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### **Jewish Americans' Comparisons of Ingroup and Outgroup Suffering: Intragroup differences and the influence of social positionalities**

Aidan Carter

*Clark University*, [aicarter@clarku.edu](mailto:aicarter@clarku.edu)

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# Jewish Americans' Comparisons of Ingroup and Outgroup Suffering: Intragroup Differences and the Influence of Social Positionalities

Aidan Carter '22 – (Sponsor: Professor Johanna Vollhardt)



## Introduction

- Collective violence is defined as “the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group... against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives” (WHO, 2002). The perception of this violence by the victim group is referred to as collective victim beliefs (Vollhardt, 2015).
- Past research has focused on siege mentality (Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992) and comparisons of groups – specifically, exclusive and inclusive victim consciousness. Exclusive victim consciousness is when people think their group has a unique history of suffering compared to other groups (Vollhardt, 2015). Inclusive victim consciousness refers to perceived similarities in victimization between one’s ingroup and other groups (Vollhardt, 2015).
- Vollhardt and her colleagues (2021) found that inclusive victim beliefs were linked to reconciliation with the historical perpetrator group and were predicted by a general universal orientation. Exclusive victim beliefs were linked to resentment towards the historical perpetrator group and were predicted by perceived ingroup superiority.
- **Goal:** This presentation seeks to explore these beliefs using Q Methodology (see Methods). It asks the question, do different social positionalities (age, gender, immigration status, etc.) influence Jewish Americans’ endorsements of different comparative victim beliefs?

## Participants, Methods, and Procedure

### Participants

- Gender:  $N = 48$  (24 male, 24 female)
- Age: range 19-81 ( $M = 46$ ,  $SD = 20$ )
- Region: 48% Northeast United States, 42% South, 10% West, and one Midwest
- Politics: 38% liberal, 21% very liberal, 19% somewhat liberal, 13% moderate, two conservative, one somewhat conservative, two other
- Denomination: 42% Culturally Jewish, 17% Conservative, 15% Reform, 10% Modern Orthodox, 10% Secular, one Humanist, one Reconstructionist, and one other
- Ancestry: 85% Ashkenazi, three other, two half Ashkenazi and half Sephardic, and one N/A
- Holocaust Survivors: 52% no, 48% yes
- Family in Israel: 40% no, 58% yes, one N/A.

### Methods and Procedure

- Q-Methodology uses a “Q-sort” (see Figure 1) to explore participants’ viewpoints. Participants sorted 60 statements expressing different beliefs about on collective victimhood constructs. Statements were sorted according to how much they agreed or disagreed with them on a scale of -6 (most disagree) to 6 (most agree). This presentation will focus on four out of the 60 statements.
- I recruited participants through email and snowball sampling. They scheduled sessions with me through direct correspondence or Calendly from January to May 2021. On Zoom, participants used qmethodsoftware.com to perform the Q-sort.



## Analysis of Participant Responses via Positionalities

**Statement 26** (global inclusive victim beliefs): There are other groups in the world that have experienced genocide and persecution similar to Jews

- Devised from the global inclusive victim beliefs construct, statement 26 conveys the belief in perceived similarities between Jewish Americans and other groups in the world.
- One participant disagreed with this statement compared to the 12 that agreed. This may indicate that it is more normative among Jews like our sample to hold the belief that other groups have suffered.
- Neutral raters of this statement were more right-leaning, with three moderate participants. Additionally, all neutral raters had family in Israel compared to only half of agreeing participants.
- Those who agreed with this statement were more liberal than those who agreed with other statements. A third of all liberals were represented in this subsample ( $n=6$ ). One possible explanation is that perspective-taking is predictive of inclusive victim beliefs (Vollhardt et al., 2021) and liberals score higher on perspective-taking than conservatives (Hodson et al., 2019). There was an even split of men and women among participants who agreed with this statement.

**Statement 27** (global exclusive victim beliefs, qualitative comparison): The suffering of the Jewish people is unique in world history.

