

# Incongruous and illegitimate

## Antisemitic and Islamophobic semiotic violence against women in politics in the United Kingdom

Rebecca Kuperberg  
Rutgers University

Violence against women in politics encompasses physical, psychological, economic, sexual and semiotic forms of violence, targeting women because their gender is seen as threatening to hegemonic political norms. Theoretical debates over these categories and empirical applications to global cases often overlook that backgrounds and lived experiences of women in politics can differ considerably. Using the United Kingdom as a case study, in this article I analyze different manifestations of online semiotic violence – violence perpetrated through words and images seeking to render women incompetent and invisible (Krook 2020, 187) – against female, religious-minority politicians. Through a qualitative discursive approach, I identify patterns and strategies of violence in an original dataset of Twitter posts that mention the usernames of seven prominent Muslim and Jewish female politicians. Results show that multiply-marginalized politicians are exposed to both sexist and racist rhetoric online. In this case, semiotic violence functions to render women incompetent using racist disloyalty tropes as well as to render women invisible by invalidating their testimonies of abuse.

**Keywords:** gender and politics, violence against women, social media, British politics

### 1. Background

Scholars and practitioners alike have recently turned their attention to the burgeoning phenomenon of violence against women in politics (VAWIP). Work on VAWIP shows that women in politics are targeted with violence because of their gender and role, which has serious implications for democracy and gender equality. Despite the homogenizing effect of the concept, we know that women in poli-

tics, across identities and contexts, are not targeted with the same levels and types of abuse (Kuperberg 2018). Violence can be better understood within an intersectional framework, wherein sexism cannot be isolated from other forms of discrimination, such as racism and homophobia (see also Kopytowska, this issue 2021).

In March 2019, Tory peer Sayeeda Warsi described “a deep-rooted problem of anti-Muslim comments, Islamophobic comments, [and] racist comments” in the Conservative Party (Sabbagh 2019). In the same vein, in a 2018 speech in the British House of Commons, former MP Luciana Berger said that antisemitism is “more commonplace, is more conspicuous, and is more corrosive” in the Labour Party than ever before (Castle 2018). It was, in part, due to the perceived ubiquity of antisemitism that Berger left the Labour party in February 2019 for a new party, the Independent Group for Change, before eventually losing her seat in the 2019 election.

Prior to the 2019 election, there were 15 Muslim MPs and 20 Jewish MPs in Parliament, constituting only 2% and 3% of all parliamentarians, respectively. Still, antisemitism and Islamophobia are central to contemporary British politics, weaponized against minority-religion politicians and present in abusive rhetoric against many others. Furthermore, antisemitism and Islamophobia are not limited to the major political parties in the U.K. Religious hate crimes in the United Kingdom, according to Home Office and police statistics, are at a record high; Muslims are the targets of half of all religious hate crimes and Jews are the second-most-commonly targeted group (Dearden 2018).

This study is guided by the following questions: given the salience of antisemitism and Islamophobia in the United Kingdom, what kinds of abuse are British political women targeted with? Do abusive tropes levied at religious-minority women MPs incorporate multiple forms of discrimination? How do these abuses seek to exclude women from the public space?

Taking into account the prime role of digital technologies as facilitators of hostility, this research is grounded in a qualitative discursive study of an original Twitter dataset with over 225,000 tweets. The analysis unveiled that abuse mentioning Jewish and Muslim female MPs incorporates Islamophobic and antisemitic rhetoric, alongside and in addition to sexism. There are also important differences between tweets mentioning Muslim and Jewish female MPs in the dataset. Tweets including the username of Jewish MPs are also slightly more likely to mention discrimination – in this case antisemitism – but are less likely to be explicitly antisemitic in rhetoric. Those that include the handle of Muslim MPs are more likely to include Islamophobic rhetoric. Despite their differences, Muslim and Jewish MPs are targeted with some similar tropes, most notably abuse that questions their British loyalties. In addition, tweets seek to delegitimize the experiences of discrimination voiced by religious-minority, female MPs. These

two common patterns in the data – abusive tweets that assert disloyalty and disingenuous claims of abuse – are to be regarded as two forms of semiotic violence against women in politics, aimed at rendering women incompetent and invisible.

In this article, I utilize an intersectionality-inspired analysis, incorporating multiple marginalization to consider how semiotic violence is rooted not only in sexism but in religious intolerance and ethnic racism. Utilizing an intracategorical, intersectional approach (McCall 2005), I focus the analysis on women of minority religions, making visible the ways in which semiotic VAWIP incorporates racist rhetoric.

This paper will proceed as follows: first, I discuss research on VAWIP, with an emphasis on semiotic violence. Second, I provide some background on anti-semitism and Islamophobia in the U.K., particularly as these forms of discrimination are racialized and politicized. Next, I describe the methods utilized to access, sort, and analyze the Twitter data used in this study. Following, I expand on the results of the Twitter analyses and engage in qualitative, discursive analysis identifying two modes through which semiotic violence renders women incompetent and invisible. In presenting and discussing the data, I note the importance of qualitative methods in accurately and appropriately understanding discriminatory, online abuse.

## 2. Semiotic violence against women in politics

Violence against women in politics is a relatively new concept, though it reflects misogynistic violence that has existed for millennia, impacting women who enter the public space (Beard 2017). I define VAWIP as acts or threats of violence that result in physical, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women involved in politics including, but not limited to, political candidates and elected political leaders.<sup>1</sup> This violence can be physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and semiotic (see Krook and Restrepo Sanín 2019; Krook 2020) in nature and is motivated by discrimination, aiming to “maintain structural and gender-based inequalities” (Šimonović 2018) as well as hegemonic political structures. Semiotic violence “is perpetrated through degrading images and sexist language” and serves to render women incompetent and invisible (Krook and Restrepo Sanín 2019, 5; Krook 2020, 187–190).

Politicians and practitioners in Bolivia, South Asia, and Kenya first tracked and conceptualized violence and harassment against politically active women

---

1. This definition is in line with United Nations and scholarly definitions but differentiates between form and harm.

from the late 1990s and 2000s (Krook 2020, 13). A virtual discussion facilitated by the global platform iKNOW Politics in 2007 represented the first transnational exchange on VAWIP (ibid. 20). These early conceptualizations of VAWIP largely adapted the existing United Nations typology of violence against women, outlined in the 1993 *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (ibid. 17). This defined violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women”.

Research on both violence against women in elections and VAWIP has incorporated and expanded on this existing typology. In the first English-language scholarly article on VAWIP, Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2016, 138) argued for a conceptualization that includes physical, psychological, economic, and symbolic violence. Krook (2017) had replaced *symbolic* in recent works and added *sexual* violence to the typology. These resulting forms of violence – physical, psychological, economic and sexual – are now the standard for most scholarly and practitioner research on VAWIP, including online VAWIP (e.g. Zeiter et al. 2019; *Violence against Women in Elections Online* 2019). However, in their recent work, Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2019) and Krook (2020) argued that we should consider a new category – semiotic violence – in analyses of VAWIP.

Semiotic violence, though not restricted to online spaces, is particularly apt for describing online violence due to the emphasis on text and images. Krook (2020, 187) proposes that acts of semiotic VAWIP “are less about attacking particular women directly than about shaping public perceptions about the validity of women’s political participation more broadly”. The public and performative nature of online abuse, though often directed at particular politicians, influences the views of a wider public and seeks to delegitimize women as political actors (see also Esposito, this issue 2021).

