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Secondary School Choice as a Window on Jewish Faith Schools in Contemporary British Society

Helena Miller[a], Alex Pomson[b], and Hagit Hacohen Wolf[c]

[a]UJIA London, London, UK; [b]Rosov Consulting, San Francisco, California, USA; [c]Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

ABSTRACT

Research into school choice has generally explored both the processes by which choices are made and the considerations that parents explore when making this important decision on behalf of their children. This article examines the secondary school choices of Jewish parents in the United Kingdom. It explores parents' reasons for choosing to select Jewish faith secondary schools. We frame our arguments against the backdrop of the wider faith-school phenomenon in the UK, and as with the Christian communities, we find a disconnect between the small number of Jewish adults attending places of worship regularly and the growing number of Jewish children attending Jewish faith schools. We show that for many parents, schooling is synonymous with Jewish socialization, or enculturation; developing networks of Jewish friends, providing sufficient cultural resources to enable participation in Jewish life, and nurturing distinctive values. We show how Jewish schools have become more than places for academic advancement for these families; they have become the primary locus of Jewish community.

Introduction

In the United Kingdom, more than 35% of parents send their children to single faith schools, and that number is growing (DfE, 2012). This article seeks to explore some of the reasons for this phenomenon, as inferred from the actions and reflections of parents who choose to send their children to Jewish secondary schools rather than to schools of no religious affiliation. This article, therefore, sits at the intersection of two fields: the sociopolitical study of faith schools in contemporary society, and the study of parent school choice.

Launched in 2011 with the support of the Pears Foundation, this mixed methods study is a longitudinal investigation into the changing lives of Jewish secondary school students and their families. The study is following a cohort of 1,054 families whose children entered one of seven Jewish faith secondary schools in the United Kingdom. As a result of community interest in a pilot study that

looked at parents and children in just one secondary school, head teachers and governors at other Jewish secondary schools asked to participate in what has become a larger scale, longitudinal study of the families whose children attend their schools. From the schools' perspective, our data promise insights into the expectations, aspirations, and engagement of their parent bodies and students. From a research perspective, we have an opportunity to provide educators and policy makers with data to inform and help develop practice over time, as well as enriching the theoretical knowledge of the field.

Our findings from a survey of parents at all seven participating schools, as well as from a survey of parents who did not take up places at these schools, are presented along with insights derived from our qualitative, interview-based research with some of the same families. The data we gather add to our growing understanding of the place that faith schools occupy within the British educational system, and why they are so attractive to parents even while sociologists of religion have noted a widespread decline in association with, and membership in, religious institutions (Allen & West, 2009; Brierley, 2006).

Faith schools in contemporary society

Jewish schooling in Britain, as in most European Union and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, has a long history of financial support by the State. In 1851, 12 years after the government accepted that schools of a Christian religious nature were eligible for state funding, the government agreed that Jewish schools were permitted to receive grants in the same way that other denominational schools were, provided they agreed to read the scriptures of the Old Testament every day and provided they were also prepared to submit to government inspection (Miller, 2001).

Around one third of the total number of state-maintained schools in Britain are schools with a religious character (approximately 6,850 schools) out of a total of around 21,000 maintained schools. Approximately 26,000 Jewish children in the UK (60% of all Jewish children) are educated in Jewish faith schools. Within that number, there are 43 state-funded Jewish schools serving approximately 16,000 pupils. A further 1,000 Jewish pupils are educated in mainstream Jewish Independent schools. The remaining 10,000 students are educated in 43 strictly Orthodox Independent schools that operate within the *Haredi* (ultraorthodox) community in Britain, the majority of which are in and around greater London and Manchester (Miller, 2012). These *Haredi* schools are not state aided. This is because they do not meet curricular or teaching requirements required for state aid. For example, these schools may not teach the full national curriculum, choosing to emphasize Jewish studies, and may teach some or all subjects in Yiddish.

Who is admitted to faith schools?

In Britain (as in many other parts of the world), there has been much debate about the nature of a cohesive society and what it means to be a fully integrated and engaged citizen. In turn, this has led to government legislation that has changed the nature of how Jewish schools relate to, and integrate with their local and wider communities. This legislation, introduced by the Education and Inspections Act (2006) required all state-funded schools, including all faith schools, to "promote community cohesion," and was intended to build on existing good practice in schools. An additional plank of this initiative involved legislating, in a separate measure, who was entitled to be admitted to faith schools. In a further attempt to promote community cohesion, the government backed an amendment to the Education and Inspections Bill that would have legislated for faith schools to give 25% of their places to pupils of other or no faith (DfES, 2006). While the measure would initially have affected only new schools, there was justifiable anxiety among all faith schools that it would soon after be applied to already existing schools. The Board of Deputies of British Jews, in conjunction with other faith groups, coordinated a united faith community voice, to oppose this sudden call for quotas. The proposal was withdrawn later the same month and the 2006 Education and Inspections Act continued to allow faith schools to give priority to applications from pupils within their own faith.

In recent years, mainstream Jewish schools had to face additional challenges to their admissions practices. Most controversially, they had to change their admissions criteria to comply with the UK Supreme Court ruling of 2009, which made it unlawful for Jewish schools to give priority to children who are born Jewish. In practice, this ruling meant that admission to Jewish schools was now a matter of faith and not one of ethnicity. To gain entry to a Jewish school, families must show evidence of adherence to the faith (synagogue attendance for example) and not merely birth. This brings Jewish schools' entry requirements in line with other faiths, but is problematic for a religion where attending synagogue or the observance of other forms of practice is not a test of "how Jewish" a person is.

