

“Please protect the Jews”

Ideology and concealment in the *Britain First* solidarity patrol

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This research examined Facebook comments in response to *Britain First*'s 'solidarity patrol' video, in which *Britain First* is shown patrolling in Golders Green, North London, ostensibly to show support for the Jewish community after the shooting in the Koshers supermarket in Paris following the Charlie Hebdo attack. A Critical Discursive Psychological analysis was conducted on comments. Initial comments were identified as showing support and gratitude towards *Britain First*; however, comments became progressively anti-Semitic (e.g. by posing the rhetorical question, what benefits have Jews brought to Britain?). Results are discussed in terms of how *Britain First* has managed to achieve anti-Islamic rhetoric whilst trying to maintain support from the mainstream. This research has identified that discussions on Facebook have transitioned from Jews being constructed as vulnerable at the hands of Islamic extremism, to Jews being problematic and the aggressors.

Keywords: Computer Mediated Communication, Critical Discursive Psychology, far-right, solidarity

1. Introduction

On 7th January, 2015, two gunmen shot eleven people in the headquarters of the French newspaper Charlie Hebdo, the attack motivated by Charlie Hebdo's cartoon depictions of Muhammad. Two days after the attack, a Kosher supermarket in Paris was also subjected to shootings (*The Independent*, January 9th, 2015). Millions of people showed unity with France over the attacks, and the slogan 'Je Suis Charlie' became an International symbol of support.

Other incidents in the UK such as the July 2005 London bombings and the more recent killing of the British soldier Lee Rigby (*The Independent*, May 25th,

2013) have facilitated the construction in the (mass and social) media of a global ‘war on terror’, in which Arabs and Muslims are positioned as a threat to Britain (Foner and Alba 2008, 369; Wood & Finlay 2008, 712–718), in opposition to which Jews are positioned as the ‘good other’. More recent attacks by members of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Europe and elsewhere continue to provide a resource for the construction of Muslims as a (global) threat. These events have fuelled support for the far-right even further and led to ‘Islamophobia’ becoming a prominent issue in contemporary British society (*The Guardian*, 23rd May, 2013). There have been Islamophobic attacks in the United Kingdom, particularly on public transport and towards women who are more visible as Muslims wearing the hijab, for example the anti-Islamic verbal abuse towards a pregnant Muslim female that was caught on CCTV on a London bus (*The Independent*, 13th November, 2015).

The events surrounding Charlie Hebdo and the attacks mentioned have encouraged far-right parties and organisations to focus on Muslims as a ‘problem’ in Britain, termed the ‘Islamification’ of Britain (Richardson and Wodak 2009, 56). The challenge for far-right parties and organisations in the UK is to adopt and promote a fiercely anti-Islamic stance whilst appealing to the mainstream in British politics. Their solution to this challenge is, in part, a form of tokenism involving the visibility of people targeted in the streets and in the media through their appearance and dress (e.g. women in hijabs, the dress and personal appearance of Sikhs and/or Hasidic Jews). The far-right are cautious that they appear to oppose Islamic extremism and ideology, and not all Muslims. Far-right organisations such as the English Defence League argue that they aim to campaign against Islamic extremism only, rather than all Muslims (Treadwell 2012, 36; Treadwell and Garland 2011, 622). However, this distinction can become blurred in situations like English Defence League demonstrations, with anti-Islamic chants taking place (Garland and Treadwell 2010, 26).

Historically, the dilemma of the far-right is to uphold nativist nationalist values, but also reach out to the masses to gain mainstream support. Billig (1978, 130–131, 167) argued that the far-right resolve this dilemma by partially concealing their ideologies to reach the mass audience, whilst circulating propaganda. Billig proposed that far-right parties such as the National Front who historically had underlying anti-Semitic ideologies, attempted to disguise their extremist views and reject the fascist label (Billig 1978, 131–136; Eatwell 2000, 172). More recent research using parliamentary data has shown how the British National Party used strategies to mask their underlying racist ideologies, such as contrasting their own principles with more extremist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, to appear to be (i.e. construct themselves as being) more moderate and rational and thereby more appealing to mainstream audiences (Goodman and Johnson 2013, 102).

Britain First is a far-right political party that was founded in 2011. The party is committed to maintaining Christianity in UK society and openly opposing Islam (as well as other political doctrines such as Marxism, Fascism and ‘political correctness’). *Britain First* is renowned for ‘Christian Patrols’, where they break into mosques and cause vandalism. The solidarity patrol video was posted on *Britain First*’s Facebook Page on 31st January, 2015, 22 days after the shooting in the Kosher supermarket in Paris (the solidarity patrol video was also posted on *Britain First*’s official website). The purpose of this patrol was, ostensibly, to offer support to Jews, thereby implying that Muslims are responsible for the anti-Semitic attacks that followed the Charlie Hebdo shooting, what *Britain First* refer to as “a steep rise in Islamic hostility” (<https://www.britainfirst.org/solidarity-patrol/>).

The patrol took place in Golders Green, an area in London with a large Jewish population. *Britain First* is shown handing out leaflets, occasionally to people who appear to belong to the Hasidic Jewish community in Golders Green. Jayda Fransen (*Britain First*’s deputy leader), standing in front of the camera, begins by expressing “heartbreak” over Jews fleeing from Britain because of an increase in anti-Semitism. Paul Golding (the leader of *Britain First*) then turns to talk about protecting the Jewish community, and claims that nothing is being done to protect Jews from Islamic extremism due to “political correctness”. Finally, Fransen again faces the camera and reads aloud ‘anti-Jewish’ quotes from the Qur’an.

