Beyond Belonging: The Jewish Identities of Moderately Engaged British Jews

Highlights of the UJIA Study of Jewish Identity

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Policy Essay:
Making *The* Community, *My* Community
Implications for communal policy-makers
SIR TREVOR CHINN, CVO

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Steven M. Cohen, sociologist, is Professor at The Melton Centre for Jewish Education, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His dozen books include *The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America* (with Arnold Eisen), *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences* (with Charles Liebman), *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival*, and *American Modernity or Jewish Identity*. He has taught at Queens College, CUNY, Brandeis University, Yale University and the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Dr Keith Kahn-Harris

Dr Keith Kahn-Harris is a sociologist specializing in contemporary Jewish identity and in youth and popular culture. He received his doctorate from Goldsmiths College, London. He has been a "Jerusalem Fellow" at the Mandel Leadership Institute, Jerusalem, and has held visiting fellowships and lectureships in Australia, Finland and Sweden. He works as an associate lecturer at the Open University and teaches, writes and researches in a number of contexts. He is co-editor of *After Subculture* (Palgrave, 1994) and editor of *New Voices in Jewish Thought: Volume 2* (Limmud Publications, 1999). His website is www.kahn-harris.org.

The United Jewish Israel Appeal

The UJIA is the leading supporter of the people of Israel and young Jewish people in the UK. In this capacity, the UJIA provides a funding and strategic partnership to a wealth of organizations from across the community.

As well as allocating funds to projects that will have an immediate direct impact in the UK and Israel, the UJIA also invests in research and planning to underpin its programmatic development.

Leading the Jewish community

The UJIA is committed to highlighting the central importance of Jewish education in the community and is the leading central strategic planning agency in the field. We aim to transform lives and to create proud, knowledgeable Jews committed to our unique heritage and to the eternity of Israel.

Our model of change

It is the UJIA's mission to be the catalyst for Jewish renewal across the community. To achieve this we encourage communal organizations to strengthen and sustain their own vision, develop their current and future leadership, and cultivate a strong sense of well-placed optimism around the Jewish educational agenda.

Our goal in the field of research and development

Our goal is that every Jewish educational organization will understand and focus on the community's most pressing educational priorities and plan accordingly.

Developing a deep understanding of communal trends, both in the UK and abroad, is fundamental to Jewish renewal work. Utilising that information to orchestrate change in the community's organizations and agencies is key to the success of our mission. We examine Jewish research around the world, commission our own research when required, and develop a series of action-oriented proposals.

Our role

We are deeply conscious that priorities may shift, and new opportunities may emerge. Education is a fluid endeavour, and in the wider context of a rapidly changing world, it is critical that we monitor developments and respond to them accordingly.

The UJIA's Research and Development Unit exists to play this role. It works to maintain an up-to-date view of communal trends, and maintains contacts with leading Jewish research agencies worldwide.

We work in cooperation with the two key research organisations in the community – the Institute for Jewish Policy Research and the Board of Deputies of British Jews – in order to deepen our understanding of communal trends, and sharpen our educational agenda. We also maintain close ties with international Jewish researchers and policy-makers, most notably from The Hebrew University and the Mandel Leadership Institute, Jerusalem. We monitor Jewish educational developments in Britain and abroad, pilot experimental projects,

and provide a consultancy service for strategically placed communal organizations.

We have conducted the current piece of research in line with the above, in pursuit of our strategic aspirations and ambitions. Professor Cohen and Dr Kahn-Harris represent a world-class research team and these findings will be of great interest to our partners in the field and to a worldwide Jewish renewal audience. Sir Trevor Chinn, CVO, UJIA President, is a vastly experienced communal leader whose essay on behalf of the research Consultation Group grounds the research findings within a communal framework and suggests implications for future communal policy.

Foreword

David Cohen & Michael Goldstein

British Jewry is very much alive. Not since 1967 has there been such renewal of Jewish commitment in this country as in the past fifteen years or so. Our schools are growing in quantity and quality whilst there is pro-activity amongst many in seeking out better Jewish experiences, education and spiritual fulfilment. It is particularly true in London as the capital benefits from the influx of young Jewish adults after university.

However, there is one key difference between today and 1967. Then, the impact of the Six-Day War struck almost every Jew in our community. Individually and collectively, we campaigned for Israel and the Jewish people – we campaigned with our hearts and minds, with our voices and with our pockets. From the most affiliated to the least, it was everyone's cause.

Today, the renewal of Jewish life is being celebrated by too few of us. Amongst the most active in our community, there is a richness of programme and meaning that was hitherto lacking. But for too many in our community who remain ambivalent or alienated, this so-called renewal means little.

In 2002, a number of UJIA leaders including ourselves became very compelled with the work of Professor Steven Cohen of The Hebrew University. Cohen has long articulated a typology of Jews in communities as highly engaged, moderately engaged and unengaged. His hypothesis was that the highly engaged were likely to have continuity; the unengaged were too hard to reach to merit

precious communal resources; but the moderately engaged, the bulk of most Diaspora communities, were "on the fence", capable of going "either way", and needed our attention. Cohen and Professor Arnold Eisen studied the moderately engaged Jews in America to understand more about them. They found them to be very much on a quest for Jewish meaning but more sovereign about how they interacted with communal institutions and supposed Jewish truths to construct their Jewish identity and lives.

The UJIA had enjoyed (and continues to enjoy) great success in working with communal partners to renew Jewish life in Britain. But we were all determined to extend our effort to reach those Jews we all knew well who were not participating. They were our families and our friends; they were our neighbours in shul or on the end of the fundraising telethons. The truth was, we had done a poor job of asking them what they wanted from the community: of understanding why they were less a part of this renewal of Jewish life.

Understanding the Jewish needs of the bulk of our community

We decided to research this critical question and engaged the services of Professor Cohen to assist us. We were aware that our community has had its fair share of reports – but mostly focusing on how we organize ourselves. This has been complemented by the excellent statistical work of the IJPR and the Board of Deputies of British Jews, led by a group of committed and expert academics. It appeared to us, however, that policy-makers in Jewish renewal organizations were still making judgements about the moderately engaged on the basis of evidence that was either anecdotal or based on assumptions flowing from previous research from here

or America. The time had come for us to improve our evidence base or – in the language most of us in business use every day – to talk to our customers. It's hard to believe that Tesco would allow their customer base to remain a mystery for long, and surely Jewish renewal is far more important than selling groceries.

The problem with Jewish research (and indeed all research) is that it has a tendency to sit on shelves. We were determined that this research would be different – that it would lead directly to action. As the UJIA, we were well placed to do this. The UJIA spends £4 million per year on Jewish Renewal in this country and is dedicated to taking a strategic view about the trends and needs of the community. Embedding the research process within the governance of the UJIA would allow us to convert research to action quickly. However, the outcome of our research was likely to be meaningful to our partners in the community and to the community as a whole.

Thus we constructed a number of forums to guide and debate the research as it proceeded:

- The UJIA were ultimately the sponsors of the work, and the project was conceived and managed through the Renewal Executive.
- A Consultation Group of advisers was convened and chaired by Sir Trevor Chinn, CVO. Sir Trevor, our President, is one of British Jewry's pre-eminent leaders. His hunger for understanding the forces at work in our community and his awareness of the wider Jewish world made him a natural leader for this work. The group he convened consisted of people who had communal affiliations of one sort or another but who were also committed to challenging conventional wisdom and arriving at new ideas.

- An Academic Advisory Group was convened to accompany the process and critique its methodology.

The research itself was led by Professor Cohen, who spent perhaps longer than he expected in our community, with leaders and moderately engaged Jews, understanding us and contrasting us with other communities he had encountered and studied. Dr Keith Kahn-Harris, a bright and home-grown talent, was co-opted to lead the research with him. Cohen's global expertise and methodology combined with Kahn-Harris's local insight was a critical recipe for success.

Their central purpose was to understand the forces and motivations that most affect the Jewish identity and commitment of moderately engaged Jews in Britain. This they would collate and interpret for us as policy-makers so that we might consider what should change in communal educational provision going forward.

What should happen now?

This publication contains a synthesis from Cohen and Kahn-Harris of the findings from the research. This is followed by an essay from Sir Trevor on behalf of the Consultation Group that responds to the policy challenges raised by the research. That essay is designed to reflect the conversations the Consultation Group had over eighteen months about the research and its implications. It is written to assist policy-makers in every communal organization and also to assist every member of our community in considering the research.

The research and essay have already been shared with key communal agencies and partners of the UJIA as well as with the

leadership of the UJIA. We're delighted to say that it is being taken seriously. The UJIA is already incorporating the implications of the work into our planning for our programme in the coming years. Our partner central synagogue bodies are building on their excellent work with this constituency, and we know that this research is assisting them further. In addition, the team planning the London Jewish Community Centre are interpreting the findings to assist their feasibility study.

Our great thanks go to Professor Cohen and Dr Kahn-Harris for this invaluable work. We thank the Consultation Group for their time and insight. We thank the Academic Advisory Group for their time and strong input. We thank the Renewal Executive of the UJIA for initiating and overseeing the project. We also thank UJIA professionals, past and present, Michael Wegier, Shalom Orzach, Jonathan Ariel, Roy Graham, Jon Boyd and Gila Sacks for their management of the process. But above all, we thank the many volunteers who were interviewed or completed questionnaires to share with us their hopes and fears for our community. Our debt to you is to continue to strive to serve your Jewish needs and to provide a programme that allows your identity to flourish in tandem with our community.

DAVID M. COHEN
UJIA Chairman
MICHAEL GOLDSTEIN
UJIA Programme Chairman
September 2004

The Research Report

by Steven M. Cohen & Keith Kahn-Harris

1 Background

The research: objectives and approaches

For at least the last two hundred years, once-segregated Jews all over the world have integrated into the larger societies in which they dwell. They emerged out of their traditional cultures, be they in Europe, North America, North Africa or elsewhere, at different times, under varying circumstances, and with various consequences. But, in one way or another, it can be said that once-traditional Jews have everywhere come to encounter modernity, or modernity has come to encounter them. This phenomenon – known variously as the Enlightenment, Emancipation, Westernization, Modernity, and, most recently, Post-Modernity – produced many welcome developments for formerly marginalized Jews. Most prominently, these centre on new opportunities in the larger societies' political, cultural, and economic arenas, where arguably, Jews have generally attained quite impressive achievements. At the same time, the modernization process has presented a trenchant cultural challenge to Jewish group persistence, since with emancipation comes the possibility of choice and with choice comes the possibility of group dissolution, known colloquially as complete "assimilation". Not surprisingly, over the decades, engaged Jewish leaders and thinkers, as well as members of the Jewish public, have been asking whether Jews, Jewish identities and Jewish communities will endure, and if so, how.

British Jewry, like Jewries everywhere, is confronting both long-standing and newly emerging challenges to individual Jewish commitment and collective community. Some of the challenges (and opportunities) facing British Jews resemble those facing Jews in many societies. Others, as we shall see, are peculiar to the UK, as are British Jewry's distinctive strengths and vulnerabilities.

British Jewish communal leadership has become increasingly aware that the persistence of British Jewry should not be taken for granted, and that, in some shape or form, the community requires a process of "renewal" to ensure its survival and future relevance (Sacks 1994). Accordingly, since its inception in the mid-1990s, the UJIA's Renewal Executive has been engaged in a variety of coordinated and strategically informed efforts to meet the ongoing and emerging challenges to Jewish community and identity in the UK. Working with and through partnerships with other major Jewish communal agencies, it has been seeking to instigate and energize renewed Jewish commitment and build compelling Jewish communities in the UK.

In line with this overall commitment, for the last two years, the UJIA has been sponsoring a policy-driven inquiry and deliberative research process. Enlisting the participation of lay leaders, communal professionals and social scientists, this process has focused on the Jewish identities of those who may be regarded as "moderately engaged" in conventional Jewish life in the UK. The research seeks to explore and understand the salient features of Jewish identity among this key population segment, examining points of strength, vulnerability and diversity, and exploring opportunities for educational intervention. In doing so, the ultimate aim of the research is to draw from these findings actionable implications for Jewish educational and communal policy and practice. The defining test of the value of this process lies as much in eventually influencing communal action as in more immediately enriching collective understanding.

The process: deliberative and collaborative

From the outset, this research process built in a strong policy-orientation. As such, it necessitated close cooperation among lay leaders, communal practitioners and researchers. Several parties made essential contributions to bringing this process to its fruition. The major contributors to this process included:

1 The "Consultation Group", a panel of senior leaders and observers of British Jewish life from a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences, has conducted the policy-oriented deliberations. Chaired by Sir Trevor Chinn, the group provided overall direction for the research and shaped the emerging policy implications. (See Appendix A for complete list of Consultation Group members.)
2 The "Academic Advisory Group", consisting of leading social researchers on contemporary British Jewry (see Appendix B for complete list of members), provided valuable critical feedback, and helped place the research findings in the context of the accumulated wisdom of prior social scientific research on British Jewish identity.
3 The UJIA Jewish Renewal Executive, chaired by Michael Goldstein and actively represented by Tony Danker, Chair of the Renewal Research and Development Unit, who served as the lay leader responsible for guiding the entire process.
4 The UJIA Renewal professional staff, who were responsible for managing the research and extended the emerging policy directions.

5 The research team, headed by Professor Steven M. Cohen of The Hebrew University and Dr Keith Kahn-Harris, an independent researcher and associate lecturer at the Open University, sought to understand and convey the complexity of Jewish identities among British Jews. Professor Cohen and Dr Kahn-Harris conducted the interviews for the qualitative phase of the research together with Perry Goodman, an experienced interviewer. Zoe Matthews took care of the administrative arrangements and Gita Zarum transcribed the interviews. NOP World processed the survey data.

6 Communal partners, whose support we gratefully acknowledge: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, The Board of Deputies of British Jews, AJE and United Synagogue, LBC-CJE and Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues and Liberal Judaism, and Professors Harris, Kosmin and Miller.

We would like to express our appreciation to those who agreed to be interviewed (see Appendix C for profiles) and we also thank the head teachers and their colleagues who distributed the surveys (see Appendix F for a list of participating educational institutions) and, of course, the parents who completed them.

Combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies

Historically, quantitative techniques (i.e., social surveys conducted in person, by telephone, or recently on the Web) have dominated the social scientific study of Jewish identity (for an early example, see Goldstein and Goldscheider 1964). More recently, consistent with trends in social science generally, investigators have turned

to qualitative techniques, entailing participant observation and/or depth interviews to understand more fully the nuances and complexities of modern and post-modern Jewish identities (see, for example, Cohen and Eisen 2000). Combining approaches (as in Sklare and Greenblum 1967 or Cohen and Eisen 2000) offers numerous advantages in insight and confidence in the results over the use of either approach alone. Following this logic, this study relied upon both qualitative (depth interviews) and quantitative (social surveys) research methodologies. That is, we conducted two rounds of research, a qualitative round in 2002–3, and a survey research stage in 2003–4. We here summarize the essential methodological strategies used in this research.

The qualitative round began with a series of key informant interviews with a select number of keen and experienced observers of Jewish life. They included some of the leading rabbis in British Jewry, volunteer leaders in the UJIA and partner agencies, educators, academicians, and others (a journalist, social activist, etc.).

We then proceeded to conduct in-depth, in-person interviews with 36 Jews, referred to us by communal professionals, lay leaders, rabbis and other members of the UK Jewish community, all of whom were asked to identify individuals who are neither heavily involved nor totally uninvolved in Jewish life at home or in the community. We administered a screening interview by telephone to determine eligibility as "moderately engaged". The two-minute screening interview inquired about several possible points of Jewish connection. Only those who fell in a pre-defined middle range of the Jewish identity spectrum, as measured by a cumulative score for a series of questions (see Appendix D), qualified for the full interview.

The interviewees ranged in age from 25 to 45, and resided

in various parts of London, South Hertfordshire and the Home Counties, as well as Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow. We selected them with an eye to representing several dimensions of social diversity, including family status, gender and communal affiliation, all of which we tracked as the interviews unfolded. In the course of our semi-structured full interviews, usually lasting between an hour and two hours, we asked respondents to review their Jewish biographies, practices and interests ranging over such matters as family, friends, Israel, holidays, synagogue involvement, community engagement, antisemitism and the wider society (see Appendix E). We recorded and transcribed both questions and answers, supplying the scores of pages of text that we subjected to our review, analysis and interpretation.

Qualitative research offers the advantage of yielding rich and nuanced insights in unexplored territories, such as, in this case, the identities of moderately engaged Jews. The particular strength of this technique is the collection of individual narratives and the provision of illustrative diversity. However, quantitative techniques, such as random sample surveys of a given population, are much more helpful in ensuring a reasonably accurate level of generalizability, with estimates of the extent to which certain traits and configurations characterize the larger population, as well as the strength of association between and among key experiences, behaviours, attitudes and other outcomes.

Accordingly, we conducted a sample survey of Jewish parents with children attending one or another sort of Jewish school – nurseries, chedarim/religion schools, primary and secondary Jewish day schools – yielding 1,437 completed questionnaires at a response rate of 34% (by the cut-off date). We selected the particular combination of schools so as to represent, albeit in a non-random fashion, the geographical and ideological diversity of British Jewry in the parenting years. We turned to 34 institutions. These were made up of 4 secondary, 8 primary, 13 nursery and 9 chedarim/religion schools. Of these, 18 were of Orthodox affiliation and 12 were from the regions. We sought to maximize the chances of locating those who would fall under the rubric of "moderately engaged", which we discuss more fully below. Of the 1,437, we would eventually determine that 936 met a definition of moderate engagement similar to the screening questionnaire used in the qualitative research, and that these 936 would serve as the designated sub-sample for our quantitative analyses. Except for the initial analysis, we set aside the 501 respondents who were Jewishly "over-qualified" for our research purposes.

