

# Creating community and accumulating social capital: Jews associating with other Jews in Manchester

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The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** (JPR) is an independent think-tank that informs and influences policy, opinion and decision-making on social, political and cultural issues affecting Jewish life.

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## Preface

In today's world, there are literally thousands of formal and informal groups, clubs, societies and organizations that cater to the diverse specific interests of the population. Most people feel the need to belong to a mutually supportive network of relationships, some of which go beyond primary group ties or even neighbourhood organizations. We live in an 'associated society' (Davies and Herbert 1993:1). This is hardly new. Throughout history, people have belonged to groups, loosely called 'communities', in which associations of various types and intensities bind them together. Today, communities serve a variety of functions, offering safety from the apparently negative effects of unwanted change or counteracting some of the problems that stem from a society that promotes individualism.

People who identify themselves in similar ways form a nucleus around which a community can crystallize and it is in this context that we refer frequently to an entity called, for want of a better term, 'a Jewish community' or 'the Jewish community'. We often use this designation as if it is unequivocal and understood by all, even though 'Jewish community', like the word 'community' itself (but perhaps even more so), is problematic and fraught with potential for serious misunderstanding. However, 'community' is only a surrogate term, a translation for a concept deeply rooted in Jewish history and memory. The bonds that actually tie members of a community together derive from a variety of perceived characteristics, such as shared origins, similar activities or social structures, or similar attitudes and worldviews. This bonding simultaneously derives from and contributes to the individual and group identities of community members. But what does it mean to be Jewish and what does it mean to be part of a Jewish community? What do people mean when they—consciously or otherwise—use the word 'community' to describe the cultural, social and geographical environment in which Jews live? What makes a community? In reality, these apparently simple questions are both complex in structure and difficult to answer. They form the essence of Ernest Schlesinger's report *Creating community and accumulating social capital: Jews associating with other Jews in Manchester*.

Throughout the ages, community was the nucleus of local cohesion and leadership in towns and

smaller settlements in the countries of the Jewish dispersion. Approaching the modern era, as Jews increasingly became urban dwellers throughout the diaspora, community became more developed and central to Jewish society. Several Hebrew terms roughly translate as 'community'. These are *edah* (עדה), *kahal* (קהל) and *kehilla* (קהילה). *Edah* might more closely be thought of as an ethnic, a community in the sense of an ethnic community that coheres by virtue of a common identity. *Kahal* might better be translated as 'public' or 'crowd'; it is community in the sense of an almost *ad hoc* coming together. *Kehilla* is probably the word closest to current meanings of community, especially among diaspora Jews. It also translates as both 'congregation' and 'assembly', and invokes the idea of people coming together for a specific purpose, though that purpose may be as divergent as prayer, social activity or representation in the wider world. Community is thus often equated with congregation and, although congregating has traditionally been an essential part of community, the two words are not, strictly speaking, interchangeable.

Congregating has long been a means by which members of ethnic or religious communities have adapted to the urban environment, allowing them to feel secure by increasing the potential for contact with other group members. As Paul Ritterband puts it: 'Jews need other Jews in order to be Jews' (2000:227). Congregation seeks to strengthen the group by promoting interaction with others. And security does not mean just physical security, but is a cultural and social safety net that allows individuals to maintain a lifestyle that is theirs while still interacting with the general society of which they are part. Geographical proximity provides individual members of the group with an adhesive material, which is the major contributor to the cohesion of the group as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Though the

<sup>1</sup> As an example, take the case of a family that can afford a substantial house in the outer suburbs of a large metropolis. Though we may be unaware of it, the decision to change residence activates a process of 'like seeking like'. Because, for most, money (or, more precisely, the lack of it) limits choice, searches are usually conducted in areas where there are people of similar incomes and occupations. But money is never the only factor involved when we move home and, even for the wealthiest, it may not even be the principal issue. A household that moved to an economically compatible

mutual proximity of group members usually enhances feelings of community, propinquity is neither sacrosanct nor a prerequisite for community. Nevertheless, voluntary associations work less efficiently in a diffuse, let alone a virtual, environment and some form of congregation usually facilitates the operation of community at all levels.

Congregating does not erect barriers to communication with the outside world, but innocuous congregation can inadvertently lead to a much more negative and divisive segregation, in which the group is physically, socially and culturally set off from the rest of society. Under complete segregation, there would be no contact whatsoever between people living on opposite sides of the boundary line; they would have no contact at workplaces or in leisure activities; they would pray in different places of worship, travel separately and so on. Such a state of affairs is alien to the United Kingdom in the twenty-first century although some mild ethnic segregation exists and social segregation by class is common. Nonetheless, overall rates of residential segregation in Britain are not high when compared to the United States.<sup>2</sup>

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neighbourhood might find that there were other features distinguishing them from their neighbours. Skin colour might cause them to stand out in the neighbourhood, activating latent hostilities among their ostensible peers; they might be religious and find that there is no appropriate place of worship; they might not drive and thus find that getting around is impossible. All of these factors, and others, enter into the equation of finding the right place to live. Factors are differentially weighted, not only among the group as a whole, but from household to household and among individuals. Some people might look for an area near good schools or shopping facilities; others might look for close proximity to a transport facility that will shorten their journey to work. Others still might seek out a quiet neighbourhood or one in which they perceive there to be artists who might be tolerant of a musician who practises six to eight hours a day. Members of ethnic minorities who feel safety in numbers might reasonably choose to search out other members of the same group and live near them.

- 2 There is little debate that physical separation is an effective way of promoting and enforcing strict separation among groups if that is what is desired. There is also little doubt that, in some cases, segregation can occur without having been intended. Over thirty years ago, the American economist Thomas Schelling argued compellingly that a desire to congregate (i.e. to live close to like people while explicitly expressing a desire *not* to be more than the smallest possible majority in a given area) would inevitably lead to segregation. Schelling's paramount inference was that individual actions more often than not lead to group results that are exactly the opposite of what is expressly desired (see Schelling 1971 and Schelling 1974). For a discussion of the British Jewish context, see Waterman and Kosmin 1988.

In his short but erudite book *Zakhor* (Remember), the American historian Yosef Yerushalmi discusses the Jewish ways of remembering.<sup>3</sup> Remembering that one is Jewish precedes and is more important than proclaiming Jewish beliefs, for Jewish ethnicity or peoplehood is clearly prior to Jewish religion. Part of this form of remembering is concerned with having a sense of difference, a sense of Jewishness on a tribal level, if you will. This, too, is a condition for commitment to Jewish religion. Axiomatically, remembering and having a sense of difference are ways of stating that Jews comprise a distinct component within the population at large.

Being Jewish, then, is concerned with identity, or a person's or people's sense of who they are or rather who they think they are. Nevertheless, people possess multiple identities. In democratic societies, people can choose the identities they wish to project, in whatever order of precedence and in whatever combinations they desire or that circumstances demand. Jews in contemporary Britain are relatively free to construct identities to which they are most suited and according to circumstances. Indeed, these identities need not contain the descriptor 'Jewish'. The same person can identify—independently or simultaneously—as a Jew, a British citizen, a Mancunian, a resident of Salford, an academic, a supporter of Manchester City Football Club, a member of the local Fabian Society, recorder group or left-handers club. In contrast, the identities of most Jews in Nazi Germany were determined not by the people themselves but by the Nuremberg race laws that resolved the issue for them. But, in that situation as well, there was some choice. However, even today, identities can be shaped by the impact of external forces. It would be wrong to marginalize the formal and informal pressures in this process that are exerted by both 'the community' and British society, and that help mould the context within which choices are made. It is within this context, of course, that voluntary associations shape their aims.

In whichever way Jewish communities are organized in the modern world, an overriding

- 3 The Jewish way of remembering bears little relationship to the historiographic chronological approach with which most of us are familiar. Jews remember cyclically; moreover, 'remembrance' of events can be transferred from one situation to another. This collective memory, in which Jews as a group persistently remind themselves of Jewish occurrences, events and myths, merely helps them remember that they are Jews (Yerushalmi 1996).

characteristic is their voluntary nature. Although every society differs in the way that Jews structure the organizations through which they conduct the activities that make them 'tick', it is the organic and voluntary nature of the process that stands out. The bodies might include those that collect charitable donations and distribute them to the needy (Halfpenny and Reid 2000; Schlesinger 2000), organizations that govern or represent Jews in their relations with the external world (Commission on Representation of the Interests of the British Jewish Community 2000), or those that impart Jewish culture across the generations, such as synagogues and schools (Valins *et al.* 2001).

We tend to think of community organizations as formal institutions, as legal entities under the charity law. They might be established by dint of communal need (e.g. for representation), religious precept (e.g. synagogue, burial society) or charitable initiatives. People—individuals, families or households—pay membership dues or make donations, or elect representatives who, in turn, choose a management body that sets policy and makes decisions (Harris and Rochester 2001). However, many other community organizations are much more informal. Far from being 'practical' and having a clear-cut obligation, their utility is far from apparent. These informal institutions, such as drama and literary societies, rambling groups, golfing clubs and weekly chamber music soirées, may have no other ostensible purpose than to bring Jews with similar interests together—as Jews. Their vitality adds to the network of social connections among people within a community.