In the solidarity patrol, *Britain First* aims to show that they are supporting British Jews (they refer in the video to “the Jewish community”) who are presented as being under threat from Islam. *Britain First* then works to keep itself separate from Jews by differentiating between being Jewish and being British. This anti-Islamic patrol is being portrayed by *Britain First* as a patrol to show solidarity with Jews, leaving the audience to make the link between anti-Semitic attacks and Islam. *Britain First* is targeting Islam only indirectly, in contrast to other far-right movements such as the English Defence League, who hold anti-Islamic demonstrations known to be aggressive and violent in nature (Garland and Treadwell 2010, 24–25).

This research aimed to analyse critically:

- how *Britain First* attempted to disguise an anti-Islamic patrol as being a patrol demonstrating support for Jews
- how users on Facebook responded to *Britain First*’s solidarity patrol

2. Data and methods

The data for this study are from a corpus collected between March 2014 and February 2015. The project here focuses on how the far-right responded to the events surrounding the Charlie Hebdo attack, and so these posts are from January–February 2015. All data are in the public domain and can be accessed without the need for a Facebook account. Nonetheless, profile pictures have been anonymised unless the picture is an avatar. Names have also been omitted.

Communication on Facebook pages is asynchronous, i.e. users do not need to be online at the same time to communicate; therefore there can be a delay in responses to previous messages (Burke and Goodman 2012, 21). When opening Facebook pages, the Timeline is visible, which displays the posts in descending chronological order. There is also an ‘About’ Section, containing information such as when the pages were set up, a short biography of the organisation, contact details, and links to other websites (often the organisation’s official website). There is a tab to access photos, as well as other features such as future events taking place. Facebook pages are a significant and advantageous form of communication for far-right parties and movements such as *Britain First*, as it is free both to set up and use. *Britain First* in particular has a significant following on Facebook, with 1,480,334 ‘likes’ on their Facebook page as of September 2016.

This research used Critical Discursive Psychology (henceforth CDP; Wetherell and Edley 1999, 4–5), which focuses on the formation of identities and interactional work that is performed through discursive accounts. The premise of this approach is that psychological phenomena are socially constructed through language, so it is beneficial to study discourse in practise rather than as an internal state. The focus is on the “action orientation” of talk or text (Edwards and Potter 1992, 2), which is to say the analysis focuses on what actions people are trying to achieve through talk, rather than what this tells us about what people think.

CDP is beneficial for accounting for the variation that takes place in discourse, what Billig et al. (1988, 8–15) refer to as the ‘dilemmatic’ nature of talk. CDP is a suitable method for analysing talk surrounding controversial issues, as the focus is on action, for example, how individuals justify the harsh treatment of minority groups or create accusations (Augoustinos and Every 2007, 124).

CDP was used to examine how identity is mobilized through discourse. I focus on the identity work surrounding *Britain First* supporters helping people like ‘us,’ and how identities such as ‘*us versus them*’ are constructed in this particular context, as well as the construction of Jews as the ‘good other’. This is in line with previous research examining the construction of asylum seekers as ‘just like us’ (Masocha 2015, 3), which in turn challenges the counter-position

that asylum seekers are different from ‘us’ and therefore a threat (Capdevila and Callaghan 2008, 9).

In this formation of ‘*us versus them*’ (van Dijk 1995, 2), ‘they’ are associated with negative attributes and threatening the identity and values of ‘us’. Construction of ‘the other’ can be related to structures of power and can reinforce inequality between groups (Dyers and Wankah 2012, 237–238). Similarly, Lynn and Lea’s (2003, 437), *us and them* construction describes when an out-group is constructed as the ‘other’, and opposition to a group is based on the group being different to ‘us’, usually on cultural grounds. The separation of ‘*us versus them*’ allows the speaker to shift agency and responsibility; for example, the problem of integration in a community can either be attributed to those inside or outside of a community, another example of the construction of ‘otherness’ (Kirkwood, McKinlay & McVittie 2014, 379–382).

Another strategy I focus on is Goffman’s notion of *footing*, defined as “the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (Goffman 1981, 128). This means that in the suitable context, speakers can shift their alignment to speak on behalf of other people.

The first comment to the solidarity patrol video started on the same day that the video was posted onto Facebook (31.1.15), one minute after the video was posted. The final comments were posted on the 14th February: A total of 436 comments made in response to the solidarity patrol were analysed for this research (comments may have been added since data collection ceased, that are not included in the corpus). Extracts have been numbered according to where they appear in the corpus (ordered chronologically ascending by date), and are presented exactly as they appeared on Facebook so any spelling and grammatical errors remain.

3. Analysis

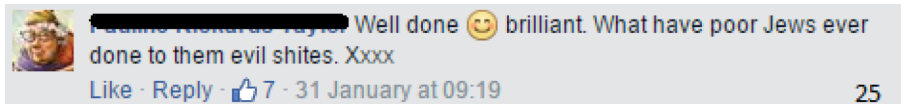
The first comments congratulate *Britain First* and display support for Jews, some of which were posted by users who identified themselves as Jewish, and who also expressed gratitude towards *Britain First*. Following on from this, progressively over the next fourteen days the comments became more hostile towards Jews. Debates arose about the benefits that Jews bring to the UK, with authors drawing upon perceived historical evidence for support as well as anti-Semitic rhetoric (such rhetoric shares features with anti-immigrant and/or nativist rhetoric, which are thereby features of a distinctive rhetorical genre; see Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2010, 57–63).