The sample segment we defined is particularly appropriate for this investigation for several reasons. With children enrolled in Jewish schools, they are identifiable and accessible to Jewish educational practitioners. As parents responsible for educating and socializing their children, they are at a point in their lives when they are especially engaged in Jewish life, consistent with patterns reported elsewhere of elevated Jewish involvement during the parenting years (see, for example, Sklare and Greenblum 1967; Cohen 1983). (Significantly, policy researchers in other Jewish communal contexts almost invariably recommend a focus upon parents of young children as one of the most promising target groups for Jewish educational intervention.) Substantively, the survey covered most of the areas addressed in the qualitative round, and also ventured into some new areas of inquiry.

The combination of alternative and complementary research methodologies serves to challenge, validate and refine our initial findings. Where findings in the two studies seemed to correspond, we drew increased confidence in their veracity. Alternatively, the

few instances of contrasting responses (such as with the concept of dwelling and seeking, and with the images of rabbis) demanded further investigation and explanation, causing us to modify, qualify and enrich our initial inferences.

The moderately engaged: who are they?

Many observers and policy-makers in Jewish life conceptually divide the population into two large segments: the affiliated and the unaffiliated, or the engaged and unengaged. While seemingly straightforward and intuitively appealing, dividing the population into two parts implicitly connotes an exaggerated distinction between the Jewishly more active and Jewishly less active, and, for some, may also connote a frozen state of affairs obviating movement between one sector and the other. In point of fact, studies of Jewish populations in every country, including Israel (where public figures and journalists sharply divide the population into "religious" and "secular" camps), demonstrate that Jewish engagement, however measured, is arrayed on a smooth continuum. In short, bipolar and dichotomized images of Jewry may well prevail in popular discourse; but the reality of Jewish engagement in all societies is one of a more continuous distribution, with far more Jews in the middle of the spectrum than at the more visible extremes that tend to capture public attention.

The distribution of measures of Jewish involvement drawn from our survey of 1,437 Jewish parents illustrates this point. We constructed an overall, cumulative scale of Jewish involvement that combined responses to questions on a wide variety of Jewish practices, where each affirmative response contributed a certain number of points to the scale. The items we used embraced a

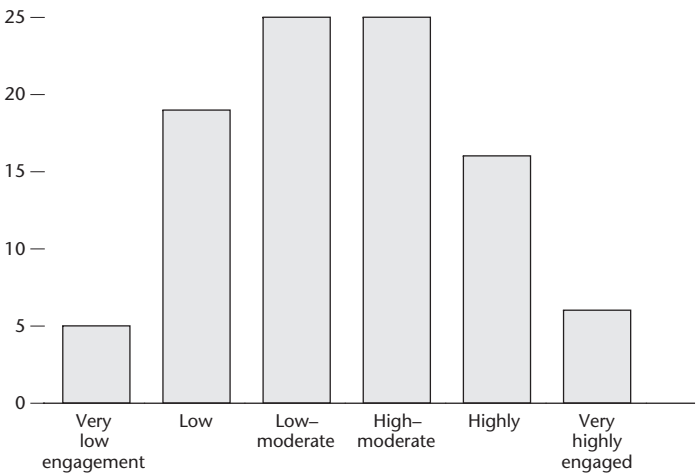
Construction of the index of Jewish engagement

Jewish identity indicator	*Point value*
All or almost all close friends Jewish	2
Most, but not almost all, close friends Jewish	1
Attends services more than monthly	4
Attends services monthly	3
Attends services more than High Holy Days, less than monthly	2
Attends High Holy Day services only	1
Synagogue member	1
Fasts whole day on Yom Kippur	2
Fasts part of the day on Yom Kippur	1
Donates almost all charity to Jewish causes	3
Donates most, but not almost all, to Jewish causes	2
Donates some, but not most, to Jewish causes	1
Reads Jewish publication(s)	1
Been to Israel three times or more, or lived there	2
Been to Israel once or twice	1
Took a Jewish learning programme in the last three years	2
Sent a child to Jewish day school	3
Serves on a board or committee of a Jewish organization	3
Refrains from using electricity on Shabbat	3
Maximum possible points	26
Points needed to qualify as moderately engaged	16 or fewer

diverse assortment of modes of Jewish involvement and commitment as follows: number of friends who are Jewish, fasting on Yom Kippur, refraining from using electricity on Shabbat, synagogue membership, religious service attendance, travel to Israel, Jewish organizational leadership, reading Jewish publications, charitable donations, attending Jewish classes, and sending one's children to Jewish day school, as represented in the table above. (The construction of this index resembles but is not entirely identical to the screening scale used in the qualitative phase and reprinted in Appendix D.)

We computed the distribution on this scale drawing upon the full sample of parents, and when arrayed on a continuum, the

Distribution of Jewish engagement for the entire sample of Jewish parents
%, n = 1,437



frequencies peak in the middle of the range, with relatively fewer at either extreme, broadly approximating the shape of a normal curve, as the figure above suggests.

For Jews in Britain and in almost any other policy-relevant context (classrooms, congregations, communities) within the English-speaking Jewish world, the population may be fruitfully divided into three segments, according to levels of Jewish engagement. Rather than seeing the world as divided statically into two blocs, one imagines the population more dynamically moving between at least three regions on the Jewish identity spectrum.

The least engaged and most actively engaged occupy either end of the spectrum, each with about 20–30% of the total, and a group we call the moderately engaged, amounting to 40–60% of

all Jews, are situated somewhere in the middle range of Jewish involvement.

Unlike the less engaged, the moderately engaged report a significant number of points of Jewish involvement (such as congregational membership, Jewish friendship ties and holiday celebration). That said, their Jewish involvement is not so extensive as to indicate a major commitment either to traditional religious piety or to significant leadership in the organized Jewish community.

Clearly no hard-and-fast definitions demarcate the upper and lower bounds of Jewish engagement for this critically positioned middle target group. The operational definition of the moderately engaged is situationally relative. Those defined as moderately engaged in one population, using the same explicit criteria, could qualify as highly engaged in another population, or be seen as relatively unengaged in yet another community. In point of fact, were so-called moderately engaged Jews of the United Kingdom living in some parts of the United States today (where rates of Jewish involvement are significantly lower than British averages), a good number of them would qualify as highly engaged in American terms. Nevertheless, even if the definition and boundaries are somewhat ambiguous, the presence of a large group of moderately engaged Jews in the British (or other) Jewish population is empirically incontrovertible, and, as we presently argue, policy-relevant.

The moderately engaged: why are they important?

From a Jewish communal policy point of view, the moderately engaged constitute a critical, if not the most critical, Jewish population segment for Jewish educational intervention on the population-scale. In a world of limited resources and forced choices,

policy-makers are compelled to prioritize their efforts. They need not exclude anybody from the purview of their policies, but they do need to decide where to place their emphases, and where the application of limited resources will yield the most benefits. The moderately engaged, according to this way of thinking, may constitute the principal target audience for Jewish educational efforts. In two respects they differ from the most actively engaged, that is, those who are highly observant of traditional religious precepts or else take a very strong and ongoing interest in Jewish communal life. A good number of the moderately engaged may be regarded as "at risk" of significantly diminishing their Jewish connections, or of raising children with little or no commitment to Jewish involvement. Moreover, with much room to grow as Jews, they offer the possibility of increased engagement in Jewish life.

Clearly, the moderately engaged also differ from the relatively unengaged. Unlike their Jewishly less active counterparts, the moderately engaged can be readily identified – by definition they are somehow attached to congregations, schools and other Jewish organizations. (In fact, as the very conduct of this study demonstrates, schools provide an excellent vehicle for reaching moderately engaged Jews. The administrative infrastructure that fielded this study managed to enlist the cooperation of the schools, distribute questionnaires and successfully urge hundreds of Jewish parents to complete and return them by mail. Presumably, the same administrative infrastructure is available for other purposes.)

In addition, relative to the less engaged, they exhibit several points of Jewish interest and attachment, raising more opportunities for Jewish educational recruitment and intervention. The potential of those who are currently moderately engaged to "move" in either direction, to become either highly engaged or relatively

unengaged, makes them pivotal to the future of British Jewry. The eventual attachment to Jewish life of the moderately engaged and their offspring (if not their grandchildren) will, undoubtedly, significantly influence the extent and nature of Jewish involvement in the wider Jewish population and thereby the health and vitality of Jewish institutions throughout the United Kingdom. Understanding the points of strength, challenge and diversity in the Jewish identities of this population group is necessary to developing effective policy and practice to deepen and broaden their involvement in Jewish life.

2 The findings: major features of the Jewish identities of the moderately engaged

Basic profile: demographic and Jewish identity characteristics

Preliminary to exploring the findings is an understanding of the basic demographic and Jewish identity contours of the moderately engaged respondents in our survey sample of Jewish parents (N = 936 selected, from 1,437 returned questionnaires). To extract the moderately engaged from our sample, we constructed a composite measure of Jewish involvement, assigning points for each of several indicators (as enumerated in the table on page 11) and aggregating them.

The particular sample of moderately engaged Jews (i.e., N = 936) we obtained and selected is more heavily weighted towards women than men (70%–30%), reflecting, perhaps, the greater involvement of mothers in their children's Jewish schooling or, perhaps, their greater availability to complete questionnaires sent to the home. Though in some ways the men and women in this sample differ in terms of their Jewish identity-related responses, the over-sampling of women, from a statistical point of view, exerts only a small impact on the results. Substantively, we would reach the same conclusions were the sample divided 50–50 by gender, as opposed to 70–30. We may illustrate this by using an overall index of Jewish engagement stratified into three groups (Low, Moderate, and High) from within the moderately engaged in this sample. We find that somewhat more women than men score at the Low level (28% vs. 22%) and somewhat fewer score at the High level (30% vs. 33%). The overall distribution for the entire moderately engaged sub-sample is distributed as follows: Low (26%), Moderate (43%), High (31%). Had the sample been evenly balanced in term of gender, we would have obtained the following results: Low (25%), Moderate (44%), High (31%). In short, men's and women's distributions do differ, but the impact of an uneven gender distribution upon these results for the two genders combined is minimal indeed.

Three-quarters of the respondents are between the ages of 35 and 49, with a median of 42 years old. Over a third hold post-graduate (including professional diplomas) degrees, and about three in five hold a first degree. Median gross household income exceeds £55,000. As many as 88% belong to synagogues, with the largest number (39%) in the United Synagogue or other mainstream Orthodox, somewhat fewer (24%) in Reform congregations, and smaller numbers in Masorti and Liberal congregations. (In comparison, relying upon Board of Deputies 2001 figures, it is estimated that about 75–80% of British Jews are synagogue members, of which 57% of UK synagogue members belong to mainstream Orthodox congregations including United Synagogue and The Federation of Synagogues, 20% are members of Reform congregations, 9% Liberal, 8.5% Haredi, 3.5% Sephardi and 2% Masorti.) The vast majority (91%) attend High Holy Day services, but very few (12%) attend services more than monthly. The majority (72%) attended part-time cheder/religion school as a child, and as many as 91% have at some point been to Israel. Of the vast majority (94%) who make some charitable donation, 40% devote about half or more of their charitable donations to Jewish and Israel-oriented causes. Decidedly more described themselves as fully or somewhat secular (23% fully + 39% somewhat = 62%

Denominational identification of moderately engaged Jews in childhood and now (as adults)

Denomination	*Childhood*	*Now*	*Percentage change*
Strictly Orthodox	3	0	-3
Traditional	53	37	-16
Masorti	2	7	+5
Reform	13	20	+7
Liberal	4	8	+4
Just Jewish	14	19	+5
Non-practising*	10	7	-3
Total	100	100	N=936

*Includes non-Jewish (2%) in childhood only.

secular) than as fully or somewhat religious (just 2% + 36% = 38% religious). Last, as a summary measure of Jewish identity, we may consider their self-identification in denominational terms. If they belong to a congregation (as almost all our respondents do), Jews tend to declare their personal denomination as synonymous with that of their congregation, although such is not always the case. We asked the respondents for their current perceived denomination, as well as that of their upbringing. The results provide a portrait both of the current denominational distribution, as well as the changes that have taken place over the last generation, in the movement from childhood upbringing to current denomination.

In comparing the results from childhood with those for the current moment (that is, in effect, "how I was raised" and "how I now identify, denominationally"), we learn of several intriguing changes. A slim majority of these moderately engaged Jews in our sample (53%) were raised "traditional – not strictly Orthodox". In contrast, with respect to their self-declared identities today, the comparable number falls to 37%. While the number of "traditional" Jews has fallen, we find increases in other denominational identities (Masorti, Reform, Liberal, and "just Jewish"), consistent

with the literature and the reports of experienced observers of British Jewry (see table opposite).

These, then, are the basic characteristics of moderately engaged British Jewish parents as we have sampled and defined them. More detailed descriptions of their Jewish identity dimensions follow. We begin by describing a number of features that widely characterize moderately engaged Jews. While clearly diverse, they do exhibit a significant degree of homogeneity regarding certain key aspects of being Jewish.

High levels of ethnic belonging

British Jews, including and especially the moderately engaged, exhibit relatively high levels of ethnic belonging, whether seen in comparison with American Jewry or in comparison with the relatively low levels of religious piety we report below (for comparable findings, see Miller 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003). Many are deeply attached to other Jews in a variety of ways, a finding consistent with a long line of social science research on British Jews in recent years. At their core, their Jewish identity is oriented to family, community, peoplehood and Israel, as well as more broadly, group membership, belonging and difference – in a word, "ethnic".

As other research has demonstrated, British Jews (unlike most Jews in the United States, for example) continue to maintain high levels of neighbourhood concentration. Population decline in Britain's smaller Jewish communities has helped prompt a compensatory movement into the main Jewish population centres, with Jews who move to or within London often moving into the band of neighbourhoods historically associated with Jewish residential concentration. Our interviewees mentioned their interest in

remaining geographically and socially close to family, parents, siblings and friends, prompting them to buy housing not far from their kin. These individual acts both reflect and perpetuate strong interpersonal ties among British Jews.

Other evidence of strong group ties abounds. Moderately engaged Jewish parents in our survey report high rates both of in-marriage and of in-group friendship. Of those moderately engaged Jews who are married, as many as 88% are married to other Jews. Nearly half (46%) report that all or nearly all of their current close friends are Jewish, with another 28% reporting that more than half of their friends are Jewish. In other words, almost three-quarters (74%) have mostly Jewish close friends, a finding that is consistent with remarks made during our personal interviews. Quite often, interviewees would comment that their closest friends were Jewish, while their friends from work, university and elsewhere (with whom they are less intimate) were more ethnically mixed.

Clearly, British Jews act and feel in accordance with widely understood aspects of Jewish collective identity. Writing about the Jewish collective consciousness, Liebman and Cohen (1990: 17) introduce the notion of "familism, the tendency of Jews to see themselves as part of an extended family". Elaborating upon the term, they write:

> Familism in turn has several elements, two of which merit our attention. The first is that of ascription: a family is a group into which a person is born and of which the person remains a part regardless of what he or she does. The second element is a sense of mutual responsibility: the members of a family care about each other. These feelings are suffused with a sense of compulsion, obligation, and permanence that characterizes the relationships of Jews.

This familism translates into a sense of closeness with other Jews that our respondents often spoke fondly of:

> Q: What are the things that stand out that you like about being Jewish?
>
> A: Just the sense of belonging. I mean, it's the history, the culture, the background. This sense of where we all came from. It's just a sense that you're slightly different. I don't know what it is. It doesn't matter, you can go somewhere – you'll go to a course or you'll go to a meeting, and you'll be in a room full of people, right? And you'll go and sit next to somebody. And you start talking and it's like – it's – there's something! You can spot another Jew!
>
> ["Saul"[1] is in his late 30s, a member of a United Synagogue congregation in North West London, with two children at non-Jewish schools.]

The answers given by our survey respondents give further testimony to this phenomenon of Jewish familism or ethnic belonging. Asked about the importance of several items to "your sense of being Jewish", they provided a very telling rank order. At the very top of the list was "Jewish festivals spent with your family" (74% answered, "very important"). Our qualitative interviews underscore the centrality of the family. When asked to cite something "you like about being Jewish", "Ernest" responded, "I think first and foremost the family environment. I mean most people from outside the faith looking in say – it's wonderful, the camaraderie and the close family links that Judaism has."

The family gathering around the Passover Seder in particular seems to hold the most powerful measures of attachment for most moderately engaged Jews (as was found in Cohen and

1 All names of respondents are pseudonyms.

Eisen's investigation (2000) of moderately affiliated American Jews). Thus, not only is Pesach among the more widely celebrated festivals, it is also among the most meaningful, combining ritual, familism, peoplehood and historical resonance. This is also the case for other festivals that involve family get-togethers; indeed the celebration of Jewish rituals in the home is one of the most attractive aspects of Judaism.

> Q: What are these festivals that you particularly like?
>
> A: I love Pesach … I did Seder night here. We had sixteen and we went to some friends in the community the other night. I usually tend to have something on Rosh Hashanah here as well and all – and Yom Kippur the kids come back here after shul.
>
> ["Julie" is in her late 30s and lives in South London with her husband and three children. She is a member of a United Synagogue.]

Following festivals with the family, in turn, we find, "time spent with Jewish friends" (rated very important by 51%), Israel (46%), God (43%) and Jewish community activities (26%). Significantly trailing all these were Halacha/Jewish Law (10%) and studying Torah (5%). The very high placement of family and friends, coupled with the very low placement of Jewish Law and studying Torah further reinforces the inference that ethnic belonging and personal relationships within the group are at the heart of Jewish identity and belonging for moderately engaged British Jews.

