Navigating the “Space Between” the Black/White Binary:

A Call for Jewish Multicultural Inclusion

Abstract

In the twenty-first century, diversity and multicultural analysis of race often falls along a Black/White binary paradigm. Therefore, those who are perceived to be White are often left out of the discussion of diversity and multicultural education (DME) in the United States. This absence is particularly true for American Jews of Ashkenazi descent. In academic circles today, the notion of “Whiteness” is often used as a determining factor for overlooking antisemitism while addressing issues of racism aimed at other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Data show that acts of antisemitism continues to rise in the U.S., especially on college campuses. Due to a lack of acknowledgment in the university classroom, Jews continue to be overlooked in multicultural academic thought, which can have wide-ranging consequences for Jews and non-Jews alike.

Keywords: Antisemitism, multiculturalism, diversity, universities, United States

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**Introduction**

In the United States, there has been an increasing number of attacks on Jewish people in recent years (Berman, 2017; ADL, 2017). The Anti-Defamation League (2018) found in its annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents “that the number of anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. rose 57 percent in 2017 – the largest single-year increase on record and the second highest number reported since ADL started tracking such data in 1979” (p. 1). In addition, according to the most current Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) hate crime report, Jewish people continued to be the largest group of religious hate crime victims in the U.S. at 58.1 percent (FBI, 2018). As a basis of comparison, hate crimes committed against Muslims ranked second on the list at 18.6% (FBI, 2018). This hatred of Jewish people culminated in the worst mass killing of Jewish people in U.S. history - the shooting of worshippers at Saturday service at a Pittsburgh synagogue - in October 2018. Then, in April 2019, exactly six months to the day of the Pittsburgh attack, there was a shooting at a San Diego synagogue, killing one person and wounding three others.

Hatred of Jews in the U.S. is nothing new, and in the Age of Trump, antisemitism continues to grow with the emergence of the so-called “Alt-Right” (Hayden, 2017). Many observers have asserted that Trump, in his passive, indirect condemnation of White Nationalists, has provided racists with unspoken support (Abramsky, 2018; Ioffe, 2018). Therefore, it is apparent that, in the twenty-first century, “many American Jews will have a personal experience with antisemitism at some point in their lives; nearly all Jews are impacted by acts of antisemitism vicariously” (Schlosser, 2006, p. 433).

Recent research has found that on college and university campuses across the United States, Jews continue to be ignored in multicultural classroom discussions (Langman, 1995; MacDonald-Dennis, 2006; Rubin, 2013, 2017; Schlosser, Ali, Ackerman, & Dewey, 2009). Anti-Jewish hatred proliferates as antisemitic incidents on U.S. colleges and universities increase at concerning rates. In the United States, there was an 89% increase in anti-Jewish sentiment from 2017 to 2018 (ADL, 2018); therefore, it has been asserted that college campuses are “a hotbed of anti-Semitism” (Phillips, 2017, p. 1). Jewish people have endured thousands of years of racism and discrimination (Biale, 1998), and there has been an increasing trend of antisemitism in both U.S. society and on college and university campuses.

To the detriment of all students, the inclusion of Jewish people in university DME course discussions is still greatly lacking. This article will address one reason why this may be the case - the “Black/White binary.” It appears that issues of antisemitism are often overlooked since most Jewish people do not fit neatly into this duality. The Black/White binary creates a tension and ambiguous “space between” for many Jewish people, which puts their place in multicultural thought in doubt. This piece will also address the potential “who has it worse” competition in multiculturalism as well as the harmful psychological consequences of a lack of Jewish acknowledgement in the university multicultural classroom. This article will explain the case for Jewish presence in multicultural thought and academic inquiry in college and university education programs across the United States.

**The Diversity and Multicultural Classroom**

The diversity and multicultural classroom, as it is discussed in this article, does not refer to particular ethno-religious studies courses and/or programs at U.S. colleges and universities, such as Jewish Studies programs. It refers to the study of diversity and multicultural education (DME) in the area of curriculum and instruction. Although there is no one set definition of multicultural education (Özturgut, 2011), it has been championed by prominent scholars in the field of education for decades (by eminent scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Christine Sleeter, Sonia Nieto, and James Banks). According to Banks (2016):

Multicultural education is at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students – regardless of their gender; sexual orientation; social class; and ethnic; racial, or cultural characteristics – should have an equal opportunity to learn in school. (p. 2)

In teacher education programs across the U.S., multicultural education is able to provide future educators with the groundwork for important issues of diversity (Jupp & Sleeter, 2016). While most minority groups are covered in such courses (e.g., Blacks, Latinx), there are still some perceived gaps.

