

<b>Institution: Birkbeck, University of London</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 30 History</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b> Antisemitism and multiculturalism: shaping new thinking among policymakers and NGOs
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Professor David Feldman’s research has influenced thinking about antisemitism, racism and multiculturalism among a range of organisations and policy makers. Since becoming first director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism in 2010, he has shaped its development by pursuing a distinctive course of public engagement, with partners such as the All Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism, underpinned by the insights of his research over two decades. As a result, he and the Pears Institute are recognised as significant forces shaping public discourse and policy thinking on issues related to antisemitism.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Feldman’s ground-breaking research has focussed primarily on the place of Jews in British society, politics and culture between the middle of the eighteenth century and the First World War. Significantly, his research extends beyond the history of the Jewish minority to encompass histories of immigration and of ethnic and religious diversity in Britain more broadly.</p> <p>Feldman’s research focussed initially on the ways in which Jews featured in political debate: in controversies over the Jews’ ‘emancipation’ in the early Victorian period, for example, and in responses to Jewish immigration from eastern Europe between the 1880s and the First World War. Conventionally, the study of hostility to Jews is analysed from the standpoint of the Jewish minority and within a narrative of antisemitism which stresses the continuities and timelessness of the phenomenon. By contrast, Feldman’s research emphasises the ways in which attitudes to Jews emerged from larger contexts of political debate and social interaction. In <i>Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914</i> (Ref 1) he demonstrates how early-Victorian views about Judaism were shaped by anti-Catholicism and how contending attitudes to Jewish emancipation were predicated on different conceptions of British identity.</p> <p>His later research has reached back further to examine the vicious eighteenth-century controversy over whether foreign Jews could naturalise as British subjects and forward to examine how Jews figured in the literatures of social investigation, empire and racial science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Refs 2, 3, 5, &amp; 6). At the same time, Feldman undertook research on migration, multiculturalism and welfare, investigating the ways in which the British state and British society have responded to religious and ethnic diversity and to immigration, providing the broad contexts in which he locates the history of antisemitism (Ref 4). This work highlights the close and formative relationship between antisemitism and other forms of racism and exclusion. Since negative responses to Jews developed within these larger frames of reference, Feldman shows that these contexts should also be fundamental to our understanding of what these attitudes meant to the people who held them. This approach requires a shift away from a search for continuous traditions of Jew-hatred towards an examination of the ways in which Jews have figured at different times in the world views of non-Jews.</p> <p>This body of research has been widely recognised as contributing important new insights which has influenced public discourses and policy considerations relating to antisemitism, immigration and multiculturalism.</p>

### 3. References to the research

1. David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914*, London; Yale University Press, 1994 (1000 copies sold) This book received a number of positive academic and non-academic reviews including: *The American Historical Review* Vol. 100, No. 2 (Apr, 1995), *The Economic History Review* Vol. 48, No. 2 (May, 1995); *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Spring, 1995); and by Raphael Samuel in *The Independent* (1995);
2. David Feldman, '[Migrants, Immigrants and Welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State](#)', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2003, pp. 79-104.
3. David Feldman, '[Jews and the British Empire c.1900](#)', *History Workshop Journal*, 63.1, 2007, pp.70-89.
4. David Feldman, 'Why the English like Turbans: A History of Multiculturalism in One Country' in D. Feldman and J. Lawrence eds, *Structures and Transformations in British History*, Cambridge University Press, 2011.
5. David Feldman, '[Jews in the East End, Jews in the Polity, "the Jew" in the text](#)', 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 13 (2011).
6. David Feldman, '[Conceiving Difference: Religion, Race and the Jews in Britain, c.1750–1900](#)' *History Workshop Journal*, August 2013. This is the published version of Feldman's inaugural lecture (2010).