Debates about school admissions reflect different assumptions about how pupils in Jewish schools can become full members of the UK community, and whether attending a faith school helps or hinders integration in the larger society (Cairns, 2009). Holden and Billing (2007) speak of "parallel lives" to describe the way people in local communities live separately from one another. They identify faith communities as making an important contribution toward building and sustaining cohesive communities by developing local leadership, providing meeting places, and encouraging values and attitudes conducive to cohesion. The mainstream adult Jewish community in Britain has always wanted to play a full role as part of British civil society.

Indeed, in every synagogue in Britain, every Sabbath, a prayer is read which acknowledges and blesses the Queen and all the Royal Family. British Jews have always appreciated those occasions when they were welcomed into Britain while other countries at best refused them entry and at worst persecuted them. Many sectors of the UK Jewish community do, however, lead "parallel lives." This is as much because of where they live, and their socioeconomic status, as it is because of their faith or cultural backgrounds.

A challenge for those seeking to connect Jewish youth with the wider world is that the Jewish community itself provides an extensive enough infrastructure to meet so many of the needs of Jewish children and their families that their members may never have to venture beyond the community. There are religious, social, and welfare institutions; informal youth provision; kosher shops; restaurants; and of course, schools. This resonates with Smith's observation (Smith, 2007) that the existence of groups and organizations with high levels of internally invested social capital (that is, social relationships that serve as resources for social functioning) can be a significant challenge for societies because the experience of living in close-knit communities can lead to the exclusion of others (Smith, 2007, p. 2).

Studying the school choice of Jewish parents

Until now, there has never been any systematic examination of the school choices of Jewish parents in the United Kingdom, or of why some parents select Jewish faith schools for their children and others do not. Inquiry into these matters will help reveal what some who choose faith schools see as their purpose.

Against the backdrop of a broader theoretical debate about the rationality of parent decision making (Coleman, 1990, Ostrom & Ostrom, 1971; Smrekar & Goldring, 1999), research into school choice more generally has had two major foci. It has examined the *processes* by which choices are made and the *considerations* that parents weigh when choosing a school.

With respect to the processes of school choice, that is, *how* school choices come to be made, researchers have investigated a remarkably diverse set of historical, economic, social, and cultural variables that inform the ways in which parents go about choosing schools. These variables include the public policy contexts that establish lower or higher barriers to parent school choice (Levin, 1992; Raveud & Van Zanten, 2007; Wilkins, 2010), parents' own educational biographies (Bulman, 2004), where families live (DeLuca & Rosenblatt, 2010), parents' access to information (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000), their gender (David, West, & Ribbens, 1994), class (Holme, 2002), race (Saporito & Lareau, 1999; Sikkink & Emerson, 2008), and ethnicity or faith (Cambre, Causey-Konaté, & Warner, 2013; Cohen-Zada & Sander, 2008; Denessen, Driessena, & Sleegers, 2005). All of these factors are found to make a difference as to *how* parents choose a school for and with their children.

No matter the social or national context, there is much more consensus about the main issues that figure in parents' considerations when they choose a secondary school (Bosetti & Pyryt, 2007; Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles, & Wilson, 2014). More than 20 years ago, Goldring and Shapira (1993) summarized this research in terms of four broad considerations: (a) academic reputation and curriculum—a characteristic often expressed in relation to a proxy of class size, assumed to be directly related to academic quality; (b) discipline and safety—frequently expressed in relation to assumptions about the ethnic composition of the student population; (c) religion and social values—questions weighed most intensely in relation to whether or not to select a faith school; and (d) convenience, a composite variable that includes ease of access to school and also parents' capacity to afford school fees. More recently, Bell (2009) reached the same conclusion, if worded less delicately. In his words: "the literature suggests that parents prefer schools that are academically superior … match their values … are safe … convenient … and contain fewer poor children and children of color" (p. 494). Similar conclusions have been reached in research conducted across the globe, for example, in Australia (Le & Miller, 2003), Canada (Bosetti, 2004), France (Langouët & Léger, 2000), and Israel (Oplatka, 2003).

There has been limited previous research into aspects of Jewish schooling in the UK as noted previously, and almost none into the considerations of parents who select such schools for their children. Valin's (2003) analysis of the attitudes and motivations of Jewish parents was in large part based on the secondary analysis of the social and political attitudes of British Jewry. Those British parents with children in Jewish schools constitute an especially fertile data set especially by way of contrast to the population of parents whose children are enrolled in Jewish schools in North America, where the greatest concentration of Jewish schools outside Israel can be found (Pomson & Deitcher, 2009). In the United States (where all Jewish schools are private and independent) and in Canada (where most are) school fees can range between $10,000 and $40,000 a year. Scholars and policy makers have debated the extent to which Jewish school fees influence parents' choice of school. Cohen and Kelner (2007) have argued that only the very small number of parents for whom Jewish day school is an option but not a necessity are truly cost sensitive. However, others continue to argue that price is the first consideration for many Jewish parents when considering enrollment in a Jewish school (Held, 2014). In the UK most Jewish schools receive funding from the State for all ongoing costs except for the religious studies, for which parents are asked to make a *voluntary* contribution of £1,500–2,500 a year. The cost of Jewish schooling, therefore, does not overwhelm all other considerations for most Jewish parents. In this context, it is, therefore, possible to examine more rigorously what other factors, besides price, are of concern to parents when they select a Jewish faith school for/with their child. Indeed, in a context where the State funds Jewish as well as other faith schools, it might be assumed that parent choices in the UK will also not be overwhelmed by concern about seeming to abandon the public

system when choosing a Jewish school, a phenomenon that has been found to distinguish Canadian Jewish parents (where there is a tradition of public funding for some forms of faith schooling) from American Jewish parents (where no such tradition of public funding exists; McDonough, Memon, & Mintz, 2013; Pomson & Schnoor, 2008).