Researchers have found that the study of antisemitism in university academic programs is still relatively nonexistent (Altman, Inman, Fine, Ritter, & Howard, 2010; Langman, 1995; MacDonald-Dennis, 2006; Rubin, 2013, 2017). This lack of focus on Jews and Jewish issues is evident in different ways. For example, there is little to no discussion of Jews in any capacity in many comprehensive, foundational texts focusing on the study of DME that are often used at the university level (Rubin, 2017). In addition, it has been found that, “many major works on stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination have paid relatively little attention to resurgent anti-Semitism” (Cohen, Harber, Jussim, & Bhasin, 2009, p. 290). Antisemitism, defined as “prejudice, hostility, and discrimination towards Jews as a religious or cultural group that can manifest on an individual, institutional, or societal level” (Schlosser, Talleyrand, Lyons, & Baker, 2007, p. 118), continues to be overlooked in college and university DME classroom discussions, which is problematic.

There are several theories as to why Jews and antisemitism are not often approached in the university DME classroom. First of all, Jewish people are seen as White[[1]](#footnote-1) (Greenberg, 2015; Langman, 1995; MacDonald-Dennis, 2006; Maizels, 2011). Most U.S. Jews have the ability to “pass” as White (Freedman, 2005) due to their light skin tone (i.e., most Ashkenazi Jews[[2]](#footnote-2)). Recent data show that, “More than nine-in-ten U.S. Jews surveyed describe themselves as non-Hispanic Whites, while 2% are Black, 3% are Hispanic, and 2% are of other racial and ethnic backgrounds” (Pew, 2013). While there are Jews of color living in the U.S., defined as those of “racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds including African, African American, Latino (Hispanic), Asian, Native American, Sephardic, Mizrahi, and mixed-race Jews by heritage, adoption, and marriage” (Rishon, 2015, p. 1), the vast majority of Jews in the U.S. are perceived to be White due to their light skin tone. Jews often go unseen amongst their non-Jewish peers for this single reason.

In addition, Jews are often absent from the DME classroom since they are considered to be a model, successful minority (Freedman, 2005; Gilman, 2003; Langman, 1995). Jews are also believed to be successful in politics, finance, business (King & Weiner, 2007; Langman, 1995; MacDonald-Dennis, 2006) as well as the arts, entertainment, and science (Alba, 2006; Gilman, 2003). Therefore, due to their (apparent) economic and social success, many believe that Jews do not require the same academic/social support and attention as other racial groups (Langman, 1995). Jews are also not discussed by multiculturalists in college and university DME classroom discussions because of their invisible minority status (Schlosser, 2006). Many Jewish people keep their identities hidden for fear of what might eventually come if they are found out to be Jewish (Altman, et al., 2010), so they often go to great lengths to avoid bringing attention to their Jewishness (e.g., through religious discussions, personal identification). Lastly, multiculturalists often overlook the study of antisemitism because of the Zionist question and how they personally perceive Israel’s relationship with Palestine. Many feel that Israel is a discriminatory nation, and due to their oppression of Palestinians, Jewish people are no longer seen as victims and in need of academic study (Rubin, 2018).

**Racialization and the Jews**

Jews in the United States have begun to transcend the line between race and religion, yet there is very little in academic literature that discusses race and racism in regard to antisemitism and Islamophobia (Meer, 2013). According to Gonzalez-Sobrino and Goss (2019), “Racialization plays a central role in the creation and reproduction of racial meanings, and its inclusion enriches the study of race and ethnicity” (p. 505). Unfortunately, this lack of discussion of Jews and their racial positionality in U.S. society leads to the absence of critical conversations regarding Jews and antisemitism in the diversity and multicultural classroom. Nye (2018) has posited that race and religion should not be viewed as separate categories, and since the identification of religion is often used as a racial identifier for groups such as Jews and Muslims, “it is misleading to see the category of religion as solely based on issues of belief and theology” (pp. 4-5). For example, during the Spanish Inquisition in the 15th century, Jews were viewed more as a racialized group than an ethno-religious one, which had grave consequences (Hochman, 2018; Meer & Modood, 2012).