Still more evidence of the importance of group ties is found in the vast majority (93%) who agreed with the statement, "I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people." Concomitantly, a very large majority (82%) also agreed, "I have a strong sense of belonging to a Jewish community." The literature on community

belonging distinguishes between concrete interaction and imagined connection (Anderson 1991). The former is embodied in everyday relations with family, friends, and neighbours; the latter inhabits the inner regions of consciousness and sense of self. Clearly, the Jews of Great Britain, at least those who are moderately (or highly) engaged, provide clear evidence of both sorts of connection, both structural and imagined.

The strong sense of ethnic belonging among British Jews is apparent in several distinguishing institutional and collective features of British Jewish communal life, most notably organized Jewish youth experiences. Our expert informants and moderately engaged respondents made frequent reference (often with some pride) to the rich array of voluntary organizations for young people, embracing sports clubs, Zionist youth movements, youth groups and Jewish student societies. The pervasiveness of Jewish youth groups emerges in our survey data. Most parents (61%) participated in a Jewish club, youth movement or organization. Most (56%) also report that they have encouraged their children to join a Jewish or Zionist youth group, and almost all the rest (37% of the total) claim they will do so when their children are old enough, suggesting that 93% of these moderately engaged parents are favourably predisposed to Jewish youth involvement. By similar calculations, as many as 86% favour their children going on organized trips to Israel. This Jewish youth culture both reflects and sustains the web of group affiliations in British Jewry. (For a fuller picture of the thick matrix of formal and informal affiliations among adult Jews in one community – Manchester – see Schlesinger 2003.)

Implications

The strong sense of ethnic belonging among British Jews in general, and the moderately engaged in particular, constitutes both a resource and a challenge. As a resource, the many social connections and emotional attachments to the Jewish group can be (and are being) used to foster group ties and to sustain a variety of educational initiatives and activities, not only for younger people, but for Jews of all ages.

At the same time, we must ask, can ethnicity serve as a sustainable basis for Jewish commitment? Many factors seem to militate against the persistence of Jewish ethnicity, when unaccompanied by other forms of Judaic commitment. Ethnic sentimentality and the thick network of personal ties to other Jews may continue to sustain Jewish group life and the distinctiveness of Jews from the wider society. However, the emerging younger generation – one more highly educated and culturally cosmopolitan than its parents and grandparents – may need an explicit rationale for Jewish involvement and commitment. To be compelling and effective, the rationale will need to be more developed and more articulated than those offered in the past. Ethnic attachment for ethnic attachment's sake, continuity for continuity's sake, runs the risk of being seen as meaningless.

Devising appropriate responses to the challenge of augmenting the currently strong ethnic basis to Jewish engagement will demand the attention of lay leaders, rabbis, thinkers, educators, communal practitioners and the Jewish public itself. In our view, if the power of ethnic belonging diminishes, as well it might, British Jewry will need to develop compelling Jewish narratives that can motivate and legitimate continued Jewish involvement. The narratives will be made up of compelling stories that will underscore the appeal and distinctiveness of Judaism, Jewish history and Jewish civilization in ways that are attuned to the contemporary Jewish experience in the UK.

In all likelihood, one narrative will not fit all sorts of Jews. The major constituencies of British Jewish life, however they are to be defined, will require their own narratives that seem attractive and plausible in their own terms. The major constituencies (to be discerned and defined) will each, in all likelihood, require arguments for Jewish involvement that are sensitive to their assumptions, perspectives and symbols. In such a circumstance, the role of a central agency of Jewish life is not so much to invent narratives as to assure that appropriate and capable members of each constituency are energetically and creatively addressing the issue.

Case study: Natasha

"Natasha" is in her late 30s and lives in Leeds with her Jewish husband and three secondary school age children (in non-Jewish schools). She works in the public sector and her husband works in a well-paid job, allowing them a comfortable lifestyle. The couple were both born and brought up in Leeds and both returned to the city after university. They are members of an Orthodox congregation.

Natasha grew up in a tight-knit, observant family and was one of the more Jewishly involved members of our sample. Although the style of observance was stricter whilst growing up, she still sees her current Jewish practice as following on from her formative Jewish experiences as a child in which the family observance of Shabbat left a powerful imprint:

> And my background – they were quite Orthodox and they had a very similar thing about Shabbos. It was very much Shabbos. Probably stricter than now, than mine was, than we

have here. My mother didn't drive or shop or hairdresser or anything like that. Shabbos was a proper Shabbos. We went to shul every Shabbos. We went to my grandma for Shabbos lunch. We'd *bensch* …very much a family Shabbos.

…

Q: Did you enjoy it?

A: Yeh, I did. And I think that's probably why, I think, it was very much part of, you know, it was – this is what we would do. Though we do have Shabbos – not to the same degree as when perhaps I was younger. But we certainly don't shop on Shabbos now, although we do drive.

Her associations with Judaism and Jewish practice are clearly positive and happy:

I was brought up in a very Jewish household and I can't pinpoint any one thing that could, you know, change my belief or anything, but I remember a very happy childhood. I remember a lot of happiness. I remember the celebrations, you know, I remember all the Yom Tovim, I remember Shabbos. You know, to have to remember every – you know, a proper Shabbos. But I think my view is that being Jewish is very much a way of life.

This idea of Judaism as a home-based way of life above all else overshadows the role of teachers and other institutions in Natasha's Jewish upbringing. Although she was a member of Habonim and did receive a Jewish education, the quality and impact of these do not seem to have been formative, and certainly not as influential in shaping her approach to Judaism as her mother:

Q: What about role models? Did you have any particular Jewish role models?

A: I didn't have any great teachers that I remember. I can't say the school that I went to – the Jewish school – was anything fantastic … I really can't say that there was any hugely great role model who I could say influenced my life in terms of Jewish. When I sort of look back and I reflect, I look at my Mum, for example. She worked during the week and very much liked nice things and liked to look nice and, like, have her hair done and all this business which isn't so important but it would never be done on Shabbos. Everything was done before Shabbos. There was no way that she would go for the hairdresser's or go shopping or do anything. Shabbos was Shabbos and that was that. And managed to get everything done.

This strong Jewish upbringing meant that Natasha was determined to continue with Jewish life into adulthood, influencing her choice of dating partners:

Q: Did you date non-Jews or just Jews?

A: In [university] I did and I once got quite involved with somebody, but I didn't want it to continue.

Q: Right. That was your decision?

A: It was my decision and I wasn't happy with what I was doing because I didn't think – I think [sigh] – change in lifestyle and would have been too huge for me and I wouldn't have been able to … it was too alien I think.

On returning to Leeds after university, Natasha met her husband and has lived in the city ever since. She and

her husband are active members of her synagogue and have been members of other Jewish organizations over the years as well. The life of her family is bound into tight knit and mutually reinforcing circles of family, community and synagogue. Life has a Jewish "rhythm" to it, replicating the patterns of her childhood:

> Friday night we tend to have family for dinner. Well, occasionally we get invited out: a nice treat. Shabbos we go to shul, I would say almost every Shabbos. Occasionally I don't. I'm lucky [chuckles] if my husband has to go to work on Saturday morning and then usually turns up to shul later. And then they go to my husband's mother for lunch and tend to spend the day, the afternoon, there and come home.

Not only is she attached to an identifiably extended Jewish family, she is also embedded in a residentially based Jewish social circle, reflecting the persistence of a Jewish neighbourhood:

> The street where I live is very Jewish. Probably about half – apart from two or three houses everybody is Jewish. Socially I would say 95 per cent of our friends are Jewish and we tend to see friends on Saturday nights.

The way that Natasha practises Judaism in the home is strongly influenced by her childhood. She tries to replicate the way she felt as a child in order to transmit her Jewish engagement to her own children:

> I think it's important to pass on the Jewishness, you know, why you do certain things. Pesach, for example, we always have, we usually have about twenty or twenty-five people here *Seder* night and we go to somewhere else the second night. One of the family who comes is a cousin of mine who isn't religious at all. And the younger children absolutely look forward to it every year. Because I think part of it is the family being together, joining, sharing something together. What I got out of it as a child I certainly would love to pass on to my children and I hope that they are able to remember it. It's very special.

Natasha's sense of Jewish belonging does not simply begin and end with Leeds. She also has a strong sense of belonging to a more global Jewish family and to Israel, a sense reinforced by her attendance at the 2002 solidarity rally in London:

> It was the most incredible atmosphere and there was a lot of joking in it. How many fish balls can you squash into Trafalgar Square! And when we got in the coach with friends, you know, and the amount of – have we got enough food? And my daughter actually said to me, in the middle of the Square, and we were absolutely squashed liked sardines, "Do you know," she said, "Mummy, you know, if I got lost, I just felt I could ask anybody here to look after me and I know I'd be safe."

Clearly Natasha feels a close bond to Judaism as a practice that unites family, community, synagogue, Israel and the worldwide Jewish family. But whilst she feels a strong sense of responsibility towards maintaining Jewish practices in the home and outside, this responsibility has its limits. For one thing, her family needs always come first. She took her children out of their Jewish primary school as she felt they were not being pushed academically. She also made

it clear that she and her husband were not bound by the conventions of Orthodoxy:

> Although we have Shabbos, we don't keep Shabbos to the letter. You know, we do drive and we do go out and, rightly or wrongly, we go out on a Saturday night when Shabbos isn't always out.

The family eat out (albeit vegetarian only) in non-kosher restaurants and do not keep some of the more onerous religious requirements such as building a *sukkah*. This is something that Natasha is totally unembarrassed about:

> Most people are on a similar level. We call ourselves "happy hypocrites" and I just think we do what we choose to do.

Since "ethnic" belonging is at the centre of Natasha's practice of Judaism, Jewish practice only needs to be followed to the point where those warm, fuzzy feelings are triggered. There is little desire for further study or to become more engaged in Jewish practice, or even to change the unsatisfactory aspects of the Jewish institutions to which they belong. It is significant that the only two things Natasha thought she would like to change about the community would be to have a kosher restaurant in Leeds and a Jewish secondary school – both institutions that intensify community cohesion. The Judaism Natasha loves brings people together but does not necessarily involve personal rigour and challenge.

Intermarriage and "survivalist" ideology

Attitudes toward intermarriage, or more precisely, the prospective intermarriage of one's children, provide a highly emblematic insight into much broader issues. Here we ask two questions: to what extent would the moderately engaged be troubled by intermarriage, and, to the extent that they are, why do they find intermarriage troubling?

Generally, Jews committed to Jewish group survival tend to view intermarriage with alarm. In their view, the marriage of a Jew to a non-Jew seriously compromises the chances that the couple, and perhaps more critically, their children, will identify as Jews and actively participate in Jewish religious and communal life. Moreover, their opposition is based not so much on concern for individual marital happiness (much as that might concern them), but also out of concern for Jewish group survival and continuity.

In reviewing the qualitative interviews and survey data, the moderately engaged generally focus upon individual rather than collective concerns. Most of our respondents treat in-marriage as definitely preferable. At the same time, they have a fatalistic acceptance of the possibility of intermarriage. The extent of opposition to intermarriage (or lack thereof) emerges in answers to the survey question, "If my child were to marry a non-Jew who did not convert to Judaism, I would be very upset." Significantly, just 49% agreed, 28% were not sure and 24% disagreed, far from an overwhelming opposition to intermarriage. The lack of efficacy to influence the chances of one's child marrying a Jew can be seen in answers to the question, "By sending a child to Jewish day school, one significantly raises the chances that one's child will marry a Jew." While 43% agreed, 27% were not sure and 30% disagreed.

The preference for in-marriage is based on the desire for

authentic replication of Judaism, rather than on theology or an ideological commitment:

> Some people get married to Jewish people and they're very unhappy and they get divorced, and then find a non-Jewish partner and the differences get sorted, or they learn to live with the differences and they're happy. I just feel that one needs to be realistic that in this day and age you need to relax about how much you're going to push it down the child's throat. I will push [our son] as much as I can to be within our religion, but if he's still by himself at that sort of age, then I'd rather he be happy. I'd rather see my son happy with a non-Jewish wife than be by himself [single].
>
> ["Meira", married, in her late 20s, is the mother of an infant, and a member of a United Synagogue congregation in North West London.]

The focus upon individual happiness and family relationships extends not only to the prospective couple itself, but to the relationship between parents and their potentially inter-marrying child:

> Q: What about them marrying someone Jewish: is that still very important to you?
>
> A: Yeh. I think so. But I wouldn't lose my children over it. You know, I've seen it happen and – life's too short. And yes, that would be my ideal. If we get to that position, then we'll worry about it.
>
> ["Rebecca" lives in South Hertfordshire, a United Synagogue member in her mid-30s, and sends her children to non-Jewish schools.]

Implications

The pattern of responses to the intermarriage issue is certainly of interest in and of itself. However, the findings also point to a larger phenomenon, namely the lack of a strong survivalist practice on the part of moderately engaged British Jews. Though holding great affection for Jews, Judaism and their Jewish families, significant numbers are not particularly given to the kind of principled commitment to Jewish group survival that would entail hard choices and personal sacrifices. Group survival is clearly preferable to total assimilation, but not at the cost of totally closing oneself off from the wider society.

Congregational centrality, but limited piety

For the moderately engaged, beyond the family, the most important location for the performance of authentic Jewishness lies within the synagogue. In fact, in our interviews, the family and synagogue were the two arenas that occasioned the most discussion with our respondents as well as the strongest expression of feelings about Jewish experiences.

Notably, 88% of our moderately engaged sample reported membership in congregations. About as many (91%) attend services on the High Holy Days. Most claimed to attend even more often (such as on other festivals). Service-attendance, though clearly not a regular feature of their week-to-week experience, does constitute a meaningful part of their Jewish lives, though perhaps not in the way some observers may expect. The following illustrative remarks convey both the depth and limitations of the significance of synagogue service attendance, even that which is, in this case, apparently fairly regular and long-term:

> To me, although I sit in [a North West London] shul and I

> probably don't understand more than ten per cent of the service in terms of the words we are, you know, *davening*, I still feel much more comfortable there because that's all I've done. And then we'll listen to the sermon and we'll join in. I feel much more at home there than, as I say – that probably, if we were honest with ourselves, we live a Reform style of life in terms of driving on Shabbat, and the other things, traditions and laws that we keep. But as soon as I go into shul, I feel very uncomfortable when I am in anything other than a United Synagogue. I don't understand that. I suppose it's what you're brought up with. It's just what you feel comfortable with. You set your own parameters. You're comfortable with those. It's those traditions that sort of just become part of you, you remember from the earliest days, going to that. And anything that sort of breaks those bonds, you feel slightly out of sorts with.
>
> ["Ernest", of North West London, is a United Synagogue member in his early 40s who sends his children to non-Jewish schools.]

Although the synagogue plays a commanding role in shaping their Judaism, most interviewees were not particularly spiritually inclined. God plays a superficial and minor role in their conception of Judaism. During our qualitative interviews, only a few attested to what at best may be called a vague spirituality, without a major drive to seek spiritual fulfilment. Apparently, the prime motivations for observing "mitzvot" centre on family, community, tradition and nostalgia, rather than upon a declared commitment to observing any divine imperative. "Mitzvot" translates from the Hebrew as "commandments". But, in their performance of ritual practice, British Jews – like many of their counterparts around the world – feel, at best, obligated, but not commanded. They feel an obligation to their family and friends, but not commanded, at least not directly, by a personal divinity. Few respondents gave any report or evidence of serious encounters, let alone relationships, with God (let alone a particularly Jewish understanding of God). However, a number did attest to a vague kind of spirituality and belief. As "Jane" (Manchester, not synagogue member, divorced, children at Jewish schools) says:

> I can't even remember the last time I had a little communication with God – except as an expletive. You know what I mean? I do believe in God most of the time. I sometimes think I believe in Judaism more than I believe in God – if that doesn't sound peculiar.

The survey evidence on these complex matters is equivocal, but does seem to support these inferences. Half the respondents agreed, "I am a spiritual person," though only 18% went as far as to answer, "strongly agree". Perhaps in contrast, the sample expressed little interest in God and synagogue-related activities. Asked about various areas of Jewish life in which they might be interested "in increasing your involvement", just 6% answered "very interested" to synagogue services and prayer, as contrasted with higher numbers for such areas as "Israel-related activities" (13%) and "Jewish arts and cultural activities" (17%). We also asked respondents to assess the appeal of various areas, "If you were to read or study about being Jewish". At the top of the list were the Holocaust (30%, "to a great extent"), Jewish history (29%), and Israel, Zionism and the Arab–Israel conflict (24%). In contrast, near or at the bottom of the list were Talmud (4%), Torah or Bible study (5%), participating in and/or leading synagogue services (6%), and spirituality, God and theology (13%). This rank order again testifies to the strength of ethnic commitment, and, notwithstanding the centrality of the synagogue, the weakness of

genuine religious interest and commitment on the part of moderately engaged British Jews. The following exchange well illustrates the lack of spiritual interests that we generally encountered:

> Q: Going back to Jewish … we didn't mention spirituality and God. How do you feel about that sort of side to Judaism?
>
> A: Not a lot. I'm not a deep thinker you see. I mean you're asking me questions that mean a lot of deep thinking. I'm not like that. Is there a God? Do I think there is a God? Is that what you're asking me?
>
> Q: No, no. I'm just asking how you feel about those sorts of questions.
>
> A: Spiritual. What do I get out of being Jewish? It's just my way of life and that's it. I don't think about it. I am Jewish. End of story.
>
> ["Gabrielle" of Glasgow is an Orthodox synagogue member, in her late 30s, with children at non-Jewish schools.]

Significantly, we believe, not a single member of the interview sample talked about their faith in God in firm terms. There were however a number who talked about God much more vaguely.

