SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS JEWISH NON-CONFORMITY: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ANGLO-JEWSH EXPERIENCE IN THE ORAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE OF THE MANCHESTER JEWISH MUSEUM

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Tereza Ward

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures
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Word count: 82,402
Abbreviations

CPG - Communist Party of Great Britain
HO - Home Office
ILP - Independent Labour Party
JAPGW - Jewish Association for Protection on Girls and Women
JC - Jewish Chronicle
JLB - Jewish Lads Brigade
JLVA - Jewish Ladies Visiting Association
JP - Justice of the Peace
JWMC - Jewish Working Men’s Club
MCN - Manchester City News
MGS - Manchester Grammar School
(M)JBG - (Manchester) Jewish Board of Guardians
MJM - Manchester Jewish Museum
MLJVC - Manchester and Liverpool Jewish Visitation Committee
MP - Member of Parliament
MSSA - Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association
NCF - No-Conscription Fellowship
PPU - Peace Pledge Union
SPGB - Socialist Party of Great Britain
SPWG - Society for Protection of Women and Girls
T# S# - Tape (number) and Side (number)
TAC - Trades Advisory Council
WCML - Working Class Movement Library
YCL - Young Communist League
YCMA - Young Men’s Christian Association
Abstract

Histories of the Anglo-Jewish community have typically been written in terms of its ‘conforming majority’ but this is problematic on two grounds. Firstly, it excludes those deemed socially, religiously and politically nonconforming and omitted from communal records either deliberately or by default. Secondly, it presents a narrow view of the community, defined by its elites and captured in their sources. This thesis seeks to restore nonconforming individuals to the communal narrative and thus provide a more nuanced understanding of the Jewish community and the struggles of its members as they arrived in Manchester and adapted to their new environment, sometimes manifest in their dual identities as Jews and as Mancunians. The Manchester Jewish Museum oral testimony collection provides an ideal source for such restoration and through availability of sources determines the period of study to be between 1880 and 1945. Rather than accept a united community defined by consensus, this thesis illuminates the plurality of Jewish identities and experiences and the numerous sub-communities that existed in Manchester. These sub-communities were united in their identification as Jews, which was both self-selected and imposed on them from outside of the community but they differed and sometimes clashed in their understanding of social norms and values. The four chapters that make up the main body of this thesis focus on crime, political radicalism, marriage/intermarriage and disability and illness and consider how these challenged notional social norms of the elites, which represent communal leadership, wider communities and localities, and individual families. The varied and conflicting responses to these types of nonconformity further complicate the idea of consensus, not just within the wider Jewish community but also within the individual sub-communities which typically displayed greater inner cohesion. The result of this study is not only greater understanding of the Jewish community, outside of preconceived patterns but also more fluid and nuanced model of nonconformity in the community. Nonconformists, though they might have, by the virtue of their intermarriage, disability or political radicalism fallen into the same category, were nevertheless motivated by different factors and this affected both their understanding and interpretation of the community and their place within it and also their communities’ response to them.
Declaration

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I am especially grateful to the staff at the Manchester Jewish Museum, especially Alex Cropper, Gareth Redston and Andrea Donner, who allowed me desk space in their already small office. I am particularly indebted to Alex Cropper, for her knowledge and help with accessing the museum’s collection. I feel privileged to have seen the museum undergo such monumental changes, with the foundations laid to the new museum and feel excited about what is yet to come. Thank you also to the staff at the Manchester Central Library Archives, the Working Class Movement Library and the Greater Manchester Police Museum, too numerous to name, but universally welcoming and helpful.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family who are the absolute best. My husband Simon did everything these past few months and as a reward got to proof-read my thesis! My children Edi & Jude have been so good and let me work in the last few months, although I’m sure they’ll be happy to have me back. And thank you also to my dogs Fidi & Vlty who have kept me sane and who have some mega walkies in store for them.
1. Introduction

