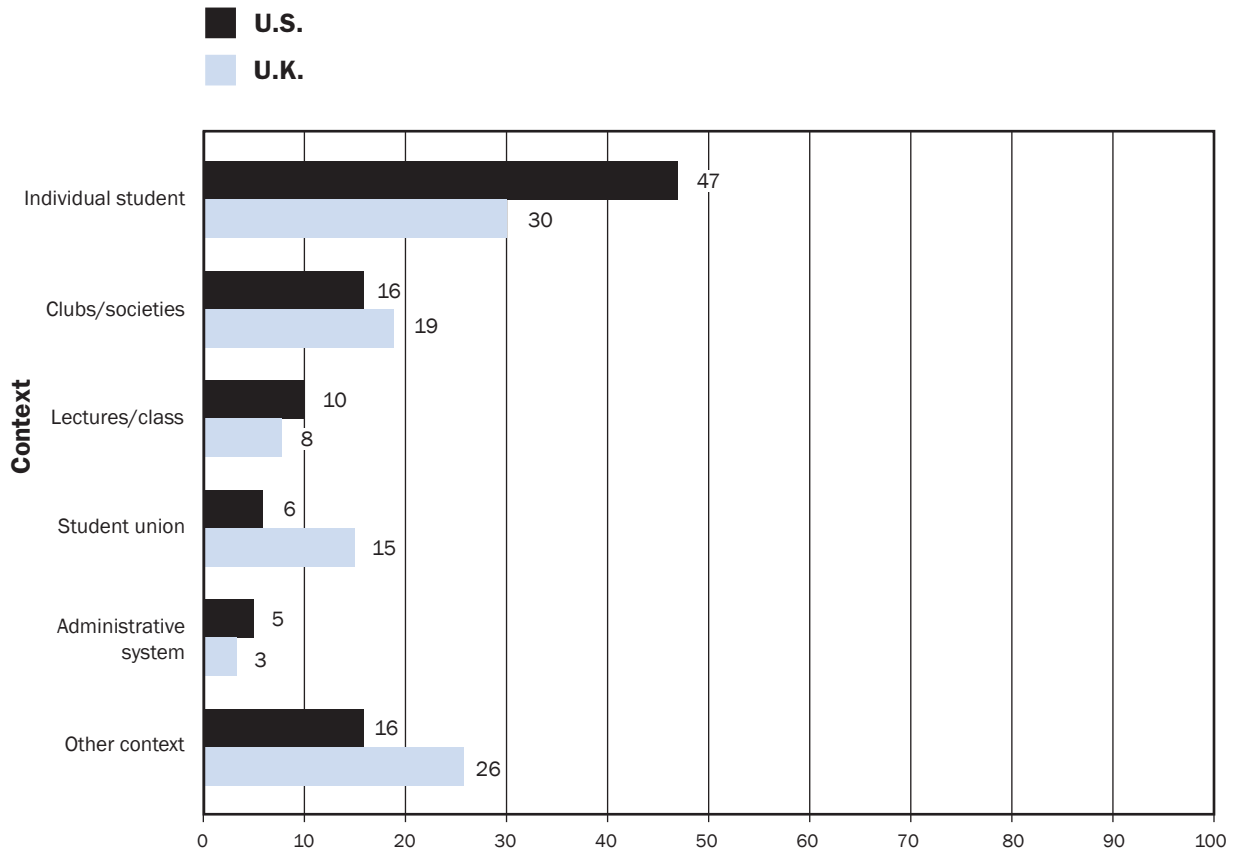
Jewish Student Reports of Anti-Semitism  
U.S. 2014 and U.K. 2011 by Percentage

Chart 3 shows the distributions of anti-Semitism reports covering 740 contexts in the U.K. (471 student reports x 1.57 contexts provided) and 730 contexts in the U.S. (625 reports x 1.15 contexts). This comparison suggests there are considerable differences between the campus climates facing Jewish students in the two countries. American students face more inter-personal prejudice and harassment which accounts for nearly half the U.S. incidents but less than one-third in U.K. Institutional anti-Semitism is also apparently regarded as slightly more of a problem in the U.S. if we combine the administrative and faculty (lectures) categories at 15% compared to 11% in the U.K. However, for both university systems the university administrations per se are not problematic. Compared to the U.S. anti-Semitism on U.K. campuses was more likely to be encountered in student clubs and societies and much more in student unions i.e. political contexts. The category of other contexts is also more frequent in the U.K. and this includes items such as social media, leaflets, posters, graffiti, and outside visitors. This probably reflects a higher degree of anti-Zionism at British universities.