3.1 “What have poor Jews ever done”: Showing support for Jews

In the early comments to the video, viewers displayed signs of being convinced by the message in the solidarity patrol. Comments were often written in an informal and affectionate manner towards *Britain First* (e.g., ending a comment with kisses), with authors shifting their footing (Goffman 1981, 128) to talk about how Jewish people feel. The focus is the vulnerability of the “Jewish community” and the threat to Jews from Islam. This involves a construction that separates Jews from ‘us’, the British, thereby invoking an ‘*us versus them*’ interpretative repertoire and marginalising Jewish people.

These authors mirrored *Britain First*’s inclusive and exclusive discursive strategy of forming an alignment with an ethnic minority, who are like ‘us’, thus using Jews being in danger as justification for constructing Muslims as an out-group. Some authors distanced themselves from actively supporting Jewish communities, and instead pleaded that *Britain First* continue to do so on their behalf. Extract One directly mentioned the vulnerability of Jews:

Extract one



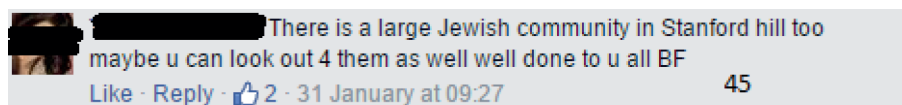
The first part of this comment has three components: (1) “Well done”, (2) the smiley face, and (3) “brilliant”. The “Xxxx” which are used as kisses along with the smiley emoticon work to make the account affectionate and thus less formal, with the author visually expressing pleasure from the video through using the smiley. The account is forming an affiliation with *Britain First* and has a friendly tone, thus drawing *Britain First* into the position of friends of the author. The term “poor” works to place Jews into a category of being vulnerable. Note that the author’s interrogative construction of “what have poor Jews ever done...” is used to make a declaration rather than to ask a question, and is a form of complaining on someone else’s behalf (Drew and Walker 2009, 2405–2408).

The vulnerability of Jews is implied through the juxtaposition with “evil” Muslims. The term “evil shites” is cohesive with the ‘*us versus them*’ construction. The use of “shites” does not explicitly mention Muslims, yet the categorisation implies Muslims. The derogatory term downgrades and objectifies Muslims, as well as presents them as dirty. The term also generalises beyond extremist Muslims, and constructs all Muslims as one category through concealment. The category construction of Jews as “poor” positions Jews as an out-group along with Muslims

also being constructed as an out-group. This juxtaposition constructs Jews as being under threat from Islam, and Muslims causing Jews to be fearful.

The next extract demonstrates that not only did the viewer show agreement with the solidarity patrol, but also inserted their own suggestion for *Britain First* to widen the support beyond Golders Green to other Jewish communities:

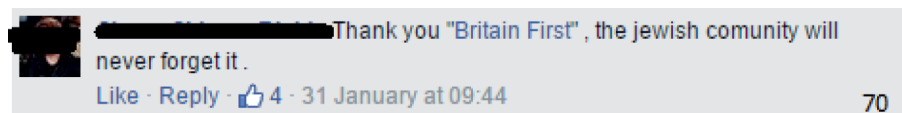
Extract two



Here the author constructs a link between location and a religious community (Drew 1978, 8–19). Note that the author herself uses the term “Jewish community”, though of course Jewish identity displays a complex hybridity between religion, ethnicity, race, history, memory and more; so from a Jewish perspective, “a large Jewish community” might be considered an oversimplification tending already to a form of othering – note also that the author refers to “them”. This is the only point where the link between being in Golders Green and showing support for Jewish communities is made salient, particularly through using the term “too”. The author is referring to (but has misspelt) Stamford Hill in North London, an area with a large Hasidic Jewish community. This comment shows that people are giving accounts of being convinced by the video. The author addresses *Britain First* as BF; using an abbreviation rather than the full name mitigates the nationalist connotations of *Britain First* as a political party. The abbreviation also emphasises the author’s friendliness in an environment where cues such as eye contact and nodding are absent (e.g. Fozdar and Pederson 2013, 379).

Following this, the comments continued down the line of supporting and thanking *Britain First*:

Extract three




Here too the author changes his footing to speak on behalf of “the Jewish community”, presenting that community as being in debt and grateful to *Britain First* for the solidarity patrol. An extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986, 219) is invoked that *Britain First* helping the Jewish community will have long term effects, and the notion that the event will have historical importance in terms of Jews actively appreciating *Britain First*’s cause. Note the author directly addresses


Britain First by name as with Extract two (comment number 45). *Britain First* has been ‘tagged’ in this post, meaning that Facebook users reading this comment can click on ‘*Britain First*’s, name, and will be taken to the *Britain First* Facebook page. *Britain First* also receives a Facebook notification about this comment. This suggests that the author intends to directly draw *Britain First*’s attention to the comment, and be seen to be actively showing support for *Britain First*.