1.1. The aims of this study

The aims of this study are threefold. Firstly, it seeks to place the lives of ordinary people in Manchester at the centre of a study of community typically defined by its elites and to do this primarily through the use of oral testimony. The Manchester Jewish Museum (MJM) oral testimony collection captures well the diversity of the Jewish community over a period from 1880 to 1945, yet historians tend to utilise only the most eloquent and well-informed interviews failing to consider the aggregate effect of so many interviews over such a period. Secondly, it aims to establish an historical model of Jewish nonconformity in Manchester by exploring how different sub-groups within the community constructed their identity and social norms based on their experiences as Jews, immigrants and Mancunians and how this affected their response to nonconformity. Thirdly, this thesis seeks to challenge the idea of ‘one community’, its ability to reach a consensus on any one particular topic, and the concept of a unified response to nonconformity based on this consensus. Although historians have readily admitted the fragmentation of the Jewish community, they have continued to work with it as a paradigm, partly because the evidence is dominated by elite perspectives and sources. If one focuses on the sources generated from the accounts of the non-elites and reads between the lines and against the grain of this imagined community, one clearly sees a cluster of sub-communities. It therefore makes little sense to speak of conformity and nonconformity within a broader unified community.

The majority of studies detailing Anglo-Jewish experiences focus on London which had the largest Jewish community and, on an organisational level, represented centralised leadership. Provincial communities, though they had their own leaderships, were often financially and otherwise dependent on London, yet they also displayed unique characteristics. Studies of local communities enhance the typically London-centric history by capturing how they interacted with their environments and derived identity from them and also, on an organisational level, the struggles of local

communal leaders to maintain this sense of identity which was both compliant with London’s leadership and independent of it.\(^2\) Manchester presents an ideal opportunity for such a study of community, through examples of conformity and nonconformity, due to the extensive oral testimony archive housed at the MJM, and also due to the existence of previous studies on the topic, namely Rosalyn Livshin’s study of political radicalism which provides an opportunity for debate.\(^3\)

1.2. A Brief history of Manchester Jewry: ‘the community’

“My mother was very orthodox, you see, and most of our life was under her direction. She was an extraordinarily orthodox, very, very orthodox and we caused a lot of trouble because we had the problem of identity. Are we Jews or are we English? She was very insistent that we all go to Hebrew school and she wanted me to study to become a rabbi and things like that you see. And I particularly caused her a lot of grief and pain because I wasn’t a very conformist young Jew and didn’t even belong to any Jewish organisation of any kind.”\(^4\)

Jack Cohen

Few quotations could better express the struggles of dual identity, the expectations of conformity to values one did not identify with and the impact rejection of them could have on an individual and their family. However, the sentiment was shared by many immigrant Jews and their children who had settled in Manchester at the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century. The Jewish community has been upheld as a paradigm for understanding the acculturation, assimilation and integration of minority communities into the mainstream but this understanding is largely based on a distorted version of the community projected by its elites. The inclusion of people like Jack, often ignored by historians, helps to rectify this distortion and creates a

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\(^3\) Rosalyn Livshin, ‘Nonconformity in the Manchester Jewish Community’ (Manchester, 2015)

\(^4\) Jack Cohen J63, T1 S1
more nuanced understanding of a community which was diverse, contradictory and sometimes difficult to understand even by its members but especially those on the outside.

Jack Cohen was born in 1905 in Strangeways, a slum area of Manchester which, along with Red Bank, had by that point become home to the majority of the city’s immigrant Jews.\(^5\) The area was described as “the slummiest, the most awful part of the city, a Jewish Ghetto”\(^6\) and the same description could be applied to London’s East End, Glasgow’s Gorbals, Leeds’s Leylands and Liverpool’s Brownlow Hill, neglected areas of industrial cities where Jewish immigrants, fleeing persecution or seeking a better life, started to settle in the 19\(^{th}\) century. In Manchester the Jewish ‘community’ was never homogenous. By the 1820s, economic and social divisions ran so deep that it was possible to talk about two communities, best described by Bill Williams:

> On one side, there was a settled community of shopkeepers, overseas merchants, share brokers, and professional men, anglicised in speech and custom, comfortably off, generous to local causes, the providers of essential goods and services to the middle classes; on the other, the flotsam of pedlars and petty criminals...illiterate in English, incoherent in speech, uncouth in appearance, often associated with the criminal underworld, most frequently as the receivers of stolen jewellery and plate.\(^7\)

On the surface the two groups were divided by their respective socio-economic circumstances but their rift was more deeply rooted in their increasingly differing self-identification. Whilst the immigrant milieu remained socially insular and struggled economically, occasionally resorting to crime, the emerging ‘elite’ conformed to the values of their wider society in order to gain acceptance.\(^8\) The steady influx of impoverished immigrant Jews throughout the 19\(^{th}\) century served as an unwelcome reminder of the elite’s own immigrant roots and threatened the

\(^5\) Bill Williams, *Jewish Manchester* (Derby, 2008), p. 42
\(^6\) Jack Cohen J63, T1 S1
\(^7\) Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, p.57
respectable image of the community they worked hard to project and upon which their membership among Manchester’s middle-classes depended. In this sense the Jewishness and the immigrant status which linked the two communities also served as the greatest dividing force. There was little interaction between the two groups, except through philanthropic organisations, which marked one group as ‘givers’ and the other as ‘receivers’. This socio-economic division underscored the community’s organisational structure up until the 1940s.

By the 1840s immigration into the city intensified and the hawker, who in the 1820s had been regarded by the elite as a blemish on the community’s reputation, was replaced by a different type of newcomer. New Jewish immigrants, religiously orthodox, Yiddish-speaking and impoverished arrived, sometimes en route to America, and settled first in Red Bank and later in Strangeways, Lower Broughton and Hightown. It would be misleading to assume unity among the fast growing immigrant milieu but there was a level of solidarity and support networks emerged. The most important of these was the support given to ‘landsleit’, which saw new arrivals take up temporary residence with someone they knew from their home town, which contributed to the community’s growth. This was how Jack Cohen’s parents came to leave Russia and settle in Manchester, in his words: “if somebody in their village said you go because I’ve got my brother or my brother’s cousin or a friend of my father’s or something of that kind they would go there. They had no conception of where it was. It was somewhere to go with some kind of feeling that there was somebody there to whom you might turn”.9 The immigrant community taking shape in Red Bank and surrounding areas was made up of both individuals and families, arriving in Manchester for different reasons, from different places and with differing levels of skill and resource.10 For all its diversity, the immigrant community was united in its use of Yiddish, its Orthodoxy, pattern of work and its immigrant status.

By the 1860s the Jewish population had reached nearly 2,000 and Manchester’s synagogues, which had previously assumed responsibility over the immigrant community, were no longer managing to provide relief to new arrivals. In 1868 the

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9 Jack Cohen J63, T1 S1
Manchester Jewish Board of Guardians (MJBG) was established, following London’s model, and became the community’s leading charity. Its aim was two-fold: to deter permanent settlement and to anglicise those who could not be persuaded to leave. The first aim was achieved by providing only minimal relief during the first month, offering assistance towards emigration and, in rare cases, deportation. Those who chose to stay were provided with limited relief aimed at promoting self-help. Relief was not given indiscriminately but to those deemed ‘deserving poor’, that is those who conformed to elite values. Applicants had to, for instance, provide proof that their children attended the Jews’ School, another elite institution which became its most successful tool of Anglicisation. The Jews School pupils were banned from speaking Yiddish, their names were forcibly anglicised and girls were encourage to dress in pinafores to resemble the dress code of the royal household. The overall purpose of Anglicisation was to introduce the immigrant poor to “the values of English respectability, ridding them of foreign or criminal habits and preparing them for entry to stable occupations”.