Method

Population and sample

As we have noted, the data in this study come from an unprecedented longitudinal study of a cohort of families whose children attend seven Jewish secondary schools (six in London and one in Manchester). Six of these schools are state aided, one is an independent school. All provide an educational program that conforms fully with the national curriculum; even while they differ in the hours they devote to Jewish studies and in the Jewish ethos to which they are committed.

The focus for this article is the data collected from families in the summer of 2011, on the eve of their children starting Year 7 in one of seven Jewish faith secondary schools. The number of families in that category totals 1,054. We used a single stage sampling design, in which we had access through the schools to all the names of the families that had applied to take up places, and they were sampled directly (Cresswell, 1994). Our sampling frame was the e-mail database that each school held. There was no further selection of population.

(1) Surveys; There were 394 complete responses from parents whose child started a Jewish school, constituting 40% of total enrollment at these schools. In addition, there were 92 completed responses from parents who had applied for a place at least one these seven schools, but did not then take up that place.
(2) Interviews; We conducted interviews with a representative sample of families enrolled at each of the seven schools, from among those who responded to the survey, totaling 89 families with children who had started at a Jewish secondary school. In addition, we conducted interviews with a further 50 of those families that did not take up places at any of the seven Jewish schools. This sample from a randomly selected population was stratified to ensure proportionate representation by gender, secondary school, previous primary school, and Jewish religious denomination.

Categorized as developmental research (Cohen, Manion, Morrison 2000), longitudinal research is concerned to describe both what the present relationships are among variables in a given situation, and to account for changes occurring in those relationships as a function of time. Surveys may vary in

their levels of complexity from those which provide simple frequency counts to those which present relational analysis.

Our data were collected at the very start of a longitudinal study and are therefore not yet typical of the long view generated by multiple data collections made during a longitudinal study. Our data are descriptive, gathered at a point in time, and do not compare existing conditions with previous data gathered.

Survey method

A survey instrument was developed based on a previous study (Pomson & Miller, 2011).

The survey comprised 43 questions, broadly covering:

(1) current schooling of the child and any siblings;
(2) considerations when choosing a secondary school;
(3) decision-making processes when choosing a secondary school;
(4) parental goals and expectations;
(5) the parents' attitudes toward a range of goals and expectations of secondary school; and
(6) parent profile: age, education, income, engagement in Jewish life and the Jewish community.

A variety of types of scales were used to measure the items on the instrument, from Likert-type scales (*not at all important* to *very important*, and *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) to dichotomous scales (yes/no). There were some multiple choice questions as well. Respondents were encouraged to insert their own answers in "other" boxes, and there were two places on the survey for open-ended answers to be inserted, for example "please specify, if you wish, the educational philosophy of the school." These open-ended questions were the only nonmandatory questions on the survey. The final question asked the respondents to indicate whether they would be willing to be called for interview.

Procedure

The survey instrument was piloted by six families who were not part of the population targeted by the research to establish the face validity of the instrument and to give us an opportunity to eliminate ambiguities, and to revise and improve the questions, format, and scales.

Every family in the cohort (that is all those who had applied for a place in at least one of the seven schools) was offered the opportunity of responding to the survey. The schools managed the dissemination of our surveys via e-mails sent directly from the Head Teacher's office. Anonymity of both respondents and schools was strictly assured.

As suggested by Cresswell (1994); Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000); and others, we conducted a three phase follow up sequence. Two weeks after the original e-mailing, and 4 weeks after the original e-mailing, reminder e-mails were prompted by the research team and sent by the Head Teachers' offices to all those in the cohort. Data collection took place during an 8-week period between September and November 2011. This follow up method helped to yield the high response of 394 completed surveys out of a cohort of 1,054.

Profiling data was tested by comparing parental responses with the responses provided to a survey of students also conducted within this study. Representativeness of our sample was also tested against the preliminary findings of the National Jewish Community Survey (2013; Graham, Staetsky, & Boyd, 2014). Both these measures enabled us to moderate internally, for example, whether the parents' and children's answers matched one another with regard to profiling questions, and externally whether, for example, our findings correlated with national findings.

Findings

Parents' considerations

Factor analysis was performed to inspect the factor structure of parents' considerations when choosing a secondary school for their child. A Principal Component Analysis was conducted on the 11 items with orthogonal rotation (varimax) and pointed to a 3-factor solution. (Three components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 which explained 57.69% of the variance.)

Table 1A in the Appendix shows the factor loadings after rotation and the reliability (Cronbach's alphas). The items that cluster on the same factors suggest three broad types of priority: factor 1 represents Jewish educational concerns (such as "Jewish ethos"), factor 2 general educational concerns (such as "Academic track record"), and factor 3 instrumental concerns (such as "Convenience").

Comparing the importance of each of these factors across all of the Jewish schools (see Table 2A in Appendix) reveals how similar parents' concerns are, no matter what school their child attends. Parents consistently attribute high importance to general education, and in general, they view Jewish education as being less important than general educational concerns. The only difference in response comes from those families who are strictly religious and send their child/children to a strictly religious school (school B).

Nevertheless, there are differences between schools in the importance that respondents attribute to instrumental factors (cost and convenience). At school A (the only private Jewish school in the sample) such matters are relatively less important, while at school G, these matters are relatively more

important. Indeed, school G parents were the only London respondents for whom such instrumental matters were of more importance than Jewish educational concerns.