The U.K. pattern of incidents may be an indicator of the trend to be expected on U.S. campuses in the future as anti-Semitism coalesces with anti-Zionism and becomes more globalized.

## Part II

### Anti-Semitic Incidents

For many people the term anti-Semitism arguably conjures up an image of a violent and highly emotive act committed by extremists, by neo-Nazis and other committed bigots. In other words, acts by hate-fueled individuals who subscribe to racist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, and other bigoted ideologies. It is not surprising that many people think this way about hate crimes because of the tendency of the media to focus on the most extreme and serious incidents as is the case for crime reporting in general. This focus might be more credible if “anti-Semitic” incidents are indeed mostly committed by “extremists.” Our data suggest this is unlikely to be the typical case. The anti-Semitic incidents reported by Jewish students instead mainly occur as part of the unfolding of everyday life as much as through political extremism. Yet for the media especially, photographic evidence of the swastika has “marketability” much greater than any other form of anti-Semitic activity. In short the drama of extremism is the news, for academics as well as journalists.

Nevertheless, “anti-Semitic” incidents, like hate crimes and sexual harassment and misconduct, do not occur in a vacuum. They occur in cultural contexts where bigotry, and in some instances the use of violence as a social or political resource, are norms that serve as the social basis for the offenders’ actions by determining who is an appropriate target. Much of what Jewish students report can be categorized as “low level” offenses (such as insults, hostile leaflets, name calling and damage to property belonging to or sponsored by Jewish campus organizations-e.g. posters, graffiti, theft). However the “everyday” opportunistic and indirect character of most of these incidents needs to be understood within the wider social context of campus life. This “ordinary” offense has a huge impact on the lived reality of Jewish life on today’s university campuses and impacts the whole campus climate. It certainly seems to create a sense of grievance and hurt among Jewish students, many of whom believe it has become socially acceptable to provoke or disparage Jews.

It is important to let those that suffer a wrong or hurt judge its salience. Anti-Semitism is not a Jewish problem per se: it is a societal issue. However, judging whether or not it is present and how serious is very much for Jews to decide. To do this most Jews arguably bring much more sensitive antennae, an understanding rooted in painful memory, and a greater historical awareness than do most gentiles.

### Jews and the University Problem

The level of anti-Semitism reported by college students in 2014 is surprising because of the emphasis that universities today place on creating a campus climate that embraces diversity, inclusiveness and a safe environment for all students. This is done through speech codes and campaigns to protect a growing list of vulnerable minority populations defined by race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality and student status, against prejudice and by embedding systems of consultation that incorporate the perspectives of these populations. Most universities now employ deans of multi-cultural affairs and diversity officers charged with seeking out discrimination and inequities. Yet according to our survey anti-Semitism appears to go under the radar and is largely ignored by the official cognitive system. In the current climate on campus, and under the official

cognitive system, Jewish students and supporters of Israel are not perceived as legitimate victim groups. Rather, they are perceived as privileged.

Why do many members of a socially integrated Jewish student body feel that they are under hostile attack? However, the first question should be why this topic is under discussion now rather than twenty years ago? One cause could be a growing tolerance of incivility and an indulgence of anti-social behavior on campus, and a reversion to historical norms after a post-Holocaust period of anomalous tolerance.

## Jewish Student Voices

The final item in the 2014 Jewish student survey questionnaire invited students to provide anonymous open-ended comments on their issues of concern. They were asked: *In your opinion, what are the crucial issues concerning young Jewish people like yourself today?* A number offered illustrative comments on the current anti-Semitism problem. Each quotation comes from a different student:

*Jewish student rights on college campuses; anti-Semitism on college campuses.*

*Anti-Semitic dialogues on campus and in the classroom*

*Subtle anti-Semitism – it's the "last socially acceptable form of racism."*

*The divestment campaign and other anti-Israel campaigns on this campus are intertwined with rampant anti-Semitism. After a widespread anti-Israel/anti-Semitic attack earlier this year the University issued a weak response. Jewish students . . . want to know that our University stands by us.*

*Knowing our Jewish history and that there are many who still hold strong anti-Semitic views and we need to protect ourselves.*

*I do believe that a big issue is making sure people are educated about Jewish history and heritage in order to prevent discrimination.*

*Anti-Semitism in classes with uninformed professors.*

*There is no excuse for any American to have little to no knowledge of the crimes of the Holocaust, and genocides of the further past.*

*Not enough education and awareness of local and worldwide causes and issues surrounding Jews, Israel, and anti-Semitism.*

*Tolerance and acceptance are still an issue when we live in a Christianity-based society.*

*There is this constant pressure to defend the State of Israel, because we are frequently in an environment where people have only heard sound bites about the situation, or only know one side of the story.*