The late 1870s marked the beginning of mass immigration from Russian and Eastern Europe, which saw the Anglo-Jewish community increase five-fold by 1914. In Manchester numbers grew from 10,000 in 1875 to at least 35,000 in 1914. The Jewish elite in this period intensified its efforts to subjugate immigrant culture and to ‘iron out the ghetto bend’. In addition to existing charities the Jewish Working Men’s Club (JWMC) was established in 1886, the Jewish Lads’ Brigade (JLB) in 1889 and the Jewish Girls’ Club in 1907 which sought to dominate the leisure sphere of the immigrant community. In 1884 the Jewish Ladies Visiting Association (JLVA) was established to provide assistance to Jewish mothers and to promote standards of hygiene and prevent the spread of infectious disease. The elite, which had assumed leadership of all these organisations, had become religiously and

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11 MJBG, Third Annual report (1868-1870),
12 See also Rosalyn Livshin, ‘Aspects of the Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews to Manchester’ (Manchester, 1982) and Pamela Ruth Kirk, ‘Comparison of the Aims of Education for Jewish Children in the Manchester Area during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century’ (Salford, 1994)
13 Williams, Manchester Jewry, p.27, Tilly Caplan J53, T1 51
14 Williams, Manchester Jewry, pp.75-76
15 See also Sharman Kadish, ‘A Good Jew and a Good Englishman’ (London, 1995)
culturally divided by the 1870s, though it did retain a level of economic and social homogeneity. The Reform Synagogue was established in 1856 and although the split from orthodoxy was acrimonious, its members remained closely involved in communal matters. The *Jewish Chronicle* criticised Manchester’s Reformers for being too Americanised in comparison to London, but its members were also the wealthiest men of the Jewish community and as such, represented the majority on the committees of most philanthropic organisations in Manchester. Sephardi Jews, who started to arrive in Manchester from the 1850s, were culturally and religiously insular and although they occasionally joined in the elite’s communal organisations, were continuously accused of being ‘exclusivist’. The establishment of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in 1874, the first in the provinces, was seen by the *Jewish Chronicle* as completing the basic pattern of religious life in Manchester, a pattern from which the immigrant *chevra* (places of worship) were excluded. Likewise, the 1880s completed the transition of the elite into the community’s official leadership, from which representatives of the immigrant community were conspicuously absent.

The immigrant community, though largely dependent upon the elite and open to its influences, were not merely passive recipients of charity. Religiously, they remained impervious to the anglicised Judaism of the elite. By 1860 at least 15 *chevrah* existed in Red Bank, fulfilling the social as well as religious needs of their communities. Most were crude in appearance, though perhaps not many as basic as Chevra Walkawishk which was created by demolishing a partition wall between two backyards and installing corrugated metal sheeting over them. Linked to *chevrah* was a host of friendly societies which provided financial relief to families in need and, where necessary, sought to replace family networks broken in the process of immigration. The leadership feared both the chevrah and the affiliated societies which were seen as promoting ties to the old world, deemed backward by the elite.

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16 Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, p. 240-269
18 *JC*, 5 December 1884
19 *JC*, 3 May 1872
20 Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, p. 272
thus hindering assimilation.\textsuperscript{21} In reality, very little is known about such societies, which perhaps encourages a romanticised interpretation of the community’s self-help tendencies, but the immigrant community was just as divided as the elite. The \textit{chevroth} often took their name from the place of origin of its congregants, suggesting that nationality acted as either a cohesive factor or an isolating one, depending on one’s point of view.\textsuperscript{22} Although the majority of the new immigrants were religiously orthodox, divisions also existed based on religious factors and the use of specific liturgy, which led to the establishment of separate \textit{chevroth}, such as the Lubavitch ‘Hayshop Shul’.\textsuperscript{23}