These informal organizations perform this function discreetly, often without much awareness that they are doing it. If the individuals, the friendship networks and the families represent the bricks of the community estate, and the formal organizations constitute the mortar holding them together, then these informal associations can be regarded as the foundational underpinning and reinforcing construction rods. Without them, the whole structure is in danger of collapse. They add insurance value to the property, making the social capital of Jewish communities more secure over the long term (see Saguaro Seminar 2000:1). These organizations are the voluntary associations through which social capital is accumulated. They add considerable value to the social capital of those Jewish communities within which they operate and of which they are an integral part.

Social capital is productive, making possible achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible. It is far less tangible than physical or human capital, but it exists in the relationships among people. It refers to the worth of the social networks symbolized in diverse groups of people (both geographical communities and communities of interest), and the trust and reciprocity that flows from those networks. It involves two components: objective associations between individuals and the reciprocal, trusting, emotional ties between individuals. In particular, the concept of social capital illustrates how the social structure of a group can function as a resource for the individuals of that group. Because of the reciprocal nature of the ties developed in creating social capital, use of social capital actually increases its value (Coleman 1988; Paxton 1999; Putnam 2000).

Where social capital has been amassed through trust and networking, there are:

. . . lower crime rates and more effective schools. Children in such communities are at lower risk of teen pregnancy, child abuse, drug use or juvenile delinquency. Citizens in high social-capital communities enjoy more responsive, honest and efficient government and are, in turn, more likely to pay taxes and fulfil other civic obligations.<sup>4</sup>

There is considerable evidence from around the world that social capital can be measured. However, although it has been suggested that in the United States, at least, there has been a decline in the value of social capital, this has been disputed by others (Putnam 2000; Paxton 1999). Obviously, measuring social capital is a more complex exercise than estimating the value of physical capital. Notwithstanding the ensuing debate, attention has recently been drawn to the decline in trust and the rise in suspicion within British society, presumably with a consequent decline in overall social capital (O'Neill 2002). Moreover, it has also been pointed out that not all social capital is necessarily positive (Mohan and Mohan 2002).

This report examines voluntary associations of Jewish people in the Manchester conurbation in north-west England. The recreational associations

<sup>4</sup> Robert Putnam, *Observer*, 25 March 2001.

that Ernest Schlesinger discusses in this report provide a case study of the background elements of 'Jewish community'. They contribute to the well-being and continuance of a spirit of community, of being Jewish. They help increase the stock of Jewish social capital. In these associations, Jewish people come together informally or semi-formally to be with one another, to interact, to strengthen bonds. The bonding is oriented inward and is exclusive, its main purpose being to reinforce those identities that make people feel Jewish—and thus different to others. Perhaps in this way, by having more confidence in who they are, they can look outward and construct bridges to others from different social and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>5</sup>

A study by Riv-Ellen Prell of two Minneapolis Jewish congregations found that each synagogue represented a major way of creating community, namely by memory and by choice. Whereas memory could be nostalgic, remembering passively and contemplating the 'good old days', the community of choice turned to the past to find the courage and resources to build a future (Prell 2000). Therefore, we have to ask whether 'hanging out together' is sufficient for long-term continuity. That it still persists and, in the case of Manchester, can attract several thousand individuals, is worthy of note. After all, the power of relatively weak non-ideological and non-religious links, which confound logic, as well as social and historical theories, is remarkable. However, we still have to ask whether this is sufficient.

Some Jews might wish to play golf or football, or act or play cards, as part of normal recreational desires, and they might find that doing it with other Jews is easier. So it is obvious that coming together in voluntary associations fulfils certain personal social needs. That is a good start. Moreover, these associations should not be viewed in isolation, as separate from other, more formal, organizations. People have a layered involvement in society. For some, these informal associations are their only connection with other Jews outside the family; for others, they are just one of many. Changing circumstances, such as life-cycle changes

or residential location decisions, may either increase or decrease active involvement in more formal institutions. These voluntary associations should be viewed as fitting into a nexus of familial, neighbourhood, friendship and more formal ties. These associations are good at building up trust and personal friendships among their members, and this is an important part of all successful voluntary organizations. They reinforce and extend Jewish networks and connectivity, creating and maintaining links between core and periphery within the Jewish community.

Ernest Schlesinger's report thus fits comfortably into the Institute for Jewish Policy Research's project, Long-term Planning for British Jewry (LTP), which is a five-year undertaking to record the current state of the Jewish voluntary sector in the United Kingdom. It aims to provide decision-makers with a current and accurate picture of this sector, allowing strategic planning decisions to be guided by accurate information that reflects the real world. The objective of LTP is to identify and build on the community's distinctive strengths, to help the Jewish voluntary sector develop a shared vision and sense of its own identity, and to develop a strong and cohesive sector as a prerequisite for planning for the future. The various projects that comprise LTP may be conceptualized as pieces of a complex jigsaw puzzle that, when fitted together, will ultimately form a clear picture. Its ultimate goal is the production of a strategic planning document, whose preparation at the culmination of the research programme will enable the community to develop an agreed agenda for action in the areas of planning, policies and priorities in the twenty-first century.

This report should be read as a portal into Jewish Manchester. It contributes to the Long-term Planning for British Jewry project in the sense that it foresees that many British Jews over the next decade will continue to associate freely together in informal leisure activities and so congregate socially. Historically, one consequence of continuing involvement in informal associations might well be to encourage the participants to learn more about their Jewishness, and to become involved in other, more formal, aspects of Jewish communal life and in civil society. In the case of Manchester's Jewish voluntary associations reported here, what Jewish leaders have to ask is whether the social capital they generate is sufficient to ensure Jewish continuity. Certainly, maintaining the organic connection

5 This type of social capital, termed 'bonding social capital', is exclusive and inward-looking, its main purpose being to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. It is distinguished from 'bridging social capital', which is inclusive and outward-looking and which aims to encompass people across diverse social cleavages (Putnam 2000:184).

between the Jewish public and communal institutions will be a considerable challenge in the twenty-first century. Yet without the accumulation

of social capital arising from Jews just associating with other Jews, the task would certainly be even harder.

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## 1 Jews associating with other Jews in Manchester

*Jews in the UK often refer to themselves collectively as 'the Jewish community'. This 'community' comprises not only those individuals who identify as Jews, but also an interlocking network of formal and informal organizations run largely by and for Jews. These organizations are, in effect, 'voluntary organizations'. They are not part of the governmental or commercial sectors of society. They were established voluntarily, and they rely to a greater or lesser degree on voluntary contributions of human and/or financial resources (Harris 1997:2).*

*Their Jewishness may seem to rest on nothing more than a preference for spending their leisure time in Jewish company and their holidays in certain hotels (Freedman 1962).*

### Leisure and the voluntary sector

The variety of leisure activities available in contemporary Britain is almost infinite. Leisure can be understood as comprising three main elements: recreation, recuperation and individual development (Hargreaves 1987). Specifically, recreational associations offer people the opportunity to pursue an activity for immediate enjoyment and, as one commentator put it, to be in 'a place "to do", but also and crucially, a place "to be"' (Hoggett and Bishop 1986).

Given the pressures of modern life, some people, almost as a reaction to the length of time they spend with others at work or in the family, may prefer activities that permit them to be alone, such as reading, gardening or listening to their favourite music using a set of headphones. Others reject solitude in favour of associating with other people during their leisure time. Many of these 'associations' are purely informal, such as visiting relatives, sharing a drink with friends in a pub or going to watch a football match. However, many people prefer to pursue activities in their free time with others and within a more organized and structured framework. In any case, whatever their structure, leisure activities now account for over 30 per cent of consumer spending in Britain. Leisure has been a major force in changing people's everyday lives in the West throughout the twentieth century (Roberts 1999).

Leisure activities operating within the framework of voluntary associations are commonplace in the United Kingdom and there are thousands of organizations with millions of members covering a broad range of activities. Voluntary leisure associations comprise just part of the wider voluntary sector, that is, non-profit-seeking institutions that are more formal than associations

of family and friends, that are self-governing and benefit in some measure from voluntary contributions of time or money. By the 1970s, over half of the primary or subsidiary functions of voluntary organizations were connected with leisure, and this proportion has undoubtedly increased since then (Henry 1993:165).

Though a defining feature of a free society is an individual's right to associate freely with whomever they wish, one of the most elementary and interesting features of voluntary leisure groups is that they are usually, by their very nature, socially homogeneous. Almost axiomatically, this is because it is simply easier to join and participate in the activities of a group with whom one feels an affiliation. As Alan Tomlinson has observed, these associations 'offer an individual a group identity combined with an activity of his choice' (Tomlinson 1979:38; Marshall 1996; Hoggett and Bishop 1986).