Semiotic VAWIP has at least two modes: rendering women incompetent and rendering women invisible. Acts of semiotic violence render women incompetent by “emphasizing ‘role incongruity’ between being a woman and being a leader” (Krook 2020, 187). Perpetrators of this mode of semiotic violence objectify women, emphasize their looks or sexuality, and describe them as bad mothers or failed women. In particular, one strategy that underscores role incongruity for women in politics is disqualification, when opponents mobilize to find information on a political woman to disqualify her from political life. Importantly, these strategies are distinct from those that seek to disqualify a politician based on their policy views or previous political activities. Instead, this scrutiny and criticism disproportionately emphasizes the personal lives and sexuality of political women (Komath 2014). For women in influential political positions, such as executives, the role incongruity between political leadership and gender is especially visi-

ble and thus, prone to greater backlash (Rheault, Rayment, and Musulan 2019). Though fewer authors explore these dynamics for politicians whose identities span multiple axes of marginalization, Sanbonmatsu (2008) and Shames (2015) note that harassment and incivility – and their resulting deterrence effects – can be especially severe for women of color in the U.S.

Rendering women invisible, which aims to symbolically annihilate women in politics, underscores that men are “the only legitimate participants” of political activity (Krook 2020, 190). Illustrative examples of the second mode of semiotic VAWIP, rendering women invisible, generally revolve around offline spaces. Turning off a congresswoman’s microphone (Restrepo-Sanín 2018), interrupting women politicians (Och 2019) and mistaking Black women MPs for parliamentary staff (Cocozza 2019) – among other examples – are in-person acts. These incidents are often described as microaggressions: everyday acts motivated by (sometimes implicit) discrimination that invalidate individuals based on their affiliation with a group (Sue 2010). Microaggressions and acts that aim to render women invisible are not one-off events. Instead, they together constitute patterns of behavior that demonstrate to political women that they are not fully welcome in formal politics. Women are also rendered invisible when their experiences of abuse are discredited or delegitimized, as is the case of the religious-minority female MPs in this study. Women speak about their experiences of abuse, at professional and personal risk, and experience further violence when their words are ignored or, as illustrated here in the data, delegitimized. This form of violence mirrors, but is not identical to, the double assault survivors of sexual assault experience: first, the assault itself; second, ignorance and injustice (Brody 2011).

The delegitimation of experiences of abuse is a form of testimonial injustice, “wherein a speaker receives an unfair deficit of credibility” (Fricker 2007, 9). We can specify this further as a form of testimonial quieting, which starts from the work of Patricia Hill Collins (2000). Collins notes that due to structures of discrimination in the U.S., Black women are considered less credible and will “systematically be undervalued as a knower” (Dotson 2011, 242). Though national-level women politicians have relative power vis-à-vis their political positions, and thus are not the subject of most theories of epistemic violence, theories of testimonial injustice and quieting can shed light on the power disparities within political bodies. Research shows that female leaders are perceived as less credible than men (Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky 1992) and face prejudice due to the perceived incongruity between leadership and gender stereotypes (Rudman et al. 2012). Most research on public leadership emphasizes one axis of discrimination, most commonly gender (Breslin, Pandey, and Riccucci 2017). Although stereotypical effects are not consistent across groups (Rosette et al. 2016) or contexts, multiply marginalized leaders can experience unique and compounded bias. Applying

this research to politics, multiply marginalized politicians are likely perceived as less credible, and less worthy of belief, than their colleagues. For example, Meer (2013b, 511) finds that Muslim minority accounts of victimhood and discrimination are specifically criticized and discredited.

Both modes of semiotic violence, rendering women invisible and rendering women incompetent, can be understood through an intersectional, or intersectional-type, framework. Intersectionality is considered the most important theoretical contribution of women's studies (McCall 2005). The term intersectionality is attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) who pioneered the concept using court cases in the United States to demonstrate how race and gender are construed as exclusive categories of identity in the law, disadvantaging Black women who experience sexism, racism, and classism simultaneously and interrelatedly. Before intersectionality, the notion of multiple or multiplicative discrimination was described as “interlocking systems” of oppression (Razack 1988, 13), multiple jeopardy (King 1988) and matrices of domination (Collins 2007). Described as a buzzword, theory, paradigm, and framework, intersectionality asks us to consider the power hierarchies implicit in categories of analysis (see also Esposito, this issue 2021).

An analysis of VAWIP inspired by intersectionality, or at a minimum one that dehomogenizes the category woman and considers multiple marginalization, takes as a starting point that women are not a uniform group. Sexism does not operate unilaterally. Though axes of discrimination differ across contexts – geographic location, workplace and time – sexism acts in concert with other forms of discrimination, such as antisemitism and Islamophobia in the British case. Scholars and practitioners have previously highlighted the role of race and ethnicity (Dhrodia 2017), sexuality (Amnesty International 2018) and ability (Zeiter et al. 2019) in studies of online VAWIP.

### 3. Antisemitism and Islamophobia in the United Kingdom

Religious discrimination is rooted in violent and boundary-enforcing nationalism, which serves to exclude individuals based on their affiliation, or presumed affiliation, with non-hegemonic religions (Kushner 2013, 445–447).

Race and racism are important specifically in the consideration of anti-Semitic and Islamophobic discrimination because it is through these forms of discrimination that Jews and Muslims are construed as racial groups (Meer 2013b, 502). Anti-religious discrimination does not sufficiently encapsulate the racialization resulting from antisemitism and Islamophobia (ibid. 503). Meer (2013a, 388) illustrates that religious minorities were racialized historically, including in Eliz-

abethan England, leading him to argue that race “was co-constituted with religion”. He makes the case both for the study of antisemitism and Islamophobia as racism as well as the joint study of both forms of discrimination (p.392). A subset of scholars argue that antisemitism and Islamophobia are forms of *new racism*, specifically a cultural racism based not on physiological markers but immutable cultural characteristics (Linehan 2012, 376).<sup>2</sup>

In U.K. policy, both antisemitism and Islamophobia have been defined as forms of racism. All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG) on British Muslims and against Antisemitism have published several reports over the last decade providing key definitions and statistics. In the 2006 Report of the AAPG Inquiry into Antisemitism, the group upholds the Macpherson report (1999) which states that the racist nature of an act is defined by the victim, not the perpetrator. This parallels a victimological approach often adopted by feminist researchers of cyberviolence. The report authors conceptualize as anti-Semitic: “any remark, insult or act the purpose or effect of which is to violate a Jewish person’s dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him,” utilizing the language of the 1976 Race Relations Act. The report further distinguishes between anti-Semitic incidents such as acts of violence and abuse against Jews or their property and “antisemitism in public and private discourse.” The APPG on British Muslims released a report in late 2018 entitled “Islamophobia Defined”. Like the definition on antisemitism, the working definition of Islamophobia, put forward by the APPG, focuses on racism. The definition is as follows: “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.”

Intersectionality scholars share this framing of antisemitism and Islamophobia as forms of racism in the UK (Knapp 2005; Prins 2006). Prins (2006, 280) in identifying the primary differences between intersectionality in U.S. and U.K. contexts, describes that British scholars reject conflation of race with an American conception of racism so as not to ignore “the various ways in which Irish people, Jews or refugees from the Third World have been negatively racialized and subjected to racism.” Where some might critique the continual addition of intersectional categories, the etc. problem according to Judith Butler (1990, 143), in the

---

2. Importantly, other scholars push back on the comparability of antisemitism and Islamophobia in the British case as well as the conflation of racism and religious intolerance (Hargreaves and Staetsky 2019, 4; Klug 2014, 443).