Further underscoring the limited implications of widespread congregational belonging and of reasonably widespread service attendance (at least on an annual basis), we found that membership in a particular synagogue does not necessarily imply agreement with its "official" theology. One Orthodox rabbi with whom we spoke remarked, "You know, no one in my congregation is Orthodox," meaning that none, to his knowledge, are fully observant of the laws of Shabbat and Kashrut. In like fashion, an activist in the Reform movement said, "Hardly any of our people are seriously Reform."

Two seemingly contradictory inferences can be made: The widespread attachment to synagogues and deference to rabbis ought not be confused with religious fervour and piety, theological sophistication, or spiritual hunger. At the same time, the absence of genuine, "pure" religious commitment and knowledge should not obscure our appreciation of the British synagogue as a prime locus for the expression of Jewish identification on the part of the moderately engaged. They invest congregation and rabbi with great symbolic value, and see them as the repositories and representation of historically and religiously sanctioned authenticity. The most meaningful family-centred Jewish activities that take place outside the home invariably take place in the synagogue and/or with the engagement of a rabbi. Consequently, for most moderately engaged Jews with whom we spoke, rabbi and synagogue represent the "face" of Judaism.

In fact, the confluence of the two sides of the relationship with rabbis and synagogue (high centrality, but limited piety) may help to explain two sets of further seemingly contradictory findings drawn alternatively from our qualitative and quantitative phases. In the qualitative interviews, respondents voiced rather restrained, ambivalent or mildly critical attitudes toward rabbis they have known, albeit with some praise for a few rabbis from childhood, and a few with stellar reputations in congregations other than their own. In fact, we came to appreciate that the dramatic changes in profile, membership and dynamism that have taken place in a few, select synagogues in recent years have not gone unnoticed by congregants in other congregations. Thus, congregational revival and extraordinary rabbinic leadership not only directly influence members of a particular congregation but may also improve the image and attractiveness of Judaism for those within "hearing range" of such a congregation.

At the same time, when asked on the survey to characterize their congregational rabbis, as many as 55% of the synagogue members agreed that they were "inspiring", and just 13% saw their rabbis as "dull". They were also very widely seen as accessible (80%) and hardly at all as unapproachable (7%). What explains the more critical comments in person and the more positive findings on the survey?

We believe the survey results point to the respect and deference British Jews accord their clergy specifically, and established institutions, custom and leaders in general. In contrast, the more layered, nuanced and critical remarks in the depth interviews could emerge only after the establishment of rapport, the assurance of confidentiality and the ability to express complex and qualified views.

Discussion and implications

A half-century ago, distinguished sociologist Marshall Sklare (1972) (although the research was conducted in the mid-1950s), referred to the Conservative synagogue of mid-twentieth century America as an "ethnic church". He wrote:

> Judaism constitutes an ethnic church: a fellowship whose members are differentiated from those belonging to other denominations by virtue of their special descent as well as their doctrines or practices. … Many [Jews] wish to identify themselves as being members of a religious group while at the same time they lack much religious interest. (1972: 36, 39).

Rabbis at the time certainly preached fealty to religious law and custom, and congregants affiliated and attended out of a strong sense of ancestral obligation, nostalgia, middle-class

propriety, family belonging and minority distinctiveness. Except for the fact that non-Jewish suburban middle-class America of the 1950s valued congregational affiliation and worship attendance, Sklare's characterization of the ethnic church then bears many similarities with the British Jewish congregations of today.

The American Conservative Jewish ethnic churches of the 1950s, many of which were large and impersonal, eventually gave way to smaller, more intimate and more participatory congregations. An elitist havurah movement emphasized study, informality and non-hierarchical leadership, both lay and clerical. The Conservative congregations were also successfully challenged by feminist influences to move to greater gender egalitarianism, and they lost substantial congregational "market share" on the religious left to the more liberal Reform movement, and, in recent years, on the religious right to a more pious and more Jewishly educated Modern Orthodox movement.

Striking parallels can be seen in recent developments in British Jewish religious and congregational life, suggesting both the sorts of options and possibilities, as well as challenges and dangers, that stand before congregations in the UK. Contexts are different, particular situations are unique, and history never repeats. At the same time, historical parallels and lessons can prove instructive – if cautiously drawn, properly understood and adaptively applied. In fact, leaders of synagogue movements in Britain have, in recent years, acknowledged the dangers of stasis in their communities.

Any comprehensive and ambitious strategy aimed at enriching the Jewish lives of the moderately engaged will need to recognize the centrality of congregations and rabbis, along with the currently limited interest in religious commitment and spiritual quest, per se. Congregations remain ideal locations for reaching and teaching the moderately engaged. They represent and

effectuate sentimental ties to family, neighbours, Jewish community and Jewish peoplehood. As communities, congregations hold the potential both to attract and repel, and to lend positive or negative imageries and associations to Jewish involvement. Rabbis maintain contact, even if limited, with a very large number of affiliated Jews, and do seem to reach them particularly during the major holidays as well as at highly sensitive times of family transitions (birth, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, weddings, divorces, illness, funerals and mourning). The potential for changing the Jewish lives of the moderately engaged individuals, and the congregations they inhabit, ought not be ignored or under-estimated.

Case study: Aaron

"Aaron" is in his early 40s and lives in North West London with his wife and three teenage children. He works in computers. Aaron was brought up in a Liberal synagogue and was involved in its youth club and had what he describes as a "traditional Progressive Jewish upbringing". His parents were quite involved and his mother taught at the cheder. Aaron takes pride in the continuity between his upbringing and his current family practice, weaving together a Jewish tapestry that embraces his parents, his children, and his family:

> Q: How did your parents celebrate the festivals?
>
> A: Pretty much all of the major ones. I mean, all – you know, apart from Shabbat obviously. I mean we've always done candles and the *brochos* on Friday night. That's always been traditional in our family and certainly my parents always used to do that and I always do it.
>
> Q: Did you have a special meal on Friday night?

> A: Oh yes. Friday night's the important night. Friday night is the one night where I always make sure I'm home – almost unknown for me to be away or to not be home on a Friday night. I mean it happens occasionally but it's very, very rare. *Challah* cloth, candles, kosher wine. I've always made my children do the blessings. So my daughter does the candles; my oldest son does the wine – the *challah;* and my youngest son does the wine and that's how it's always been ever since they were old enough to do it and my parents did the same thing.

Aaron and his wife are members of a large Reform synagogue. He is a proud and partisan Reform Jew. However, his denominational affiliation has less to do with strictly theological considerations than a bad family experience of an Orthodox synagogue:

> My parents were married in an Orthodox synagogue, but they became members of [name of Liberal synagogue] for a variety of reasons. My uncle who taught me my Bar Mitzvah portion was a very well-respected lay reader at [name of Synagogue] until it got to the point where he could no longer walk because he had a quite serious illness. And that actually had a big profound [influence] on the direction I think that the whole family's Judaism went because the committee or council or rabbinate or whatever at [name of synagogue] turned round to him and said: You can't come to synagogue on Shabbat in a wheelchair because no one's allowed to push you … and it completely destroyed our whole family … that and the fact that his daughter, they told her she couldn't take the baby to synagogue in a pram.

Aaron's children have attended cheder and attend non-

Jewish schools. His own Jewish practice lessened at university and in the early years of his marriage, but he became more involved as his children grew:

> I was more involved when my children started going to religion school, because then I got involved in the youth group, and my wife got involved with the friends of the youth group who are on the committees and things, and got involved in fundraising activities and things for the youth group. I became more involved with the synagogue, from that perspective – although not necessarily from a religious perspective.
>
> We did start going to services more regularly with the children from birth. Again, probably not every Shabbat, maybe every two or three weeks, something like that. But until my oldest son's Bar Mitzvah was on the horizon, that's when I started, really started, to get more involved. Because I had to! In terms of going to synagogue more regularly because it was part of what he was involved in. That's when I think there was quite a significant change in my attitude.

Aaron is one of the members of our sample who is most involved in synagogue life:

> I actually got more involved in the synagogue because I'd been involved with the youth groups. I knew a lot of people, and the then senior warden's wife and my wife were very involved with the Friends of the religion school. I'd got involved in things. Done things like security duty. And so I was known as someone who was involved on the periphery of things. My wife's friend, her husband was then the senior warden, asked me if I'd like to become an assistant warden and I said, Yeah, OK, why not? You know, I'm there every week. So I then did a year as assistant warden; a year as a junior warden; and then last year I was senior warden. I'm very much involved in the synagogue.

Aaron is proud of and takes a lot of pleasure in his growing involvement in the synagogue, which for him serves as a central locus for meaningful Jewish community of a very powerful and compelling nature:

> Everyone knows who you are – which is quite nice. People come and ask you advice, which is quite nice – and if you don't know the answer, you at least know someone who might know the answer because you'd have quite a wide range of people then who you know and know you. And I would say a good number of them are friends. So it has broadened my range of people I know as friends, who we actually see on a social basis and regularly go out with.

Aaron's attachment to Judaism is bound up inextricably in his involvement with the synagogue and with his family. The spiritual side of Judaism, whilst not entirely without interest, is a grey area. His relationship with God is ambiguous and tentative:

> Q: Where does God come in? Anywhere?
>
> A: I was wondering when we were going to get to that. That's one of those interesting debates that can go on all day. People have said to me: What do you believe in God? And the answer to that is: I don't disbelieve, but I don't believe in the concept of some supernatural being … I don't see any reason why there should not be a superior or higher force within the universe that has some guiding principles. Whether that is an intelligent force, in the sense that it actually guides deliberately, I'm not clear about that one.

Attached to Israel, but often ambivalent about its policies

Consistent with their strong sense of ethnic belonging and Jewish peoplehood, Israel occupies a central place in the consciousness of British Jews. Both in our qualitative interviews and the survey, respondents provided widespread evidence of strong attachment to Israel. In the survey, as many as 78% agreed, "I care deeply about Israel," and just 5% disagreed. At a time when the larger society may well view "Zionist" as a less socially acceptable label than "pro-Israel", it is significant that almost half (47%) agreed that "I am a Zionist," while 27% disagreed. Fully 33% had participated in a Zionist youth movement in their adolescent years, suggesting a major pro-Israel educational resource in the moderately engaged population.

The extent and frequency of travel to Israel both reflects and supports the widespread attachment to Israel. Of the moderately engaged Jews in our survey sample, as many as 91% have been to Israel, and 64% either have been to Israel three times or more, or lived in Israel. By way of comparison, only 35% of American Jews have been to Israel, and about 16% have been there twice or more.

When conducting our interviews, we were struck by off-hand comments that reflected the ease with which a substantial portion of the moderately engaged readily and repeatedly travel to Israel. When asked where she spends her holidays (vacations), one respondent said, "Well, this year we're not going to Israel," suggesting that she travelled to Israel almost annually, a not uncommon pattern. The intimate connection between travel and attachment, as well as the special challenge to maintaining attachment in the absence of travel, emerges in "Edward"'s comments:

> I wouldn't go and live there but I have a very strong attachment to Israel. It was certainly a very impressionable time that I spent there [as a teenager] – all the time I spent there. And I love the country. I've got very close friends who are there … and I wish I could go there more often than I do. But I haven't been [in almost twenty years]– we'd never take the kids.
>
> ["Edward", married and in his mid-30s, lives in London, does not belong to a congregation, but sends his two children to a Jewish day school.]

We conducted our interviews not too many months after the Trafalgar Square solidarity rally for Israel (May 2002), held in the wake of the 2002 terrorist attack on the Passover Seder in Netanya. Observers had reported that perhaps over 50,000 demonstrators had crowded the square in solidarity with Israel. Presuming that the vast majority of participants at the rally were Jewish, one could assume that a major fraction of British Jewry had joined the demonstration. Indeed, a large fraction of our qualitative interviewees had been to the demonstration. Of those who did not attend, practically all had considered going or had averred that they would have attended were it not for the fear of a terrorist incident. One mother, for example, reported that she and her husband decided he would go and represent the family.

With all this said, British Jews live in an environment in which (despite support for Israel from both major political parties) criticism of the policies of the current Israeli government is widespread and vocal. Indeed, some of this criticism may be pointedly anti-Zionist, leading to fierce and anguished debates about the connection between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. Illustrative of the depth of sensitivity among Jews engaged in public affairs, we refer to one key informant we interviewed who said, with reference to British journalists, intellectuals and foreign policy elites: "Now repeat after me – South Africa, Chile, Israel; South Africa,

Chile, Israel. I'm not saying Israel is seen as illegitimate as apartheid South Africa and Pinochet's Chile once were, but it's getting there. Some in Britain feel that we made a mistake when we let the Jewish State come into existence and we bear a special responsibility for all that's happened afterwards."

The British media have become the focus of criticism from much of the British Jewish communal leadership and this critical attitude is also shared by our sample. When asked to respond to the demanding agree/disagree statement, "I am disturbed by the British media's biased coverage of Israel," (note that the statement contains both an empirical evaluation of the media and an expression of personal distress), as many as 75% of the sample agreed, and just 8% disagreed.

Yet for the most part, our qualitative interviews spoke of anti-Israel sentiment as "out there" rather than close by and immediately threatening. They reported that their non-Jewish friends and co-workers viewed Israel neutrally or passively, even as they did express discomfort that public figures and the media appeared to be highly critical of Israel. One set of comments expresses many of the observations above:

> The media in this country are terrible. I do watch the news, but that's why I read *Ha'Aretz*. I went on the march last week because I want to support Israel. I didn't want to support Bibi Netanyahu, to be honest, although he speaks beautifully. But I support the State of Israel wholeheartedly and I will stand up and if ever need be, I will go there and help in any way I can.
>
> ["Nancy" is single, in her mid-30s, living in North West London, and does not belong to a congregation.]

Certainly, the salience and significance of Israel as a central element of British Jewish identity, nurtured in Jewish educational

and Zionist frameworks, and strengthened by frequent travel to Israel, has been heightened by perceived threats to Israel – both in Britain and in the Middle East. With that said, on a policy level, the moderately engaged, while sure of their passionate attachment to Israel, are themselves not all that sure of Israel's policies. Furthermore, they are not sure *how* to make those judgements, given their distrust of the available sources of information. When asked about Israel's handling of its policies, Sarah responded:

> [Sigh] – I don't feel I have a right to comment. I haven't read enough or understand enough. And part of that I suppose is because I find the British press completely biased and when I hear something, I don't believe it anyway. So I can't make a right judgement on the thing when I'm being told a load of lies.
>
> ["Sarah" is in her early 40s, lives in South Hertfordshire, belongs to a United Synagogue congregation, and sends her children to a Jewish school.]

The moderately engaged are more confused and ambivalent than critical and oppositional. Like many Israelis, they worry about Israel's future, and are unsure of what to do:

> I don't know that if Israel were to give in to the Palestinians to give them what they want, whether everything would die down and there'd be peace. It would be nice to say: Well let's give part of the land back to the Palestinians, give them what they want and stop all these endless killings and suicide bombers. But if they do it, will there be peace? I don't know. I don't know.
>
> ["Saul"]

Most of the people we interviewed declined to identify with one or another approach to Israel's search for peace and security.

Yet, of those who were ready to venture a particular point of view, most voiced what may be characterized as pro-Israel "dovish" positions, albeit qualified and tentative, as the following remarks well illustrate:

> Q: And what do you think about Israel's handling of the Palestinians?
>
> A: I was quite shocked when Sharon was brought to power after what I knew about what he'd done – all those years ago. I don't know what else they can do, but I think that they have to give up territories. I think they have to. And I don't think that anyone knows. I don't agree with what they're doing, but I stand by what they're doing at the moment because I think it's come to a situation where no matter how much the Palestinians want a State, suicide bombing is not the answer.
>
> ["Nancy"]

When asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "I generally support the policies of the current Israeli government," just 22% answered agree, while even more – 28% – disagreed. Half said they were not sure or mixed. By 35% to 23%, they agreed that, "My Jewish friends and associates are often very critical of current Israeli government policies." Even more critical are non-Jewish friends and associates where a parallel question elicited far more agreement (44%) than disagreement (19%). Consistent with this critical personal and social context, when queried about their own positions as more identified with Israeli "right-wing hawks" or "left-wing doves", most respondents (63%) could not identify with either, preferring ambivalent or ambiguous responses. But of those who could ally themselves with one camp or the other, by a very lopsided margin (30% versus 8%), they preferred doves to hawks, ambiguous as these terms might be, not just to the respondents, but to Israelis themselves.

Perhaps in part because of the ambivalence and confusion about Israeli policies, the population seems quite interested in learning more about Israel. The topic ranked among the three highest in a list of Jewish topical areas for possible reading or study. In addition, they provided asymmetrical reactions to the question, "I would very much like to become better informed about the current situation in Israel." As many as 69% agreed, and just 10% disagreed. The extreme responses may be more genuinely indicative of the interest in Israel-related learning: 24% strongly agreed and just 1% strongly disagreed. We should also note that 16% of the sample at least occasionally or frequently read the *Jerusalem Post*, 10% occasionally or frequently read *Ha'aretz*, and 9% occasionally or frequently pick up the *Jerusalem Report*.

Certainly, some of our qualitative respondents, in parallel with the small number of survey respondents, voiced support for Prime Minister Sharon and his policy line of the time. As one interviewee remarked:

> My view is very harsh. My view is that there should be a total cut-off – total cut-off to the Arabs, specially after the terrorist attacks … I think Sharon should be twice as hard as he is now.
>
> ["Avi" – North East London United Synagogue member, in his early 30s, married with one child.]

Discussion and implications

Emerging from these findings is what we have called the new Israel-trilogy, as follows:

1 I love Israel.
2 I don't always agree with what Israel is doing.
3 I hate when the non-Jewish media makes Israel look bad – even when I myself don't agree with what Israel is doing.