As noted in the Preface, the benefits that accrue as a result of involvement in voluntary associations such as a choir, a political party or a football league contribute to 'social capital'. Therefore, this associational life fosters the accumulation of a community's social capital, which comprises networks and systems of reciprocity as well as trust, and is a key building block of modern civil society (Coleman 1988; Mohan and Mohan 2002; Putnam 2000). In the view of Robert Putnam, one of the principal proponents of the concept of social capital, civil society is the space in which people relate and associate voluntarily with each other outside the state apparatus. It thus becomes reasonable to assume that, in addition to being selective about what they spend their leisure time doing, many people are also likely to be discriminating about those with whom they elect to spend that time.

### The study

This report presents the results of a study of several Jewish voluntary leisure associations in Greater Manchester. The research methodology is principally qualitative. The Jewish community in the Greater Manchester area was chosen because it satisfied three criteria necessary for the study of the benefits of voluntary leisure associations: first, that the community be of a reasonable size; second, that it be located within a defined geographical area; and, third, that it includes a comprehensive range of Jewish voluntary, religious, welfare, educational and social institutions.

Participation in informal associational networks is just one dimension recognized by those researching Jewish identity. Throughout the whole of Jewish history, Jewish religious beliefs, the observance of religious rites and overall general religious behaviour have all been important for the construction and maintenance of Jewish identities. However, in recent centuries, participation in formal Jewish organizations and ties with other Jews such as relatives, friends and neighbours—all of which have been significant factors throughout Jewish history—have come to play a more prominent role.<sup>6</sup> Although perhaps not sharing Putnam's emphases, an analysis of the activities of associations and their networks could contribute towards a more complete understanding of social interaction within the community.<sup>7</sup>

On this basis, this study investigates the extent to which Jews associate with each other through voluntary recreational activities. The study brings to light several of the major factors that influence such associational activity and considers how long-lasting they might be. In short, it asks what and how strong are the ties that bind?

### Mancunians

After Greater London, the Jewish community in Greater Manchester is the largest in Britain.

6 Identity is perceived as a person's notion of being, whereas identification is the way and extent to which individual Jews are connected to the Jewish group (Chazan 1980).

7 There are, of course, other possibilities for the origins of associational activities. They may be an expression of dissent from the communal consensus, representing either a means of escape from communal life or a challenge to hegemonic definitions of community. Such associations of challenge and dissent have existed in the past and have made possible a social, political or religious non-conformity that is not easily expressed in a close-knit Jewish residential area and that, for some, has been the precursor to complete assimilation.

Moreover, it is the only significant community whose numbers are currently holding steady, if not actually increasing. The Jewish population of Greater Manchester is approximately 30,000 and is therefore one of the larger minorities among the 2.3 million living in the conurbation.<sup>8</sup>

Table 1: Ethnic minorities in Great Britain by region (% of population)

Selected regions and metropolitan counties	Black	South Asian	Chinese and others	Jews
Great Britain	1.6	2.7	1.2	0.5
Greater London	8.0	7.8	4.3	3.0
West Midlands	3.6	9.7	1.2	0.2
South Yorkshire	0.8	1.4	0.7	<0.1
West Yorkshire	1.1	6.0	0.9	0.5
Greater Manchester	1.3	3.7	1.0	1.2
Merseyside	0.7	0.4	0.9	0.3
Tyne & Wear	0.2	1.0	0.6	0.2
Wales	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.1
Scotland	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.2

Sources: Owen 1992:4; Schmool and Cohen 1998

Established in the late eighteenth century, Manchester Jewry already numbered 4,500 by 1865. Immigration from Eastern Europe began in the 1840s and gathered pace throughout the nineteenth century, growing rapidly towards the end of the century. The community more or less reached its present size when its population was augmented by the arrival in Manchester of refugees fleeing Nazism's rise to power in Germany and its subsequent conquests elsewhere in Central Europe.<sup>9</sup> The Jews of Greater Manchester are almost equally divided between the northern and southern parts of the conurbation, with a further 1,800 people living outside the boundaries of Greater Manchester, mainly in Cheshire (Schmool and Cohen 1998).

8 According to the 1991 Census, the two largest ethnic groups were from the Indian sub-continent and those of Afro-Caribbean descent.

9 *The Jewish Year Book 2000*, ed. Stephen W. Massil (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell 2000), 117.

### The sample of voluntary associations

The two sources of information about voluntary, recreational associations used were the database of Jewish voluntary bodies maintained by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), and the *Jewish Representative Council (JRC) of Greater Manchester and Region Year Book for 1999/2000*. From the large number of organizations listed in these two sources a small representative sample was selected. The criteria for selection were as follows:

- Recreational activity must be the main reason for the existence of the association.
- The association must be an independent body, not dependent on any national or international Jewish religious, Zionist or charitable organization.<sup>10</sup>
- The activity must be one that Jews choose to carry out with other Jews by preference.
- The association must be based within the boundaries of Greater Manchester.

Table 2: The sample groups<sup>11</sup>

Group (date founded)	Number of members	Male: female	Comments
Club Thursday (1989)	200	3:7	Social/cultural: majority aged 60+
Dunham Forest Golf Club (1959)	700*	7:3	*Includes 300 primarily social members: majority aged 40+, about 15% not Jewish
First Tuesday (1994)	125	2:3	Social/cultural: all aged 65+ including some members' non-Jewish partners
Jewish Adult Cultural Society (1955)	60	1:1	Social/cultural
Jewish Caravan Club (1970)	60	not applicable	Mainly couples and families
Jubilee Leisure Club (1985)	70	1:5	Majority aged 60+
Manchester Jewish Cricket League (1950s)	155	15:1	About 50 aged under 18, including a few women players
Manchester Jewish Soccer League (1948)	1,000+	not applicable	Of members (all male), at least 300 are juniors, generally with at least one Jewish parent
New Jewish Theatre Group (1975)	50-200	not applicable	50 permanent active members, aged 10-70+; most shows involve 100+ rising to 200 during performances
Pennine Wayfarers (1969)	220	3:2	Majority aged 40+ but including a religiously Orthodox group of 20-30 year olds
Phoenix (1991)	120	not applicable	Social/cultural: all female, majority aged 50+
Stage 80 (1980)	80	not applicable	Performers aged 11-16, mostly girls
Whitefield Golf Club (1932)	600**	not applicable	**Includes 340 social members, a significant number female and 7% not Jewish

10 Nevertheless, some qualification is in order. The Phoenix Club (see Table 2) is an association of Jewish women who come together for 'social/cultural' purposes, and it is, indeed, 'organizationally independent' of Zionism. But an important reason for its existence is the shared Zionism of its members, and one of its activities is the collection of funds for Zionist purposes. In this way, there may be reasons why Jewish people come together for 'recreational purposes' that are not

stated because they are assumed. Some recreational groups are not simply expressions of a preference for Jewish company but of particular identifications that are not necessarily 'shared'.

11 The chairperson of each group provided the information in this table, which is approximate. Unless otherwise stated, the members are all Jewish. Two of the five social/cultural groups, one golfing club and one of the theatre groups, are based in south Manchester.

Thirteen recreational associations were considered suitable for inclusion in the study and these are listed in Tables 2 and 3. These associations were all established between 1932 and 1999 and their active and passive membership at the time that fieldwork was undertaken totalled 3,590. This figure represented over 10 per cent of the Jewish population of Greater Manchester, although it is undoubtedly inflated somewhat by some unavoidable double counting caused by multiple memberships.

There is no central register of memberships in voluntary associations or other organizations in Greater Manchester. Nevertheless, telephone enquiries revealed that at least a similar number of Jews belonged to more formal not-for-profit recreational and social organizations such as Maccabi (sports club), the Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and Habonim (Zionist youth group). Therefore about 7,000 Jews, the equivalent of nearly a quarter of the population of Manchester Jewry, are currently involved in

Table 3: The sample groups by main function

Main function	Number of members	Active members	Passive members
Social/cultural	575	575	---
Recreational	560	410	150
Sporting	2,455	1,775	680
Total	3,590	2,760	830

formal and informal recreational activities. This fact in itself considerably strengthens the case for the study of voluntary associations.

### The methodology

The study set out to uncover the feelings, thoughts and experiences of members of Jewish recreational associations in relation to the function that these associations perform in strengthening ties within the community. Given its qualitative nature, it was decided therefore that most respondents would be interviewed face-to-face.

Set questions were asked about each association and the interviewee was asked for his or her views concerning a range of issues. Initially, the chair or person in charge of each association was contacted.<sup>12</sup> All agreed to be interviewed and each suggested members who might contribute usefully to the enquiry. A total of 47 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted between October 2000 and April 2001. The respondents comprised 30 men and 17 women. Four others (2 men and 2 women) responded in writing to the same questions. A further 10 people with expertise in the area of recreational associations were also interviewed. All the interviewees granted permission to quote their responses verbatim, provided that the quotations would not be attributed directly to them. Consequently, all the unreferenced quotations in the report derive from these interviews.