- Created from the global exclusive victim beliefs construct, statement 27 articulates the belief that one’s ingroup has suffered more than any other outgroup throughout world history.
- Five women and only one man strongly disagreed with this statement. This could be explained by the socialization of women as caring, empathetic, etc., in American culture (Blackstone, 2003). Placing another group’s suffering on the same level as your own’s requires empathy. Conversely, the masculine norm of domination conflicts with the ability to disengage from competitive victim beliefs. This norm encourages men to see things from a perspective of winning and losing (Mahalik et al., 2003), a practice conducive to endorsing exclusive victim beliefs.
- Those that rated this statement neutrally were less educated than the overall sample with only 55% holding a Master’s or above. Neutral raters were also politically and religiously diverse.
- Only two participants agreed with this statement; therefore, it may be normative to see Jewish suffering as not unique in world history.

**Statement 29** (downward regional intergroup comparison): There are other groups in the U.S. that have suffered more than Jews.

- Formulated from the construct of downward regional intergroup comparison, statement 29 expresses exclusive victimhood consciousness within the context of the United States in a downward comparison.
- No participants strongly disagreed with statement 29. This can be attributed to the reality our overall sample was liberal. Being left leaning in the United States often means critically engaging with our country’s history. This brings to the forefront our country’s treatment of people of color, especially the history of Black Americans’ exploitation in the founding of our country.
- Supporting this assertion is the fact that participants who agreed strongly with this statement were similar to our overall sample. They were educated, liberal, evenly split according to gender, family history, immigration status, and were only one year younger than the mean.
- Participants who rated this statement neutrally were less educated than the overall sample and were the youngest of all subsamples being on average six years younger than the mean.

## Analysis Cont.

**Statement 57** (competition over acknowledgment): The suffering the Jewish people experienced is often overlooked or forgotten because all the attention is devoted to racism in the U.S.

- Based on the construct of competition over acknowledgement, statement 57 illustrates the victim group’s desire for acknowledgement compared to other groups’ perceived acknowledgement within the context of the United States
- Participants who disagreed that the suffering of Jewish people is overlooked because of racism in the U.S. were all born in the United States and were not very religious.
- Those who rated the statement neutrally were far more diverse religiously and included nine out of ten immigrants in the sample. Presumably, this was the case because immigrants are less exposed to American History and critical discourse around racism in the United States.
- Only one participant strongly agreed with this statement compared to the seven that disagreed. This may be because there is widespread acknowledgement of the Holocaust in the U.S. due to its presence in education and the media.



## Discussion

- This research aimed to understand how social positionalities influence the endorsement of collective victimhood among Jewish Americans. Our sample tended to rate statements in a more inclusive way, such as disagreeing with exclusive beliefs, endorsing inclusive beliefs.
- Statements 26, 29, and 57 had little to no participants strongly endorsing the competitive belief. This may indicate that it is normative among Jewish Americans similar to our sample (i.e., liberal or left-leaning, educated) to not engage in competitive beliefs regarding other victim groups.
- Immigration status was influential on competition for acknowledgment. In statement 57, those that disagreed were the only subsample without any immigrants, and 90% of all immigrants rated 57 neutrally. Therefore, immigration status may be a strong influence on regional competition for acknowledgment. One explanation could be that the suffering of Jews may actually be overlooked in one’s country of origin and these feelings could persist upon immigration to the United States.
- Politically liberal participants showed stronger endorsement of inclusive victim beliefs (26) and downward comparisons (29). Being liberal did not impact endorsement of global exclusive victim beliefs (27) or competition over acknowledgment (57). Therefore, political identity may only be a strong influence on inclusive victim beliefs.
- Far more women strongly disagreed with global exclusive victim beliefs (27) than did men. This was not the case with the other three statements. Thus, the social positionality of gender may not be a strong influence on collective victimhood.
- Limitations of the present research include a lack of religiously orthodox and politically right-leaning Jews in our sample. For stronger and clearer conclusions, these groups should be better represented in future research.

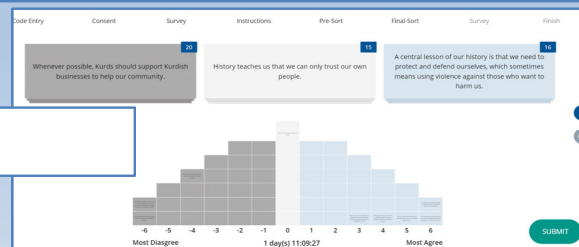


Fig 1: Ima sorting tab qmethodso