There are an increasing number of academics who believe that Jews are now their own race. For example, Kaplan (2003) asserts that Jews are a sociocultural race - one with a shared history, descent, and appearance. The Jews share a specific racial identity that creates a common cultural reality, and this forms an important part of their self-image and social identity (Kaplan, 2003). Nye (2018) summarized the notion of racialization when he stated that:

In short, ‘race’ and racialization are not about skin colour and genetic classification. Such bodily attributes are a part of the discursive and ideological power of the concept and practice of race, of marking and organizing social differences on ideas of difference that rely on such embodied distinctions. In practice, though, race is also embodied in social institutions and practices— the processes of racial formations—that are manifest in physical and social experiences such as law codes, segregation in housing, education, criminal justice, and healthcare, and in the experiences of people who are classified to live within such structures of power. (p. 11)

While some may still argue that Jews are not a separate race, but rather a religious group or some other classifiable entity, this is highly contested.

In brief, Jews have lived as a minority group for thousands of years (Schlosser, 2006), or at least since the destruction of the Second Temple (Floyd, 2006), and over that time, they have been alienated and marginalized (Alhadeff, 2014) as well as oppressed and discriminated against (DiAngelo, 2016; MacDonald-Dennis). Schlosser (2006) asserted that, “Judaism is a culture, a religion, an ethnicity, and a set of traditions that is embedded in Jewish people’s expectations, belief systems, and family dynamics” (p. 424). It is for these reasons that I believe that Jews be considered a race of people, and since they are victims of racism and discrimination in the U.S. and around the world, they need to be discussed alongside their peers of color in the multicultural classroom alongside those who fall within the Black/White binary.

**The Black/White Binary**

Scientists generally agree that there is no real biological basis for race, and social scientists affirm that race is a social construct (Ladson Billings, 2018). That being the case, in the twenty-first century it appears that the study of race in the United States falls along a Black/White binary (Chanbonpin, 2015; Goldstein, 2006; Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2019; Greenberg, 2015; Perea, 1997). In brief, the Black/White binary is a paradigm that explains that racial issues in the U.S. only focuses on two groups, Blacks and Whites, and that racial identities are understood through this binary (Perea, 1997). Castagno (2005) has asserted that:

many Americans ascribe to [the Black/White] paradigm because it allows them to simplify and thus make sense of a very complicated racial reality and that *some scholars narrow their discussion of race to Black(s) and White(s) and thus implicitly appear to accept the paradigm*. (p. 454; italics added by author)

According to Perea (1997), the Black/White binary is widely accepted by multiculturalists, and very few people even understand that they use this paradigm to assess race relations. It can then be inferred that many in the field of DME accept the Black/White binary (knowingly or unknowingly) and then decide, through gatekeeping, via academic journals, textbook creation, etc., which groups are allowed into DME university classroom discussions. Lozano (2017) states that, “In higher education, it is the tendency to equate the terms ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ with ‘black’ or ‘African American,’ which, for all intents and purposes, ignores other racial and ethnic groups” (28). It has been suggested that other groups of people, such as Latinos/as, Asians, and Indigenous Peoples, have difficulty fitting within the Black/White binary (Perea, 1997). For example, “Asian Americans occupy a space of contingent racial identity primarily shaped and defined by White institutions [such as the law]” (Chanbonpin, 2015, p. 647). Also seen as a “model minority” (Lew, 2006) like the Jews, Asians must navigate the notion of the Black/White binary in all of its complexities.

The Black/White binary is so important to U.S. Jews because one of the primary assumptions against the inclusion of Jews in university DME discussions is that Jews are seen as being White. According to Brodkin (2000), “Whiteness is a state of privilege and belonging” (p. 182), and since American Jews have undoubtedly benefited from White privilege (Langman, 1995; Maizels, 2011), they are no longer in need of representation and examination. For thousands of years, Jews were believed to be ugly, swarthy, diseased, shrewd, moneygrubbing, Christ-killing outsiders (Adams & Joshi, 2016; Gilman, 1994, 2003; Greenberg, 2015; Segal, 1999; Weinbaum, 1998), yet soon after World War II, like the Italians and Irish before them (Kelkar, 2017; Stapinski, 2017), light-skinned Jews were generally considered to be White in American society (Biale, 1998; Goldstein, 2006; Weinbaum, 1998). U.S. Jews were able to accomplish this renegotiation of social status by assimilating their culture, language, occupations, hair and clothing styles, and physical appearances in order to go unnoticed by their neighbors (Adams & Joshi, 2016; Gilman, 2003). Post WWII, skin tone alone became the determining factor for Jewish people being considered White in the United States. This is despite the fact that, even as a collective unit, there are a great number of non-White Jews. Ultimately, the question of how Jews of color fit within the Black/White binary must be asked and explored further.