### 4. Details of the impact

Professor Feldman's historical research provides a fresh perspective for understanding the present, which has been translated into impact, in the first instance, through the work of the Pears Institute, which Feldman directs. While the Pears Institute continues to develop new areas of research, its strategic work with policymakers and NGOs and its consequent impact is underpinned by Feldman's research on antisemitism, immigration and multiculturalism. The approach taken by the Pears Institute to public policy and public engagement follows directly from the emphasis he pioneered on a contextualised understanding of antisemitism.

Feldman's influential research was fundamental to the decision to appoint him as first Director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism. As the Director of the Foundation writes, 'We know that Professor Feldman's approach to placing antisemitism in a broad social and cultural context and alongside other forms of racism is an innovative one.' She adds 'Professor Feldman has carved out a space for the Institute that is both grounded in history and highly relevant to contemporary contexts.' (Testimonial 1)

Feldman's influence was clearly evidenced in November 2010 at the public launch of the Pears Institute which was also his inaugural professorial lecture. Attended by MPs, think-tank representatives and representatives of Jewish communal organisations, the event marked both his own success in raising awareness of, and interest in his analysis of antisemitism, and the significance of the new Pears Institute. MP John Mann noted in Hansard: 'I estimate that 400 people attended the inaugural lecture by Professor David Feldman, which is a significant number. The intellectual interrogation that is needed to draw on and analyse lessons from around the world is already of huge value to us, and we look forward to working closely with that institute. It is a landmark for this country' (Sources 6 & 7). Another influential figure in this arena writes: 'The huge crowd attending Professor Feldman's inaugural lecture and the formal opening of the Institute included a very high proportion of politicians, journalists, community activists, clergymen, interfaith figures—a clear acknowledgement that the unique placing of a leading academic figure at the head of a body tackling a subject so heavily affected by sharp and seemingly irreconcilable political divisions promised much. Significantly, Professor Feldman, through his finely-tuned lecture, which drew on his research on antisemitism, made it clear that his understanding of antisemitism as a complex and variegated phenomenon ... would guide the work of the Institute.' (Testimonial 2)

Feldman has been acknowledged both in the press and the blogosphere for his active role in promoting constructive dialogue and collaboration between numerous organisations, interest groups and individuals engaged in forming and reflecting on public policy, with regard to antisemitism, multiculturalism and racism. Many regard his work at the Pears Institute as a unique venture which generates discussion on antisemitism and the Israel/Palestine conflict between parties who normally do not engage in dialogue and among organisations with a keen interest in the issues at stake. (Testimonial 2)

Feldman utilises his research on antisemitism and multiculturalism to inform his engagement with a range of partners and stakeholders nationally and internationally, and these partners draw on his research to inform their work. Most significant is Feldman's work with the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism. In 2012, the All Party Group approached the Institute and asked it to devise an event to reflect on the government's policy on integration. Feldman organised a Symposium on Integration, Disadvantage and Extremism with the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford, at the House of Commons (May 2013). As John Mann MP notes: 'We felt that given Professor Feldman's focus on immigration and multiculturalism he would be expertly placed to advise us on how best to consider the government's integration strategy. His insight and extensive network of contacts led to one of the best and most thought-provoking days we have organised. The feedback we received highlighted how impressed various parliamentarians, government officials and others had been with the breadth of expert opinion and the quality of the debate. We hope to publish some of the policy recommendations emanating from the symposium as part of our ongoing dialogue with government about protecting Jews and other minorities in the UK' (Testimonial 3). Sixty people participated, including: six MPs and Government Minister, Baroness Sayeda Warsi; 10 government officials (Home Office, Department of Communities and Local Government, APPG Against Islamophobia and APPG Against Antisemitism); and representatives from 12 think-tanks, and five charities. (Sources 8 & 9)

The full significance of the impact here can be gauged by contrasting the framing of this event and the forthcoming report with the All Party Group's 2006 inquiry and report on antisemitism. Whereas the 2006 report isolates antisemitism from wider concerns about diversity and racism in British society, the symposium at the House of Commons does the opposite, and in this way drew on the findings and perspectives of Feldman's research. In this way Feldman's research has guided a public body and made a significant contribution to its changed approach to the problem of antisemitism.