Next is a comment comparing Jews and Muslims:

Extract four




lets face it every other culture and religion have got on in this country all except islam i know it and everybody else does, why this government are allowing this cult to spread there hatred i do not know. but what i do know is the jewish people are a peaceful race and i for one would back them 100% they are a part of this land unlike islam who want to take over

Like · Reply ·  5 · 31 January at 09:56


The author uses the argument that Islam is the only religion that is not getting on with other religions, and thus is the cause of the problem. “Everybody else does” is an appeal to common knowledge (Edwards & Potter 1992, 117) to add credibility to the author’s argument. This change of footing to speak on behalf of others means that the author cannot be held personally accountable for the view that he/she expressed. The use of “let’s face it” also suggests that the problematic character of Islam is obvious, but people are not opening their eyes to the issue. Islam is presented as a threat and a problematic cult (rather than a religion), that is trying to take over. Constructing Jews as a “peaceful race” serves to heighten the contrast between Jews and the aggression and threat associated with the problematic “cult” of Islam. The author refers to Jews as “them”, again invoking the interpretative repertoire of ‘*us versus them*’, thereby separating Jewish people from British people. Note the user’s profile picture of the United Kingdom flag, displaying a patriotic emblem to represent their British identity.

The next two extracts presented Jews as vulnerable at the hands of Islamic extremism:

Extract five

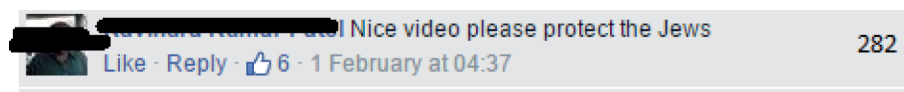


Good job Britain first standing up against evil anti semitic bullies.

Like · Reply ·  11 · 31 January at 12:02

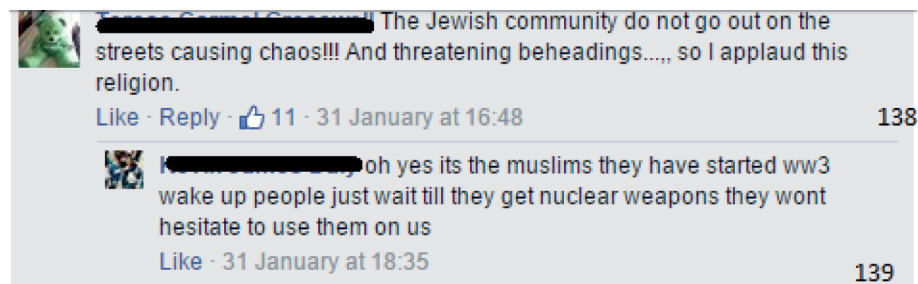
Comment number 112 positions Islam as threatening and bullying Jews, again addressing *Britain First* by its name. The construction of Muslims as anti-Semitic underlies the author's use of the term "evil" to describe Muslims, and has a substantial impact, as anti-Semitic is a term that carries historical significance. 'Anti-Semitic' is also a reference to the idea that Muslims are specifically targeting Jews over other groups. Jews are thereby being constructed by the author as needing assistance in "standing up" to Islam.

Extract six



This statement demonstrates that *Britain First* has successfully constructed themselves as 'protectors' of Jews, who are in danger at the hands of Islamic extremists, and that there is something that *Britain First* can actively do to keep Jewish communities safe. The term "protect" implies that Jews are vulnerable, again emphasising the construction of Jews as the good 'other'. By pleading that *Britain First* protect Jews, the author identifies *Britain First* as being the only source of support for Jews. The use of the term "the Jews" is a form of othering Jews into a lesser category.

Extract seven



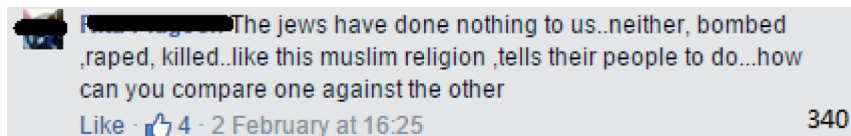
The first comment (number 138) is drawing a contrast between Muslims and Jews; the opposition to Muslims is escalating. Saying what Jews don't do creates an implication about what Muslims do, and is an indirect accusation towards Muslims, again using strategic concealment. The use of "this religion" (comment 138) allows the author to distance themselves from and not affiliate closely with Jews, whilst nevertheless emphatically aligning with a religion that they have named at the start of their account. We see the use of dots, indicating that there is more that could be said about this issue, particularly in the case of the first author in comment 138 where they have mentioned "beheadings". The use of dots in this case

allows the author to refer to common knowledge events such as the murder of Lee Rigby, without explicitly stating so, reflecting, as discussed earlier, the events that have led to the perception that Muslims are a threat to Britain.

The response to the first comment (comment 139) begins with “oh yes”; displaying emphatic agreement and treating the first author’s statement in comment 138 as obvious and self-evident. The statement is formed as though the first author had asked a question, and is a similar strategy as saying ‘of course’ in an emphatic manner (see Heritage 1998, 308–309). An extreme case formulation is used through referring to “ww3”. The second author in comment 139 refers to the more generalised identity of “Muslims” rather than ‘Islam’ or ‘Islamic extremism’, which suggests that it is less problematic to oppose Muslims in an online setting. This could be due to users being less accountable online than in other settings where individuals are more likely to be guarded with how they talk about other groups (e.g. Augoustinos and Every 2007, 125–137). Similar findings have been reported by Burke and Goodman (2012, 28–29), who observed that users online found it less problematic to oppose asylum seekers in comparison to politicians and individuals in face to face settings.