This trilogy of statements encapsulates the often contradictory and ambivalent position that most of our sample appear to hold regarding Israel. Even the minorities in our qualitative and (particularly) quantitative sample are rarely certain about anything to do with the current situation in Israel.

In short, Israel, like other key elements in the British Jewish consciousness, is treated with a high degree of familism. Like members of the family, Israel is approached with genuine and immutable love. It is seen with familiarity, often appreciated for its strengths and accepted for its shortcomings. If it is to be criticized or reproached, it is to be reproved in the confines of the family, out of earshot of outsiders, let alone antagonists.

At the same time, one has to be concerned about the sustainability of deep affection for and passionate attachment to Israel, and especially the inter-generational transmission of such powerful pro-Israel sentiments. The Israel that younger adults experience today is a far more complex entity and symbol, both politically and morally, complicating the ways in which parents, rabbis, educators and lay leaders can speak about Israel to the next generation. Jewish communal activists regard Israel as the subject of particularly unfavourable treatment in the British mass media. The violent turn of events has diminished travel to Israel both on the part of organized educational programmes (despite a strong rebound) and by parents taking their children. Obviously, being present in Israel is a powerful tool for educating people about Israel, Zionism, and contemporary issues.

The obstacles to the inter-generational transmission of Israel attachment pose a significant policy challenge not just to organized British Jewry, but also to Jewish communities around the world. The UK may have a special opportunity to devise new directions in Zionist education for those who do not travel (as frequently as they might have in the past) to Israel, and in shaping Zionist education that is both pro-Israel and open to discussion of specific policies, an educational approach appropriate for those who might love Israel but are confused or opposed to specific Israeli government policies. As much as, if not more than, in other countries, influential sections of the UK population are antipathetic to Israel, heightening the challenge. And as much as if not more than the Jews in other countries, British Jewry has amassed the cultural resources and experiences to be mobilized on behalf of innovative approaches to Zionist education in these times. Thus, organized British Jewry is uniquely positioned to devise and experiment with new approaches to a problem that much of Diaspora Jewry is currently facing.

As noted, numerous findings point to some significant degree of interest in Israel education, especially that focused on contemporary issues and dilemmas. Travel, reading Israel-oriented publications, and discussions with friends, family members and Jewish community members all provide a flow of information and perspectives that is seen to be at variance with that offered by the mass media. However, clearly, some portion of the moderately engaged both need and want additional vehicles to learn about Israel, and may well be receptive to engaging in safely structured and open conversations about Israel's political and moral complexities.

Case study: Leah

"Leah" is in her mid-30s, lives in North West London and is single. She works as a teacher. She is a member of a Reform synagogue, was involved in a Jewish youth movement and has stayed involved in various Jewish communal activities as an adult. Her current involvement in Judaism, she reports, exceeds that of her parents, who seem to have exhibited a reticence to be publicly identified as Jews:

> My parents were quite ashamed of their Judaism or they hid it. They did silly things like the cleaner used to come and Mum would always put the candlesticks away – you didn't want the cleaner to know that you were Jewish. The *mezuzah* was on the inside of the door rather than on the outside of the door because people walking past might know. So they were very clear that I wasn't going to a Jewish school and yet, from the age of about twelve, they sent me to the Reform youth club at synagogue and sent me to summer camp. I went through summer camps until I was eighteen and then I became a *madrichah* and then I went off on Machon and kind of followed that all the way through.
>
> Q: You went to Machon for a year?
>
> A: Yeh.
>
> Q: Was that your first time in Israel?
>
> A: No. I went on Israel Tour when I was sixteen – for a month. But my parents had never taken me to Israel. My parents had never been. Neither of them had ever been to Israel until I was on Machon programme and I don't think – they've not been back since. They didn't go out when my brother went on Machon because it was, it was during a really dangerous time. I went out to visit him and they were very, very unhappy about me being out there. He actually came back midway through his year. They'd be very concerned about what's going on in Israel, but they're not pro – they're not – they're certainly not anti-Zionist, but they wouldn't be particularly pro-Israel.

In contrast to her parents, Leah is clearly passionate about Judaism and Israel as a result of her experiences in the youth movement. Indeed, following Machon, she considered going back to Israel permanently:

> [I] probably planned to go back at that stage. In fact, I'm sure I did. But I needed to come back and study and I wanted to get my degree here. And then, when I finished teaching, I always knew I had to do one year for my teaching qualifications – it would otherwise be void. And I always intended at the end of that year to go back and to live on kibbutz or – and it never happened.

In more recent years, trips to Israel became more infrequent, perhaps pointing to a gap in opportunities to travel to Israel:

> I haven't been back to Israel for a long time. I've never been to Israel on holiday. The last time I went to Israel was probably about eight years ago. And I feel very bad that I haven't been to Israel because I would like to go back. I don't know how to go back to Israel any more because I don't think I want to stay in a hotel in Tel-Aviv. Lots of my friends at the time made *aliyah,* but I'm not particularly friendly with people now. The last time I went back was a UJIA project that they ran for two years which was about people who

had grown up with their movements, who were beginning their professional lives. They wanted to become the Jewish leadership of the future, and how to get us involved. And it was a monthly study session and part of this was a week in Israel. And it kind of fizzled. It didn't really go anywhere. And I'm not sure that any of us kind of developed what we did any more because of it. It was just quite a nice thing to do once a month. So that was the last time I went out.

Leah has clearly struggled to find a way of transforming her youthful enthusiasm and engagement with Israel into a more adult connection with the state. Without the organizational infrastructure to support her Israel experiences, she is somewhat at a loss to know what to do. Nonetheless, the passion for Israel remains, albeit one suffused with a strong sense of vulnerability and physical danger for those who live there or even visit:

Q: How do you feel about Israel generally?

A: Very passionately about Israel's right to exist. Very scared about what's going on there right now. I'm very glad I'm not living in Israel right now. I've got a very good friend in Israel at the moment and I am constantly worried about what he's doing and where he is. And friends who are often in Israel – I will worry about what's going on.

With respect to Israeli politics, Leah, like many of our qualitative interview respondents, has become confused and ambivalent, reflecting both concern for the disruption of Israelis' lives, as well as a view that "the Palestinians are … oppressed":

I understand, on one level, the dilemma that an Israeli

faces, that they're threatened and that life's at risk. I feel furious and angry and frustrated that an Israeli's lifestyle has changed so much in the last couple of years, that restaurants have guards outside. Now I've friends that say you don't walk down the street, and you certainly question getting on a bus, and that to me is horrific. But on another level I believe that people have rights, that the Palestinians are, on a high level, oppressed. But I think until Palestinians recognize the need for democracy and until both sides understand that – that there has to be compromise and neither is going to get everything that they want without compromise, it's not going to be resolved.

At one point in the interview Leah described herself as "left-wing" on Israel matters, yet on the other hand:

My own view's become more right-wing. Every time there's a suicide bombing I wonder what the response should be. I get more and more angry about the way Palestinian extremists – and I do believe it's extremists: I don't believe it's all of them. But the way Palestinian extremists behave, I end up believing that responses should become more right-wing. I've recently ended up even having a discussion somewhere that said maybe if a suicide bomber believed that their whole family were going to – going to suffer as a result of their actions, then maybe they'd stop doing it. Maybe they wouldn't believe that martyrdom was the way and that they were martyrs. And yet I also – I don't believe that Jews ought to be expanding settlements. I don't believe it's the right way to behave. I think it's antagonistic. I think that an acknowledgement of the people around you and acceptance of their rights has to start happening.

Given that political judgements on the situation in Israel are clearly difficult and painful for Leah, involvement in more "consensual" Zionist activities becomes intensely pleasurable:

Q: Did you go to the rally in Trafalgar Square?

A: Mmhm. Yeh. Yeh.

Q: How do you feel about it?

A: I thought it was very powerful, very positive … I felt I had to be there. I couldn't have imagined not being there. And, in fact, I was amazed at being there! For however many thousands of people there – I met so many of my friends there. That, for me, was ironic. That there were so many people there, but we all managed to bump into each other, and everywhere I turned some of my friends were there. No, I wouldn't have dreamt of not going.

Identification with Israel in this way is clearly much easier than the day-to-day struggle to make sense of a complex reality. For Leah, the UK media do not help in clarifying things:

Q: How do you feel about the media on Israel?

A: That it changes on a daily basis and I'm cynical towards it, whichever way it changes. I think the BBC's been disgusting and yet, at times, it becomes almost apologetically sympathetic. I don't think they know which way to turn. I think they're trying to lead the population and I don't think that what they're saying is – is based on truth. I think it's based on propaganda and hype. But I don't know what to believe any more because that's my source of information.

So unless I've got friends who've just been to Israel, or unless I check *Ha'aretz*, I tend not to look at it regularly. I'll look at it if I know if I've heard on the news that something's just happened, then I'll look on the *Jerusalem Post* and *Ha'aretz* because I think, well maybe then I'll get a more clear view. But then, what do I know?

Whilst Leah does not feel personally threatened living in the UK, she was among the very few in our qualitative interviews who reported difficult confrontations over Israel:

Recently I had a really interesting and unpleasant debate with a woman in my office who I know very well and I've always had huge respect for, but the level of pro-Palestinian issues coming from her I find very threatening. I think, in terms of Israeli politics, I'm quite left-wing. Although – as time goes on, I'm finding every so often I come out with things that shock me with kind of feeling more right-wing in response to what's happening. But a woman in my office has really been very, very negative and I've got to the stage now where I actually will avoid talking to her about it because I find what she says quite offensive. And although on one level I want to get into the debate with her and therefore I want to have it out with her, I don't think she's in a place where she can do that.

Leah's engagement with Israel is one of intense love and intense confusion. She is unclear how to relate to Israel now that her youth movement days are over. She is confused about how she feels about Israeli government policy and does not find "advocacy" easy or natural. In this respect, the solidarity rally was a relief as it largely avoided all this complexity.

Dweller orientation, albeit with openness to seeking

Sociologists of religion distinguish "dwellers" from "seekers", two ideal types with respect to orientation to religion, spirituality, faith, and practice. Writing about "dwellers, seekers and hybrid souls", Carroll and Roof (citing Robert Wuthnow, another sociologist) offer the following concise description of these somewhat enigmatic concepts:

> Dwellers live in a stable place and feel secure within its territory; for them the sacred is fixed, and spirituality is cultivated through habitual practice within the familiar world of a particular tradition. Not that they are untouched by social change, but they are relatively well-anchored amid the flux. By contrast, seekers explore new vistas and negotiate among alternative, and at times confusing, systems of belief and practice; for them, the sacred is fluid and portable, and spirituality is likened unto a process or state of becoming. The language of the journey fits their experience. (2002: 39).

Dwellers are loyal to and content with established modes of religious practice. Seekers search for personal meaning through religious involvement and are less bound to established ways of doing things. To seek is to constantly search for new modes of experience and as such it is perfectly possible to be a seeker whilst still being committed to orthodox religious practice. It is to see Jewishness as a negotiable and dynamic process. It is to treat the quality of Jewish experience as importantly as its authenticity. In contrast, to dwell is to be content with current modes of Jewish engagement. It is to be anchored within a strongly felt sense of what is Jewishly authentic.

The qualitative phase of our research, embracing key informant interviews and depth interviews with moderately engaged respondents, led us to conclude that most moderately engaged British Jews fall within the camp of dwellers rather than seekers. They are largely contented Jews who are mostly happy to be part of the community of family, friends, neighbours and fellow congregants. They are supported by a British Jewish culture, embodied in synagogues and other institutions which are better disposed towards dwellers than seekers. They are inclined to believe that there is a "proper" or "authentic" way of being Jewish embodied within the concept of "tradition" – tradition seen as a set of practices learned from one's parents and to be transmitted to one's children. (The Latin root for tradition, like its Hebrew counterpart, connotes transmission.)

Lack of change, or more precisely the perception of continuity and its attendant authenticity, may even constitute a positive attraction in this perspective. As "Roger" (early 40s, Glasgow, Orthodox synagogue member, children at non-Jewish schools) remarked, "I think the thing I like about Judaism, although I don't participate in it, is that the laws have never changed. It's not moved with time." This view of Judaism's immutable character, of course, separates Orthodoxy (even Modern Orthodoxy) from denominational alternatives that argue for an explicit recognition of change over time. Yet, as these remarks illustrate, the claim that Judaism's laws have never changed obviously resonates with a British Jewish population that values constancy, tradition and authenticity. Furthermore, even members of non-Orthodox denominations within our sample share this view of the unchanging character of Judaism – albeit in a more qualified way.

Most moderately engaged British Jews, it seems, seek a Judaism that honours and replicates the way in which Judaism was seen to be performed in the past (by parents and grandparents, and in the synagogues of their youth). Jewish continuity is

performed through studious and proper imitation of authentic Jewish rites, occurring at crucial times in the calendar or in their lives, as these remarks demonstrate.

To strike out on your own, to create new patterns of engagement even if sanctioned by family or rabbis, may find little support among one's friends, social environment or legitimate institutions. To "seek" Jewishly, to innovate, may seem inauthentic and somehow "not proper". One telling example, even if a bit extreme, testifies to the power of resistance to innovation or, in perhaps more positive terms, loyalty to established patterns. One interviewee was decidedly unhappy at the prospect of his daughter engaging in a Bat Chayil ceremony, marking her transition to Jewish adulthood. His disapproval was based primarily on the fact that as he says, "In my time there was no such thing." This father insisted on rejecting his daughter's desire for a Bat Chayil ceremony, even though it would, it seems, positively express her Jewish commitment, and even though his wife sided with his daughter, and his rabbi gave the ceremony his blessing and approval. For this moderately engaged British Jewish dweller, the Bat Chayil ceremony, in its very novelty and in its seeming response to his daughter's search for personal Jewish meaning, violated his sense of propriety, shaped by nostalgic memories of his own childhood. That he not only held such views, but expressed them and apparently prevailed in preventing the ceremony, is testimony to the power of the dweller orientation in British Jewry.

While we were duly impressed with the extent to which our qualitative interviews lent support to the dweller characterization of British Jewish identity, our survey evidence seemed to tend in the other direction. Respondents rejected propriety as an ultimate arbiter of innovation. They endorsed a search for meaningful ways

to be Jewish; and they rejected the notion that there is indeed a right or wrong way to act out one's Jewish commitment. By a margin of 82% to 8% they agreed that they are bothered "When people try to tell me there is a right way to be Jewish". By an equally wide margin (78% to 6%), the sample agreed, "It is important for me to practise Judaism in a way that I find meaningful, even if I have to depart from the way things have been done in the past." Contrary to our pre-survey expectations, only a minority (18% versus 53%) agreed, "It is important for me to practise Judaism in a proper fashion, in the way things have been done in the past." They also rejected the notion (12% versus 67% disagreeing), "It bothers me when I see Jews not living a traditional Jewish life."

How are we to reconcile these seemingly contradictory tendencies in the two phases of field work? Our sense is that, with some exceptions, the moderately engaged population indeed inclines in the dweller direction. At the same time, they also display some "seekerly" tendencies. Perhaps more to the point, they accept the legitimacy of religious seeking and innovation, if not for themselves then by others (the example of the Bat Chayil father notwithstanding). These "seekerly" tendencies take the form of vague aspirations rather than serious ones. It is the more comfortable "dwellerly" tendencies that tend to be the dominant ones in most moderately engaged Jews.

Case study: Rebecca

"Rebecca", in her mid 30s, lives in South Hertfordshire with her husband and three children, the oldest of whom is seven years old. The family are members of a United Synagogue congregation. She works part-time. Rebecca grew up in a small provincial Jewish community that she describes as "a

close-knit community that really looked after everybody else". Her parents were members of the local Orthodox community that she attended regularly and she was involved in two national Jewish youth organizations as well as attending cheder three times a week.

Rebecca attended a university with a very small Jewish population and hence was not involved in UJS (Union of Jewish Students) during her time as a student. She moved to London on completing her studies, in part because of the lack of Jewish opportunities in her home town:

> Q: Was it your intention to move to London?
>
> A: Yes, I think so. Or – move away from [name of town], because long-term, there wasn't really much of a Jewish future there. The community was already by then beginning to condense. Get to eighteen and all the kids would move away. Not that I wasn't happy there, but I could see long-term that wasn't really where I wanted to be.

Rebecca and her husband married a year after moving to London. Her husband was brought up in the Reform movement and had been a *madrich* in RSY-Netzer (Reform Synagogue Youth), yet they married in a United Synagogue:

> When we discussed getting married, it was always our intention to get married in a United shul because, rightly or wrongly, it gives your children a choice. You know, then there's no issue with Jewishness.

This sense that Reform Judaism is somehow less authentic than Orthodox is reinforced by Rebecca in her account of her discomfort with Reform services:

> We went to a Reform shul, and it was like sitting in church. Big organ. Microphones. Operatic choir. And I felt very, very uncomfortable – not the sort of experience I particularly enjoyed at all.
>
> Q: So what you like about the United Synagogue is the atmosphere then?
>
> A: Yeah. That was the environment I'd grown up in.

Even if the drive to join a United Synagogue came principally from Rebecca, her husband has in fact become more involved in the community since joining. She tells a story of her husband's Jewish growth, sparked initially by the impending birth of their child, and facilitated by their rabbi and a well-functioning Jewish community:

> [He] couldn't read Hebrew, had no knowledge of history or the festivals and all that kind of the stuff that you learn at cheder – had never had any of that. And then, when I was pregnant I said I didn't know what was going to happen. If it was a boy, there's going to be a *bris* and there's going to be a whole business. So he suddenly thought: Well, I'd better sort of get my act together and go and learn to read! And he phoned the rabbi that had married us. He was a young guy who he felt that he could approach and talk to. He said that he couldn't teach him, but he'd put him in touch with somebody else that can. And they put him in touch with the Jewish Learning Exchange, and he used to go once a week and it started off to learn to read. And then it became more of a *shiur*, because it was like a discussion, a topical discussion – not necessarily just Jewish stuff but everyday moral dilemmas, if you like. And he really, really enjoyed it.