Interviews with samples of between 10 and 15 parents from each Jewish school and more than 50 further interviews with parents whose children did not enroll in Jewish schools confirm the patterns identified by the parent survey in relation to parental priorities. Typical of many responses was the following statement, indicating that from parents' perspective, the quality of general education was more important than anything else:

> We would not have chosen a Jewish school if it couldn't deliver. Again, much like [our primary school], we'd heard that [this particular Jewish school] was a phenomenal school academically, and the Jewish thing is nice.

Or from a parent who didn't choose a Jewish school: "The only time I would consider it [a Jewish school] is if I felt that my child would *not* do better in a private school environment" [emphasis added].

Interviews repeatedly confirmed that, from the perspective of parents, the quality of Jewish education is, as one interviewee put it, a "lovely bonus"; it is something that might increase the appeal of a school, "an extra box to tick," but is not a key determinant of choice. Even among the most Jewishly engaged families, parents do not seem to expect that children will learn as much at school about what it means to be Jewish as they will from home. This accounts for why few interviewees who chose a Jewish school identified the Jewish curriculum in their child's schools as a consideration for them when making a choice. Much more important in Jewish terms was the question of who were the other students with whom their children would meet at school.

Parents' expectations in terms of the Jewish dimensions of schools can be summed up as follows: Primary school is where children acquire Jewish literacy, and secondary school is where they acquire their Jewish friends.

Interview data also sheds light on how to understand patterns of response in relation to instrumental factors such as convenience and cost. One interviewee whose child took up a place at a non-Jewish school explained her calculations: "The only thing that might have made me consider it seriously would be if it was nearer." But then, coming back to this theme later in the same interview, she indicated that there were actually other factors at work:

> I really do think it comes from within. From my life, and from my identity of who I am. And maybe that's part of my difficulty; even if the school was quite near, I would find it difficult to send my daughter there, because of that authority of religion, or institutionalized religion, which I find hard.

Evidently, lack of proximity does influence choice—as shown in the survey data—but beneath the surface—as uncovered by interview data—other

psycho-social factors lurk that inhibit any readiness to tackle the challenge of being so far from school.

Parental aspirations

We assume that parents' school choice reflects a broader set of hopes and aspirations for their children that are operationalized, when possible, in the school choices they make.

In this data collection cycle of our research, we paid special attention to the priorities that lie behind parents' school choices. One particular survey question asked respondents, on a 5-point scale between "*not at all important*" and "*extremely important*," to indicate "how important to you" is a series of nine different educational, cultural, and social aspirations they hold for their children, based on an earlier pilot phase of qualitative research.

Strikingly (as shown in Table 3A in Appendix) statistically significant differences were found between samples of parents whose children took up places at Jewish schools and those whose children did not, in relation to only two items, both of which reflect the school choice parents have made: on average, parents whose children took up places at Jewish schools have a greater aspiration in "giving your child an intensive Jewish education" (M = 3.38, SE = 1.17) than parents whose children took up places at non-Jewish schools (M = 3.11, SE = 1.09), t(485) = 2.05, *p* < .05. In addition, on average, parents whose children took up places at Jewish schools have a lower aspiration in "promoting friendships between your child and non-Jewish children" (M = 3.69, SE = .95) than parents whose children took up places at non-Jewish schools (M = 3.95, SE = .74), t(170) = −2.85, *p* < .05. Overall, though, parents indicate that the social aspects of schooling—promoting friendships with both Jewish and non-Jewish children—are more important to them than giving their children an intensive Jewish education.

With so much similarity between the samples of respondents who took up places at Jewish schools and those who did not, we have combined the two samples in order to analyze whether parents' aspirations, whatever school their child attends, might be correlated with other independent variables, that is, with aspects of their personal profiles that might in some way influence their preferences.

We have explored these relationships in terms of four question-items previously mentioned: the importance of (a) "giving your child an intensive Jewish education" (a Jewish academic goal); (b) "promoting friendships between your child and other Jewish children" (a Jewish social goal); (c) "promoting friendships between your child and non-Jewish children" (a general social goal); and (d) "providing your child with a stepping stone to a form of higher education of his/her choice" (a general academic goal). These relationships were determined by looking at two key axes: social and

academic; and Jewish and general, recognizing at the same time the potential for interplay between these two axes: parents may place an emphasis on children socializing with other Jews, and this may not be distinct from academic aspirations via (perceived) peer effects.

Denomination

As shown in Figure 1, significant differences were found between parents of different denominations (self-defined). The denomination of parents was found to be correlated with parents' aspirations in relation to the two items that were directly concerned with Jewish outcomes, "intensive Jewish education" and "promoting friendships between your child and other Jewish children." In both instances, those respondents identifying themselves as Orthodox attribute much greater importance to these outcomes than do parents identifying with other denominations. There are, however, no such significant differences in relation to general social or academic aspirations. Interestingly, it seems that while orthodox parents may be less concerned than others to promote friendships between their children and non-Jewish children, this difference is not statistically significant.

Age

No significant differences were found between the aspirations of parents of different ages.