British context, an analysis of antisemitism and Islamophobia falls within the traditional race-gender-class intersectionality triad.<sup>3</sup>

These contemporary understandings of antisemitism and Islamophobia are rooted in long histories of discrimination against Jews and Muslims in the U.K. Legal discrimination from 17 to 19 centuries excluded religious minorities from “full participation in civic society” (Weller 2006, 298). Antisemitism increased between the First and Second World Wars (Linehan 2012, 366) and, more recently, reports of Islamophobic violence escalated following the first Gulf War, September 11, and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (Cole 2015, 27; Weller 2006, 313). Over the last decade, the rise of antisemitism and Islamophobia has been a common discursive theme in scholarship, journalism, and practitioner reports with emphasis placed on antisemitism in the Labour Party, Islamophobia in the Conservative party, and rising discrimination during and following the Brexit vote (Casciani 2018; Swami et al. 2017).

Though both groups can be understood as racialized and insights can be derived from comparative studies (Meer 2013b), Jews and Muslims in the United Kingdom do not face identical discriminations. In some instances, a reduction of racism against one group is associated with a rise against the other (Burke 2018, 365–366). In comparing forms of antisemitism and Islamophobia, Linehan (2012, 383) finds that both Muslims and Jews are targeted with similar forms of conspiratorial, cultural, and religious discrimination, but antisemitism can take an economic form that is not mirrored in Islamophobic tropes. This paper touches on several of these differences, including the violent categorization of Muslim Brits as terrorists and distinct antisemitic tropes pertaining to wealth and class.

In addition, and of particular usefulness in understanding VAWIP, both antisemitism and Islamophobia exclude Jews and Muslims from the public space. However, law and policy definitions classifying Jews as racial minorities were codified earlier than similar milestones for Muslim Brits. In the U.K. and broader European context, anti-Semitic tropes against Jews often emphasize their assimilation, contributing to discriminatory conspiracies about power and infiltration, while reports of violence against Muslims indicate that Muslims are more often subject to violence when they identify as visibly Muslim, not conforming to hegemonic norms of attire and public presentation (Meer 2013b, 508; Zempi 2019). The Missing Muslim Report (2018) adds, “Muslim women can often face a compounded element of discrimination, owing to their religion, gender and ostensible identity markers such as the headscarf (*hijab*) and face-veil (*niqab*).”

---

3. Even if antisemitism and Islamophobia are not sufficiently captured by racism, many scholars have argued for an expansion of intersectionality to include other salient forms of discrimination, including homophobia, transphobia, ableism and others.



Among these differences, it is important to note that Jews and Muslims are not homogenous groups, as illustrated by established and new Jewish immigrants to Britain in the early 20th century (Meer 2013a, 391), the historic political division of Jewish communities and the privilege of some families vis-à-vis others (e.g. the Rothschilds) (Topolski 2018, 2184), and the discursive division between good and bad Muslims in policy and research (Lacey 2014, 95; Mamdani 2004). Thus, in addition to the different forms of antisemitism and Islamophobia, multiple discriminations also differ at the individual level.

Data for this present analysis was gathered during a tense period concerning anti-religious discrimination in British politics. By March 1, 2019 eight Labour and three Conservative MPs had left their parties and joined a new Independent Group, later named Change UK. Several Labour MPs, including Luciana Berger and Joan Ryan, indicated that they left Labour over ongoing anti-Jewish racism (Yorke 2019). Defecting MPs were particularly critical of the then-leader Jeremy Corbyn for both his own comments and actions as well as for the Labour Party's treatment of antisemitism within its ranks ("A guide to Labour Party antisemitism claims" 2019). Prior to and following his election as Conservative leader, Boris Johnson was rebuked for a series of high profile Islamophobic comments, including describing women wearing niqab and burka as letter boxes and bank robbers (Proctor 2019).

With the growing use and ubiquity of social media, online Islamophobia and antisemitism are growing concerns in the United Kingdom. The majority of Islamophobic incidents reported to Tell MAMA, an organization and reporting center that monitors anti-Muslim attacks, were online and 58% of all incidents were against women, 80% of whom identify as visibly Muslim (Feldman and Littler 2014). Similarly, manifestations of antisemitism have changed with the proliferation of online spaces. According to Community Security Trust (CST) incidents of social media antisemitism have tripled since 2008; in-person violence has also increased. Anywhere from one-quarter to one-fifth of incidents reported to the CST are from social media, mostly from Twitter. A 2018 report found that antisemitic comments spiked following allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party (Burnap and Williams 2018, 5). CST has also found that female Jewish MPs were targeted 15% more than their male colleagues by far-right website users (Sommers 2018).

It is, therefore, not surprising that when the then-Deputy Speaker Lindsay Hoyle commissioned a team to monitor threats and abuse among MPs on social media in 2016, he concluded that MPs are facing increased social media threats and abuse. Specifically, Jewish and Muslim women MPs face the greatest quantity of abuse ("Jewish and Muslim women MPs 'face most abuse'" 2017). Though online racist abuse is growing more common in the U.K., abuse against MPs is

particularly visible and impactful, with consequences for governance, representation and democracy.

Given the salience of Islamophobia and antisemitism in the United Kingdom, including in the formal political sphere, the abuse levied at Muslim and Jewish MPs provides an opportunity to understand how multiply marginalized politicians are subject to distinct forms of semiotic violence. This background guides the research questions of this study: how are sexist, antisemitic, and Islamophobic tropes present in abuse received by British, Jewish and Muslim politicians? How do these abuses seek to exclude women from the public space? The following sections seek to address these questions.

## 4. Data and methods

### 4.1 Gathering data

While only about one-third of the Internet-using British population is on Twitter (eMarketer 2018), the platform is utilized by most political figures, journalists, and others involved in the broader field of politics. While not entirely representative of the British population, Twitter is useful for analyses of political hate speech.

With that in mind, this study analyzes 225,000 tweets that tag seven, female, Jewish and Muslim politicians: Luciana Berger, Lucy Frazer, Ruth Smeeth, Nusrat Ghani, Yasmin Qureshi, Tulip Siddiq, and Sayeeda Warsi.<sup>4</sup> The former three are Jewish and the latter four are Muslim; all have publicly shared their religious affiliations. I started the selection of women MPs with a case study on Luciana Berger since she is the subject of significant antisemitic abuse. In the same vein, I also included Tory Lord Sayeeda Warsi. Like Berger, who was a member of the Labour Party and openly critical of antisemitism within her party ranks, Warsi publicly denounced Islamophobia within the Conservative Party, prompting both public praise and condemnation. Warsi is the only politician in the sample who, at the time of data collection, was not an elected MP.<sup>5</sup> However, as a member of the House of Lords, she is still a national-level, political figure.

---

4. This means that the tweet includes the handle or username of the MP not only the mentions of their names.

5. While this study was in progress, Luciana Berger left the Labour Party and joined an independent party. Several months later, she joined the Liberal Democratic Party and ran as a Liberal Democrat for the 2019 election; she was not reelected. Ruth Smeeth also lost her election in 2019. However, all the data for this analysis were collected while both Berger and Smeeth were serving as MPs.

Following the selection of Berger and Warsi, I used a modified random selection for the remaining five MPs in the dataset, making sure to select MPs that were either Jewish or Muslim from both Labour and Conservative Parties. The MPs selected differ by party, position, time in parliament and Twitter followers.<sup>6</sup> Table 1, below, lists these differences by MP. Due to the number of tweets directed at Luciana Berger, I ran a separate stream<sup>7</sup> for tweets mentioning her Twitter handle.