Rebecca's husband has since become more involved in the synagogue and has also volunteered for a major British Jewish organization. Significantly though, Rebecca's Jewish involvement has not changed much, notwithstanding her ongoing concern for her children's upbringing:

> I've kind of sort of plodded along in the middle of the road that's not sort of one extreme or another. And he's kind of gone from one side to the other. You know, I mean, it was really him more than me. Well, I want to keep kosher and I want all of this kind of stuff for the kids. And, he's not wrong in what he says. I'm happy to go along with that. And I think for the kids it is important.

Rebecca has been able to accommodate her husband's greater involvement, as it has not impinged greatly on her own "traditional" Jewish practice. Although they attend Shabbat services regularly, her husband and children still play tennis and watch football matches on Saturdays. Although they celebrate most of the festivals, they do not pull their children out of school on festivals such as Pesach and Shavuot. In many key respects, her current Jewish practice replicates her Jewish practice growing up, as in their decision not to send their children to Jewish schools:

> We've always been quite involved in the shul and they would go to cheder. I just felt that they could have the best of both, because they could have a secular education and yet still have a Jewish education running parallel with that. That was how I grew up. I suppose historically that was what I'd had, and secular schools offer a very good standard of education and I perhaps felt that it was a better education.

Indeed, in the way she talks about her children's Jewish upbringing, it is clear that it is important to her, as for many if not most of our interviewees, that they replicate her own way of being Jewish, as part of a keen sense of the possibility of assimilation:

> Q: What do you hope for your children Jewishly?
>
> A: To understand what it means to be Jewish. To want to retain their Jewish roots and want to carry on that tradition I suppose. I think you have a duty to maintain that, to try and educate your children not to marry out, to maintain the Jewish line, and to keep Judaism alive. I suppose it just becomes more and more diluted. I suppose if you take it to the nth degree, then, some ten generations down the line there will be no Jews. So I think you have an obligation to educate your children as to what being Jewish is all about.

Although Rebecca has become involved in the running of the synagogue cheder as a way of further committing to the maintenance of tradition, she is not much given to introspection about Jewish issues. She shows no desire to enquire further into her Jewish life as this exchange illustrates:

> Q: Where do God and spirituality come in your Jewish …
>
> A: I would say that I'm much more of a traditional Jew, rather than spiritual or questioning: What's it all about? – all this kind of stuff. For a start, I haven't two minutes in the day when I can sit and wonder what, where or how! I do believe there is a God, and I do believe we're all part of God's grand plan. But that's about as far as I've really sort of thought about it.
>
> …

Q: So, just to round off, is there some kind of Jewish activity or programme that you wish were available, either for you or for your family, that doesn't currently exist?

A: I haven't given it any thought, to be honest.

Rebecca's Jewish vocabulary is very much one of tradition, obligation and continuity. It is anchored in a firm ongoing commitment to Jewish observance and community. In many ways involvement in Jewish community and Jewish practice is simply a given part of life, inculcated in childhood and maintained in adulthood. For Rebecca, Judaism is a static phenomenon.

Focusing on the differences: seekers vs. dwellers, high engagement vs. low

Notwithstanding the common themes recounted above, moderately engaged British Jews obviously are not all the same. Rather, they divide into distinguishable segments and this diversity has significant implications for policy and practice.

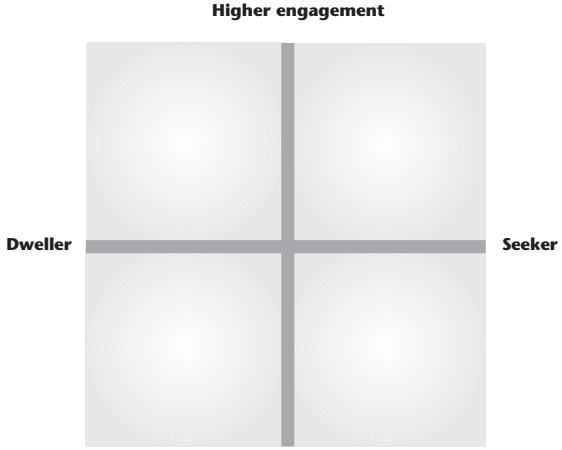
Two principal dimensions differentiate our sample. One dimension is the degree of *engagement*, that is, the degree to which they are involved in Jewish activity on a personal, familial or communal basis. By definition, the moderately engaged occupy the middle region of the Jewish identity spectrum. With that said, they do cover quite a bit of Jewish identity "territory". Our sample ranges from those who are a little more than so-called "three times a year Jews" to those who are fairly involved in synagogue and other Jewish communal activities. This is indeed a wide range, embracing a large fraction of British Jewry (we cannot determine the exact proportion), but, at the same time excluding both the much more highly engaged and the many who are much less engaged in conventional Jewish life.

The second dimension that differentiates the moderately engaged is the degree of *seeking* or *dwelling*. Although the samples, qualitative and quantitative, are much more predisposed to dwell than to seek, we can detect a division between those who are, potentially at least, much more *predisposed* to seek than to dwell. They may not necessarily know how to seek or may not see it as Jewishly legitimate or communally sanctioned, but the will is certainly present. Just as some are relatively more engaged and relatively less engaged, so too are some more oriented to dwelling and others more oriented to seeking.

The survey data permitted a more systematic way of distinguishing the two dimensions and, accordingly, the four resulting segments within the moderately engaged population (more engaged dwellers, more engaged seekers, less engaged dwellers, and less engaged seekers): see the chart overleaf.

Using the screening scale of Jewish identity presented earlier, we divided the population fairly evenly (and somewhat arbitrarily near the sample mid-point) into the more and less engaged, producing 48% on the low end, and 52% on the high end.

We defined seekers as those who strongly agreed to two questions on the survey: "It bothers me when people tell me there is a right way to be Jewish"; and favouring the practice of Judaism in a meaningful way, "even if I have to depart from the way things have been done in the past". Thus, operationally, a "seeker" is one who both strongly rejects the notion of a right way to be Jewish (expressing a high degree of autonomy), and who strongly evinces the need to seek Jewish meaning even in opposition to "the way things have been done in the past". (Of course, any survey measure inevitably only approximates the underlying concept it tries to



measure.) By this definition, we declared the particular sample as divided into 77% dwellers and 23% seekers.

The intersection of these two dimensions divides the moderately engaged into four segments, with their proportions of the population indicated:

- More engaged seekers: 13% of the sample
- More engaged dwellers: 39%
- Less engaged seekers: 10%
- Less engaged dwellers: 39%

Preliminary data analysis suggested that both a higher level of engagement and seeking orientation are associated with greater interest in Jewish growth and learning. That is, those who

constitute the first segment above (more engaged seekers) score highest on indicators of interest in personal Jewish growth and additional involvement. At the same time, the last group (less engaged dwellers) score lowest on those measures. In light of these patterns, two lessons may be drawn:

1 Engagement breeds engagement – the more engaged more readily opt for other forms of engagement.
2 Seeking breeds engagement – those more disposed to seek meaning in ways somewhat at variance with established norms and tradition, are also more disposed to seek opportunities for Jewish growth.

The implication is that intervention needs to contend with the dweller orientation of most moderately engaged Jews. In part, this may mean sparking elements of seeking in the population; and it may mean providing institutional and programmatic alternatives for the minority that is more seeking-oriented, and that may well feel alienated from a community that they regard as too closed, static, and conventional. This does not presuppose a narrow agenda – seeking can be encouraged within the Orthodox and Progressive sections of the community. Clearly, the key objectives of any Jewish educational policy in the UK will be to foster engagement, and to encourage more Jews to seek ways to explore, grow, and develop as Jews, both at home and in the community.

Nevertheless, the "dwelling" orientation should not be seen as in and of itself problematic. The predisposition of a large section of the Jewish community to happily dwell within its confines has ensured the institutional strength of the community. The challenge is to ensure that the organized community becomes a more conducive place for seeking Jews, whilst still ensuring that it

feels "familial" and reassuring – and this is, indeed, no small challenge.

Conclusion

Among the highlights of the research findings are the following:

1 Levels of Jewish engagement do range over a wide spectrum. Within that spectrum, we can indeed identify a group that may be termed "moderately engaged" in Jewish life. This group, itself far from homogeneous, is critical to the future of Jews, Judaism and the Jewish community in the UK.
2 Moderately engaged Jews in the UK express a strong sense of Jewish belonging, one that may be seen as more decidedly ethnic than religious in character.
3 They continue to view congregations and rabbis as central to their understanding of Jewish authenticity, even as they are not characterized, generally, by strong spiritual commitment or interests.
4 They express strong attachment to Israel, even as many are often divided, ambivalent and confused about certain Israeli government policies.
5 They seek to perpetuate and replicate the Jewish life as they have come to understand it, even if they are, in theory, open to change and innovation.
6 They may be characterized more as dwellers, than as seekers, even as they express a readiness to encounter new and more personally meaningful possibilities in Jewish living.

The challenge to the UJIA and its partner agencies, as well as to individual leaders both lay and professional, is to engage with these findings and fashion policies and practices that will Jewishly engage the large segment of UK Jewry that is neither heavily involved in Jewish life, nor so far removed as to be beyond the reach of Jewish institutions, educators and communities. With appropriate reflection, deliberation and commitment, organized British Jewry can enhance its effectiveness in spurring Jewish interest and Jewish involvement.

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Making *The* Community, *My* Community

Implications for communal policy-makers

An essay by Sir Trevor Chinn, CVO
on behalf of the Consultation Group

Making *the* community, *my* community

Introduction

The greatest reward of communal leadership is to see your efforts result in the engagement of many. The single greatest frustration is to build something that reaches too few. When asked by the UJIA to convene a group to consider this research, the logic seemed entirely simple – we engage too few. And to engage more in our community, we need a better understanding of their Jewish motivations.

Judaism is based on both learning and action. I have long believed that research in our community is only of value if it leads to action. Therefore I invited a small group of communal activists to join me in considering this research. All of them had experience of leading communal activities of one kind or another whilst also being well disposed to thinking anew – to challenge conventional wisdom. We sat together over eighteen months and deliberated the findings as shared by Professor Cohen and Dr Kahn-Harris. This essay does not capture everyone's range of opinions nor does it reflect the disagreements we had. *It was not an exercise in the comprehensive and direct translation of the research into policy, but it does reflect our common convictions about renewal in our community and identifies key arenas for intervention.* We realize this is a big challenge and it is clear there is no big singular response. But there is plenty we can do.

We were united about our desired outcome: we seek *an intensification of Jewish experience* amongst this segment of our community – the moderately engaged. Our group encompassed a broad range of views as to the form that intensification might take. It is very much for each communal provider to identify its vision of intensified experience, but it is paramount that we build Jewish identities that transcend generations.

Our interviewees described an interplay between the home, the shul, the school and Israel. They reflected also on the communal professionals that led them – rabbis, teachers and educators. And so much of what we discuss below centres on major areas of communal provision: shuls, schools and Israel. However, our Consultation Group discussions also highlighted two further critical insights that permeate all questions of identity and policy for this group: 1) the importance of the Jewish life cycle in bringing the moderately engaged into communal life – for most of this group, their Jewish experience takes place at life cycle moments; 2) the need for innovation – both its development and diffusion – throughout the mainstream provision of our community in order to capitalize on the life cycle moments.

Below we examine these concepts further and consider how they apply to shuls, schools and Israel. From there, we set out how as a community we might take this work forward, together with our partners who are now debating these findings with us.

Innovation and the mainstream

Dwelling and seeking

Like Cohen and Kahn-Harris, we were struck by the degree of "dwelling" in British Jewry and debated whether it was a source for contentment or concern. Whilst it is reassuring to know that many

find a degree of fulfilment within the community, we all felt that communal policy-makers should aspire to higher levels of engagement, particularly if we wish to build an identity that could sustain itself from one generation to the next. It is encouraging that many like living according to what they perceive as "authentic" and to a set of standards. However, obligations and traditions are likely to face ever-increasing challenge across generations.

Some have argued that our community has maintained a traditional infrastructure and resistance to change because of the silent rejection of the majority. The argument runs that many Jews drift away from communal life rather than repair what they might perceive as broken. They do not, as would appear to be the case in America, seek out a more sovereign construct of Jewish life; they simply become apathetic and participate occasionally, through obligation, and with some disdain.

The findings suggest otherwise. People in this group do not reject wholesale the traditional modes of engagement in our community. Typically, the synagogue is seen as central – just "not for me", beyond more than an occasional visit. The rabbi is seen as the rightful communal leader – just not very relevant in affecting "my life". Some of our sample do appear to seek completely new modes of engagement with the community and we need to respond to this. However, most attach great validity and authenticity to the dominant formats of communal provision. We simply fail to exploit the potential of these formats. We fail to deliver real personal meaning or inspiration, at least on a sustained basis.

If we cannot do this going forward, it threatens the continuity of these Jews – they may dwell physically within our community, but their hearts and minds will leave us. What is required is more successful innovation within the mainstream.

Innovation in British Jewry

There is in reality a lot more innovation in our community. Limmud, Seed, the Reform Chavurah, the Jewish Learning Exchange, Jewish Book Week, the Saatchi Synagogue are all fine examples. Interestingly, much of it originates outside of the mainstream of our community – perhaps in response to a lack of innovation therein. We should not be overly concerned by this. Students of innovation all realize that innovation naturally takes place at the periphery but forces those at the centre to respond. This has been true to some degree in our community. But the diffusion of this innovation – from the periphery to the centre and then within the mainstream for example, from one shul to the rest – appears to us to be most important. The moderately engaged seek good ideas not new ideas.

Many in our research recount innovations, mostly small, that had a very positive impact on their decision to get more active. They make reference to the creative approaches of rabbis (either theirs or a neighbouring congregation's); they recall the Israel rally in Trafalgar Square. This is good news as it shows that there is much already under way that is being noticed. We were lucky to have around our table activists from synagogue groups who shared with us other innovations already in place that seem to be enjoying success: the Kinloss Learning Centre, Living Judaism, Israel Counts and the Community and Family Education Project (CAFE).

Diffusing innovation

Innovations such as these now need to become part of the mainstream agenda of every communal provider at local as well as national level. Every synagogue board should adopt a strategy for its moderately engaged that is based on small but impactful innovations. Every membership organization needs to consider how best to reach out to a new audience or the silent majority who join but never join in. And in our collective experience, we find that the highly engaged too welcome increased participation and creativity.

Diffusion is what turns a success story in one synagogue into the norm in 50 synagogues within three to five years. Critical to this are people – lay and professional leaders who learn from peers and adapt success stories to make them work "for us". Whilst it is possible for commercial organizations to systematize innovation and roll out successful programmes based on successful pilots, our community is naturally more amorphous. Thus the critical resource again for us is people – British Jewish innovation will only be delivered by British Jewish innovators.

The life cycle – critical to making *the* community, *my* community

Make it personal

Our interviewees often talked about "the" community rather than "my" community. Why is this? Often our communal organizations are driven more by the input and interests of leaders rather than members. Without ill intent, we dedicate time and effort to discussions that are meaningless to our less engaged members. We become, to put it in the language of the commercial world, provider-driven, not consumer-driven. But as the best outreach organizations in our community have shown, you need to reach people on a personal level. Two Harvard Business School authors even talk about "markets of one".

Critical moments

The research suggests to us that there are critical moments when members seek out very personal and active engagement in communal life – *when the communal becomes personal*. These are typically at life cycle moments: getting married; having a child; educating that child; Bar/Bat Mitzvah; Israel Tour; university; seeking a partner; children leaving home; retirement; death of a parent. Some of these are Jewish moments in a life cycle – others are life moments that merit a Jewish response. As moderately engaged Jews venture in and out of communal life, these life cycle moments become key access points for the community to become meaningful to them.

Our group discussion captured this pertinently when discussing the birth of a child. New parents recount fondly the moment when the "Bounty Pack" lady arrives. (The Bounty Pack is a package of baby products and information, calculated to support new parents in the first weeks of new parenthood.) The group considered the potential magic of a Jewish "Bounty Pack" – perhaps filled with a first kippa, Seder cup, saving scheme voucher for Israel tour, information on Brit Milah or baby-naming ceremonies. The idea, already being developed in several communities, rests on making a life moment, a Jewish moment and a life cycle event, another opportunity for lifelong learning.

Moments of transition

Too often, however, we fail to capitalize on these moments to inspire and involve. Often, this revolves around failing to follow up on personal contact made. We appear to have done a good job at basic service provision at these moments – there is no evidence that parents struggle for help when it comes to Brit Milah, Bar Mitzvah or burial. However, we would wish to see a community that "over-delivers" at these moments – that provides truly meaningful encounters that strengthen commitment to Judaism and the community. We believe it is incumbent upon every communal organization to consider its life cycle offering in terms of how these moments can become transition points to a more intensified Jewish life.

In our discussions, we took these concepts of life cycle and innovation into our consideration of the forms of community our respondents spoke most about: shuls, Israel and schools.

Moving shuls from congregations to communities

Reports of the demise of the synagogue appear to be greatly exaggerated. That is a dominant policy conclusion from this work. In fact, our shuls appear to be both the great threat and opportunity facing British Jewry. They are perceived as predominant in Jewish life, which means that those who have a bad experience tend to reject much of "the" community. Meanwhile, this predominance and the authenticity attached to shuls by many, means that people do come to shul and they attach their notions of community to shul. Yet for too many people, our shuls are more congregations than communities.