Feldman's stature in the field has enabled him to invite high calibre and renowned speakers to present at the Institute. In less than three years, he has organised 28 successful public lectures and round-tables, attended by over 3,000 people, including scholars, students, representatives of a wide range of organisations and members of the public. Public events typically attract between 65-100 people, the majority of whom are non-academics. The following initiatives exemplify how the emphasis on a contextualised understanding of antisemitism that stems directly from Feldman's research has shaped the Pears Institute's engagement with public debate and policy issues.

- Symposia on 'The Politics of Demonization' (June 2011, with 28 participants) and on 'Definitions and Conceptions of Antisemitism' (September 2012, with 39 participants) brought together a range of speakers and participants, including representatives from three charities, two think-tanks, two advocacy groups, the All Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism and two members of the House of Lords: Baroness Ruth Deech, Chair of the Bar Standards Board and Sir Terence Etherton, Lord Justice of Appeal.
- A two-day workshop 'Muslims and Jews: Citizenship, Identity and Prejudice in Europe, U.S. and Israel' (February 2012) explored attitudes to Israel and antisemitism in the context of multiculturalism, Islamophobia and racism today. Speakers and participants were drawn from

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across the Jewish and Muslim communities. This workshop was part of a series, alongside others in Paris, Berlin, New York and Tel Aviv. Reviewing the workshop, influential commentator, Anthony Lerman wrote: 'It is hard to think of any other forum than the Pears Institute in which the discussion of the often very difficult issues raised could have been managed with such a degree of civility and respect. No attempt was made to pretend that one event of this kind could do much more than identify issues for further exploration.' (Source 10)

The Executive Director of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality writes 'In his capacity as the first director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, Professor David Feldman has made an enormously important contribution to the way in which academics, policy makers and community activists look at the relationship between different forms of racism such as antisemitism and Islamophobia. His work has helped to bring to light many of the issues which need analysing.' (Testimonial 4)

Feldman is frequently invited to speak about Anglo-Jewry, multiculturalism, secularism, racism and citizenship at a wide range of events nationally and internationally, including lectures at Bedford Historical Society (Feb 2011) and the annual Limmud Conference (Dec 2011). He has also been an invited contributor to conferences bringing together academics and non-academics, such as '*Secularism, Racism and the Politics of Belonging*' organised by the Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB) and the Runnymede Trust (January 2011), 'The Politics of Religious Diversity' (Toynbee Hall, 2012.). He was invited to speak to staff at the NGO Facing History and Ourselves in Boston, Massachusetts (2011). In August 2012, the Runnymede Trust, the UK's leading race equality think-tank, invited him to sit on its Academic Forum.

The Director of the Runnymede Trust writes: 'David has been very effective at placing anti-Semitism in a broad political and social context and relating its study to that of other racisms. This is particularly crucial in a period where policy has tended to separate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief from that driven by ethnicity, which has led to an increasing distance between anti-Semitism and antiracist movements.' (Testimonial 5).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact****Testimonials**

1. Director, Pears Foundation (factual statement)
2. Independent writer and commentator on antisemitism and Jewish affairs (factual statement)
3. John Mann MP on the importance of Feldman's research to the All Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism (factual statement)
4. Executive Director, Jewish Council for Racial Equality (factual statement)
5. Director, Runnymede Trust (factual statement)

**Other sources**

- 6 [Podcast of Feldman's talk](#) at the launch of the Pears Institute, November 2010, which was attended by over 400 people.
- 7 John Mann MP, statement in Hansard, 20 January 2011 (supplied on request)
- 8 [Podcast of All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism](#) meeting in May 2013
- 9 Pears Institute's annual reports are available [here](#) or can be provided on request. They provide a full record of events, attendance statistics and feedback statements.
- 10 Anthony Lerman's [review](#) of the workshop 'Muslims and Jews: Citizenship, Identity and Prejudice in Europe, U.S. and Israel'