*Student activism in favor of Palestine that targets Jewish students for their support or ties to Israel.*

*The association of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism – people are starting to believe that the two go hand in hand and that has the potential to become very dangerous and create situations where Jewish students are less likely to openly discuss their Judaism.*

*Anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic sentiments are a growing problem on many college campuses, especially with groups like BDS and Breaking the Silence.*



## Jewish Identity and Sensitivity Factors

The issues and opinions raised in the section on student voices may make some readers uncomfortable and lead others to dismiss the comments as paranoia, yet some readers will view these findings as vindication of what they have long experienced or believed but which has not previously been taken seriously by others. However, one of the outstanding Jewish intellectuals of the last century, Sir Isaiah Berlin, reflected on this psychological reality: ‘All Jews who are at all conscious of their identity as Jews are steeped in history. They have longer memories, they are aware of a longer continuity as a community than are any other which has survived.’<sup>7</sup> This attribute appears true for many of today’s American Jewish students. Contemporary American Jewish students have had their consciousness raised about anti-Semitism by their educational and travel experiences. Holocaust awareness is particularly high among this cohort; 40% have visited a Holocaust memorial museum in the past year and 10% have taken a university course in Holocaust studies and another 8% intend to do so. When asked what factor was most important to “what being Jewish means to you personally” awareness of the Holocaust topped the list with 60% reporting it. Among the sample of college students, 62% also reported that they had visited Israel of whom 38% had gone on an organized educational tour. This cultural exposure has created a situation whereby Jewish students have a historical awareness and sensitivity that is lacking in general American society and more sadly among university administrators.

---

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, Princeton University Press, 1955, p. 317.

## Part III

### Policy Recommendations for University and College Administrations

Many students as well as Jewish commentators think this is a moment in history when a rising tide of anti-Semitism is sweeping through Europe and finding beachheads in North America, principally in academia. At such a time, it is more important than ever not only to combat this virus of hate but also to understand exactly who is promoting it and where such activity is condoned if not supported. The response today of many university faculty and administrators to Jewish complaints echoes the situation described by British writer George Orwell, whose own pre-war fiction is not immune to some manifestations of anti-Jewish stereotypes:

Above a certain intellectual level people are ashamed of being anti-Semitic and are careful to draw a distinction between 'anti-Semitism' and 'disliking Jews' . . . Among educated people, anti-Semitism is held to be an unforgivable sin . . . People will go to remarkable lengths to demonstrate that they are not anti-Semitic.

This feeling that anti-Semitism is something sinful and disgraceful, something that a civilized person does not suffer from, is unfavorable to a scientific approach, and indeed many people will admit that they are frightened of probing too deeply into the subject. They are frightened, that is to say, of discovering not only that anti-Semitism is spreading, but they themselves are infected by it.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of this syndrome, unfortunately the response of many university faculty and administrators to Jewish complaints and outrage often shows that their threshold for the definition of the existence of the crime of anti-Semitism is set ridiculously high. Would they deny the hurt feelings and argue against any other minority or identity group who claimed they were defamed and threatened apart from the Jews? The obvious answer is that many intellectuals ostensibly committed to a social justice agenda hold, whether knowingly or not, to a prejudice against the Jews in the mass, even if they do not evidence a prejudice against individual Jews.

Should university administrations in the public sector be concerned by Jewish student discomfort other than on moral grounds? Invariably, at both the collective and individual levels a bitter animus against Jews is seldom unaccompanied by other negative attitudes and traits. The fact and logic of history is that the treatment of Jews is frequently the litmus test of the 'good society'. Where Jews are well-treated, happy and productive then more often than not so are the rest of the society. Environments that overlook harassment and intimidation of Jews are also often liable to become unpleasant and dangerous places for many other sorts of individuals and groups.

---

<sup>8</sup> George Orwell: 'Antisemitism in Britain,' *Contemporary Jewish Record*. London, April 1945.

Effective administrative supervision is the key to ensuring and reinforcing effective investigation of anti-Semitism on campus. This is necessary to reassure the American Jewish community that the hostile campus climate involving threats and harassment of Jewish students and particularly members of Jewish and pro-Israel organizations is being taken seriously by university administrations. Particularly worrying is the targeting of Jewish women. This problem needs to be dealt with before the situation deteriorates further and moves from insults to acts of violence.