The next extract challenged previous comments that were making comparisons between Muslims and Jews:

Extract eight



This statement responds to debates surrounding the “damage” that Jews have done to Britain (see comments in Section 3.3). The author invokes his/her own three-part list (Jefferson 1990, 63) criteria of what counts as damage (1; bombing, 2; raping 3; killing). The author criticises the action of comparing Jews to Muslims, yet imposes his/her own comparison by stating what Jews don’t do in comparison to what Muslims do, in a similar manner to Extract seven (comment 138). This comparison constructs Muslims as violent ‘others’ and encompasses a feature of a genre (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010, 57–63).

Referring to the religion as Muslim rather than Islam invokes a personal attack towards individuals rather than the religion generally, as research has shown that politicians make the distinction between opposing the religion and not Muslims as individuals to appear more reasonable when making anti-Islamic arguments (Verkuyten, 2013, 346). This suggests that it is less problematic to oppose Muslims as individuals online than it is in offline settings. There is a conflation of “Muslim”

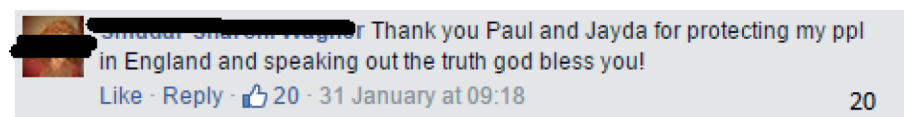
and “religion”, implying that the lines between individuals and religion have been blurred. There is some orientation to the religion being problematic and people choosing to follow the religion. We see the use of “this” in comment 340 used to emphasise hostility (Jackson 2013, 313). The notion that Jews have not done anything to “us” constructs Jews as inherently different to and isolated from British people, but not causing trouble. This again separates being Jewish and being British as two different identities, and works to present Jews as impassive; again, we see the formation of ‘us versus them’.

This section has explored comments in support of the solidarity patrol, displaying affiliation with Jews and agreement with *Britain First*’s cause. These extracts differ from the solidarity patrol itself in that *Britain First* emphasised that they are a Christian organisation, and that Christians have also faced persecution at the hands of Islamic extremism. These comments do not orient to *Britain First* being a Christian organisation, focusing only on Jews being under threat.

The next section highlights how support also came from people who identified themselves as Jewish. Comments have the same friendliness and exaggerated nature as those in the previous section, and some authors used the same strategy of separating being Jewish from being British (note that outside of Facebook, the support from *Britain First* was not welcomed by Jews, see Jewish Times 2015).

3.2 “I say this as a proud British Jew”: Comments from authors who identify themselves as Jewish

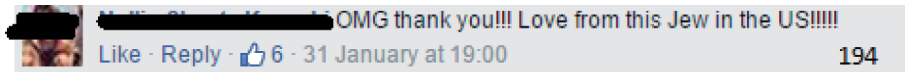
Extract nine



This author is using the rhetorical technique of separating herself from *Britain First* by constructing herself as inclusive with Jews and using the term “my people”. This emphasises that this author has the ‘right’ to speak as a representative of Jews thus exerting an epistemic kind of authority (See Sacks 1992, 171–172 on the use of categories of groups used by group members and ‘outsiders’). This is a similar strategy to that used by *Britain First*, distinguishing between and thereby separating Jewish people from British people. Despite the separation between the author and *Britain First*, the use of exclamation marks indicates excitement and addressing Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen by their first names invokes a sense of familiarity.

We see similar strategies used in the following extract:

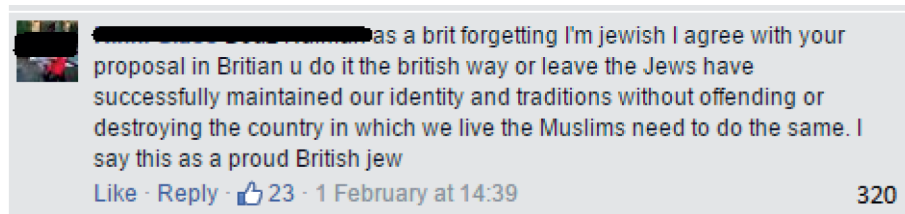
Extract ten



Here the author discloses him/herself as Jewish (although note that unlike the other posts, the author has stated that they are from outside of the UK). The account is emphasised through the use of the hyperbolically ecstatic OMG (“Oh my God”) and triple exclamation marks. As has been seen before in previous comments supporting Jews, the account is more informal and friendly. While the exclamation marks and the expression of gratitude and love make this account affiliative towards *Britain First*, the account is less affiliative than the posts in the first section where authors ‘tag’ *Britain First* in their posts, so that other Facebook users can click on the link and be taken to *Britain First*’s Facebook homepage (refer to Extract three for an explanation of ‘tagging’).

The following extract used some of the same strategies used by *Britain First* to differentiate being Jewish from being British, although at the end of his/her account, the author self-categorises as “a proud British Jew”:

Extract eleven



This comment is addressing another user on Facebook, who had expressed the opinion that British laws and values should be enforced in ‘Sharia zones’ (not included in this paper). The author has taken what was a statement about Islam, and shifted the focus to be about Jewish people keeping their values and customs separate. The author is using the common strategy found in other areas of this research, of making his/her account about Muslims rather than Islam or Islamic extremists. The author begins self-disclosing him/herself as being Jewish, and separating the subject position of a British Jew, into two parts of Jewish and British, in a similar way to *Britain First* in the solidarity patrol video. The author rejects the Jewish label (perhaps orienting to the idea that ‘Jewish’ is an ‘othered’ category) and emphasises his/her British identity, but the account ends by integrating the two into the subject position of “proud British Jew”.