Level of education

Of the four aspirations on which we have focused, the only one where there was a significant difference between parents with different levels of education was that concerned with "providing your child with a stepping stone to a

BY DENOMINATION - How important to you is
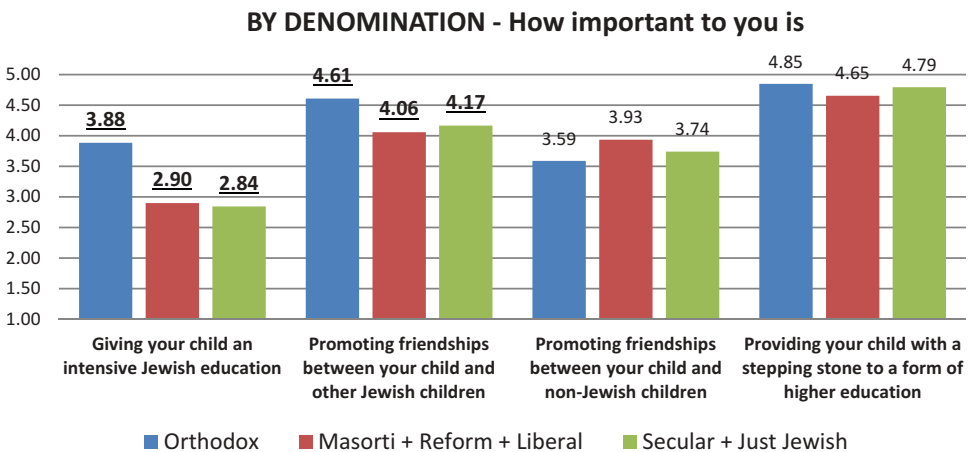
Figure 1. The relative importance of the outcomes of schooling by Jewish denomination. Statistically significant differences are both indicated in bold and underlined.

BY EDUCATION - How important to you is
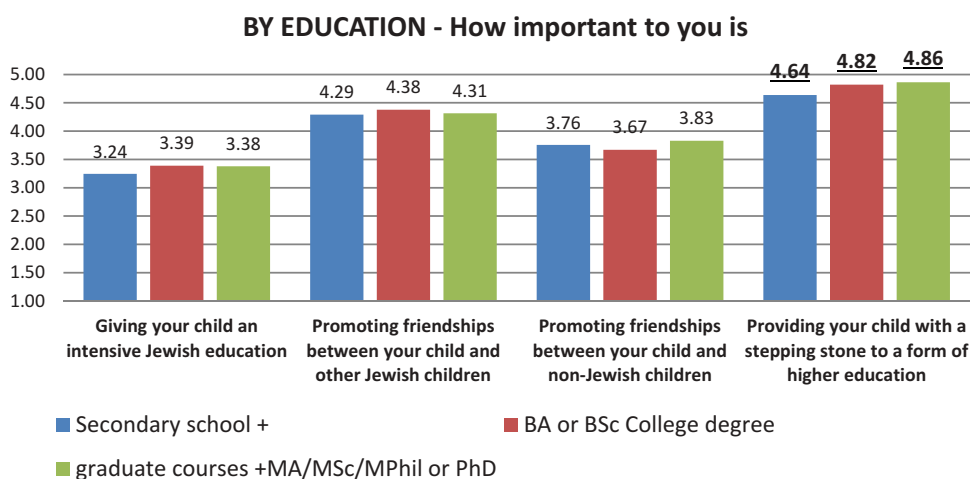
Figure 2. The relative importance of the outcomes of schooling by level of parents' education.

form of higher education" (Figure 2). This finding seems to indicate that parents strongly desire that their children at least achieve the same educational opportunities that they did. At the same time, higher levels of education have not suppressed an interest in nurturing Jewish social or academic outcomes in their children.

Annual household income

A significant difference was found in relation to the higher levels of wealth and parents' goal to promote friendships between their child and other Jewish children (a Jewish social goal). Easier to explain, and fully anticipated, is the difference between those with the highest and lowest levels of income in relation to seeing school as a stepping stone to higher education (Figure 3).

Knowing that they can afford access to the best possible education for their child, parents evidently seek out such opportunities. As our interview data confirms, this is a matter of acquiring the best possible education that money can buy rather than seeking fuller integration for their children with non-Jewish children by attending non-Jewish schools (where there is not a significant difference between samples by income).

One interviewee whose child is enrolled at a non-Jewish school explained her preferences, and why, if necessary, she would have considered a Jewish school.

> I can understand why people choose to send their kids there [one of the Jewish schools]. If we couldn't afford private school, of course I'd send my child there, you know. It's not that I'm—my ideal situation would be that they would be in a non-Jewish school with other Jews there. If I couldn't find that then of course I would send my child to [one of the Jewish schools]. So, it's not that I feel so strongly about it and I would never ever send them there; if we couldn't afford

private, of course we would send our child to a Jewish school—I think thank goodness those schools are there really, you know.

Or as explained by another parent who registered at a Jewish school, but did not take up a place: "Money was a major factor for us, and if we couldn't afford the private schools, we'd had to look at the Jewish state schools, because they've got brilliant academic records."

Parents' expectations from schools

Until now the data we report might be taken to indicate that parents view Jewish schools as proxies, cheap substitutes for private schools. They are attracted to schools by their high educational standards and their academic promise compared to the great majority of state schools.

Parent responses to a question about their expectations for their children suggests a different account. Undoubtedly, they are drawn to Jewish schools by their high academic standards, but they also expect schools to shape the Jewish identities and lives of their own children. Indeed, if they do not possess Jewish cultural capital of their own, in other words, if they do not possess the knowledge and/or skills to function successfully in Jewish social and institutional contexts, they are especially concerned that their child's schools will provide it.