The material is organized into two main sections. The first consists of an in-depth review of three selected associations, from which several significant themes emerge. The second expands on those themes.

12 The selection for interview of 'persons in charge' and others suggested by them might result in a tendency among respondents to exaggerate the association's coherence and community-sustaining role.

## 2 Three case histories of recreational associations

The following reviews focus on three Jewish recreational associations in Greater Manchester. Two involve sports that are popular all over the world: golf, in which the emphasis is on the individual, and soccer, in which the emphasis is on team effort. The third case focuses on a theatre group. Though professional sport has become an important industry, both economically and in terms of entertainment, it also complements and enhances the role of amateur sport as a healthy participatory physical activity that possesses social value in modern society. Theatre is typically a popular indoor activity and has for a long time been particularly attractive to Jews, many of whom have become prominent in Manchester's arts circles, especially the performing arts.

### The golfing clubs

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, many Jewish men in the Manchester area who played golf regularly were unable to join local golf clubs because of the antisemitic prejudices of those times (Alderman 1992). As a reaction to this policy of exclusion, Joe Cassel and some other prominent Jewish businessmen and professionals leased and subsequently purchased the land and buildings on which the Whitefield Golf Club is presently located. The club opened in 1932 and its first annual report recorded that it had a total of 406 members. Whitefield Golf Club rapidly became a major social centre for Jews throughout the Greater Manchester area, its membership peaking at around 800 during the 1950s. Some of its current members have belonged to the club for up to fifty years.

Three main reasons were advanced for Whitefield Golf Club's popularity and its importance for the Manchester Jewish community. First, many felt it was natural to join a Jewish golfing club to which their friends belonged. Though its principal function was in providing a place where Jewish golfers could play regularly, it also provided 'a Jewish atmosphere'. Emphasis here was placed on the kitchen rather than the bar, and the club served good kosher food. Most Whitefield Golf Club members, particularly those with families, reported that they played a round of golf, and then perhaps had lunch or coffee before returning home. This contrasts with the activities of members of most other golf clubs, who reported spending a large part

of their day there. Second, many other golf clubs in Greater Manchester, even in recent years, have not been particularly welcoming to Jewish members. Key members of Whitefield Golf Club all said they knew of Jews who had experienced difficulties in becoming members of other golf clubs. Third, the course at Whitefield Golf Club was arguably the best test of golfing prowess within a fifteen-mile radius.

Since the 1960s, there have been several important changes in the distribution of the Jewish population in Greater Manchester. Many Jews have migrated from north Manchester to south Manchester and Cheshire. Many Whitefield Golf Club members who had moved south were unable or unwilling to make the journey north to play a round of golf, especially in the pre-motorway era. This resulted in the establishment of another predominantly Jewish golf club by Jewish golfers living to the south of Manchester, at Dunham Forest. Following the example of the founders of Whitefield Golf Club, a conglomerate of Jewish professionals and businessmen leased derelict land, and designed and constructed a totally new golf course and clubhouse, consequently lowering membership numbers at Whitefield Golf Club. Today, Dunham Forest Gold Club has over 700 members, and is still mainly Jewish, although it does not restrict membership by race, religion or ethnicity.

In recent years, both clubs have experienced financial problems. Several potential members of Whitefield Golf Club have been deterred from joining because the club's membership fees are significantly higher than the average in the area. The club has also faced difficulties in attracting new and younger members from the 20–35 age-group. People in this age range are often unable to find sufficient time to play golf while they are developing careers or businesses and raising young families.

While its directors were upbeat about the future of Whitefield Golf Club as a Jewish club, they were also realistic. They hoped that membership continuity would be encouraged by offering young players the opportunity to improve not only their golf but also their social awareness by feeling part of a Jewish club. They regarded the response to this call for a heightened social awareness as having been quite exceptional. A further initiative to

increase membership levels among younger people was to offer fee concessions to young Jews from out of town studying in Manchester. Furthermore, the club's junior section was said to be thriving, with some seventy-five mostly Jewish youngsters playing regularly. Though a number of non-Jewish golfers had also recently joined, it was estimated that 80 per cent of the membership in 2001 was Jewish. Dunham Forest was also trying to maintain its high level of Jewish membership.

Manchester Jewry has therefore created two golfing clubs, neither of which is entirely sustainable financially. There is general agreement that one club in a more central geographical location could be financially viable and, at the same time, predominantly if not entirely Jewish.

### **Jewish football leagues**

Refugees from Nazism in Central Europe who had played football regularly in their countries of origin and wished to continue doing so took the initiative in setting up organized Jewish football in Manchester in conjunction with their new English friends. Jewish footballers preferred not to play on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. At first, this was difficult to arrange; in the north of England, largely due to the influence of the church, popular sports like football and cricket tended to be played midweek or on Saturdays.<sup>13</sup> It was not until the early 1960s, in response to the Football Association's change of stance in accepting that competitive football could be played on Sundays, that this became a regular activity in northern England. This problem was one of the driving forces behind the formation of the Manchester Jewish Soccer League in 1948, but the main protagonists probably also preferred to play with other Jews rather than compete against people with whom they believed they had little in common.

Initially, there were few teams, but interest grew rapidly. Footballers from other northern provincial cities were impressed by the success of the Manchester Jewish Soccer League, and this led to the formation of the Northern Jewish Soccer League in 1950. At its peak, teams from Liverpool, Leeds, Southport, Blackpool and Sheffield, as well as Manchester, belonged to the league. There were

two main categories of players. The first were members of the many Jewish recreational clubs such as the Jewish Lads' Brigade, Maccabi, Waterpark and Workingmens'. The second were part of the so-called 'street corner' teams, set up by groups of friends, or people who attended school or Hebrew school together. With the growth of Sunday football in general, some of the better Jewish teams played both in Jewish and non-Jewish leagues. Sometimes, players from cities such as Liverpool or Sheffield preferred to play locally, although only a few Jewish footballers were either good enough or wanted to play for non-Jewish teams. At the peak of its popularity during the 1970s, the Northern Jewish Soccer League had also developed a social dimension to complement the footballing activity; its annual dinner dance became the highlight of the sporting year. However, it became increasingly difficult to field all-Jewish teams, especially as Jewish communities in northern England outside Manchester were dwindling. In the interest of winning matches, player eligibility rules were flouted and Jewish players found themselves superseded by better non-Jewish players. Eventually, in the mid-1980s, the Northern Jewish Soccer League folded.

The Manchester Jewish Soccer League has also experienced peaks and troughs. Early in the 1960s, during one especially poor season, the league could muster only four teams with a total of sixty-four registered players. Yet, by the end of the decade, the Manchester Jewish Soccer League had once again become extremely popular and active. Many recreational clubs fielded more than one team and new 'street corner' teams had been formed. Moreover, junior leagues were also established. All in all, about 400 people played Jewish football regularly. The Manchester Jewish Soccer League avoided the eligibility pitfall experienced by the Northern Jewish Soccer League and its rules were firmly focused on providing competitive football for Jewish youth. Currently, the Manchester Jewish Soccer League's junior leagues are thriving and have been divided into different age-groups in line with Football Association guidelines. About twenty teams, comprising some 400 young Jews, play in competitive junior leagues, with a similar number of players under eleven years of age involved in non-competitive Jewish football. The youngsters are treated to an annual presentation ceremony held at Old Trafford, facilitated by Mike Edelson, a Manchester United director, and himself a former Jewish footballer.

<sup>13</sup> Unlike the south of England where, during the inter-war years, these sports and others were regularly played on Sundays (Williams 1996).

By 2001–2 the senior league had shrunk from 2 divisions comprising 15 teams and around 200 players to 1 division of 12 teams. Of about 1,000 current players in Manchester Jewish football, the majority belonged previously to the junior leagues. Senior Manchester Jewish Soccer League administrators reported concern about the league's future. They believed that fewer players were graduating from the juniors to the seniors, partly because many left Manchester permanently after university and partly because they either attended the increasing number of Premiership matches that are now played on Sundays or watched them on television.

This fall in the numbers of Jewish Sunday soccer players reflects the general decline of Sunday amateur football. For example, a highly thought-of non-Jewish football league in Manchester recently had to be disbanded. The officials of the Jewish league believed that the league still occupied a unique place in the community and that, in time, the appeal of televised football might diminish. They were guardedly optimistic about the future of organized Jewish football in Manchester, not least because parents tended to encourage their children to play football with other Jews.

### **Jewish theatre**

Before the Second World War, there were activities in Manchester, created at the turn of the century as part of the Literary Society Movement, that were supported substantially by the children of Eastern European immigrants. This second generation included poets, novelists and playwrights and the Jewish literary societies in Manchester sponsored drama of a high standard. The Literary Society Movement and its offshoots existed in parallel with Jewish minstrel-style groups that were usually linked with one of the many Jewish recreational clubs, and that regularly put on shows and plays in the community. When the refugees from Central Europe joined these latter clubs, their character was altered and, under the umbrella of Manchester Maccabi, several very popular shows, pantomimes and plays specifically aimed at Jewish audiences were produced.