Of course, our central synagogue bodies have realized this for some time, as have several local congregations. We have seen the Community Development Group of the United Synagogue increasing its efforts and the RSGB launching the Living Judaism programme. The *Jewish Chronicle* may have a section called Alternative Minyan but the concept came from synagogues themselves.

These should be encouraged especially in diffusing innovation

and driving consistency across the board. Success often relies on the orientation of the local rabbi or the mindset of two or three key leaders on the synagogue board, and thus it is hard to generate consistent success. Several of our interviewees had few good things to say about their own shul though they noted it was different "down the road". The synagogue bodies we spoke to acknowledge that the essence of their challenge going forward is to replicate the success stories elsewhere, and we all know this is challenging.

It is clear from our discussions with them that our central synagogue agencies are already engaged in this task and are developing greater expertise at understanding what works and why. So we do not set out programmatic ideas here.

We found a more complicated terrain today in terms of the nature of community in British Jewish life. Some parents find the local Jewish school as a more relevant form of Jewish community than the shul. And now plans are afoot for a Jewish Community Centre. There is no one blueprint that will work for what Cohen and Kahn-Harris describe as quite a segmented section of our community – each approach is likely to attract demand. However, it is still, in our view, the synagogue congregation that provides the greatest opportunity for the development of community.

How to love Israel through good times and bad

British Jewry has a love affair with Israel. Despite the odds at times being against it, amazing numbers of moderately engaged Jews identify with and visit Israel. It is a potentially unique platform for Jewish identity and Israel–Diaspora relations. However, Cohen and Kahn-Harris's Israel trilogy ("I love Israel; I don't always agree with what Israel is doing; I hate when the non-Jewish media makes Israel look bad – even when I myself don't agree with what

Israel is doing") fascinated and concerned us. We had feared a more damaging impact from recent political developments and media reporting, i.e. that many in this group would have found their commitment to Israel significantly challenged and their non-Jewish peers a source of real pressure. This did not materialize in a substantive way: British Jewry appears more resolute in its love and attachment for Israel than we might have feared.

However, the apparent dissonance faced by many towards Israel is worrying in the short term when manifested in, for example, fewer Israel trips by families. But this is more concerning in the long term – how long can this dissonance endure without eventually affecting one's attitude towards Israel and certainly the passing of that love to one's children?

Much communal debate has focused on *hasbara* – the need to better educate non-Jews about Israel. It remains a critical priority. Yet it would appear we have work to do within as well. There appear to be too few "safe places" where people can express their concerns and learn more about Israel and its political challenges. These safe places should be apolitical and focused more on exploring questions than giving answers. In fact educating non-Jews and educating Jews are both connected. Many in our community feel keen and called upon to defend Israel, yet ill equipped to do so.

Israel/Zionist education must therefore become a priority for our community once more. Certainly most of our group and naturally the UJIA believe in Jewish-Zionist education for its own sake. However, this research identifies Israel as so relevant a factor in the identity of nearly all moderately engaged British Jews, that as a fundamental question of identity, it needs addressing now. The real issue is not how many British Jews back a specific Israeli government, but how much British Jews can confidently continue

to retain that specific bond with Israel that so benefits Israel and us as a community in parallel.

Building on the success of Jewish schools

One of the most interesting aspects of this research is that it provides one window, though not comprehensive, into the impact of Jewish schools on Jewish identity. Here we refer only to the impact on the identity of the parents. We purposely targeted the questionnaire at parents of children in Jewish schools in order to capture this perspective. It is the one area of our research that informs a policy phenomenon in the earliest stages of formation.

Whilst many in our community would assume that Jewish schools are predominantly the choice of highly engaged Jewish parents, our survey suggests a significant number of moderately engaged parents within Jewish schools. Whilst there may be some relevant factors in the sample we have, or indeed in how we constructed our barometer of engagement, it is still fair to conclude in our view that Jewish schools are attracting moderately engaged Jewish families and as such, provide a further opportunity for the Jewish renewal of those families.

The IJPR has done important work in understanding the motivation of parents for choosing Jewish schools, suggesting that some send their children to good schools that happen to be Jewish rather than Jewish schools that happen to be good. We also know that, as it stands today, the Jewish dimension of our day schools does not necessarily permeate the entire life of the school. Our group were struck by two interesting evolutions:

1 We perceived an increase in family consideration of the Jewish dimension of their lives and homes; this ranges from a discussion on the merits/demerits of lighting candles through to the decision to attend synagogue more often.
2 We sensed a new mode of Jewish community emerging, developing among families with children in school: ranging from social pursuits such as fundraising evenings through to adult education.

Many questions still remain unanswered, for example:

- Are schools "cannibalizing" shuls as parents feel that this will satisfy their Jewish parental obligations?
- Is the reverse happening as parents respond to the friendships built up by children and attend a connected shul as a result?
- Are youth organizations similarly encountering either negative or positive knock-on effects from increased Jewish school attendance?

These issues merit further research. It is likely that Jewish schools will begin to change the dynamic of the Jewish home and even the nature of Jewish community. Given that the Jewish home is so critical an arena for Jewish identity yet so difficult an arena for the community to influence, it is vital that we engage school leadership in this debate. We believe that schools can play a critical role in considering how they can contribute to continued Jewish family renewal. Ultimately we believe this should reinforce the strength of the school in every respect in the long run. However, this policy experiment is very much at an early stage.

How to proceed?

These concepts and concerns are the synthesis of our discussions

over eighteen months. They are designed to help set a direction for those who are focusing on this vital constituency of our community. We do not set out concrete programme ideas as we recognize that several organizations are already actively pursuing much in this vein. In fact in recent years, often due to the work of imaginative communal professionals, our programmes have improved in great measure. We believe that these need to be built upon and more done. We see the importance of piloting in innovation – experimenting until we create case studies of success, rather than fundraising for, and then delivering large programmes presented as "the answer". Organizations such as the UJIA and central synagogue agencies can act as enablers of innovation, and then, even more importantly, as diffusers of it.

Cohen and Kahn-Harris talk about the importance of "narratives" in communal life. The 1950s and 1960s were very much filled with the narrative of supporting the process of state-building in Israel. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the further development of the Israel community as well as a major communal struggle for Soviet Jewry. The 1990s were filled with a spirit of Jewish renewal as an emerging priority for British Jewry. We believe that the decade ahead should have a new narrative – one that builds upon the success of the 1990s, synthesised with a commitment to and meaningful engagement with Israel – a narrative of Klal Yisrael (Jewish Peoplehood), Jewish community and love of Israel. That narrative should be one of extending the richness of Jewish identity and Israel commitment to more in our community by continuously understanding and responding to the motivations and concerns of those whose engagement is moderate. The frameworks we provide for Jewish life in this country are the right ones to engage many in this group. *But we need to focus more on where*

communal meaning and personal meaning coincide in the belief that through people getting more they will give more.

There are multiple policy possibilities to intensify Jewish experience. Our aspiration should be that, through a variety of paths, people participate in synagogue life as part of transformed and transforming communities; that parents send their children to Jewish schools and not just schools for Jews; and that we grow more confident in our love for Israel by engaging with her struggles and aspirations. We should aspire to ensure that all of this communal provision will have a direct bearing on the Jewish home – the foremost locus of Jewish identity. This requires a focus on life cycle events so that we make sacred events more special and key life events more sacred.

Through these interventions, we can make "the" community, "my" community for the majority of Jews in Britain today who remain well disposed, if not truly committed to a vibrant Jewish continuity.

Conclusions

Implications for all of us

What does this mean for the leaders of central agencies?

Central agencies should recognize the need to shift their emphasis from the concerns of activists to the concerns of members, in order to become more relevant. They should regard themselves as the enablers of innovation – in the way they sponsor experimentation, learn from success both inside and outside their organization and diffuse successful models and ideas across their organization. They should recognize that innovation is as much about doing everyday things better as it is about doing new things, and this is particularly critical in utilizing current assets and resources better.

They should think about the way their members engage along the life cycle as the acupuncture moments at which they can make most of a difference. Over-deliver at these moments and follow up on the bonds made at these times. Finally, they should take a long-term view of their community's relationship with Israel and explore ways of enhancing and securing meaningful Israel engagement.

What does this mean for the leaders of local provision?
Local boards and professionals should be constantly evaluating the success of their endeavours, with their intended audience, rather than just the activists involved. Do not rely on anecdotes about why people are not participating – go out and talk to them. Seek new ideas from inside or out that have the potential or track record in successfully intensifying Jewish experience and support them. Make life cycle moments the beginning of a relationship rather than the end of one. These processes will clearly require continued re-visioning and investment in local community-building frameworks including shuls and schools.

What does this mean for philanthropists and philanthropy?
Much of the money raised in our community is for core services, and this is essential. When the agenda is reaching new people or developing a new concept, donors should become active investors and leverage their skills in developing and rolling out innovations. There should be more priority placed on programmes designed to diffuse the already existing best practice and innovation in the community, and when a new idea or programme is being proposed, it should be funded in stages: pilot, evaluate, plan, implement. Beware of large-scale programmes as yet untested and beware of the temptation to always fund something new over replicating something in new places.

What does this mean for communal professionals?
Most communal professionals are already consumed by the need to serve and lead their highly engaged constituents. This is natural and requires dedication to outreach to be focused. Understanding your role in life cycle moments is a good way to focus, given that the research identifies how small investments of your time and personal contact at critical moments can have a great impact.

What could this mean for you?
If you are motivated by what you read here, then please do something in response. You can help those active in your community and its organizations to improve how they are doing things. You may have a new idea that with support and resources can make a difference. You may have learnt about an idea elsewhere that requires similar local support to replicate it successfully in your organization. Or you may be unable to dedicate a great deal of time to communal activism but still be a valuable source of advice and connection between those leading organizations and the many followers whose point of view is not heard. Providing that bridge can be the most critical activity of all.

Appendices

Appendix A **Members of the Consultation Group**

Sir Trevor Chinn, CVO, Chair
Judge Anthony Ansell
Keith Black
Caroline Buchler
Tony Danker
Tamara Finkelstein
Stephen Grabiner
Jon Mendelsohn
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Jerome Reback
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Staff

Professor Steven M. Cohen
Dr Keith Kahn-Harris
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Appendix B **Members of the Academic Advisory Group**

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Professor Stephen Frosh
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Professor Leslie Wagner
Chair
The Higher Education Academy

Professor Stanley Waterman
Director of Research
Institute for Jewish Policy Research

Appendix C **Interviewee details**

Pseudonym	*Age*	*Area*	*Synagogue*	*Status*	*Children*	*School-age children at Jewish school*
Edward	35	NW London	No	Married	2	Y
Nancy	33	NW London	No	Single	0	–
Gabrielle	39	Glasgow	Orthodox	Married	3	N
Roger	40	Glasgow	Orthodox	Married	2	N
Deborah	28	Cent. London	No	Married: non-Jew	0	–
James	28	Cent. London	United	Single	0	–
Richard	45	NE London	Liberal	Divorced	2	N
Saul	37	NW London	United	Married	2	N
Meira	28	NW London	United	Married	1	–
Natasha	39	Leeds	Orthodox	Married	3	N
Jane	35	Manchester	No	Divorced	2	Y
David	41	Leeds	Reform	Married: non-Jew	2	N
Sarah	40	S Herts	United	Divorced	2	Y
Leah	33	NW London	Reform	Single	0	–
Aaron	44	NW London	Reform	Married	3	N
Michaela	35	S Herts	United	Married	1	–
Avi	30	NE London	United + Sephardi	Married	1	–
Judith	27	NE London	United	Engaged	0	–
Karen	26	Cent. London	No	Single	0	–
Grace	26	Cent. London	No	Single	0	–
Roberta	25	NW London	Independent Reform	Married	0	–
Andrew	41	NW London	Liberal	Married: non-Jew	4	Y
Roslyn	34	NW London	No	Married	1	–
Adam	30	NW London	Sephardi	Married	2	–
Russell	28	NE London	Federation	Single	0	–
Liz	28	NW London	United	Married	0	–

Pseudonym	*Age*	*Area*	*Synagogue*	*Status*	*Children*	*School-age children at Jewish school*
Robert	31	NW London	No	Living with partner	0	–
Elaine	32	S Herts	United	Divorced	1	–
Kevin	45	Essex	Liberal	Married: non-Jew	3	N
Ernest	44	NW London	United	Married	2	N
Catherine	41	NW London	Masorti	Married	3	N
Rebecca	36	S Herts	United	Married	3	N
Miriam	34	NE London	No	Married	2	Y
Jocelyn	40	Cent. London	Orthodox	Married	1	N
Julie	39	S London	United	Married	3	N
Alvin	44	S London	United	Married	2	N

Appendix D Screening questionnaire used for selecting respondents for the qualitative interviews

1 point each:

- Synagogue member
- Attends High Holy Day services every year
- Fasts on Yom Kippur every year
- Attends Pesach Seder every year
- Contributed regularly to a Jewish/Israel charity over last two years
- Read one or more Jewish books in the last year

2 points each:

- Went to Israel in the last five years
- All or most close friends are Jewish
- Regular volunteer for synagogue activities
- Went to a course/three or more lectures on a Jewish subject/a one-day Limmud in the past year

3 points each:

- Attends synagogue at least once a month
- Sends child to Jewish day school
- Regular volunteer for a non-synagogue Jewish organization
- Went to the winter Limmud conference at least once in the last three years

Anyone who scored between 5 and 16 points on the scale was eligible to be interviewed.

Appendix E The interview guide for the qualitative interviews

As I think I/we told you on the phone, two social scientists – Professor Steven Cohen of The Hebrew University and Dr Keith Kahn-Harris, a British sociologist – are writing a book on the meaning of being Jewish to British Jews, funded by a major Jewish philanthropic organization. For this study, they're not at all interested in the views of rabbis, educators and Jewish leaders. Rather, they and their associates are interviewing Jews in all walks of life, living in various parts of the UK. We want to hear how people such as you describe their lives, their feelings and their backgrounds.

I'll be recording our interviews and they will be transcribed. We promise you total anonymity. We will not use your name in the book, and when we use your words, we promise to disguise your identity.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Biography and day-to-day life

First, let's start with a bit of your basic biography – how old are you, what do you do professionally, and tell me a bit about members of your family, and where you live.

Now, please tell me about your interests and activities. Outside of work and family, how do you spend your time? How do you generally spend your holidays?

What are the important issues in your life? What or whom do you really care about? [CLARIFY: Balance among family, friends and career.]

What newspapers and magazines do you read, if any?

Do you use the Internet much? What sorts of sites do you bookmark?

Are you involved in any organizations outside your place of employment?

Do you do any sort of volunteer work?

Have you had any recent involvement in politics or in any social causes? [IF YES: Why? What attracted you to become active?]

Now, if we may, I'd like to run through your life – from childhood – and ask you to give me a running narrative that touches all the high points. [IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK ABOUT: parents, grandparents, university, career.]

If you think back, were there any major national or international events that particularly affected you or left a powerful memory?

Jewish biography and family life

Now let's go back and focus on the Jewish part of your biography. Again start with your childhood, your parents and the types of Jewish things your family did.

Concerning your Jewish upbringing, what sorts of things most stick in your mind from your childhood? What sort of Jewish education did you experience as a child and teenager? [MENTION: Festivals, antisemitism, religious school, Jewish day school, Jewish assemblies at school, summer camp, youth club or movement, UJS, campus life, synagogue, Israel, friends, parents.]

When you were a teenager, were most of your friends Jewish or not … did you date? Who (Jews, non-Jews, or both)?

What would you say were the key experiences or people that had the most decisive influence on the type of Jew you are today? Would you say that there was any particular turning point in your life where you became either decidedly more or less Jewishly involved than you were before?

Thinking back, were there any particular Jewish role models in your life?

What sort of Jewish schooling are you (giving/planning to give) your children? Why – what were your principal reasons for sending your children to (Jewish/non-Jewish) school?

What about informal Jewish education experiences – such as Israel experiences, Jewish youth clubs or movements, camps, UJS and the like? Did your children participate in such experiences, or will they? In your mind, how important are they?

What do you hope for your children? What kind of people should they be when they grow up? How would you like them to relate to being Jewish? How would you feel if they decided to marry non-Jews?

In what ways is your husband's/wife's way of being Jewish different from yours? And does your husband/wife have a different approach to raising your children as Jews than you do?

Festivals and Jewish behaviour

Now I'd like to begin by asking you to review the festivals, telling me which you or your family celebrate, and how or why? [IF ASKED: Both Jewish and other festivals are fine.] Let's proceed through the 12-month calendar from beginning to end. [IF ASKED: Jewish or "regular" calendar OK. Respondent may pick either or both.]

What are some of the things you like or enjoy about being Jewish?

What are some of the things that you find annoying, disappointing or embarrassing about either Judaism or some Jews?

Tell me about your friends and associates. How many and which kinds are Jewish, which not? Do you have different sorts of relationships with Jewish and non-Jewish friends?

Can you tell me a little bit about the people you dated (before marriage)? About how many were Jewish, or not?

Do you ever discuss aspects of your Jewish life with your colleagues or co-workers?

Have you found that there have been times when you downplay your being Jewish?

Community involvement

To what extent have you been involved in a synagogue or synagogues, if at all? (Be alert to people who are members of one, but attached to another.) [IF INVOLVED:] When did you first join and why? Why did you pick that particular synagogue?

What do you get out of your involvement? How do you feel about services?

How has your involvement changed over the years?

What are your impressions of your rabbi?