According to Biale (1998), “as Jews became economically successful, they found themselves for the first time in modern history as doubly marginal: marginal to the majority culture, but also marginal among minorities” (p. 27). In other words, as Jews started to be accepted as White, they found themselves further separated from other minority groups in the U.S., even though they still were not fully accepted by White society (nor are they fully accepted today). Herein lies one of the great conundrums of Jewish positionality – despite vast evidence of past and present discrimination and hatred of Jewish peoples, skin tone has become a major inhibiting force in their access and acceptance into college and university DME classroom conversations (Rubin, 2013).

In the Black/White racial discourse, “Ethnic groups are now homogenized as either ‘peoples of color’ or ‘White’ (whether they so identify themselves or not)” (Biale, 1998, pp. 26-27). This is problematic for many Jewish people. According to MacDonald-Dennis (2006), “One of the biggest difficulties in discussing Jewish identity and ‘place’ in the United States is that Jews do not fit neatly into established and understood notions of ethnic, racial, national, or religious identity” (p. 267). The Black/White binary just does not fit the specific Jewish condition in modern times since the reality of race in the U.S. has always been more complex than just Black and White (Martín Alcoff, 2003).

**The “Space Between”**

How Jewish people see themselves racially can be quite a complicated subject (DiAngelo, 2016). It is the author’s contention that U.S. Jews occupy an uncomfortable and ambiguous “space between” or “liminal zone” (Biale, Galchinsky, & Heschel, 1998, p. 5), which exists within and without racial and ethnic categorization. It has been asserted that for Ashkenazi Jews deemed as White, “on many levels and for many of the historical, social, cultural, and economic reasons, maintain a ‘bicultural’ perspective within U.S. society. Our perception, historically from the margins and more recently toward the center, gives us our middle or insider/outsider status” (Blumenfeld, 2006, p. 18). As discussed previously, most Jews in the U.S. can pass as White, thereby benefitting from White privilege, yet simultaneously, they possess distinctive traits (e.g., traditions, belief system, physical characteristics), which separate them from the dominant ethnoreligious identities of their fellow citizens (Gilman, 2003). It is important to note that, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center (2019), there are currently 1020 hate groups spread across a predominant majority of the 50 states. Most, if not all, of these hate groups, such as the Aryan Nations and the Knights of Ku Klux Klan, harbor prejudicial and virulent attitudes against Jewish people (SPLC, 2019). These hate groups consider themselves to be White; so, it is clear why, “On a more personal level, many Jews feel left out by multiculturalism, lumped as they are with those they have long fought to distance themselves from” (Greenberg, 1998, p. 78). Due to Jews being aligned with those same White hate groups who despise them, Jewish people’s place in the White majority is a false narrative. In the twenty-first century, Jews are now, for all intents and purposes, considered to be members of the same discriminatory group that they continue to struggle with on a daily basis.

Altman, et al. (2010) posit that the current forms of “Jewish oppression and multiculturalism do not fit into currently established analyses of racism and economic oppression (i.e., underrepresented minorities, people of color)” (p. 163). Jews exist in this ominous “space between” of race, religion, ethnicity, and color (Greenberg, 2015); therefore, in order to clearly and sufficiently address the lived realities of all Jewish people in the United States, the current Black/White binary in diversity and multicultural thought needs to be reevaluated to ascertain where White Jews actually fit in. According to Blumenfeld (2006b), “it is important for educators and others to realize that this racial divide (this binary) is itself a social construction and one that does not adequately take into consideration the collective history and psychic memory of the Jewish people” (p. 18). The Black/White binary only addresses skin color, and it does not address other potential factors that contribute to one’s individual and/or group identity formation.