So as to establish a point of reference against which to compare possible changes in Jewish life within the family, parents were asked in this survey, on a 5-point scale between "*very unlikely*" and "*very likely,*" to indicate *to what extent they expect that their child's attendance in this particular school will lead to changes in their child's and in their own lives* in relation to four aspects of Jewish life: (a) synagogue attendance, (b) the practice of Judaism at home, (c) participation in Jewish organizations, and (d) their relationship to Israel.
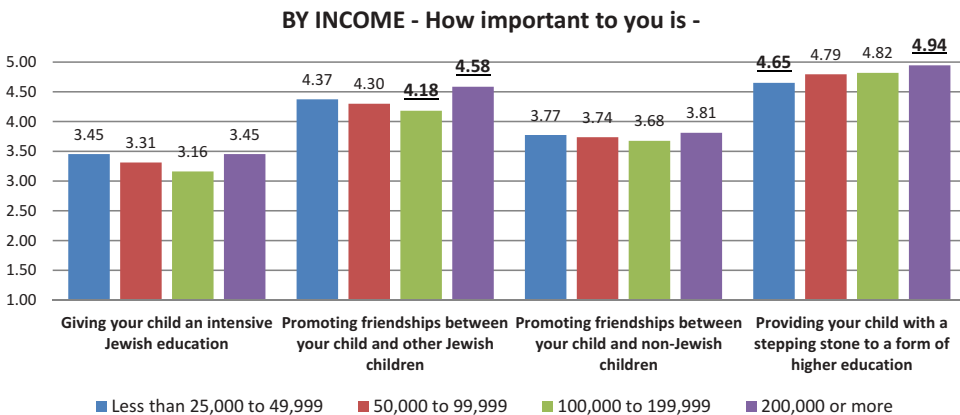
Figure 3. The relative importance of the outcomes of schooling by level of parents' income.

Parents' answers to these questions have been correlated with a measure of parents' current Jewish engagement that distinguishes between low, medium, and high levels. This engagement measure was developed based on some strong evidence that emerged during pilot qualitative research that revealed distinct differences in the ways that parents with different levels of Jewish engagement talked about what they expected to be the Jewish outcomes of their school choices.

These degrees of engagement were operationalized in a way that makes it possible to analyze data in the parent survey, by producing a composite measure of engagement. The maximum score of that measure is 8, where respondents indicate participation in all of the relevant items—3 communal (closest friends are Jewish, Jewish education attendance, donation to a Jewish organization other than a synagogue); 2 national (attachment to Israel, intention to travel to Israel); and 3 religious items (Synagogue attendance, lighting Sabbath candles, fast on Yom Kippur) and a minimum of 0 (where respondents indicate participation in none of the items). We categorized the measure to three types of Jewish engagement: Low (score of 0–2), Medium (3–6), and High (7–8).

Overall, and as anticipated, parents expect greater changes in their children's Jewish lives than in their own. Otherwise, there is great consistency in patterns of parents' expectations for both their children's lives and their own. Most notably, parents who report medium levels of engagement express a greater expectation of change than those who report either low or high levels of engagement in terms of both their children's lives and their own. As can be seen in Figures 4 and 5, our findings are consistent across the Jewish items about which we asked, but there is a small statistically significant difference (0.16–0.24) between these medium engagement parents and others when it comes to expected changes in both their child's practice of Judaism at home and their child's relationship to Israel, but not in relation to the child's synagogue attendance or participation in Jewish organizations. When it comes to changes in their own practice of Judaism at home, there is a statistically significant difference between these different groups of parents in relation to their practice of Judaism at home, their participation in Jewish organizations, and their relationships to Israel, but not in relation to synagogue attendance.

At first glance these findings may seem counterintuitive, in that the most highly engaged do not expect that their children's schooling will lead to changes in their Jewish lives. While wary of overinterpreting a small set of data points, we think that these findings confirm a central conclusion of the qualitative research: that the most Jewishly engaged families do not seem to expect that children will learn as much at school about what it means to be Jewish as they will from home. The burden of expectation on schools comes most from families expressing moderate level of engagement where parents retain strong Jewish aspirations for their child but where there may be fewer Jewish social and cultural resources at home to

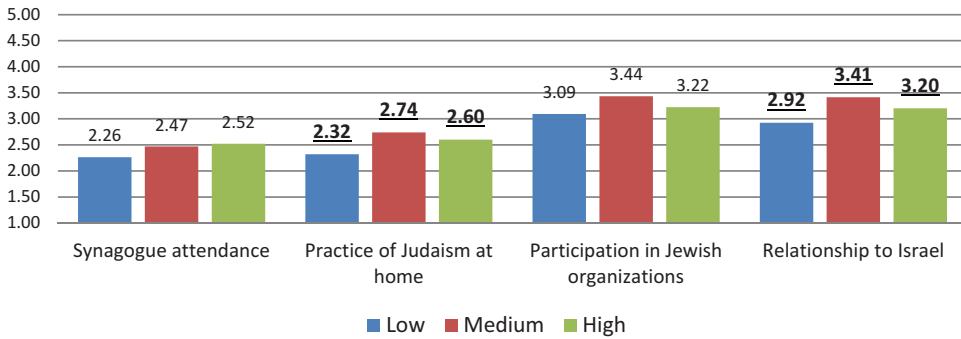## Expectations for children BY ENGAGEMENT

Figure 4. Expectations for children's Jewish lives related to parental levels of Jewish engagement.