**Table 1.** MPs selected for dataset (2019)

MP name	Religion	Age	Party	Position	Time in Parl (yrs)	Twitter followers	Number of tweets in dataset
Luciana Berger	Jewish	37	Labour; Liberal Democrat	MP; Shadow Minister Mental Health ('15-'16)	9	108k	115,966
Lucy Frazer	Jewish	46	Conservative	MP	4	4,299	9,824
Ruth Smeeth	Jewish	39	Labour	MP	4	16.9k	18,572
Nusrat Ghani	Muslim	46	Conservative	MP; Undersecretary for Transport; Assist Whip	4	12.8k	6,384
Yasmin Qureshi	Muslim	55	Labour	MP	2.5	18.3k	13,425
Tulip Siddiq	Muslim	36	Labour	MP	4	113k	9,068
Sayeeda Warsi	Muslim	49	Conservative	Member of House of Lords	12	158k	54,320

6. Which can be understood as a proxy for prominence and name recognition.

7. If I had not separately streamed tweets with Berger's handle, I would have overwhelmed the sample thus limiting the representation from the other MPs. As noted in the final two columns, the number of followers did not correlate with the number of tweets. Tweets with Berger's handle were greater than the number of other tweets combined, even though Tulip Siddiq has a *greater* number of followers than Berger. As such, name recognition and Twitter activity are not perfectly correlated in this sample.

Using streaming API via #TAGS, I continuously scraped public tweets that included the Twitter usernames of the politicians listed above, with data pulls taking place every hour, from January 29 to March 10, 2019. Though some studies (Bardall et al. 2019) utilize politicians' names (mentions), rather than their usernames (tags), tweets that include the Twitter username of the MP are either (a) tweets in response to a particular MP or group of MPs or (b) separate, user-generated tweets in which the user purposefully *tags* the MP. Generating tweets with this model serves an important function: an MP (or their staff) is much more likely to see a tweet that includes the MP's username. We can, therefore, presume that users that send hostile tweets and tag an MP are more interested in the MP seeing the tweet and being harmed<sup>8</sup> by its contents.

## 4.2 Procedure of analysis

I utilized a multi-part analysis to manageably understand the data I had collected. Several studies of online VAWIP have utilized violent keywords as a means of mining, or combing through, large amounts of social media data (e.g. Bardall et al. 2018; Esposito and Zollo, this issue 2021; Zeiter et al. 2019). I combined inductive and deductive approaches, combining two existing lists of discriminatory keywords, then adding to those lists based on insights gleaned from in-depth analysis of the data. To start with, I combined antisemitic and Islamophobic slurs, found in the online Racial Slur Database<sup>9</sup> and the sixteen most common online hate speech words as identified by the Anti-Defamation League. I then read 1,000 random tweets selected from across the multiple data pulls. From these, I identified several keywords in antisemitic and Islamophobic tweets that were absent from the existing hate speech wordlists, such as Soros, agent or burka. While not inherently offensive, these words were recurrent and central to the discriminatory messages in several tweets. During the initial data mining process, related keywords were added. For example, a tweet referencing Soros also included Rothschild as an antisemitic slur, prompting me to add the latter to this keyword list. The final list – including both keywords from the existing lists as well as those generated during analysis – contained 189 keywords, which included sexist slurs (e.g. bitch), racist insults, and generally abusive words. Results are based on min-

---

8. I use the term “being harmed” here in reference to definitions of VAWIP and violence.

9. Very little information exists about this site and source, but it includes a disclaimer that its entries are meant to be a source of ‘humor or information.’ Due to its open-source nature, it includes both recognizable and in-group slurs, making it useful as a basis for analysis. The Racial Slur database keywords were not prevalent in the data but provided a means of identifying additional tweets.

ing all tweet samples with all 189 keywords from my custom list. If a keyword generated less than 250 tweets, I read all of them; otherwise, I read a random sample.

Finally, in order to conduct a more in-depth, discursive analysis of strategies and patterns of abuse, I randomly downsampled the database. I looked for patterns among this smaller selection of abusive tweets of 536 tweets, classified discriminatory rhetoric, and, where necessary, looked back at the original tweet for context. In very few cases, I read additional tweets by a single tweeter to better determine if the tone of the tweet was serious or sarcastic. I classified tweets by the form of abuse present: general, racism, sexism, and multiple forms of discrimination.<sup>10</sup> *General abuse* includes hostility that is not based on an identity or protected class. *Racism* includes abuse that is derogatory on the basis of ethnic or religious identity and stereotypes. *Sexism* classifies abuse that is hostile and invokes gendered norms and stereotypes. Finally, tweets that were classified as *Multiple* were those that, a single tweet, incorporated multiple stereotypes, most commonly racism and sexism. In close reading, I considered the intersectional nature of the discourses and rhetoric used throughout various abusive tweets. From this close reading, two themes emerged: alleging disloyalty and delegitimizing testimonies of abuse.

### 4.3 Theoretical framework

I use a critical discursive approach and an intersectional analysis to examine power hierarchies established and reestablished through discriminatory language. In particular, I draw on feminist critical discourse analysis for its potential to illustrate “the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities” (Lazar 2007, 142). A feminist critical discourse analysis also overcomes some constraints of algorithmic analysis. For example, algorithms are often limited in their ability to distinguish between serious and sarcastic or humorous tweets and this can lead to the incorrect categorization of results. Recent work exposing algorithmic bias, particularly emphasizing gender and race (Criado-Perez 2019; Noble 2018) highlights limitations with machine learning and big N analysis. Big N analyses may be reproducing, rather than uncovering, the biases prevalent in online data. Remaining cognizant of context and contextualized structures of power can contribute to more accurate, as well as more feminist, analyses of social media abuse.

---

10. This classification was based on previous work (Kuperberg 2018).

## 4.4 Limitations

The methods selected for this analysis have several limitations. First, I did not intend to count all incidents of online abuse in the sample; my methods reflect this choice. Second, for different reasons, not all Twitter data is accessible. Also, direct messages, which are a key source of online violence, are not public. I utilize public tweets because they are accessible, access to these tweets presents fewer ethical concerns, and, importantly, because public messages of hate can have an impact beyond the elected official, influencing constituents and the general public. Finally, and relatedly, some public data is reported and removed from the platform. This skews the data slightly, as the most abusive tweets are inaccessible. Despite this bias, reporting and removing tweets is a sign that measures to reduce hate speech on platforms are working. Through my analysis of the data, I see remnants of previous violent tweets; tweets in which users respond to and condemn violent tweets indicate that these tweets were previously on the platform.

## 5. Results and discussion

### 5.1 Overview

There are two major ways that antisemitism and Islamophobia are presented in the data: (1) approximately<sup>11</sup> 8.8% of tweets are abusive, incorporating Islamophobic and antisemitic discrimination and (2) tweets discuss allegations of discrimination, approximately 20.7% of the sample. Broadly, tweets referencing Jewish MPs were slightly more likely to take the latter form, mentioning antisemitism and the debates surrounding antisemitism in the UK. 18.5% of sample posts directed at Jewish MPs and 17.2% of those directed at Muslim MPs, were about abuse. In comparison, tweets directed at the Muslim MPs in the dataset were less likely to discuss Islamophobia broadly and more likely to take the former form, including Islamophobic tropes directly. 10.5% of tweets directed at Muslim MPs, and 7.2% of tweets directed at Jewish MPs, were coded as abusive

Through a bottom-up, data driven broad taxonomy, tweets were classified by form of abuse. Figure 1 illustrates that minority-religion, women MPs are not uniformly targeted by discriminatory abuse: general abuse, racism, sexism, and multiple forms of discrimination. Other studies find that male MPs are targeted with general abuse – abuse that is not identity-based – more than their female

---

11. This estimate is based on a random sample of 1,000 posts. Further numeric data will also be based on this random sample, unless otherwise noted.

colleagues (Berry, Bouka, and Kamuru 2017; Brechenmacher 2017; Ward and McLoughlin 2020); general abuse makes up the smallest proportion of abuse in this sample. Tweets directed at all women in the sample disproportionately included racist language, either on its own or in conjunction with other forms of abuse (primarily gender). Berger and Muslim female MPs were also targeted with comparatively more tweets that contain multiple forms of discrimination while Frazer and Smeeth were more likely to receive *either* racist *or* sexist abuse.