Levine-Rasky (2008) asserts that, “Jewishness elicits a specific set of questions about Whiteness. Conceptualizing ‘Jew’ as ‘White’ is problematic” (p. 52). The reality is that Jewish people are often considered to be White in the U.S., and unfortunately, there are those who believe that only people of color can be subjected to racism and discrimination (Alexander, 1994). This belief does not erase the abuse and harassment of Jewish people in the U.S., which has risen in recent years (ADL, 2017). Invariably, the Black/White binary, which is a “one or the other” perception of race, does not work for the Jewish people. In a study by Blumenfeld (2006b), it was found that:

The majority of [Jewish] participants found it extremely difficult to position themselves on the racial binary (assignments) as currently constructed in the United States in which White is located on one side and persons of color (Blacks, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Latinos or Latinas, and Native Americans) on the other. To most participants, the categories Jew and Judaism not only confound the U.S. racial binary but also expose the fact that race as a concept is, indeed, a social construction (often arbitrary) reflecting historical, social, economic, and cultural contexts. (pp. 13-14)

Jews occupy this nebulous “space between” in the racial Black/White binary, which dictates societal acceptance on one hand and distrust and discrimination on the other.

Ultimately, the ability to claim which groups have the right to be discussed in university DME classroom discussions, thereby validating one’s positionality as a victim of racism and discrimination, often feels like a battle for who has it the worst. While many Jews understand that, due to White privilege, they do not have the same struggles as people of color, it becomes an uncomfortable negotiation for representation. According to Gilman (2003), “Multiculturalism is…a space where the contrast between the haves and have-nots is played out. The more you can claim the status of victim, the stronger your case is for primacy in this world” (p. 128). Martinez (1994) described this type of competitive one-upmanship as the “oppression Olympics,” and it is, again, a false narrative. Race is not a constant, all-or-nothing, state of being in society. As is evident from the historical and sociological analysis of Jewish people in the U.S. over the past century, racial categorization can evolve and change over time (Brodkin, 2000). Unfortunately, for many Jewish people in the U.S., if one is not distinctly a person of color, s/he is not accepted as having a valid claim of being oppressed and persecuted. In the case of the Jews, it is inappropriate that they are placed in the same category of Whiteness as Neo-Nazis and other racist hate groups (Langman, 1995). If Jewish people are still being persecuted around the world by those considered to be White, it is difficult to accept that they are now full members of the same White racial group. Somehow, that is exactly what is occurring in discussions of race and ethnicity in the U.S. today.

It has been observed that most American Jews do not view themselves as White (Greenberg, 2015), yet they find themselves in this “space between” the Black/White binary. Since the Jews’ “very existence is perennially in question” (Langman, 1995, p. 3; taken from the html text), due to thousands of years of persecution and the memory of the Holocaust (also referred to as the *Shoah*, in Hebrew), Jewish people do not have the same lived experience that other White people do. Greenberg (1998) believes that, “The experience of Jews as simultaneous insiders and outsiders, both victims of and members of a privileged class, can strengthen multicultural theory by reinforcing the multicultural commitment to hybridity and highlighting the complex, shifting, and voluntary nature of identity” (p. 82). This analysis can never occur if antisemitism is not thoroughly explored in the DME classroom.

**The Negative Effects of Jewish Invisibility**

Few, if any, DME scholars would contest the fact that “the moniker of black skin renders a different lived reality for darker-skinned [people] in a racist society” (Matias, 2016, p. 3). That being said, it is vital for multicultural scholars to understand that the lived reality of Black youth does not make the scourge of antisemitism any less real or substantive. History has shown that Jewish people were able to assimilate more easily into American society than Blacks after World War II (Goldstein, 2006). Though assimilation might have been easier, that does not mean that it did not come without a high price. According to Goldstein (2006), “While American Jews were often buoyed by their ability to move freely in White America, their entry into that world resulted in alienation, communal breakdown, and psychic pain as surely as it produced the exhilaration of acceptance in non-Jewish society” (p. 6). Historically speaking, it is obvious that Jewish people’s relative ease of acculturation into U.S. society does not mean that Jews did not suffer or were free from discrimination and persecution. Due to the Holocaust and a long history of oppression, many Jewish people suffered, and continue to suffer, from traumatic stress and anxiety, depression, as well as a determination to overachieve (Schlosser, 2006; Schlosser, et. al 2009).