The situation requires university authorities to implement policies to:

1. Adopt well-established definitions of anti-Semitism, such as the U.S. State Department definition, in order to dispel confusion about what does and does not cross the line.
2. Announce that the university considers anti-Semitism a serious issue equivalent to other forms of hate and bias.
3. Encourage victims of anti-Semitic incidents to report them by taking their experiences seriously; offer assistance to victims and refer victims to support agencies where they exist.
4. Develop prompt, sensitive, effective and visible responses to reports of anti-Semitism.
5. Improve reporting systems and ensure that students are better informed about the mechanisms for reporting hate and bias incidents to university administration.
6. Build trust by responding to the fear and insecurity felt by some Jewish students.
7. Provide staff training to raise understanding of these issues, using resources such as the *LDB Fact Sheet on the Elements of Anti-Semitic Discourse*.
8. Adopt best practices for responding to anti-Semitic incidents, such as those described in the *LDB Best Practices Guide for Combating Campus Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israelism*.
9. Develop accurate knowledge about the perpetrators.
10. Add questions on experiences of anti-Semitism in the annual self-assessment survey conducted in many colleges and universities by their internal institutional research.

Without implementation of these recommendations Jewish students will feel increasingly uncomfortable and one can only foresee more Jews forsaking some campuses and transferring to friendlier ones. This trend will undermine universities' standing and their oft claimed pretensions to be truly multicultural and tolerant societies. It would mean that in the future some campuses would not have the benefit of the presence, ideas and creativity of Jewish students.

## Policy Recommendation for Jewish Organizations

1. Devote communal resources to researching anti-Semitism on university campuses.
2. Raise awareness of campus anti-Semitism within the community.
3. Allocate a higher share of communal resources to combating anti-Semitism on American campuses.
4. Provide resources to address the full range of anti-Semitic incidents that students are facing, rather than addressing only those issues that command greater media attention, such as BDS resolutions.
5. Distribute efforts across the entire nation, consistent with the regional findings of this report, rather than assuming that campus anti-Semitism is primarily a local, California, or bicoastal problem.
6. Pay particular attention to the concerns of Jewish college women.
7. Develop the full array of available options (including legal avenues), using each in the context for which it is most appropriate, rather than focusing only on a few cheaper, more popular, or less aggressive techniques.
8. Build a sense of Jewish college student pride to compensate for the pressure that campus anti-Semitism is placing on campus Jewish identity.
9. Devote a portion of Israel advocacy resources to programs dedicated to combating anti-Semitism.
10. Respond directly and firmly, as a community, to anti-Semitic incidents on college campuses, rather than leaving undergraduate students with the onus of doing so, but do so in conjunction with the students to ensure that efforts are well placed.

This report suggests a need for a detailed in-depth investigation of the problem we have discovered. There is a need to better understand the situational dynamics of contemporary anti-Semitism on campus. Since young Jewish adults are more than five times more likely to be targets of anti-Semitism than older Jews (Pew, 2013) and since the vast majority of young American Jews spend four or more years studying at universities and colleges, an important public policy question is to know to what extent anti-Semitic victimization is associated with the social climate on the nation's university and college campuses today. Questions need to be answered particularly about the perpetrators. What proportion of anti-Semitic incidents is carried out by committed bigots? To what extent is campus anti-Semitism now organized? To what extent is "extremism" involved in incidents given the rising public concern with self-radicalization of Islamists? Jewish students need to be encouraged to report incidents. Incidents need to be investigated and correctly flagged to produce valid statistics that allow monitoring of trends.

In the course of carrying out the National Demographic Survey of American College Students the authors discovered that Jewish students are keen to share their opinions and experiences. Over 800 students who participated in this 2014 survey agreed to be re-interviewed and provided contact information. This is an opportunity to follow up participants to further understand Jewish students' experiences on campus and to explore in greater detail the problem we have illuminated. There is also a need to expand such an investigation to a larger national sample of institutions of higher education and to obtain larger size samples on particular campuses that will allow statistical comparisons for public policy purposes.

## Appendix A

### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This online research study interviewed 1,157 self-identified Jewish students. Despite its size and wide geographical coverage (see below), it cannot claim to be a fully representative national random sample for a number of practical reasons. Firstly, there is no known universe of the American Jewish student population and thus there is no sampling frame available for surveying it. Secondly, there is no available sampling frame for four-year college and university student population of the U.S as a whole. Furthermore, there is no consensus among scholars and the Jewish communities concerning “who is a Jew?” and neither is there general agreement on what constitute the social boundaries of the Jewish population.

Low cooperation or response rates to surveys in general is a contemporary problem as reflected in the Pew Research Center’s 2013 telephone survey of U.S. Jews. Despite the geographic stratification of households in residential areas of high Jewish density, Pew achieved a 16% response rate with seven call-backs. The Trinity College on-line student surveys achieved 10-12% response rates with only one reminder. Students responded to an invitation by e-mail to participate in the survey. The sampling frame was taken from open-access databases of college students. Students were offered a small incentive for their participation, a chance to win a gift certificate.