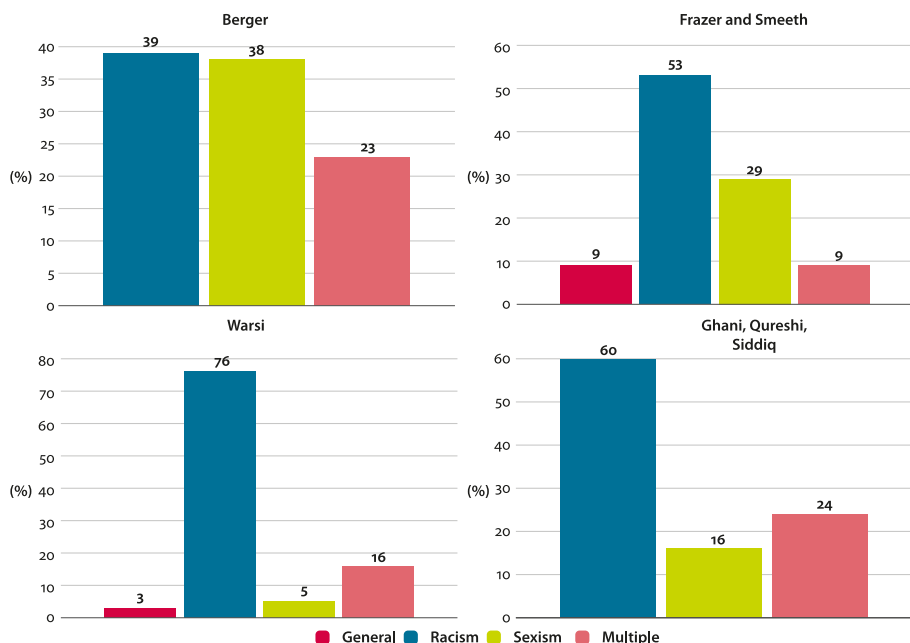


Figure 1. Forms of discrimination

Despite some differences in the forms of discriminatory abuse addressed at these politicians, the data shares two key characteristics. First, 3.5% of all posts, and approximately 40% of tweets coded as abusive, questioned the MP's loyalties. These tweets invoked distinct Islamophobic and antisemitic tropes depending on the identity of the politician, but with a similar effect: suggesting that the MP's gender and religious identity make her unfit for political office. The MPs were primarily targeted with racism – used here as a category that includes ethnic racism, antisemitism, and Islamophobia – and sexism. Sexist language includes descriptions of MPs' clothing, sexist slurs, and comments on the MPs' sexualities. In other cases, the tweets incorporated multiple forms of discrimination, almost always gender and racism. This includes referring to a Muslim MP as a “terrorist-

supporting bitch” and a “Pakistani whore doing politics.”<sup>12</sup> While strategies of rendering women incompetent often incorporate sexist slurs, these examples of online abuse add antisemitic and Islamophobic tropes, indicating their targeted nature.

Second, users respond to MP claims of abuse with incredulity, suggesting that the MP is lying about her experiences with online and offline abuse. Approximately 6.6% of posts in the sample sought to delegitimize MPs’ claims of discrimination and abuse. These tweets, though less likely to be traditionally understood as abusive or violent, are a form of testimonial injustice, invisibilizing women’s experiences and quieting their voices. These types of tweets illustrate how semiotic violence against women in politics not only utilizes sexism but incorporates other forms of discrimination in an attempt to render religious-minority women incompetent and invisible in the public sphere.

## 5.2 Rendering women incompetent

Rendering women incompetent, as a mode of semiotic violence against women in politics, attempts to illustrate role incongruity by asserting that qualities attributed to women are not the same as the qualities attributed to good politicians. Women in this sample are not immune from sexist abuse. However, as religious minority MPs, they were also subject to Islamophobic and antisemitic abuse that sought to render them incompetent as a function of their religious and ethnic identities. Luciana Berger, for example, was tagged in the following tweet:

- (1) The peoples vote was held in 2016. The people voted to leave the EU. I suggest you listen to the voters in your Northern seats outside Liverpool. If your party betrays Brexit. You will be buried at the next election. You Soros funded, middle class tits.

This tweet begins with policy-related disapproval. Policy-based and political disagreement, online and offline, is a fundamental part of democratic activity. However, this tweet turns violent, and violently antisemitic and sexist. First, by describing that should Berger “betray Brexit,” she will be “buried,” the poster of this tweet is using physically threatening language to express their disapproval. Burying a candidate is not uncommon phrasing and does not rise to the level of an imminent physical threat. However, unlike in *to bury a treasure* or *to bury the lede*, bury in this context evokes physical violence and death. Second, by suggesting that Berger is funded by George Soros, the tweeter is referencing a common

---

12. Both “bitch” and “whore” are two common misogynist terms on Twitter, used to regulate and silence women, including those who violate societal norms (Levey 2018).



antisemitic conspiracy theory, namely that Soros is a “puppet master,” controlling global finance and politics (Grassegger 2019). By insinuating that Berger is financed by Soros, the tweeter is implicitly stating that she is corrupted, and her loyalty is not to her constituents. This dual loyalty is not, deviating from the former part of the tweet, a function of public policy but instead, a function of her Jewish identity and connection to Soros. By further including “middle class” and the derogatory, gendered synecdoche “tits” to describe Berger, the tweeter seems to suggest that her class and gender status are undesirable and incompatible with good political behavior. This claim of disloyalty seeks to render Berger incompetent because of her intersecting gender, class, and religious identities.

Other tweets more strongly imply the dual loyalty of MPs in the sample. For example, in a tweet that tags both Ruth Smeeth and Luciana Berger, a tweeter writes:

- (2) This makes me piss my pants. Never mind make me cry. How the Fuck do Foreign powers infiltrate our politics? Money? Israel and the Lobby? Very disturbing and poor indeed.

Here, the tweeter adds a link to a YouTube video and claims that Berger and Smeeth are agents through which foreign powers – in this case Israel – have political control within the U.K. Linking both politicians to Israel and assuming that they are disloyal to the United Kingdom, not only allowing but abetting foreign interference, is a form of semiotic violence, attempting to illustrate incompetence for political office through disloyalty. Similarly, another tweeter writes:

- (3) All MPs who represent a foreign nation should be thrown out of Parliament. Be it USA, Russia, Israel or Saudi. MP PRIMARY DUTY IS TO PUT BRITAIN FIRST. Kings were beheaded for not doing this.

Claiming that these Jewish, female MPs are infiltrators in British politics indicates not only that they do not belong there, but also that they are dangerous. The call to put “Britain first” could be a reference to the U.K.’s far-right nationalist party, whose leaders have made highly-public antisemitic and Islamophobic statements. Finally, finishing the tweet by writing that kings have been beheaded for similarly “treasonous” activity suggests that the MPs – less powerful than a historic king – should be removed from political office at best and at worst, physically assaulted or killed.