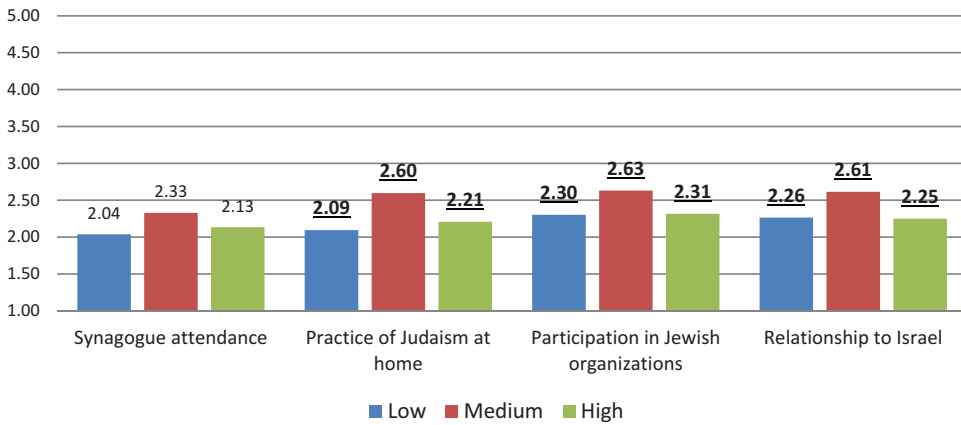## Expectations for parents BY ENGAGEMENT

Figure 5. Expectations for parents' Jewish lives related to their levels of Jewish engagement.

support the Jewish development they desire. Interviews with parents whose children took up places at non-Jewish schools have provided an opportunity to probe how parents expect the resources of home and school to contribute to their child's Jewish development. We expect that much of what this particular sample reported is consistent with the expectations of those with children in Jewish schools. It certainly aligns with our survey findings where there were no significant differences between Jewish and non-Jewish school samples in this respect.

Thus, those who already possessed high levels of Jewish social and cultural capital (the "highly engaged" to use the language of our survey analysis) had made plans for their children's Jewish development once that started at a non-Jewish school: through private Jewish study lessons; making sure that their child went to a Jewish youth group; staying in touch with their Jewish

friends; or ensuring that the Jewish festivals were experienced at home as worthwhile.

By contrast, for those with few Jewish resources of their own, there was a sense of unpredictability in what might come from taking up a place at a non-Jewish school: their children might fall in with a Jewish social circle, but they also might not. They might learn something from the school's "Jewish society" (a lunchtime club), but they couldn't be sure that their child would even attend, especially if programs ran during lunchtime. With the declining number of Jewish children in nonselective state schools, the precarious consequence of their choice was increasingly a source of anxiety for those who went down the non-Jewish school route. As one parents admitted:

> In an ideal world, I would never send my kids to a Jewish school. I would send them to a school that had a good demographic mix … My ideal just doesn't exist anymore. There are either Jewish schools or there are other schools where you might get a few Jewish kids. But over time, those numbers of Jewish kids are decreasing because the Jewish schools are so good and plentiful that people just send them there.

For the moderately-engaged or low-engaged families with children in Jewish schools, there was an expectation that these social outcomes would take care of themselves, for the good. These parents simply assumed that their Jewish social aspirations would not now need much cultivation at home. Attending a Jewish school made such things easy:

> When you talk about teenagers, when you make your friends, and there aren't many Jewish kids at the two grammar schools, and you have to make more of an effort to go to Jewish clubs … but it's actually easy because they make their friends at school.

Discussion

There is a paradox in how Jewish parents view Jewish schools. Our data suggest that the primary consideration for parents when weighing a school for their children is the academic quality of the education that their children will receive, and the extent to which their children's school will serve as a stepping stone to higher education. Those who choose Jewish schools and those who choose non-Jewish schools are alike in that respect. They differ only in their capacity to pay for private education and in the level of their own education. Viewed in these terms, Jewish schools seem like a low cost alternative to selective schools. They provide an exclusive social and academic environment for parents who would prefer for their children not to take their chances in the state system. This an argument consistent with Mendelsohn's (2011) association of the growth of the Jewish state school sector in the UK in the 1980s with the demise of

grammar schools and the creation of comprehensive education. It also aligns with findings from studies of Anglican and Catholic families in Britain (Allen & West, 2009).

And yet our data show that the search for quality academic education and an exclusive social environment is not the whole story. When Jewish parents send their children to Jewish secondary schools they hope and desire that their children will grow Jewishly, in very particular ways. They are not especially concerned that their children develop high levels of Jewish literacy; they assume that they will have learned enough about what it means to be Jewish and how to practice as a Jew in primary school. In secondary school, they hope and expect, instead, that their children will develop a Jewish social network, and cement a commitment to Jewish communal continuity.

In these terms, Jewish parents first and foremost value Jewish secondary schools for their potential to facilitate their child's socialization into the Jewish community and to intensify their Jewish pride and identification. At the same time, they don't see that task as one that can *only* be carried out by schools. Home and family can contribute to such outcomes too. That's why some of the most Jewishly engaged families in our sample are comfortable not sending their children to Jewish schools. These families are confident in their own ability to provide for their children from the cultural and social resources available at home. Of course, schools help with such matters but—unlike when it comes to academic preparation—they are not the sole purveyors of such desired outcomes. However, for families without such extensive social or cultural resources—those classified as exhibiting medium levels of Jewish engagement—Jewish schools are critical agents of their children's ongoing involvement and commitment to their faith community.

Our inquiry into the school choices of Jewish parents reveals a great deal about how Jews in the UK perceive what it means to be Jewish, and about their aspirations for their children's Jewish lives. For these parents, to be Jewish means to belong and to believe but not so much to know or understand things to an advanced degree. Against this backdrop, Jewish education is synonymous with Jewish socialization or enculturation; developing networks of Jewish friends, providing sufficient cultural resources to enable participation in Jewish life, and nurturing distinctive Jewish values. Jewish education does not presume the development of expertise or high-order Jewish literacy.