It appears that the motivation to focus on antisemitism is not that important or necessary, at least when compared with the needs of other racial/ethnic groups. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) assert that “Dominant group members tend to dismiss the voices of minoritized group members…as unworthy of consideration” (pp. 148-149), and since it is often assumed that Jewish people in the U.S. are protected from harm due to their cloak of Whiteness, they are not victims like people of color. Ultimately, through the eyes of some multiculturalists, Jews are simply unworthy of inclusion in the discussion of multicultural issues (Alexander, 1992). This belief, whether stated outwardly or not, is felt by many in the Jewish community. It has been posited that many Jews do not even feel comfortable allowing themselves to believe that they are members of a discriminated minority group since they are not people of color (Rubin, 2013). Simply because of the color of their skin, they are told by society that they are White; as a result, they are quite different from other minority groups of color (Rubin, 2013). Deep-seeded beliefs such as these continue to be harmful to both Jews and non-Jews alike. The invisibility of Jews in the DME classroom strips Jews of any potential for true understanding and compassion. In reality, Jews are consistently marginalized and oppressed in the U.S. today (Blumenfeld, 2006a; Schlosser, 2003), and by not being discussed in the classroom, the Jewish perspective is discounted. For Jews taking DME courses at the university level also poses distinct risks. A lack of presence can infer that “[Jewish people’s] existence is of no importance [which] exacerbates Jewish students’ invalidation of Jewish identity and anti-Semitism” (MacDonald-Dennis 2006, p. 276).

According to Blumenfeld & Jaekel (2012), “For members of minoritized groups and nonbelievers, [being other than mainline Christian] can result in low self-esteem, shame, depression, prejudiced attitudes toward members of their own religious community, and even conversion to the dominant religion” (p. 130). Jewish people sometimes have feelings of shame and inferiority due to an unhealthy Jewish identity. This is caused by internalizing antisemitic beliefs in the U.S., which is a Christian-dominated society (Schlosser, 2006; Schlosser, et al. 2009). Many multiculturalists only recall Jewish persecution as occurring during the Holocaust. It is this select moment in time, a horrible one no doubt, that encompasses Jewish positionality in global society. Therefore, since the Holocaust ended over seventy years ago, Jews have surpassed antisemitism and have found their rightful place in the White elite (Rubin, 2013). As the statistics presented earlier attests, racism against Jews did not disappear after the Holocaust ended. It is alive and it is thriving in the Age of Trump in the United States.

**Conclusion**

It is important that college and university students in the United States are provided the opportunity to explore the concept of anti-Jewish bias in all of its forms in the DME classroom. This can provide students, both Jews and non-Jews alike, the chance to discuss antisemitism and break down any potential Jewish myths and stereotypes (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006) which continues to lead to the harassment and discrimination of the Jewish peoples. Jews occupy an uncomfortable “space between” in the traditional Black/White racial binary paradigm. Their absence in the multicultural classroom negatively affects the Jewish people, for it is a constant push and pull between acceptance and oppression. Biale, Galchinsky, and Heschel (1998) posit that “…it is not only real and imagined anti-Semitism that makes Jews anxious about multiculturalism. As important is the consciousness Jews have of themselves as occupying an anomalous status: insiders who are outsiders and outsiders who are insiders” (p. 5). This is a very complex and difficult balance, and for Jews and non-Jews, if antisemitism and falsehoods about the Jewish people are not addressed in university DME classroom settings, then there is little chance for growth and understanding.

Data show that acts of antisemitism are increasing in frequency in both the U.S. and around the world (ADL, 2017; Soch, 2015), yet the study of Jewish oppression continues to be minimal or completely absent in DME classroom discussions. The lack of acknowledgment of antisemitism and Jewish oppression causes many Jewish people to feel overlooked, disrespected, and disregarded. Therefore, “Because non-Jews do not include Jewish issues in multiculturalism, I argue that this tells Jews that their experience is of no importance and exacerbates Jewish students’ invalidation of Jewish identity and anti-Semitism” (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006, p. 276). Over time, the invalidation of Jewish identity can manifest itself in deleterious ways, such as shame, low self-esteem, depression, internal antisemitism, a feeling of invisibility, and even the desire to convert to Christianity (Blumenfeld & Jaekel, 2012; Schlosser, 2006). Jews are in need of discussion and analysis just like their peers of color, and it is the responsibility of all multiculturalists to address and discuss antisemitism and the complicated positionality of the Jewish people in the university DME classroom.

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1. It must be noted that “identities are intersectional – that they are made up of overlapping and complex categories” (Mayo, 2016, p. 133). Therefore, the personal identity of a Jewish person of color can be attributed to numerous factors. The following analysis of Jewish identity refers to those Jews who are perceived to be White due to their light skin tone. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Those being of Eastern, Central, or Western European descent [↑](#footnote-ref-2)