Muslim MPs in the dataset were also targeted with allegations of disloyalty through the invocation of Islamophobic tropes. One user describes Yasmin Qureshi as a “Paid agent of Pakistan.” Another tweeter, also tagging Qureshi, writes: “Hope the real Brits kick you out of there to your native place in Pakistan or Bangladesh.” The tweeters of these abusive posts claim that Qureshi, who was

born in Pakistan, is not a real Brit because she was born outside of the country. By describing Qureshi as an agent, the tweeter is alleging her allegiance is to the Pakistani state. Further, in a number of tweets, Qureshi is described as “porkistani”; this slur incorporates the word pork – a food that is not halal and thus should not be consumed by those who follow Muslim dietary law – to transform Qureshi’s heritage into an Islamophobic and offensive slur. These tweeters do not only try to demonstrate that Qureshi is an unsuitable politician due to both her religion and ethnicity but also use racist language to cause additional harm and offense. Calling on her Pakistani heritage and separating her from supposedly legitimate British citizens suggests that Qureshi, and any Brit with heritage outside of the U.K., is not truly British. This post, therefore, underscores racist and exclusionary claims of British nationalism, semiotic violence seeking to establish incongruity between Qureshi’s identities and her political office.

Another tweet that uses racist tropes to establish role incongruity and disloyalty reads as follows:

- (4) You live in a white christian country there is no ethno state or christian only country for us THIS IS OUR HOME. Islam is totally counter to our values If you don’t fucking like it go to Saudi and live amongst only MUSLIMS if your religion is so fucking sacred 2 u.

In this tweet, which tags Sayeeda Warsi, the tweeter suggests that as a non-white non-Christian, Warsi does not belong to the UK because British and Muslim values are incompatible. In these cases, tweeters go beyond arguing that Muslim MPs do not belong to politics; these Twitter users are claiming that they do not belong to the U.K. at all.

In addition to these claims of disloyalty and foreignness, some tweets link Muslim, female MPs with terrorist activity. These tweets suggest that Muslim MPs are not only illegitimate, but also dangerous; they are not only loyal to other countries but are actively seeking violence in the U.K., their country of citizenship and public office. In a tweet referencing Qureshi, a user writes, “@YasminQureshiMP. With a rep like you in the British parliament, who needs a jihadi?” Other tweets describe Qureshi as a “terrorist supporter MP”. In a tweet that is both Islamophobic and sexist, a tweeter writes: “@SayeedaWarsi we will fuck Pakistan and Pakistani terrorists that’s it.” Describing Muslim MPs as terrorists is an extreme and explicit example of semiotic violence, rendering women incompetent through misinformation about their loyalties and political goals. Describing an MP as a terrorist in a public tweet, reaching a large audience, can also justify – or in the case of the last tweet, threaten – future violence, online and offline.

### 5.3 Rendering women invisible

Research on online VAWIP focuses primarily on threats and efforts to render women incompetent, using gendered slurs and image manipulation (Krook 2020, 200). However, women can also be rendered invisible online, including through overt acts such as denial-of-service attacks or online violence so severe that individuals have no choice but to leave a platform. In the Twitter sample under scrutiny, I found numerous tweets that delegitimized female MPs who discussed their experiences, in particular their experiences with abuse. This, I argue, represents another form of semiotic violence, rendering women invisible by discriminatorily denying their testimony and undermining their deserved credibility.

In the case of VAWIP, acts of testimonial quieting (Dotson 2011) discourage female politicians – who already have ample reason not to discuss their experiences with VAWIP – to be open about the violence they face. Undermining their credibility, buoyed by the broader credibility deficit women face, can also have implications for governance, representation, and reelection. As with acts that rendered women incompetent, the minority-religious female MPs in this sample were targeted with tweets that delegitimized their experiences both as women in politics and as Jewish and Muslim women.

For example, Sayeeda Warsi and Luciana Berger were, at the time of data collection, the most vocal critics of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party and antisemitism in the Labour Party, respectively. Both women were tagged in tweets that questioned and critiqued their accounts of discrimination. For example, approximately 20% of tweets tagging Luciana Berger in the sample include the term antisemitism, about 20,000 tweets. In a random sample of 100 of these tweets, I found that 29 informatively discussed antisemitism allegations, 35 were in support of Berger and indicated empathy for her experiences, and the remaining 36 questioned the veracity of Berger's calls of antisemitism. Examples of this third category include:

- (5) Sick of sight and sound @lucianaberger. Former Director LFI [Labour Friends of Israel], utterly false, hard as nails and practised liar. Been 8½ months pregnant for over three months and still putting herself and her lies about.
- (6) You are a liar.....like police protection at Conference porkie.....but since you know that, being parachuted into Liverpool last time, won't mean a thing next GE [General Election] and you're not the candidate.... That's why this continual crap of AS [antisemitism].....go find a job

Many tweets, including post 6 – “you are a liar....like police protection at Conference porkie” – questioned photographic evidence that Berger attended the 2018 Labour Party conference with police protection, following a police-led risk

assessment (“Jeremy Corbyn” 2018). This tweet seeks to legitimize Berger on account of her intersecting identities as a Jewish woman. In these tweets, the denial of Berger’s need for security, related to threats she received, is compounded by gender-based and religious discrimination. In the former tweet, Berger is assumed to be lying about the length of her pregnancy; other abusive tweets claimed that Berger was using her pregnancy as a means of fallaciously attracting sympathy. The latter tweet describes Berger’s broader experiences of antisemitism as “crap,” invalidating her past and future experiences of abuse. This invalidation aims to cast doubt over the legitimacy of these claims. This invalidation is a form of semiotic violence, testimonial quieting which aims to make Berger’s experiences invisible.

In the case of Sayeeda Warsi, users also questioned her credibility, as a woman and a Muslim woman of minority ethnicity. In one tweet, a tweeter writes:

- (7) Some people use their religion or ethnicity to stir up the shit and play the victim, you are certainly one of that type and should be ashamed, but of course you won’t be.

Here, Warsi’s religious identity is construed as a discrediting attribute, rather than a source of her expertise on public Islamophobia. She is accused of “playing the victim”, seeking empathy or attention for her claims rather than credited for sharing her experiences which exposed her to additional semiotic violence. Compounding this narrative that Warsi is unworthy of belief and sympathy, another tweeter writes:

- (8) This bitter woman should be ignored.

Calling a woman “bitter” is a sexist trope that diminishes the legitimacy of women’s anger. Here, this tweeter is instrumentalizing this sexist trope to discredit Warsi and particularly, her calls to change the Islamophobic culture of the Conservative Party.

In addition to Warsi and Berger, other MPs were tagged in racist tweets that sought to silence them. In two illustrative tweets directed at Tulip Siddiq and Yasmin Qureshi, tweeters write:

- (9) @YasminQureshiMP shut up Jihadi liar !!
- (10) @TulipSiddiq @HackneyAbbott You are more privileged than most white people. Don’t even try to talk about “muh oppression”.

These tweets, by bringing in tropes about terrorism and using the phrasing “muh oppression” – evoking ignorance – combine both modes of semiotic violence, both rendering women incompetent and invisible, by using racist slurs to silence their voices.

Skepticism over claims of abuse goes beyond simply seeking factual data. Disbelief and incredulity in themselves are violent, with roots in offline structures of racism and sexism. Sexism is prevalent in these delegitimizing tweets, *bitter woman* as an example. In addition, the racist and sexist tropes interwoven in disbelief over antisemitic and Islamophobic claims underscore the intersecting discriminations converging in these tweets. Both the broader corpus as well as individual tweets reflect intersecting forms of discrimination, incorporating both sexist and racist tropes. As we seek ways to mitigate VAWIP, pervasive disbelief over public claims may prove an obstacle, even a backlash, to increased reporting by historically underrepresented politicians.

## 6. Conclusions

Results of the analysis show that sexism alone is insufficient to understand online VAWIP, particularly VAWIP targeting multiply marginalized political women. Similarly, these results illustrate the appropriateness of a multi-method approach – in this study, combining data mining, descriptive statistics and qualitative discursive analysis – on the study of online abuse. A one-size-fits-all analysis does not sufficiently account for nuance, context and multiple categorization in understanding online abuse. Big N and machine learning analyses can reproduce or heighten biases in data analysis, which hinders a critical examination of discrimination. Existing databases, whether keyword banks or software and code packages, are incomplete for work that is specific to context and particular individuals. Ultimately, feminist analyses of online abuse are strengthened by the inclusion of qualitative methods, both alone and in conjunction with big N and quantitative studies.