The ‘*us versus them*’ interpretative repertoire (van Dijk 1995, 2; Lynn & Lea 2003, 437) is drawn upon by the author through keeping Jewish traditions separate

from British culture. “Forgetting I’m Jewish” may be an orientation to the author wanting to be identified and listened to as a British person rather than a Jewish person, or possibly the author having lapsed in his/her observance. This is seen as a common strategy in Jewish secular discourse, to symbolise solidarity with Judaism (observance) whilst not actually being observant. This orients to the notion from *Britain First* that being Jewish and British are separate things, and the author constructs his/her identity as a British person rather than a Jewish person to make their argument. This also shows that the identity distinction between being Jewish and being British is also made by a Jewish individual. However, the author switches between “the Jews” (distancing him/herself from the Jewish identity) and “our identity”; switching back and forth between Jewish and British, he/she shows the complex relationship between being British and being Jewish.

In this section I have discussed how authors who identify themselves as Jewish respond to the solidarity patrol, although none appear to self-identify as being Hasidic Jews. The authors displayed gratitude towards *Britain First*, and used similar strategies such as invoking the category of Jewish people being strangers (e.g. Extract nine, comment 20), and differentiating between being Jewish and being British (e.g. Extract eleven, comment 320).


The following section examines how the discussion turns from support for the Jewish community, to a more oppositional nature which questions the contribution Jews have brought to Britain:

3.3 “Who cares about the Jews?” comments displaying anti-semitic discourse


Here we see the transition from comments being pro-Jewish and contrasting Jews with ‘evil’ Muslims, to now being anti-Semitic, questioning the contribution that Jews bring to Britain, and what Jews have done for ‘us’, British people. Arguments opposing Jews often focused on historical evidence and what Jews have either contributed to or damaged in Britain in the past. We also see some orientation to the solidarity patrol video being a cover up. Note how the topic remains focused on Jews and the distinction between Jews and Christians, the current climate of the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack and the attack at the Kosher supermarket is not mentioned in any of the extracts.

The following extract challenged a comment of support for Jews:


Extract twelve




Great Video, you are doing a great job, the jews are a peaceful people and never bothered us. I am proud to share this Video, Keep up the good work (*Britain First*)

Like · Reply ·  12 · 31 January at 16:49

141



jews a peaceful people? Tell that to the Palestinians...

Like ·  7 · 31 January at 17:29



142



Notable here in comment 141 is once again the use of the ‘*us versus them*’ interpretative repertoire, separating Jews from British people, but also aligning with ‘peaceful’ Jews to emphasise Muslims as the aggressors (see van Dijk 1995, 2). The statement “never bothered us” constructs Jews as people who are potentially problematic to British people, but choose not to be a problem. Jews are peaceful, but still not ‘us’, the British. The term “bothered” implies that Jews should not integrate with British people and it would be problematic to do so. The author is dealing with the ideological dilemma (Billig et al. 1988, 1) of constructing a positive case for Jews without directly aligning with Jews. Again, we see the author addressing *Britain First* by name, and tagging *Britain First*, meaning that *Britain First* receives a notification on Facebook that they have been tagged in the post. Note that while comment 141 can be classified alongside the posts in Section 3.1, the comment of interest here is 142 in terms of displaying anti-Semitic discourse in disagreement with the author of comment 141.



The interrogative question used by the second author in comment 142 highlights the moment of transition; prior to this comment talk had been about the vulnerability of Jews, but at this point we see a challenge to this notion and an introduction to the Jewish-Palestinian conflict. Comment 142 reveals the first construction of Jews as ‘not peaceful’. This question is used to mock the first author and provides a gloss over historical events, as well as an anti-Zionist statement. This is similar to a strategy used by the British far-right political party the National Front during the 1970’s, who argued that they were ‘anti-Zionist’; this allowed them to make anti-Jewish arguments without being accused of being anti-Semitic (Billig 1978, 132; 166). The use of dots implies that there is more to be said on the issue, but that it does not need to be said. Despite the author of comment 142 explicitly challenging the idea that Jews are peaceful, the use of dots means that the author can avoid giving specific examples of why Jews are not “peaceful people”.

The next comment in opposition to Jews is different to the previous comment in that the author invokes historical ‘evidence’ in the Bible:

Extract thirteen

 [REDACTED] The Jews had Jesus arrested. presumably based on information that Judas Iscariot provided. The Romans then found Jesus guilty of a crime against the State, punishable by death - in this case, crucifixion.
Like · Reply ·  5 · 31 January at 16:51 150

 [REDACTED] You obviously read the bible with blinders on!! Why don't you read it again!!!!
Like ·  1 · 31 January at 19:15 151

 [REDACTED] Very funny ..
Like ·  2 · 31 January at 19:19 152

The first author constructs Jews as being the problem, referring to an account given in the Bible, and thus presenting Jews as an exclusionary group, based on religious differences. Unlike the previous comment (142 in Extract twelve), comment 150 is an example of an anti-Semitic argument that is given from a Christian perspective, another example of discourse that has a 'genre' nature. The author provides a 'factual', chronological account of Jesus' crucifixion. Jews are constructed as assailants, contrary to earlier extracts where they have been portrayed as victims. *Britain First* presents itself as a Christian organisation so this author's account is in line with *Britain First's* Christian principles (note though that the author does not acknowledge that Jesus was Jewish). This also allows the author to distance him/herself from making a direct oppositional statement about Jews.