In 1952 the Northern Jewish Theatre Group split from Maccabi, and began producing and writing its own shows, some of which also included original sketches that used Jewish or Yiddish humour. Some 50 to 60 people might perform in each show, with

a similar number involved in its production. The decade after the end of the war was a tremendously dynamic period for Jewish theatre in Manchester; the shows had high performance and production standards, and there were regular drama festivals. A show, which was usually self-financing, would normally run for seven nights, with each performance being sold out to audiences that included as many as 1,200.

Interest in Jewish theatre groups in Manchester declined during the early 1960s and for about ten years the Jewish theatre movement was moribund. In 1974 a Jewish thespian group initiated a very successful production of *Fiddler on the Roof* and, again, production costs were covered by ticket sales. This prompted the formation of the New Jewish Theatre Group, which recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The group has concentrated on performing existing material, occasionally plays but more often musicals, which are not specifically Jewish or Yiddish in nature, although most have a 'shmaltsy', sentimental flavour. It has also presented both adult and children's shows and plays. At its peak, the group's shows attracted audiences of over 2,500 people. Another group, Stage 80, has complemented the New Jewish Theatre Group's work. Formed in 1980, and largely based in south Manchester, its actors are aged from 11 to 16. The recent fall in the audience numbers of both groups reflects a general trend that shows a reduction of interest in amateur theatre throughout the country, largely due to competition from alternative sources of entertainment.

One respondent, who had been involved with the New Jewish Theatre Group in a range of senior capacities, was convinced that people just liked to appear on the stage or be associated with the theatre in however minor a way. Having worked with or assessed how other theatre groups operated, he believed that the New Jewish Theatre Group performed to a high standard. Although some members had been associated with non-Jewish theatre, he felt that the majority preferred to belong to one that was Jewish. Some had suffered anxiety about how they might be treated or viewed in a non-Jewish group, and felt more welcome in a Jewish group; in other cases, people just preferred to mix with other Jews. This was borne out by the fact that many members had formed lasting friendships with each other.

### 3 The fieldwork: explaining the push and the pull of associating with other Jews

Since the first burgeoning of Jewish associational life in Manchester, two important social processes have been at work in the Jewish community. First, many Jews have climbed up the socio-economic ladder, engaging in occupations of higher status than their predecessors in earlier generations. This has resulted in a parallel increase in disposable incomes, leading to a higher standard of living. Second, at the same time, many Jews have also become more integrated in British society. Thus, Jews in Manchester at the beginning of the twenty-first century live in very different social and economic circumstances to those of the period just before and immediately after the Second World War. Nevertheless, and to quite a considerable extent, socially they still mix predominantly with other Jews. What contributes to this Jewish desire to stick together, to play golf and football, and perform with other Jews? What are the ties that bind Jews within these groups and that help sustain others in similar associations?

#### The push: exclusion and self-exclusion

The presence, experience, awareness or even the suspicion of antisemitism has influenced the establishment of all the associations examined. A member of Whitefield Golf Club observed that

as a medical consultant I am more assimilated than my Jewish friends, having previously belonged to a secular golf club, but I still come across attitudes that I don't like. A few years ago at a dinner party we chatted about Jews and sport and how rife it was that golf clubs didn't want Jewish members. One guest, a barrister, had joined a [named] secular club, where he was ostracized. He just didn't fit in and wondered why he had put himself in a no-win situation.

Prejudice in the wider golfing community and its concomitant practice of exclusion were at the root of Whitefield Golf Club's formation. Golfing clubs were not alone in excluding or deterring Jews from joining. Both before and after the Second World War, the same pattern has applied in many middle-class recreational and sporting clubs.<sup>14</sup> And

so-called working-class sports were not exempt either. Since the 1950s several of the better Jewish football teams had regularly competed in non-Jewish leagues and cups. Different generations of footballers had all experienced prejudice. One footballer, who had represented Manchester Boys, had been a Manchester United junior and subsequently a semi-professional, provided a vivid example.

Since I was at Manchester University, I played lots of non-Jewish football, which I really enjoyed as you could get stuck in. However when I played for South Manchester Maccabi, the only Jewish team in a non-Jewish league, not all the teams applauded us when we were champion of the Manchester and Cheshire League. One year, we won the cup final. At the end of the match, some of the opposition seriously assaulted our players with kung-fu style kicks and an opponent wielding a corner flag chased me. The other team were suspended *sine die* but that was it for us, and we left that league immediately. So the Jewish league just feels safer.

Religious factors have influenced the desire or willingness of some Manchester Jews to join non-Jewish clubs and associations. One female golfer could not belong to a club that served anything other than kosher food. Her attitude towards Jewish identity required that she be able to eat whatever she wanted without having to feel self-conscious or different. In another example, a talented amateur actress belonged to the New Jewish Theatre Group because:

I was involved in amateur dramatics at university where I discovered my need to sing and act on the stage. It is essential to me that the group guarantees never to perform on a Friday or Saturday night or on [Jewish] holy days. That enables me to keep my religion and I am also comfortable being with other Jews as we share the same heritage and culture even though others might not keep the Sabbath. It's good not having to explain anything.

<sup>14</sup> It was already known at the end of the 1950s that Finchley golf club in north-west London excluded Jews from

membership and that others operated a quota system (Alderman 1989).



Other interviewees expressed similar sentiments. The Pennine Wayfarers, a Jewish rambling group, was able to draw members from across the full spectrum of Jewish religious observance because it never arranged its walks on the Sabbath or on a holy day.

However, there were also more mundane reasons for self-exclusion. One cricketer said that his team would not join a non-denominational league, because the Jewish one offered it a better chance of winning matches and trophies. There is also some evidence that the Sunday leagues have sometimes tended to attract the lesser players. A Manchester Jewish Soccer League leader was candid about the league's standards. He knew that

a lot of Jewish boys would just not get a game in the non-Jewish leagues, as they are not good enough. They would also prefer not to experience the antisemitism that is still around.

Of course some Jewish youths do perform at a high level. One respondent cited a family in which all five sons were likely to represent Britain at the Maccabiah.<sup>15</sup> However, even for this sporting family, this was the extent of their sporting commitment because

Jewish kids don't quite have the competitive focus of others, which means that most of them don't think about football for instance as a professional career.

A young Jewish footballer who had enjoyed playing in non-Jewish leagues for Maccabi confirmed this attitude:

us Yids could play well against non-Jewish teams, deal with any physical intimidation and get respect from them. But to be honest there is still a cultural gap in that Jews do their homework and, if they have time, go to train or play afterwards, whereas for many non-Jews football takes priority.

Scouts had told him that this probable lack of sufficient dedication to the sport was the reason that they would not watch Jewish football when searching for potential professional footballers.

<sup>15</sup> The Maccabiah is a sort of 'Jewish Olympics', which has been held every four years in Israel since the 1930s.

### **The pull: inclusion and exclusivity**

Families and friends can undoubtedly be influential in the shaping of associational behaviour. A young man explained how he had first performed for the New Jewish Theatre Group when he was eleven years old:

Mum suggested that I should audition for *Oliver* as I had quite a good voice. I think at that age parents dictate quite a lot. At fourteen, I went into another show and continued to belong. I knew the people and we had lots of things to talk about. Later I met girlfriends through the group.

Superficially, all this seems quite innocent, but several parents gave definite reasons for encouraging their children to join a Jewish, rather than a non-Jewish, group. One wanted her children to continue experiencing the 'many beautiful elements contained in the Jewish faith and tradition'. In other cases, involvement with Stage 80 and other Jewish associations was intended to help children form friendships with other Jews and perhaps discourage them from 'marrying out' of the faith.

Familial influence could extend across several generations. The player-manager of a Manchester Jewish Soccer League team, for which his son also played, had been strongly influenced by his own mother, herself once the secretary of the Manchester Jewish Soccer League, the first woman in the country ever to perform such a role.

I set up Jackson's Row [a Reform synagogue] football team with friends with whom I still often play and meet socially.<sup>16</sup> About twelve of us joined South Manchester Maccabi around 1974, which we later represented at the Maccabiah. I played in the Manchester Jewish Soccer League mainly for social reasons and in non-Jewish football until I was thirty-five because the standard tested me.

<sup>16</sup> There are now 35,000 adult and child members of forty-one synagogues affiliated with the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB) throughout the UK. Reform Judaism is actively engaged with modern life and thought and RSGB members include many whose families have been Reform Jews for generations, others whose upbringing was in Orthodox communities and those who have drifted away from formal association with the community. It claims to maintain a dialogue between tradition and modernity, understanding that there is not one way in Judaism but many.

Two decades ago, another interviewee and his brother had played with their father in the same team, a first in Jewish football, and accordingly written up in the *Jewish Telegraph*, one of the local Jewish papers. Today this would hardly be considered an exceptional occurrence. Parents often watch their children play or perform, thereby demonstrating the importance of these activities for family and communal life.