Just as forms of violence cannot be fully understood from a unilateral focus on sexism, the impact of online VAWIP cannot be determined only by the gender of the target. VAWIP impacts women differently based on the identities they hold and discriminations they experience. The modes of semiotic violence against women in politics – rendering women incompetent and invisible – imply violence has an impact. This violence insinuates through words and images that women do not belong to the public sphere. Similar to the ways that semiotic violence against Muslim and Jewish MPs incorporated targeted and damaging racist tropes, research into VAWIP's impact should consider the intersectional identities both politicians and audiences hold.

Women and people of color enter a political space that remains associated with, and structurally linked to, hegemonic white masculinity (Criado Perez 2019; Puwar 2004). Violence and abuse are, among other things, a response to seem-

ingly out-of-place bodies; it is not surprising that those at the intersection of multiple forms of marginalization and underrepresentation are viewed as especially incongruous. These bodies are particularly threatening to hegemonies of power, not only maleness but also majority ethnicity, religion, class and sexuality. The rhetoric of the tweets included in the corpus underscores that minority women MPs do not belong; they lie about the abuse they receive and have dual loyalties, qualities that are particularly damning in a system that relies on allegiance and party discipline.

In the Report on Intimidation in Public Life (2017), commissioned to better catalogue and understand these very issues, the authors describe one impact of abuse as follows:

[R]acist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and antisemitic abuse has put off candidates from standing for public office. If this issue is not addressed, we could be left with a political culture that does not reflect the society it should represent. This has serious implications for our democracy if our public life erodes to such a degree that it effectively excludes parts of the society it is there to serve (29).

As part of the report, Luciana Berger describes a woman in her constituency who “would make a fantastic MP.” When asked, this constituent replied, “I wouldn’t do it, I couldn’t do it, I couldn’t go through what you experience” (ibid.). Anecdotally, violence does not only harm the intended target; abuse can reverberate within an MP’s family, among their staff, and through the general public. Furthermore, for members of marginalized groups, this effect is likely magnified. Individuals at the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination live in an already heightened state of precarity; seeing the abuse faced by MPs who share their identities likely has a greater impact on their desire to more visibly enter the public space. As the features of the online space allow VAWIP to spread far beyond individual politicians, related research must also consider the implications of political, online abuse on the wider public.

## References

- All-Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism. 2006. *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism*. <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/download?id=1274>
- All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims. 2018. *Islamophobia Defined*. <https://appgbritishmuslims.org/publications>
- Amnesty International. 2018. “Women abused on Twitter every 30 seconds – new study.” <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/women-abused-twitter-every-30-seconds-new-study>

- Bardall, Gabrielle, Gift Murombo, Tazreen Hussain, and Otito Greg-Obi. 2018. *Violence against Women in Elections in Zimbabwe: An IFES Assessment*. International Foundation for Election Systems. [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/vawie\\_in\\_zimbabwe\\_july\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/vawie_in_zimbabwe_july_2018.pdf)
- BBC News. 2017. "Jewish and Muslim women MPs' face most abuse." *BBC News*, March 21.
- BBC News. 2019. "A guide to Labour Party anti-Semitism claims." *BBC News*, July 16.
- Beard, Mary. 2017. *Women and Power: A Manifesto*. London: Profile Books.
- Berry, Marie, Yolande Bouka, and Marilyn Muthoni Kamuru. 2017. "Kenyan Women just Fought one of the most Violent Campaigns in History." *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/08/07/kenyas-female-politicians-just-fought-the-one-of-the-most-violent-campaign-in-history-election/>
- Brechenmacher, Saskia. 2017. "Fighting Violence against Women in Politics: The Limits of Legal Reform." *International Peace Institute – The Global Observatory*. October 5.
- Breslin, Rachel, Sheela Pandey, and Norma Riccucci. 2017. "Intersectionality in Public Leadership Research: A Review and Future Research Agenda." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 37(2): 160–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2F0734371X17697118>
- Brody, Jane E. 2011. "The Twice-Victimimized of Sexual Assault." *The New York Times*, December 12.
- Burke, Shani. 2018. "The Discursive 'Othering' of Jews and Muslims in the Britain First Solidarity Patrol." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 28(5): 365–377. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2373>
- Burnap, Pete, and Matthew Williams. 2018. *Antisemitic Content on Twitter*. Community Security Trust. <https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/4/2/Antisemitic%20Content%20on%20Twitter.pdf>
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Casciani, Dominic. 2018. "Religious Hate Crimes: Rise in Offences Recorded by Police." *BBC News*, October 16.
- Castle, Stephen. 2018. "Anti-Semitism Accusations Taint Labour Party, Once Home to U.K.'s Jews." *The New York Times*, 29 March.
- Citizens UK. 2018. *The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All*. [https://www.citizensuk.org/missing\\_muslims](https://www.citizensuk.org/missing_muslims)
- Cocozza, Paula. 2019. "I'm a Black Female MP. Why do People Assume my White Office Manager is my Boss?" *The Guardian*, October 8.
- Cole, Mike. 2015. *Racism: A Critical Analysis*. London: Pluto Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18gzdjq>
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2007. "Pushing the Boundaries or Business as Usual? Race, Class and Gender Studies and Sociological Inquiry." In *Sociology in America: A History*, ed. by Craig Calhoun, 572–604. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1: 139–167.
- Criado Perez, Caroline. 2019. *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*. New York: Abrams Press.
- CST. 2018. "Annual Review. 2018". *Community Security Trust*. <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/2/c/Annual%20Review%202018%20-%20ER%20edit%20web.1550505710.pdf>

- Dearden, Lizzie. 2018. "Religious Hate Crime Rises 40% in England and Wales – with More than Half Directed at Muslims." *The Independent*, October 16.
- Dhrodia, Azmina. 2017. "Black and Asian Women MPs Abused More Online." *Amnesty International*. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/online-violence-women-mps>
- Dotson, Kristie. 2011. "Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing." *Hypatia* 26(2): 236–257. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01177.x>
- Eagly, Alice, Mona Makhijani, and Bruce Klonsky. 1992. "Gender and the Evaluation of Leaders: A Meta-Analysis." *Psychological Bulletin* 111(1): 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.111.1.3>
- eMarketer. 2018. "Social Media Platforms Used by UK Internet Users, by Age, Sep 2017 (% of respondents in each group)." <https://www.emarketer.com/chart/212173/social-media-platforms-used-by-uk-internet-users-by-age-sep-2017-of-respondents-each-group>
- Esposito, Eleonora. 2021. "Introduction: Critical Perspectives on Gender, Politics and Violence." *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict: Special Issue on Critical Perspectives on Gender, Politics and Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.00051.int>
- Esposito, Eleonora, and Sole Alba Zollo. 2021. "'How dare you call her a pig, I know several pigs who would be upset if they knew': A Multimodal Critical Discursive Approach to Online Misogyny against UK MPs on YouTube." *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict: Special Issue on Critical Perspectives on Gender, Politics and Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.00053.esp>
- Feldman, Matthew, and Mark Littler. 2014. *Tell MAMA Reporting 2013/14 Anti-Muslim Overview, Analysis and 'Cumulative Extremism'*. Teesside University. <https://www.tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/finalreport.pdf>
- Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001>
- GOV.UK. 2017. *Intimidation in Public Life: A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life*. Committee on Standards in Public Life. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intimidation-in-public-life-a-review-by-the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life>
- Grassegger, Hannes. 2019. "The Unbelievable Story of the Plot against George Soros." *Buzzfeed News*, January 20.
- Hargreaves, Julian, and L. Daniel Staetsky. 2019. "Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Measuring Everyday Sensitivity in the UK." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43(12): 2176–2198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1682177>
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems. 2019. *Violence against Women in Elections Online: A Social Media Analysis Tool*. <https://www.ifes.org/publications/violence-against-women-elections-online-social-media-analysis-tool>
- ITV. 2018. "Jeremy Corbyn: MPs 'not under threat' at Labour Party Conference." *ITV*. September 26.
- King, Deborah. 1988. "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14(1): 42–72. <https://doi.org/10.1086/494491>
- Klug, Brian. 2014. "The Limits of Analogy: Comparing Islamophobia and Antisemitism." *Patterns of Prejudice* 48(5): 442–459. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2014.964498>
- Knapp, Gudrun-Axeli. 2005. "Race, Class, Gender: Reclaiming Baggage in Fast Traveling Theories." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 12: 249–265. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506805054267>