Our Jewish student sampling frame utilized an old identification technique; Distinctive Jewish Names (DJNs). However, the DJN list was updated to include 250 distinctively Jewish surnames covering Israeli, Sephardi, Russian and Iranian origin in addition to the usual and obvious Ashkenazi surnames. Yet even with a wider sampling frame our methodology inevitably resulted in a skew among the sub-sample of children and grandchildren of intermarriage towards those with Jewish fathers, since the Jewish surname is generally passed down by the father.

The net was deliberately cast wide: the introductory e-mail message to the students said: “*We would like you to complete this survey if you consider yourself to be Jewish in any way, such as by religion, culture, ethnicity, parentage or ancestry.*” The methodology of an online survey using emails restricted our ability to contact and interview students at locations where privacy laws for state university systems, such as in California, prevented us; we sampled only private colleges in those states.

Nevertheless, in terms of key characteristics the Jewish students seem to mirror the overall national sample of American students, which we surveyed in 2013.<sup>9</sup> That is not surprising because there was an overlap in coverage between the 38 colleges in the ARIS 2013 national college survey and the 55 institutions in the 2014 Jewish survey<sup>10</sup> of which 23 were private and 32 were public universities. Freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors as well as a few graduate students took part. In both surveys, 59% of respondents were women and 41% men, reflecting the larger female student presence on U.S. campuses today. The similarity of the demographic and educational characteristics of the two student populations (follow links in footnotes 9 and 10 below) allows for robust comparisons across the two national surveys of American students.

---

<sup>9</sup> ARIS 2013 National College Student Survey

<sup>10</sup> Demographic Survey of American Jewish College Students 2014

## Appendix B

### THE AUTHORS

**Dr. Barry A. Kosmin** is Research Professor of Public Policy and Law at Trinity College and Founding Director of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture. He is a Senior Associate of the Oxford Center for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Oxford University, England. Dr. Kosmin directed the U.S. 1990 National Jewish Population Survey and has been a principal investigator of the American Religious Identification Survey series since its inception in 1990 as well as national social surveys in Europe, Africa and Asia. He is a former editor of the journal *Patterns of Prejudice*. His publications include the books *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society*, 1993; *Religion in a Free Market: Religious and Non-Religious Americans*, 2006 and the co-edited volumes *A New Antisemitism: Debating Judeophobia in 21st Century Britain*, 2003 and *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond*, 2003.

**Dr. Ariela Keysar**, a demographer, is Associate Research Professor of Public Policy and Law and the Associate Director of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut. She was a principal investigator of the Demographic Survey of American Jewish College Students 2014; the ARIS 2013 National College Student Survey; the American Religious Identification Survey 2008; and Worldviews and Opinions of Scientists: India 2007-2008. She was co-editor of *Secularism, Women & The State: The Mediterranean World in the 21st Century*; *Secularism & Science in the 21st Century*; and *Secularism & Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives*, and co-author of *Religion in a Free Market*, and *The Next Generation: Jewish Children and Adolescents*.

**Kenneth L. Marcus** is President and General Counsel of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law and author of *The Definition of Anti-Semitism* (Oxford University Press: forthcoming) and *Jewish Identity and Civil Rights in America* (Cambridge University Press: 2010). Marcus also serves as Associate Editor of the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism*. During his public service career, Marcus served as Staff Director at the United States Commission on Civil Rights and was delegated the authority of Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights and Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. Marcus previously held the Lillie and Nathan Ackerman Chair in Equality and Justice in America at the City University of New York's Bernard M. Baruch College School of Public Affairs and was Chair of the Scholars for Peace in the Middle East Legal Task Force. Mr. Marcus is a graduate of Williams College, *magna cum laude*, and the University of California at Berkeley School of Law.

#### Student Research Assistants

Sam Hines '16

Schirin Schenkermayr '16

The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law  
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Suite 1025  
Washington, DC 20006  
Phone: 202 559 9296  
Email: [media@Brandeiscenter.com](mailto:media@Brandeiscenter.com)

Program on Public Values  
Trinity College  
300 Summit Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
Phone: (860) 297-2381  
E-mail: [issc@trincoll.edu](mailto:issc@trincoll.edu)

**This research project is supported by funding grants from the Pears Foundation, U.K.;  
Posen Foundation, Switzerland; Zachs Foundation, Mendelson Foundation, Connecticut;  
Jim Joseph Foundation, The Mark Bloome Fund of the Tides Foundation,  
Helen Diller Family Foundation, California.**