Some informants were highly motivated to mix in Jewish circles. One family had moved to Manchester because the parents wanted to live in a Jewish area 'for their young children's' sake. The father had competed as a member of a non-Jewish golf club team, but now, 'due to a combination of location and persuasion', he had joined Whitefield Golf Club. A member of a south Manchester cultural society had also moved to Manchester with his wife to be near their daughter and her family. He now mixed almost exclusively with Jews, a reversal of his experience throughout his working life in Cardiff where, because the Jewish community was so small, his contact with other Jews had been minimal.

In another case, an all-round sportsman had grown up in Longsight, which is not regarded as a Jewish neighbourhood. He said:

When I was about fifteen, a friend suggested that I play football for Habonim [a Zionist youth organization]. My involvement with the Jewish community evolved from that. Also at Central High School, I met other Jewish boys when we said prayers and ate lunch together, and from that made friends with them and Jewish girls too. Through this I established a Jewish connection and, as I was always very keen on sport, I played various sports for both Jewish and non-Jewish teams.

Now in his sixties, he currently plays golf and tennis at Whitefield Golf Club. Clearly, his sense of attachment embraced both family and friends.

The pull should not be underestimated. One man, now middle-aged, had come to Manchester from Cardiff to study, and also to meet Jewish women. Then, 'it was natural to join the Pennine Wayfarers, rather than, say, the Rambler's Association, as it would just feel different, and I would have less in common with its members'. To him, and presumably the other 200 plus members of

Wayfarers, it was entirely natural for Jews to want to walk together.

Explaining why she had joined the New Jewish Theatre Group soon after moving from London to Manchester, one divorced woman said that it enabled her to pursue a particular interest while meeting other people with similar values. In common with many other respondents, her Jewish identity was central to her lifestyle. There appeared to be a common bond, a sense of kinship, with other Jews that was premised more on cultural than on religious grounds.

Over thirty years ago, that bond inspired a couple to establish the Jewish Caravan Club. In this club, there was no need for members to explain or justify personal religious beliefs and standards of observance. Some practised *kashrut* (observance of dietary laws), others did not. Yet they were able to act 'naturally' together, becoming firm friends and, even today, three decades later, some of their children mix with each other. A similar level of intimacy had not been experienced when they attended non-Jewish caravanning events. A similar sense of camaraderie also applied to the golfers. The Association of Jewish Golf Clubs and Societies of Great Britain has a unique arrangement that permits a member of one club to play at any of the others.<sup>17</sup> These clubs belong to the International Association of Jewish Golf Clubs, which runs international competitions in which teams of Jewish golfers from all over the world play against each other. A golfer, who had represented Britain at one such tournament, said: 'I felt entirely at home with Jews from South America, India, Australia and many other countries. It was just natural to get on well with them and feel at ease together.'

For some, there were less obvious reasons for belonging. One Pennine Wayfarer had joined as he loved outdoor activities and many of his friends were members. Although he claimed not to have a particular affinity with either Jews or Judaism, most of his friends were Jewish, and he had for many years been a leading scoutmaster in the Jewish Scouts. He had followed an impulse to become involved in Jewish matters. The family interest continued as his son, who also proclaimed a secular

17 There are regular competitions between the British clubs, and over 1,000 Jewish players and supporters from all over the country attended the British championships in the summer of 2000.

lifestyle, played football for Maccabi in the Manchester Jewish Soccer League. For reasons that were more 'instinctive' than rational, many people 'felt comfortable' being with other Jews in a Jewish environment.

### **Association and associations in the future**

Each interviewee was asked what he or she thought might happen to his or her group in the foreseeable future. The following range of responses was typical of current outlooks.

A senior member of Dunham Forest Golf Club thought that within five years it might become a mixed club, a conclusion that he found distressing as Jews again might be exposed to antisemitism. He planned

always to play at Dunham unless the club falls apart. I think that most Jewish people will want to join a Jewish golf club, as there is a nice warm feeling of belonging. I know that this could apply to other clubs but I think that Jews seek it more and I feel that the parental influence is still a strong factor. There are difficulties in joining clubs anyway and being Jewish ends up as being the final nail in the coffin.

A senior Whitefield Golf Club committee member stated:

my wife will be lady captain . . . and my kids have been members although they don't go that often. The place is in my blood and I want to see it survive, succeed and to maintain its ideals.

The chair of the Pennine Wayfarers was certain that 'people would be distraught if it collapsed now', and was convinced that the group would continue to flourish.

A more optimistic Manchester Jewish Soccer League leader believed that

there is growing support, as at some games we have as many as 150 spectators, made up of parents, brothers, sisters and friends. South Manchester Maccabi has the most boys playing football of all the teams. Two years ago there were only 300 juniors in the league and now there are 670 in all age-groups. They come to training and we are running our leagues in accordance with the FA rules for under 7, 8, 9 and 10-year-olds.

Many older players were involved in local and a national Jewish over-forties competition and also in five-a-side football. He believed that there was a residual loyalty to the league, evidenced by a returning Oxford Blue who said:

I thought of playing for Manchester Grammar School Old Boys, but sort of feel obliged to turn out for Maccabi. I know all the guys and respect them as players.

All of the social/cultural groups were very popular with one of them having had to place prospective members on a waiting list. That sort of demand had resulted in First Tuesday, whose members comprise either Jewish retirees or those with a Jewish partner, which was established in 1994. Its chairperson said that

the audience gets a lot out of the speakers [both Jewish and non-Jewish] and the chance to meet new people with interesting things to say. We have a history in common as we have lived in south Manchester for a long time and belong to the synagogue. We just know each other and feel comfortable together.

Another interviewee emphasized the importance of that feeling. Despite having met a wide range of people through his business activities, he had attended a Jewish school and always socialized with Jews. He believed that

because of our upbringing most Jewish people prefer to be with Jewish people as they feel at home. The younger generation are more assimilated and will be quite happy to mix with non-Jews though it will take a long time for things to change and people will continue to belong to organizations like Club Thursday.

The current director of the New Jewish Theatre Group echoed her golfing counterpart when she said: 'It is in my blood, and I have involved my three children in the same way.' She was convinced that

there is a genuine demand and support for it in the community. It's the right vehicle for the right people as there is a comfort factor in being a Jew with other Jews. I do socialize with members of the group and have made friends through it. Many members' lives revolve around their involvement in the group and although they make a contribution they take a lot from it too.

Commenting on changing social attitudes and behaviour, one of the Jewish caravanners said:

We don't think that it will continue as over the last few years the membership has become depleted. We cannot get young couples with children to come, partly due to affluence and partly as young Jewish women with young kids are continuing to work whereas in the past they did not and were always at home for the children. Young couples haven't got the time, don't want to caravan generally as they have enough money to stay in hotels. We think that during the next ten years, it could just fizzle out.

### Summary

All in all, perhaps as many as 4,000 Manchester Jews have elected to associate with each other as Jews in various ways for informal recreational activities that have no inherent Jewish content. A similar number is involved in more formal recreational and social activities. However, some recreational groups demonstrate not only a preference for Jewish sharing but also an identification that is not inevitably 'shared'. Moreover, there is often a hard-to-express affinity that overrides 'shared common backgrounds, values and experiences', and that might be best understood as a sense of peoplehood, often between people whose 'values and experiences' might well differ, often sharply.

The interviews revealed the following principal reasons for this associational activity:

- Some non-Jewish organizations have excluded or made it difficult for Jews to become members. Though prejudice has often existed and still exists, it is frequently a myth, and it is a fear of exclusion that provokes the Jewish response.
- Jews might not wish to join an association in which it would be difficult to observe some tenets of their religion.
- Parents and friends persuade people to join an association for social reasons or because of their own interest in the activity.
- Parents encourage their children to join a Jewish association so that they will mix with other Jews, and possibly marry one of them eventually.
- While the respondents represented Jews across a wide spectrum of Jewish religious observance, most of them had joined a group because they had an affinity with other Jews with whom they felt they shared common backgrounds, values and experiences.
- Many of the respondents mixed with non-Jews, both in the workplace and socially. However, some compartmentalized their working and social lives, so that their circle of friends was largely or exclusively Jewish.
- It is often easier to belong to a Jewish association than to begin a process of integration into an association populated by a group of people from different cultural backgrounds.
- People use Jewish associations because they already exist and are based locally.
- For some, the standards of performance at a Jewish association—whether in a sports or an arts activity—enabled them to do something that they might not otherwise have the ability to do in a non-Jewish associational group.
- Most interviewees believed that there would continue to be a demand for these associations and that they play an invaluable role in the Jewish community as social and cultural foundational underpinnings, helping to maintain a community spirit.