- Komath, Ashwath. 2014. "On Scrutiny and Representation of Women in Politics." *iKNOW Politics* (blog). October 27.
- Kopytowska, Monika. 2021. "Xenophobia, Misogyny and Rape Culture: Targeting Women in Cyberspace." *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict: Special Issue on Critical Perspectives on Gender, Politics and Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.00054.kop>
- Krook, Mona Lena. 2017. "Violence against Women in Politics." *Journal of Democracy* 7(1): 74–88. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0007>
- Krook, Mona Lena. 2020. *Violence against Women in Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190088460.001.0001>
- Krook, Mona Lena, and Juliana Restrepo Sanín. 2016. "Gender and Political Violence in Latin America: Concepts, Debates, and Solutions." *Política y Gobierno XXIII*(1): 125–157.
- Krook, Mona Lena, and Juliana Restrepo Sanín. 2019. "The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians." *Perspectives on Politics* 18(3): 740–755. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719001397>
- Kuperberg, Rebecca. 2018. "Intersectional Violence against Women in Politics." *Politics & Gender* 14(4): 685–690. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000612>
- Kushner, Tony. 2013. "Anti-Semitism in Britain: Continuity and the Absence of a Resurgence?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(3): 434–449. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.734387>
- Lacey, Jonathan. 2014. "'Turkish Islam' as 'Good Islam': How the Gülen Movement Exploits Discursive Opportunities in a Tweet-9/11 Milieu." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 34(2): 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2014.912861>
- Lazar, Michelle M. 2007. "Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis." *Critical Discourse Studies* 4(2): 141–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900701464816>
- Levey, Tania G. 2018. *Sexual Harassment Online: Shaming and Silencing Women in the Digital Age*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Linehan, Thomas. 2012. "Comparing Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Asylophobia: The British Case." *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2012.01161.x>
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 2004. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- McCall, Leslie. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3): 1771–1800. <https://doi.org/10.1086/426800>
- Meer, Nasar. 2013a. "Racialization and Religion: Race, Culture and Difference in the Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(3): 385–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.734392>
- Meer, Nasar. 2013b. "Semantics, Scales and Solidarities in The Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(3): 500–515. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.734382>
- Noble, Safiya. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York: New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1pwt9w5>
- Och, Malliga. 2019. "Manterrupting in the German Bundestag: Gendered Opposition to Female Members of Parliament?" *Politics & Gender* 16(2): 388–408. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X19000126>
- Prins, Baukje. 2006. "Narrative Accounts of Origins: A Blind Spot in the Intersectional Approach?" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(3): 277–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065757>


- Proctor, Kate. 2019. "Boris Johnson urged to apologise for 'derogatory and racist' letterboxes article." *The Guardian*, September 4.
- Puwar, Nirmal. 2004. *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Razack, Sherene. 1998. *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Restrepo Sanín, Juliana. 2018. "Violence against Women in Politics in Latin America." Ph.D. Dissertation, Political Science, Rutgers University.
- Rheault, Ludovic, Erica Rayment, and Andreea Musulan. 2019. "Politicians in the Line of Fire: Incivility and the Treatment of Women on Social Media." *Research & Politics* 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168018816228>
- Rosette, Ashleigh Shelby, Christy Zhou Koval, Anyi Ma, and Robert Livingston. 2016. "Race Matters for Women Leaders: Intersectional Effects on Agentic Deficiencies and Penalties." *The Leadership Quarterly* 27(3): 429–445. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.01.008>
- Rudman, Laurie, Corinne Moss-Racusin, Julie Phelan, and Sanne Nauts. 2012. "Status Incongruity and Backlash Effects: Defending the Gender Hierarchy Motivates Prejudice against Female Leaders." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48(1): 165–179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.10.008>
- Sabbagh, Dan. 2019. "Tories Suspend 14 Members Over Alleged Islamophobia." *The Guardian*, March 5.
- Sanbonmatsu, Kira. 2008. "Gender Backlash in American Politics?" *Politics & Gender* 4(4): 634–642. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X08000512>
- Shames, Shauna. 2015. "Barriers and Solutions to Increasing Women's Political Power." Paper presented at *The Women Effect Symposium*. [https://scholars.org/sites/scholars/files/shauna\\_shames\\_-\\_barriers\\_and\\_solutions.pdf](https://scholars.org/sites/scholars/files/shauna_shames_-_barriers_and_solutions.pdf)
- Šimonović, Dubravka. 2018. "Violence against Women in Politics." [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/73/301](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/73/301)
- Sommers, Jack. 2018. "Study Lays Bare the Scale of Online 'Venom' Jewish Female MPs Face." *The JC*, November 25.
- Sue, Derald Wing. 2010. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life." *Psychology Today*, October 5.
- Swami, Viren, David Barron, Laura Weis, and Adrian Furnham. 2017. "To Brexit or not to Brexit: The Roles of Islamophobia, Conspiracist Beliefs, and Integrated Threat in Voting Intentions for the United Kingdom European Union Membership Referendum." *British Journal of Psychology* 109(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjop.12252>
- Topolski, Anya. 2018. "Good Jew, bad Jew ... good Muslim, bad Muslim: 'managing' Europe's others." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41(12): 2179–2196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1391402>
- UN General Assembly. 1993. "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women." <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx>
- Ward, Stephen, and Liam McLoughlin. 2020. "Turds, Traitors and Tossers: The Abuse of UK MPs via Twitter." *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 26(1): 47–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2020.1730502>
- Weller, Paul. 2006. "Addressing Religious Discrimination and Islamophobia: Muslims and Liberal Democracies. The Case of the United Kingdom." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17(3): 295–325. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etl001>

- Yorke, Harry. 2019. "Joan Ryan Becomes Eighth Labour MP To Quit, Blaming 'Culture of Anti-Semitism' under Corbyn Leadership." *The Telegraph*, February 20.
- Zeiter, Kirsten, Sandra Pepera, Molly Middlehurst, and Derek Ruths. 2019. *Tweets that Chill: Analyzing Online Violence Against Women in Politics*. National Democratic Institute. <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Tweets%20That%20Chill%20Report.pdf>
- Zempi, Irene. 2019. "Veiled Muslim Women's Responses to Experiences of Gendered Islamophobia in the UK." *International Review of Victimology* 26(1): 96–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269758019872902>

## Address for correspondence

Rebecca Kuperberg  
Department of Political Science  
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey  
89 George Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1411  
United States

[rlk115@polisci.rutgers.edu](mailto:rlk115@polisci.rutgers.edu)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1925-3820>

## Publication history

Date received: 1 July 2020

Date accepted: 13 August 2020

Published online: 4 March 2021