The second author in comment 151 uses multiple exclamation marks to represent disbelief, and the author uses the metaphor of the first author in comment 150 being "blind" to emphasise her ignorance. The second author confirms the first author's inferences as being based on the Bible, despite the first author not referring to it, suggesting that there is a common knowledge repertoire of *Britain First* supporters (and thus Christians) being familiar with the Bible. The author in comment 151 is making an indirect inference to being sceptical. The original author deals with the accusation (comment 152) and manages her own position through treating the second author's response as an intention to be humorous and not serious.

Next we see similar oppositional comments towards Jews that convey scepticism about the contribution that Jews have made to Britain:

Extract fourteen



The screenshot shows a vertical list of four comments on a social media platform. Each comment is preceded by a small profile picture icon. The text of the comments is as follows:

- Comment 336:** "We'll just ignore how much damage the Jews have caused us over time..?"
Like · Reply · 9 · 1 February at 18:49
- Comment 337:** "Give me a few examples (cue the conspiracy theories)..."
Like · 7 · 1 February at 21:39
- Comment 338:** "...the permian extinction and the asteroid that killed the dinosaurs"
Like · 6 · 1 February at 23:14
- Comment 339:** "Here we go, right-wing fuckjobs arguing amongst themselves"
Like · 2 February at 13:45

The first author in comment 336 displays irony by structuring a declaration into an interrogative question. The author's accusation towards Jews is made in the form of a rhetorical question, and thus constructs the notion of 'ignoring damage' to be unreasonable. Again, the use of the word "damage" shows that a transition has taken place, from Jews being constructed as victims, to now being shown as the aggressors. Note the use of dots before the question mark, which indicates that there is more that could be said, but the dots allow the author to be ambiguous and avoid elaborating about the "damage" that Jews have done. There is also the use of "just", used to imply that something is unreasonable (Goodman and Burke 2010, 333–334), in this case ignoring the damage that Jews have caused is displaying an unreasonable action. The account is about "Jews" as people rather than 'Judaism' as a religion, in a similar way that the construction of opposition towards Muslims as people rather than the religion has been discussed in Extract seven.

The second author in comment 337 engages with the first, asking for clarification as an attempt to challenge the first author (this clarification is not provided). Note how the second author uses dots in a similar way to the first author, this time to indicate pauses, providing the original author with a cue to provide an answer. The third author (comment 338) constructs a pre-emptive response to the original post, drawing upon prehistoric conspiracies to highlight the irrelevant nature of the first author's theory.

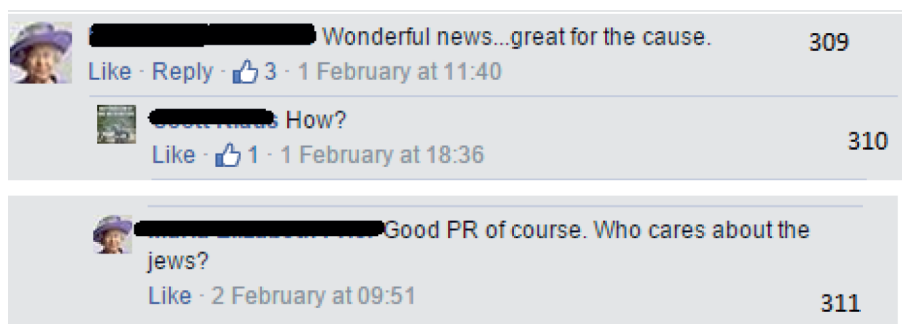
The third author mocks the first author's question and the use of absurdity creates consensus and humour amongst the second and third authors (Antaki 2004, 91–92), to suggest that oppositional arguments towards Jews are not taken seriously. The second and third authors are building their accounts together, using humour and the anticipation of conspiracy theories. As conspiracy theories are a

standard anti-Semitic argument (e.g. Byford and Billig 2001, 308–319; Richardson 2013, 281–284; 291–292), both authors are anticipating the next development of this genre.

The final author in comment 339 is attempting to expose the authors and has tagged another Facebook user (who has not posted on here) to draw his/her attention to the argument. The author insults the original author in comment 336 through using an upgraded form of the term ‘nut job’. The author distances him/herself from, and dismisses, the right-wing category, and associates being right-wing with being crazy (similar findings have found the notion of being a far-right supporter to be linked with lack of intelligence, Goodman and Burke 2012, 24).