## 4 Jews, ethnicity, identity and recreation

There is clear evidence here that a significant proportion of Manchester Jews choose to associate with each other, thus corroborating findings from elsewhere.<sup>18</sup> Much has been written about sport/recreation and ethnicity, and the literature helps us to place this report's findings in a theoretical framework. However, it is also important for any conclusions to be contextual and, to this end, they were discussed face-to-face with a number of prominent Jewish lay and religious leaders.

Many Jewish leaders dismiss informal and social mechanisms as levers for social engineering. These influential Jews are convinced that the formal education of Jews about the richness of their history and religion is the best way to combat the current high levels of Jewish assimilation into the population at large. Jeremy Michelson, an educationalist at the Manchester Jewish Museum, believes that 'a flower needs roots and the culture comes out of the religion'. From this viewpoint, a non-observant Jew might well be able to pass on some cultural behaviours to the immediately succeeding generation, but any common bond derived from the shared *non-religious* experience would eventually dwindle to little or nothing. A prominent figure in both Manchester and Jewish politics, the late Sir Sydney Hamburger, agreed with this thesis, arguing that, although the community had shifted away from religious practice, 'recreation would not help people remain Jewish'.<sup>19</sup>

Clive Lawton, a practising Orthodox Jew, currently a leader of Limmud (a Jewish educational forum), developed this idea further.<sup>20</sup> Lawton, for example, understands that Jews might go to see a Jewish film or participate in a music festival simply because they enjoy doing so. The act of attending with other Jews might temporarily help them to get in

touch with their Jewish selves. However, for him, 'Jewish sport and recreation is an archway, pleasant while you are there, but not long lasting'. Jewish continuity, the ultimate aim of so many attempts to encourage Jews to associate together as Jews, lay 'in producing values, ideas and behaviour transmissible to future generations; and such values have to be connected with the Jewish religion and tradition, for what other legitimate basis is there for behaving Jewishly?' He was convinced that 'you can play football on Sundays till the cows come home, but only if you do so because of the Jewish calendar rather than for social reasons does it become worthwhile and relevant'.

For those occupying the traditional ground of what is somewhat euphemistically termed Orthodox Judaism, this study might be interesting but, in their view, it is unlikely to make any serious contribution to the issue of Jewish continuity. This easy dismissal of sociability, however, is sociologically unimaginative given that their common measure of assimilation is interfaith marriage, a phenomenon that correlates very closely with an individual's lack of involvement in Jewish social networks and activities that produce dating within the group.

### Ethnicity and identity

Certainly for some respondents, the Jewish calendar did matter and was central to their concept of being a Jew whereas for others, though important, it was nevertheless peripheral. Sharon Bernstein, the project leader of an initiative set up to help young Manchester Jews with social and identity problems, was eclectic in the sources she had used. She found that a particularly potent example of material drawn from the religious tradition was the celebration of the first night of the annual Passover festival when all over the world even unobservant Jews gather together at the *seder*, the traditional meal. However, there were many other initiatives not rooted in religion that also assisted her in helping these young people to establish a sustainable Jewish identity.

Bernstein's approach fits in well with a change in the status of British Jews, who were legally recognized as an ethnic group only as recently as the 1970s Race Relations (Amendment) Act. As a

18 Benski's study of Glasgow Jews in 1978 found that 'despite low levels of religious observance, Jews tended to prefer their own company and largely avoided close friendships with non-Jews, especially outside of informal employment' (see Valins 1999).

19 To him marrying out was a devastating act.

20 He had led the Jewish Continuity project during the early 1990s, subsequently becoming involved with Limmud, an eclectic forum that holds regular events about a wide range of Jewish educational issues as well as providing its own courses and seminars.

contemporary report into community representation found, this reflects a shift in the self-perception of many Jews in Britain. Rather than only defining themselves primarily as a religious group, Jews from a wide spectrum of beliefs and affiliations have increasingly come to regard themselves as an ethnic group, notwithstanding the somewhat pejorative nature that that term has in Britain.<sup>21</sup> This is because, for them, ethnicity involves kinship, a sense of belonging, a common history and a desire for group continuity alongside religion, culture and language, the other three dimensions.<sup>22</sup>

Time after time, respondents mentioned feeling comfortable in the presence of other Jews. Generally Jews seemed to be part of and also separate from wider society. Interviewees referred to humour, a distinctive Jewish cuisine and the importance of food, a way of talking about and looking at life, a body language that was easily understood, and above all a sense of understanding about what it means to be a Jew in Britain. Not having to explain and feeling empathetic with the other person or group helps to cement a sense of belonging. Along more practical lines, having faced overt or covert exclusion and prejudice, it is both natural and simply easier to interact with others in situations in which one is unquestioningly accepted.

For Henry Guterman, an ex-president of the Manchester Jewish Representative Council, the comfort of being with other Jews is due in some measure to how community members have traditionally related to each other. In his experience, other minorities, such as Africans or Afro-Caribbeans, constitute communities in which there is a cultural affinity between people from the same country of origin, such as Nigeria or Barbados. The

21 The Home Office is content to allow Jewish organizations to define themselves either in religious or in ethnic terms as they choose.

22 A majority of so-called uninvolved, religiously unaffiliated Jews have been affected by their Jewish background and have some sense of being Jewish. According to Miller, Schmool and Lerman (1996), among adult Jews, 31 per cent consider themselves to be traditional, 9 per cent Orthodox, 15 per cent progressive, with the balance of 45 per cent ranging from secular to 'just Jewish'. Anthropologist Anya Peterson Royce says that a group and/or outsiders can claim an ethnicity, provided that five key criteria—common ancestral origin, common culture or customs, religion, race or physical characteristics, or language—were satisfied. These characteristics were dynamic in that they could be redefined and changed over time (Royce 1982; Fenton 1999).

most significant factor here seemed to be country of origin and not blackness. Conversely, he felt that 'we Jews have a common bond and background, which could stem from religious commonality although there could be a continuing interest in merely being Jewish which is not to do with religious practice'.<sup>23</sup> Guterman suggests that ways of being Jewish, other than those dictated and transmitted by religion and religious practice, do and will continue to exist.

In his review of Jewish identity in Europe, the anthropologist Jonathan Webber has argued that, as the constituents of identity change over time and place, there is no single and universal Jewish identity. The non-practising Jew in Israel can feel and act as Jewish as the strictly Orthodox in New York. One very real outcome of this is that many diaspora Jews who are well integrated into western societies are highly likely to express their Jewish identity through lifestyle rather than through their obligating norms and principles.<sup>24</sup> According to this paradigm, social, recreational and cultural frameworks are of increasing significance compared to divine worship and religious practice. It thus becomes easier to understand why some very assimilated Hungarian Jews today still choose to associate with other Jews and why their conversations are rarely about anything that is specifically of a Jewish nature.<sup>25</sup>

### **Ethnicity and recreation**

Use of a wider and more liberal definition of what constitutes being Jewish makes it legitimate to compare the Jewish associations studied here with similar associations of other ethnic groups. Often for reasons of prejudice, different sports have evolved along ethnic lines. In the British context, this has resulted in a prominent role for black soccer players (lately followed by rugby footballers) and a tendency for Britons whose ethnic origins are in the Indian sub-continent to play cricket or tennis. Other sports, such as golf, have remained predominantly white. In those instances in which there was mixed membership at a sports club, it has been noted that it was commonplace for members of different ethnic groups to congregate together even if there was no direct evidence of prior exclusion from other clubs. It was therefore only a

23 Guterman is involved with the Interfaith Council as well as Black-Jewish and Indian-Jewish forums.

24 Eliezer Schweid, cited in Webber 1994.

25 Andras Kovacs, cited in *ibid.*

short step to the organization of associations along ethnic lines (Hoggett and Bishop 1986).

A wide-ranging study of ethnicity and sport in Manchester found that, while South Asians wanted to participate in British sport, they perceived themselves as outsiders. This was partly because the established local British population excluded them and partly because of their own cultural predilections against integration. As a consequence, they set up their own leagues, linked to temples and community centres. Like the Jews, they emphasized career over sport, a trait that can also be observed in several other ethnic minorities, such as Turkish and Greek Cypriots. In contrast, having been denied an easy route into the professions, many Afro-Caribbeans believed that sport and related activities might offer them a more realistic career opportunity. They too formed their own teams and leagues, with some groups also creating their own multifunctional associations (Verma *et al.* 1991).<sup>26</sup> This corroborates the findings of John Hargreaves, who has concluded that sport tends not to promote intercommunal harmony and that, on the contrary, stereotyping often creates ethnocentric attitudes. This means that it is difficult for ethnic minorities to integrate into working-class, community-based sport (Hargreaves 1987:156).<sup>27</sup> In this context, the continued existence of the Manchester Jewish Soccer League is not surprising.