Aside from the synagogue, what other Jewish involvements, if any, would you say you have? [IF INVOLVED:] Why are you active? What do you get out of your involvement? Why did you pick that area to get involved in? [Get history of involvement and reasons for joining, becoming active, dropping out.]

Which sorts of charities do you support, if any, both Jewish

and non-Jewish? How do you decide how much to give to each sort of charity?

Generally speaking, what is your view of Jewish organizations in the UK? [PROMPT: UJIA, Jewish Care, Norwood?]

God and spirituality

You mentioned that you [PICK: sometimes attend services/ observe Yom Kippur/ have a special meal on Shabbat]. Why do you do those things?

You (mentioned / did not mention) God as one reason for your Jewish observance. How do you feel about God? What does God mean to you?

[OPTIONAL: Do you feel you have a personal relationship with God?]

Have your feelings about God changed over the years? How? Why?

[OPTIONAL: Would you call yourself a "spiritual" person? Why / why not?]

Israel

What are your feelings about Israel? What are your impressions?

Have you ever been to Israel? When? Why? / Why not? [IF NOT: Want to go? Why?] [IF BEEN: What surprised you? What was your experience? Want to go back?]

How do you feel about Israel's handling of the hostilities with the Palestinians?

Did you happen to attend the Solidarity Rally at Trafalgar Square on May 6?

How have your feelings toward Israel changed over the years?

Over the years, have there been any specific moments in which you felt a strong reaction about Israel one way or the other?

What do you think most of your Jewish friends feel about Israel these days? How about your non-Jewish friends and associates?

What about the media and their presentation of Israel? Are they, by and large, balanced and fair?

The Holocaust

How do you think the Holocaust has affected the way you relate to being a Jew?

Do you derive any lessons from the Holocaust?

Jewish responsibility and particularity

Do you think Jews have any special responsibilities as Jews?

Do you think of Judaism as a religion, a culture, ethnicity, race, or what? Why?

Are Jews in any way different from other people living in Britain? How?

Do you feel much in common with members of other religions and ethnic minorities in the UK? If so, which?

Because you are Jewish, have you experienced tension, friction, or even antisemitism?

Do you feel comfortable as a Jew living in Britain?

Some people are calling Britain a "multi-cultural or multi-racial society". How do you feel about that characterization? And do you feel that minorities in Britain are obligated to fit in to British society?

To what extent do you feel European in any way? In other

words, is being a "European" part of who you are as a person, a Jew, or a member of British society?

Miscellaneous

Is there some sort of Jewish activity or programme that you wish were available to you or your family members that is not now available – either because it doesn't exist, or is too far away, or too expensive?

Do you have something to add about anything we've said? Is there anything I should have asked you that I didn't?

Appendix F **Educational organizations which participated in the survey**

Akiva Primary School
Bury and Whitfield Nursery
Bushey and District Synagogue Cheder
Calderwood Lodge Nursery and Primary School
Clore Shalom Primary School
Clore Tikva Nursery
Edgware and District Reform Synagogue Nursery
Edgware and District Reform Synagogue Religion School
Finchley Reform Synagogue Nursery
Immanuel College
JFS School
King David Nursery (Manchester)
King David High School (Manchester)
King Solomon High School
Leeds Jewish Education Authority
Liberal Jewish Synagogue Religion School
Lilian Harris Day Nursery
Manchester Reform Synagogue Religion School
Mathilda Marks Kennedy Nursery and Primary School
Menorah Religion School
Menorah Nursery
New North London Synagogue Cheder
North Cheshire Jewish Primary School
North West London Jewish Day School
Simon Marks Jewish Nursery and Primary School
Sinai Synagogue Religion School
West London Synagogue Religion School
Wolfson Hillel Primary School

Appendix G **Survey results**

(Note: Questionnaire not in original format)

THE UJIA STUDY OF JEWISH IDENTITY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: A SURVEY OF JEWISH PARENTS

Tevet 5764/January 2004

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The UJIA is currently conducting a community-wide research project into *Jewish Identity* and we would greatly appreciate your assistance by completing and returning this questionnaire (for which a pre-paid envelope is enclosed).

Your child's school/cheder has kindly agreed to forward the questionnaires to you directly but you are under absolutely no obligation to respond – it is entirely voluntary. However, by participating in this research you will be making *an important contribution to the future of our community* as the findings will be used to help in planning the community's future needs.

We have also left space at the end for your additional comments, which we would certainly appreciate.

We assure you that your responses will remain *entirely anonymous* and guarantee to you that your individual response will not be available to the school. The anonymous questionnaires themselves will then be independently processed together with hundreds of others from a cross-section of different Jewish schools and educational institutions across the community and then collectively analysed. We guarantee that it will not be possible to identify or trace your individual responses.

One parent/guardian per household should complete the questionnaire and we hope you find the questions to be both stimulating and interesting.

If you have any questions relating to this questionnaire then please do not hesitate to contact Michael Wegier, Executive Director of Jewish Renewal at the UJIA (tel. 020 8369 5064) or Professor Steven M. Cohen (e-mail: Steve34nyc@aol.com).

Research team

Professor Steven M. Cohen, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.
Dr Keith Kahn-Harris, Open University, London.

Notice of Confidentiality: All individual responses to this survey will remain strictly confidential, to be used only by the research team, in the context of responses from hundreds of respondents.

Note: All figures are precentages of total respondents unless otherwise indicated.

Your sense of being Jewish

1 When thinking about your sense of being Jewish, how important are each of the following?

	Very important	*Somewhat important*	*Not important*	*Not sure*
Studying Torah	5	34	55	6
Jewish festivals spent with your family	74	23	2	0
Jewish community activities	26	59	13	2
Time spent with Jewish friends	51	39	9	1
Israel	46	39	13	2
Halacha (Jewish Law)	10	52	34	5
G-d	43	34	16	8

2 With regard to the following statements, do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree?

	Strongly agree	*Agree*	*Not sure/ mixed*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people	64	29	5	1	0
I have a strong sense of belonging to a Jewish community	46	36	13	5	1
It bothers me when people try to tell me there is a right way to be Jewish	52	30	10	6	2
It bothers me when I see Jews not living a traditional Jewish life	2	10	22	47	20
It is important for me to practice Judaism in a proper fashion, in the way things have been done in the past	2	16	30	37	16

	Strongly agree	*Agree*	*Not sure/ mixed*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
It is important for me to practice Judaism in a way that I find meaningful, even if I have to depart from the way things have been done in the past	32	46	16	5	1
I am a spiritual person	18	32	29	19	3
When I was a teenager, I led a Jewish life that was more exciting than the one I lead today	6	14	18	50	12
When I was a student (or about 18–24), I led a Jewish life that was more exciting than the one I lead today	4	12	18	53	14
There's very little that a Jewish parent can do to raise the chances that one's child will marry a Jew	6	16	20	42	16
By sending a child to Jewish day school, one significantly raises the chances that one's child will marry a Jew	10	33	27	22	8
By sending a child to cheder, one significantly raises the chances that one's child will marry a Jew	4	20	34	33	9
If my child were to marry a non-Jew who did not convert to Judaism, I would be very upset	20	29	28	15	9
In some ways, Jews in general really are better than other people	1	6	11	36	46

3 When it comes to your outlook, how do you regard yourself?

Secular	23
Somewhat secular	39
Somewhat religious	36
Religious	2

Your involvement in synagogue services and activities

4 In the past 12 months, how often have you attended a synagogue service?

Not at all	9
Only on the High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur)	31
On some other festivals (e.g., Pesach, Succot, Shavuot)	25
About once a month	23
Most Shabbatot/Sabbaths or more often	12

5 Would you prefer to attend synagogue services characterised in each of the following ways?

	Yes	*No*	*Not sure*
Traditional	60	24	16
Formal	19	65	16
Participatory	65	17	18
Emotional and lively	68	13	19

6 Which, if any, of the following types of synagogue are you currently a member of?

None	12	*Please skip to Q8*
Haredi/Independent Orthodox/Adath	2	
United Synagogue/ other mainstream Orthodox	39	
Federation	3	
Sephardi	4	
Masorti	10	
Reform	24	
Liberal	8	
Other	1	

7 Would you characterise your Rabbi in each of the following ways?

	Yes	*No*	*Not Sure*
Inspiring	55	24	22
Accessible	80	7	13
Unapproachable	7	82	11
Dull	13	75	12

Other Jewish activities

8 Below are some programmes that are offered, or might be offered, by the Jewish community. If these services were accessible to you geographically, and financially affordable, to what extent would you be interested in using such a service, for you or your appropriate family members?

	Very interested	*Somewhat interested*	*Not interested*	*Not relevant to me*
Nursery programmes for pre-school children	32	12	8	49
Day camps, during the summer, for school-age children	44	35	11	9
Residential (or overnight) camps, during the summer, for school-aged children	37	36	18	9
Physical fitness and health club facilities	29	34	32	4
Travel programmes to Eastern Europe or other destinations of special Jewish interest (other than Israel)	24	44	28	4
Arts and cultural activities	25	53	20	3

9 To what extent are you interested in increasing your involvement in each of the following areas of Jewish life?

	Very interested	*Somewhat interested*	*Not interested*	*Not relevant to me*
Jewish arts and cultural activities, like museums, theatre, film, music, art, etc.	17	52	29	1
Synagogue services, prayer	6	45	47	2
Volunteer work for Jewish organisations other than synagogues	9	48	40	3
Israel-related activities	13	41	44	2
Classes and courses on topics of Jewish interest	10	51	37	2
Fundraising	4	36	58	3

10 During the last 3 years, have you taken courses or taken part in learning programmes relating to Jews, Judaism or Israel?

Yes	21
No	79

11 If you were to read or study about being Jewish, to what extent would you find the following areas appealing?

	To a great extent	*To some extent*	*Not at all*	*Not sure*
Jewish festivals or ritual practice in the home	20	56	20	4
Participating in and/or leading synagogue services	6	26	64	4
Spirituality, G-d and theology	13	43	37	7
Israel, Zionism and the Arab–Israel conflict	24	47	23	5
Jewish History	29	59	9	3
The Holocaust	30	53	12	5
Hebrew reading	12	42	41	5
Modern Hebrew	16	39	39	6

	To a great extent	*To some extent*	*Not at all*	*Not sure*
Judaism and its implications for ethical or moral issues	22	50	23	5
Jewish arts and culture	18	49	28	5
Talmud	4	23	65	8
Torah or Bible study	5	27	60	8
Other topics related to Judaism or being Jewish	9	59	16	16

Israel and you

12 How many times have you been to Israel?

Never	9
Once	14
Twice	14
Three or more times	47
I have lived there or was born there	17

13 With respect to the following statements, do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree?

	Strongly agree	*Agree*	*Not sure/ mixed*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
I care deeply about Israel	45	33	17	4	1
I am a Zionist	25	22	26	21	6
I am disturbed by the British media's biased coverage of Israel	43	32	18	6	2
I would very much like to become better informed about the current situation in Israel	24	45	21	9	1
I generally support the policies of the current Israeli government	6	16	50	18	10

	Strongly agree	*Agree*	*Not sure/ mixed*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
My Jewish friends and associates are often very critical of current Israeli government policies	8	27	43	21	2
My non-Jewish friends and associates are often very critical of current Israeli government policies	13	31	37	17	2
I am often very critical of current Israeli government policies	9	22	41	25	3

14 Israelis are divided between right-wing 'hawks' (such as supporters of the Likud Party), and left-wing 'doves' (such as supporters of the Labour Party). With which do you generally identify?

'Hawks'	8
'Doves'	30
Neither	25
Not sure	38

Your Jewish upbringing

15 Did you receive any of the following forms of Jewish education or training before age 12 or 13 (pre-barmitzvah/batmitzvah)?

Jewish primary school	25
Part-time classes in synagogue or religion school or Cheder	72
Jewish lessons from parent/relative/ Rabbi/private tutor	21

16 Which, if any, of the following Jewish experiences did you have up to the age of 17?

Barmitzvah/Batmitzvah/Bat Chayil	52
Jewish summer camp	47
Israel 'experience'/tour	34
A Jewish sports club	22
A Zionist youth movement	33
Jewish Assemblies or other activities in a non-Jewish school	40
Fundraising committee	22
Another sort of Jewish club, youth movement or organisation	61

17 Did you receive any of the following forms of Jewish education or training after age 12 or 13 (post-barmitzvah/ batmitzvah)?

Part-time classes in synagogue or religious school or Cheder	21
Jewish secondary school	18
Yeshivah/seminary	2
Courses in Jewish studies at university	4
Belonged to a Jewish student society, e.g., Jewish Society, UJS	27

18 How would you describe the kind of Jewish upbringing you had as a child?

Non-practising (i.e., secular/cultural)	8
Just Jewish	14
Liberal	4
Reform	13
Masorti	2
Traditional (not strictly Orthodox)	53

Orthodox (e.g., would not turn on a light on Sabbath)	3
Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox, Hassidic)	0
I was not raised in a Jewish family	2

Your current Jewish involvement

19 Are candles lit in your home on Friday night?

Never	6
Occasionally	31
Every Friday	62

20 Do you fast on Yom Kippur?

Never	11
Some or most years	17
Every year	61
No – due to health reasons	10

21 In terms of Jewish religious practice, which of the following best describes your current position?

Non-practising (i.e., secular/cultural)	7
Just Jewish	19
Liberal	8
Reform	20
Masorti	7
Traditional (not strictly Orthodox)	37
Orthodox (e.g. would not turn on a light on Sabbath)	0
Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox, Hassidic)	0
None of these	1

22 How often do you read the following Jewish publications?

	Frequently	*Occasionally*	*Never*
Synagogue magazine	47	25	29
Jewish Chronicle	39	40	20
London Jewish News	25	31	43
Jewish Telegraph	11	9	80
Jewish Tribune	0	2	98
Jerusalem Post (online or paper version)	2	14	84
Ha'Aretz (online or paper version)	4	6	89
Jerusalem Report	3	6	91
Other printed Jewish newspaper or publication	4	12	83
Other Jewish websites	7	32	61

23 Thinking of your current close friends, what proportion would you say are Jewish?

All or nearly all	46
More than half	28
About half	13
Less than half	10
None or very few	3

Your involvement with voluntary organisations

24 Are you a trustee, a governor, board or committee member of any Jewish voluntary or community organisation?

Yes	8
No	92

25 Are you a trustee, a governor, board or committee member of any non-Jewish voluntary or community organisation?

Yes	11
No	89

26 How much in total have you given to charities of all sorts, both Jewish and non-Jewish, in the past 12 months? (Please do not include school fees.)

Nothing	6
Up to £100	33
£101–£500	31
£501–£2000	14
£2001–£10,000	5
More than £10,000	2
Don't know	9

27 What proportion of your donations in the last 12 months went to Jewish or Israel-related causes?

None	10
Very little	12
Some	26
Almost half	12
More than half but not all	28
All	12

Your children's Jewish upbringing

28 Have you ever sent your child(ren) on an organised trip to Israel or, if not, would you be willing to do so?

Yes, have sent child(ren) to Israel on an organised trip	19
No, but would be willing to do so when they are older	67
No, will not send child(ren) to Israel on an organised trip	14

29 Have you encouraged, or will you encourage, your child(ren) to join a Jewish club, youth group, or Zionist youth movement?

Yes, have encouraged them	56
No, but will encourage them when they are older	37
No, have not and will not encourage them	7

30 How many children are living in your home?

1=14 2=54 3=26 4=4 5=1

31 What are their ages?

14 10 8 8 7 (average ages)

32 Do you have any children old enough to have attended primary school?

Yes	89
No	11

33 (IF YES for Primary Schools) Have any ever attended Jewish state schools or Jewish independent schools?

Yes	62
No	38

34 Do you have any children old enough to have attended secondary school?

Yes	56
No	44

35 (IF YES for secondary school) Have any ever attended Jewish state schools or Jewish independent schools?

Yes	72
No	28

You and your family

36 Are you … ?

Male	30
Female	70

37 What is your age?

Median 42 under 35=12 35–39=19 40–44=34 45–49=23 50 plus=13

38 Are you currently …?

Married, first time	80
Married, for the second or more time	9
Living with a partner	2
Divorced/separated	8
Widowed	1
Single, never married	0

Please answer Q39 if you are married or living with a partner. Others skip to Q40

39 Is your spouse or partner Jewish?

Yes	88
No	12

40 What is the first part of your postal code? (e.g., N1, L12, CM21, NW1P)

2% plus: EN4, HA7, HA8, IG2, IG5, IG6, M45, M25, N10, N3, N12, N2, NW11, NW7, N20, NW2, NW3, SK8, WA15, WD23, WD6, WD7

41 Do you have any of the following qualifications?

A-levels or equivalent	16
First degree or diploma from university (e.g., BA, BSc, LLB, HND)	24
Other postgraduate or professional diploma or degree (e.g., MA, MSc, MBA, MB, BDS, ACA, FCA, LLB)	35
Doctorate (e.g., PhD, DSc, DLitt, LLD)	included in postgraduate above
None of these	25

42 Do you currently have a paid job either as an employee or self-employed?

Yes, as an employee	53
Yes, self-employed	29
No	18

43 Which of the following best represents the annual gross income, from all sources, before deductions, of your entire household?

Under £20,000	10
£20,001–£50,000	32
£50,001–£75,000	22
£75,001–£100,000	14
£100,001–£200,000	12
£200,001 or above	9

44 In what ways do you find being Jewish most attractive or exciting?

45 How do you feel about Israel these days? In what ways, if any, are your feelings different than they were three or four years ago?

46 Are there any ways in which you would like to get more involved in the Jewish community and in Jewish life in general?

Thank you for completing this important survey

Using the reply-paid envelope enclosed, please return it to:
UJIA, FREEPOST LON11319, LONDON, N12 0BR