In the following three extracts the author oriented to the idea that the solidarity patrol is a cover up to promote *Britain First* rather than show support for the Jewish community:

Extract fifteen



The screenshot shows three comments from a user with a profile picture of a person wearing a purple hat. The comments are as follows:

- Comment 309: "Wonderful news...great for the cause." (1 February at 11:40, 3 likes)
- Comment 310: "How?" (1 February at 18:36, 1 like)
- Comment 311: "Good PR of course. Who cares about the jews?" (2 February at 09:51, 2 likes)

This author presents the notion that the video is a cover up, indicating that the patrol is good for *Britain First*'s publicity rather than showing support for Jews. While *Britain First* attempts to promote anti-Islamic rhetoric by showing support for Jews, the author shifts this rhetoric and implies that Jews are being used as an excuse to help *Britain First*'s cause. Note that the author's first comment (number 309) generates three likes, while the second comment (number 311) does not generate any likes, suggesting that the first comment was somewhat ambiguous in its meaning. The comment could be taken as sarcasm, but nonetheless another author has asked for further clarification, suggesting that it has been taken as sincere by other users on Facebook. This account shows that while some users claim to be convinced by the solidarity patrol, other users orient to it being a cover up to generate anti-Islamic rhetoric. This extract shows that standing up for the Jewish community has not lost *Britain First* their supporters even if users are not convinced by the message in the solidarity patrol.

The final extract is from the discussion towards the end of the comments, about who *Britain First* will ‘target’ next:

Extract sixteen



The first comment begins with an insult towards *Britain First* as a violent organisation that threatens minority groups. The use of the interrogative question is an explicit threat that Jews will be “next”, after Muslims. ‘Dealing’ in quotation marks implies a challenge to the argument that Muslims are problematic.

The second author in comment 386 explicitly expresses what the first author implicitly suggested, and adds Jews to the threat. Note that both authors refer to “the Muslims” and “the Jews”, a form of othering. The author is orienting to (and glossing over) a common historical anti-Semitic outlook from the far-right that Jews exert control over “Western policy”. The author of comment 386 asking the original author if they are ‘scared’ appears to be mocking the author’s accusation towards *Britain First*.

The extracts in this section have shown opposition towards Jews, invoking historical and religious “evidence”, standard constructions of anti-Semitic discourse. We have seen an author orient to idea that the solidarity patrol is to use the Jewish community to promote good publicity, and the final extract showed a complex combination of opposition to *Britain First* through the use of threats and orientation to common anti-Semitic arguments.

4. Discussion

This research aimed to use Critical Discursive Psychology to analyse the responses to the *Britain First* solidarity patrol from users on Facebook, as well as the discursive construction of in-groups and out-groups. I have demonstrated that comments started in support of both Jews and *Britain First*’s cause, and that users on

Facebook differentiate being Jewish from being British. This mirrored the strategy used by *Britain First* to separate being Jewish and being British as two different identities, with no orientation to the notion that there are British Jews. This construction has nativist connotations, and works to present Jews as not a part of Britain, and thus as outsiders. Authors on Facebook shifted their footing to report how Jews feel and oriented to the idea that Jews will be grateful towards *Britain First* for the solidarity patrol. The supportive comments suggest that Facebook users exhibited concern that Jews are vulnerable and under threat from Islam, and thus *Britain First* have achieved anti-Islamic rhetoric from their supporters.

Next I focused on extracts from authors who were Jewish, expressing gratitude towards *Britain First* for the solidarity patrol. Finally, I discussed the comments that transitioned to disagreement with supporting Jews. This shows that anti-Islamic rhetoric from *Britain First* has changed to anti-Semitic discourse and debates about the contribution that Jews bring to Britain. What is novel about these discussions (and this is also seen in the solidarity patrol itself) are that neither the Charlie Hebdo attack nor the shooting in the Kosher supermarket were mentioned in these accounts, despite the solidarity patrol being a result of both attacks.

Britain First sent out a prejudicial message whilst attempting to position themselves as a tolerant benefactor for the “good” outsider (i.e. Jews) to appear reasonable in their anti-Islamic stance, and thus boost their social capital. *Britain First* managed the tension and ideological dilemma (Billig et al. 1988, 1) of showing support for the Jewish community whilst not positioning themselves as “one of them”. Prior research found the *us versus them* distinction to be used in order to present a group as undeserving of support, but in this case the construction of British Jews in a positive light was for gaining social capital for *Britain First*.

Britain First aimed to achieve opposition to Muslims through their solidarity patrol, but this has also resulted in anti-Semitic discourse, which they have achieved by leaving the commenters to draw their own conclusions. This means that despite not directly attacking two minority groups, both have been targeted in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attack by *Britain First* and by commenters of the Facebook Page. *Britain First* had to manage the dilemma that is common for far-right organisations, of appealing to the mainstream without presenting ideas that will lose them their original supporters. Researchers such as Rhodes (2009, 142) have shown how the British National Party gained support by displaying concerns for British citizens about immigration and ‘Islamification’. Now *Britain First* has progressed to also show concern for other groups being ‘affected’ by Islam.

5. Conclusion

This research has examined the responses by users on Facebook to the *Britain First* solidarity patrol. In the solidarity patrol itself, *Britain First* used the ISIS attack on a Kosher supermarket to create a conspiracy that Jews are in danger, for which *Britain First* blame Muslims. *Britain First* simultaneously showed explicit support for Jews whilst constructing Jews as different from ‘us’, the British. This analysis has shown that the response to *Britain First*’s attempt to align with Jews has resulted in a transition to anti-Semitic discourse. The analysis has also discussed how various social identities in conflict (i.e. Muslims, Jews, British and Islamic extremists) can be constructed in online interaction. The result is that *Britain First* has not only achieved its objective of anti-Islamic discourse, but this has also resulted in the marginalisation of Jews by users on Facebook.

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