Conclusion

It might be disconcerting to think of schools in such terms, that is, as much for their social and cultural provision as for their contribution to academic or intellectual development. But in a society where, as we noted previously, so few adults attend places of worship each week, faith schools seem to have assumed roles historically played by those places of worship. Of course,

schools have long served to sort or organize individuals into socially constructed roles and positions (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). Private schools have helped elites maintain particular social statuses (Peshkin, 2001) and public schools have been organized to socialize new arrivals into the norms and values of dominant groups (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Here we emphasize how schools have taken on a different function: for this particular religious minority—for Jews in the UK—schools have assumed functions historically performed by synagogues, not coincidentally at a time when participation in synagogues is in decline.

Over the last millennium the most common Hebrew term for the synagogue has been *Beit Knesset*, a place of meeting. Centuries earlier, the function conveyed by this term had supplanted that of another conveyed by the term *Bet Tefillah*, the house of prayer. Today, when fewer and fewer adult Jews meet their coreligionists in synagogue, schools have become alternative sites for meeting and for the formation of Jewish community. This, at least, is what the parents in our study convey by their school choices and preferences.

Parents' concern with both the social and academic outcomes of their children's schooling is made sharply evident by the data in this study. It is evidenced, for example, in the frustration expressed by some parents when their desire to socialize their children with other young Jewish people clashes with their goal of enabling them to receive what they perceive to be education of the highest standards. Thirty years ago, before the dramatic increase in the number of Jewish schools in the UK, and the consequent rise in the percentage of Jewish children attending those schools to 50%, there were presumed to be sufficient Jewish children in many of the UK's most competitive state schools, that Jewish parents could expect their children to receive the best possible state education and develop a strong Jewish social network at the same time. Today, Jewish state schools have acquired positive academic reputations and are seen by many as safety nets for those who do not gain admission to academically selective schools. At the same time, some families that lack extensive Jewish social and cultural resources at home and also have the highest academic aspirations for their children, must now make a difficult choice between realizing the goals of Jewish socialization and those of academic success. This is one more contributor to making school choice so fraught.

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Appendix

Table 1A. Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Question: When Selecting a Secondary School for Your Child, How Important to Your Decision Were the Following Factors?

	Rotated factor loadings		
Item	Jewish education aspects	General education aspects	Instrumental aspects
Balance of Jewish education and secular academics	**.869**	.056	.088
Strong Jewish education	**.923**	.075	.093
Jewish ethos	**.934**	.097	.065
Academic track record	.013	**.690**	−.303
Warm community environment	.283	**.593**	−.014
Superior option compared with other local alternatives	−.131	**.636**	.167
Physical safety/security of your child	.179	**.684**	.215
Social makeup of the children in the school	.054	**.594**	.202
Convenience	.133	.309	**.519**
Cost	.022	.447	**.514**
Eigen values	3.21	2.01	1.12
% of variance	23.97	21.64	12.08
α	**.91**	**.67**	**.50**

Note. Bold numbers refer to instances of statistical significance

Table 2A. Summary of Aspects by Group, for the Question: When Selecting a Secondary School for Your Child, How Important to Your Decision Were the Following Factors?

Aspect and school		N	Mean	Std. deviation
Jewish education aspects	School 1	48	3.26	1.24578
	School 2	115	4.09	.80093
	School 3	100	3.21	1.14643
	School 4	108	3.65	1.06276
	School 5	65	4.08	.80586
	School 6	31	4.82	.41131
	School 7	19	4.40	.61442
	Total	486	3.79	1.06981
General education aspects	School 1	48	4.45	.40788
	School 2	115	4.50	.58180
	School 3	100	4.46	.45527
	School 4	108	4.34	.55249
	School 5	65	4.43	.58761
	School 6	31	4.50	.43473
	School 7	19	4.18	.50726
	Total	486	4.43	.52752
Instrumental aspects	School 1	48	3.93	.69182
	School 2	115	3.63	.86177
	School 3	100	3.63	.82833
	School 4	108	3.61	.77137
	School 5	65	3.82	.78278
	School 6	31	3.78	.81485
	School 7	19	3.24	.48214
	Total	486	3.68	.80114

Table 3A. Comparison Between Parents Whose Children Took Up Places at Jewish Schools and Those Whose Children did not with Regard to Parents' Aspirations for Their Children.

	School type	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Giving your child a foundation of Jewish knowledge and tradition	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	4.33 4.35	.73 .76	−.322	485	.747
Giving your child an intensive Jewish education	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	3.38 3.11	1.17 1.09	2.050	485	.041
Promoting friendships between your child and other Jewish children	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	4.33 4.30	.72 .69	.411	485	.681
Promoting friendships between your child and non-Jewish children	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	3.69 3.95	.95 .74	−2.853	170.3	.005
Encouraging your child to date only Jewish people?	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	3.82 3.76	1.26 1.30	.421	485	.674
Assuring that your child feels attached to Israel	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	3.89 3.71	1.11 1.25	1.319	485	.188
Enabling your child to achieve high competence in Hebrew	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	3.59 3.39	1.06 1.13	1.524	485	.128
Providing your child with a stepping stone to a form of higher education of his/her choice	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	4.77 4.75	.54 .54	.304	485	.761
Assuring that your child feels proud to be Jewish	Jewish Non-Jewish	394 93	4.53 4.54	.74 .74	−.025	485	.980