### Recreation and community

In some ways, the Manchester Jewish community has acted as a trailblazer for other minority communities. Bill Williams, who has extensively researched the history of the Manchester community, coined the phrase 'walled leisure' to describe the old literary societies in which Jews exchanged ideas and knowledge. Though the Ice Palace, just north of Manchester city centre, was open to the general public, it played a crucial recreational role for the Jewish community. Between 1930 and the late 1960s, it was a place where Jews could network while avoiding the anxieties of having to deal with the non-Jewish

majority. Replaced by other recreational activities when Jews moved into the suburbs, the Ice Palace became defunct. Today's social and cultural groups continue to uphold this tradition. Williams is convinced that such recreational activities remain extremely important to a community that, in his opinion, is still closely-knit and still exhibits certain behaviours reminiscent of the ghetto.<sup>28</sup>

Even though it is not solely a Jewish predisposition and other ethnic minorities behave similarly, most Manchester Jews continue to congregate residentially and live in a small number of areas within the conurbation. Living in close mutual proximity contributes to the creation of genuine pressures to conform to a group norm. A member who spurns conformity is likely to be perceived as a transgressor, someone who chooses to step outside the group's boundaries (Cresswell 1996).<sup>29</sup>

The future of the local associations studied here is obviously more insecure than that of more formal recreational associations. An organization such as Maccabi has its own premises, permanent staff and is part of an international movement, whereas the informal associations have neither buildings of their own nor significant financial backing. As they rely almost exclusively on their members' enthusiasm and commitment, they will inevitably experience peaks and troughs. Nonetheless, they have survived for a relatively long time and there are strong indications that they will continue to provide something that the community both values and desires. This is a view that sociologist Lou Kushnick shares. His research confirms that British Jews interact with one another far more than their North American counterparts. He is convinced that, however important or attractive the activity of the associations studied might be, the essential key to their popularity over the years has been their Jewish membership.

### Attitudes

Jon Stratton, an English Jew now teaching in Australia, has tried to understand why a group such as British Jews, apparently integrated if not assimilated, still tends to congregate. He contends

26 The fact that Asian families emphasize the professions over sport is partly informed by overt discrimination against Asians gaining entry to football and cricket in Yorkshire and elsewhere in Britain (Holland *et al.* 1996; Bishop and Hoggett 1995).

27 This was confirmed by the Sports Council only recently (Hargreaves 1994).

28 Bill Williams, personal communication.

29 London-based Greek and Turkish Cypriots also congregate residentially and form local communities that facilitate ethnically based leisure activities. Such mixing together helps them to maintain their own culture but makes it harder for them to assimilate. This has been found also to apply to East African Hindus (Watson 1977; Roberts 1999).

that this is due to Jews generally being placed outside the mainstream of society wherever they live; this seems to apply universally, despite Jewish history and language (Jewish culture, perhaps) varying from country to country. This is probably due to the unwillingness of Jews to become too close to the outside world because of the social and cultural threats that such proximity is presumed to pose. This, he believes, is due to generationally transmitted cultural attitudes and thinking. His view is that the racial designation of peoples has meant that the dominant culture has effectively made it impossible for members of a minority group to assimilate fully (Stratton 2000).

The novelist Howard Jacobson, who also lived in Australia for a while, offered an interesting explanation.<sup>30</sup> Jacobson has a keen interest in

current events in the Jewish world, having retained many of his Jewish connections. As a youth, he belonged to recreational associations, and played table tennis at a high level for a Jewish club. Now married to a non-Jew, the experience he has acquired has enabled him to comment insightfully and knowledgeably about the subject. He observed that part of the answer lay in Jewish mores and history. Jacobson felt that in Sydney

it was kind of Jewish. The Australians and the Jews have something in common. They share a warmth that relaxed me. The Jews are not a northern people and don't properly belong in some of the places they have settled. Despite the English having been fantastic to us, somehow I, and I believe others, have felt the chill of English life and have never felt quite at home here.

30 Howard Jacobson, personal communication.



## 5 Conclusions

### Associating with Jews

Several reasons have been advanced to explain why well-educated, middle-class and often highly anglicized Manchester Jews continue to associate with other Jews. As with other ethnic minorities in Britain, a plausible explanation lies in what is particular to the ethnic and thus cannot be shared readily with mainstream society. The centrifugal forces that create distance between Jews and the general society can be explained by prejudice—or perceptions of prejudice—and the deficiencies of society's awareness and sensitivities to the mores and needs of others. In contrast, the centripetal forces that pull Jews towards each other are more complex, but mostly have to do with a shared history, background, location and attitudes to life. These are powerful forces: they can embrace even the most secular of Jews. However, many of these 'associational' Jews may well be Jews whose links with the more formally organized community are somewhat tenuous and whose Jewishness is based on emotion more than belief or practice.

Will this situation continue? In general terms, most respondents thought it would. For a variety of reasons individual associations might grow or dwindle, but the overall impression is that informal recreational associations will continue to be important in Manchester's Jewish social life in the foreseeable future. One interviewee who had been prominent in both Jewish and non-Jewish associations suggested that co-ordinated initiatives 'to educate, entertain and embrace young Jewish adults from every shade of observance' would certainly help. The research indicates that they act as social agents by helping to maintain cultural boundaries for their particular group (Iso-Ahola 1980).

The United States might offer a possible model for development. Most large American cities have a Jewish community centre (JCC), which is the fulcrum of Jewish communal activity. At a recent conference of community leaders in the USA, there was general agreement that the JCC could not only complement the work and role of synagogues, but could fill a niche that religious institutions cannot reach, in particular for those Jews otherwise unaffiliated with Jewish organizations. A decade after having set out to beef up their Jewish content, the JCCs were developing a two-pronged approach. While one component was designed to provide

education and information about all aspects of Judaism, the other, currently under development, would foster connections and networks among members so as to create stronger Jewish ties. This was being achieved by building on the personal friendships that members of the JCC had formed, while simultaneously encouraging participants to deepen their Jewish commitment.<sup>31</sup>

The Manchester situation is more organic and diffuse; many informal voluntary associations tend not to liaise with each other (Hoggett and Bishop 1986). Most of the associations examined here belong to the Manchester Jewish Representative Council but the council seems not to have the desire, the resources, the information or the power to take a more proactive role in the social life of the community. This notwithstanding, British organizations are pursuing ideas similar to those advanced in North America, and where there is a Jewish continuity agenda, youth education has been made a priority.<sup>32</sup> Stuart Schapiro, Manchester Maccabi chairman, has proposed that the new Maccabi centre, due to open this year, should not only provide sporting facilities, but also be a meeting place for all members of the Manchester Jewish community (Hayman 2000).<sup>33</sup> Though he did not spell out what this might mean in practice, it was unlikely that Maccabi could expect to introduce a JCC along the lines of the American model. It was likely that even less integrative proposals would meet some resistance since one of the most striking features of the Manchester associations investigated was their sense of autonomy and special identity. Thus it is reasonable to assume that they would be less than ready to relinquish their independence; issues of control would inevitably emerge. Though the idea of a JCC might be worth pursuing, there would need to be

31 They called it 'putting the J back into the JCC', whereas the new initiative is known as 'putting the community back in the JCC' (Wiener 2000).

32 Eric Finestone, Deputy Director of Makor/Association of Jewish Youth, has been given the task of helping young people feel that they belong to the Jewish community by introducing a Jewish educational component into Jewish clubs (interview, 4 April 2001).

33 Interestingly, from a wider perspective, in June 2000 an appeal for funds to build a Jewish cultural and arts centre in London was launched, the aim being to encourage all Jews to learn more about their heritage: see *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 June 2000, 1 and 11 August 2000, 14.

careful and sensitive negotiation to achieve an outcome that benefitted and satisfied all the potentially interested parties.<sup>34</sup>

### **Binding ties**

There is considerable evidence to support the assertions of Howard Jacobson and Jon Stratton that, however assimilated some British Jews might appear to be, they still retain a sense of difference that is unlikely to disappear in the immediate future. Jews will continue to act as an ethnic group, diverging in some respects from the dominant culture. The bond is there.

Unquestionably, for many, belonging to Jewish associations is very important. For some, membership in a voluntary association has resulted in or cemented lifelong friendships. A recent British example shows how powerful even seemingly

superficial contacts can be. In July 2000 prime-time television showed a documentary about a north London Jewish netball team. The team included secular and Orthodox women who would not otherwise have met. Through their netball activity, they had formed deep friendships, visited each other's homes and learned from each other different ways of being Jewish (Knoble 2000).

Provided that the political climate continues to favour multiculturalism and that their place in British society does not alter radically, a significant number of Jews will continue to associate freely with other Jews in recreational settings. These associations provide unthreatening and non-judgemental places for Jews to meet, whatever their religious denomination or designation. Accordingly, they play a critical and underrated role in maintaining community cohesion.

34 Although the *haredim* (strictly Orthodox Jews) in Manchester have been excluded from most of the discussion in this paper because they are only marginal to it, they comprise the most rapidly expanding sector of the Jewish community and, as a consequence, cannot be ignored. The future and shape of Jewish voluntary associations in Manchester and, in particular, the viability of such projects as an American-style JCC, as well as any collective discussion of strategies for continuity, are all likely to be subject to their influence.

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