By the 1870s it was no longer possible to talk of ‘two communities’. Whilst certain groups showed greater inner cohesion than others, the ‘community’ was finely divided by religious, social, economic and cultural factors. Williams described the social structure of the community as pyramidal. Only a small minority of tight-knit families, united by marriage and business ties, occupied the exalted position at the top of the apex. A larger group of middle-class shop keepers were at its centre, representing the most socially mobile group, emerging from the immigrant milieu and aspiring to become fully fledged members of the elite.\textsuperscript{24} At the bottom of the pyramid was statistically the largest and most divided group of impoverished immigrants. Inverted, this pyramid is also representative of how Anglo-Jewish history is traditionally written. The elite, though the smallest group, through its multitude of organisations and their detailed records, preserved history in a way the immigrant community did not. Next to nothing has survived of the \textit{chevroth} records or the friendly societies which existed in Manchester and attempts to reconstruct these rely largely on reports in the \textit{Jewish Chronicle}, the mostly elite voice of Anglo-Jewry. Likewise, those wishing to reconstruct experiences of Jewish prostitutes outside of the traditional ‘rescue’ narratives come up against records of the Jewish

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Marks, \textit{Model Mothers}, p.36
\item \textsuperscript{22} See also William Fishman, \textit{East End 1888} (London, 1988)
\item \textsuperscript{23} Williams, \textit{Manchester Jewry}, p.25, for more on religious divisions within the immigrant community see also Yaakov Wise, ‘The Establishment of Ultra-Orthodoxy in Manchester’, \textit{Melilah}, 2010/2, p.28
\item \textsuperscript{24} This group were also referred to as ‘Alrightniks’ a term coined by a journalist Abraham Cahan to describe the Eastern European bourgeoisie of New York’s East Side and appropriated by Williams for Manchester. See also Bill Williams, ‘East and West: Class and Culture in Manchester Jewry, 1850-1920’, \textit{Studia Rosenthaliana}, Vol.23 (1989), pp.88-106
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The history of Jewish immigration is thus inevitably narrated through its elite voices, and it would be a distortion to say, as Rosalyn Livshin does, that Anglo-Jewish history is written in terms of its conforming majority. The majority were people like Jack Cohen, whose quote was included earlier. Born to immigrant parents and grappling with his dual identity, in the end Jack found his own path and became a communist, as did many of his friends. The majority were like Dr. Rich, whose family were poor but proud and would not take money from the MJBG whom he considered “worse than the gas chambers”. Or like Mrs. Bobker, widowed, poor and bedridden in the final years of her life, sending her youngest child to Norwood Orphanage in London and selling pictures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary to her Catholic neighbours to feed the rest of her family. Almost every one of the nearly 800 interviews in the MJM oral testimony collection contains an act of rebellion against the elite or an act of ‘nonconformity’. The aim of this thesis is to subvert elite narratives of the community, defined by the supposed consensus of the conforming majority.

1.3. Defining key terms

1.3.1. Problems with definitions of community and their implications for conformity

Having already highlighted some of the divisions that existed within the Manchester Jewish community, it would be misguided to attempt to begin with too precise a definition of the term. Livshin, who is the only historian writing specifically about nonconformity in the Manchester Jewish community, defined community as a group of people who relate to one another, and who share common historical experience and a common set of values. Although she made allowances for cultural differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews and stressed that the community

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27 Dr Rich J273, T2 S2
28 Martin Bobker J43, T1 S2
was not homogenous, Livshin’s definition is largely consistent with the version of community projected by the Jewish leadership, implying that the immigrant community not only conformed to the elite’s values, but that such values were shared by the two groups, thus creating the aforementioned ‘conforming majority’. Her conclusion that nonconformity was both viewed negatively by the ‘community’ and incompatible with it, further supports this definition. Since this thesis adopts an alternative stance, it is worth taking a closer look at Livshin’s definition and considering its problems when applied to the stories of those members of the Jewish community considered ‘nonconformists’.

1.3.1.1. People who relate to one another

The notion that the Jewish community is a group of people who relate to one another, that is, those who see themselves as part of the community, is not uncommon. Bill Williams and Geoffrey Alderman who are among the few historians who attempted to define the Jewish ‘community’ both referred to it as ‘a voluntary society made up of those who regard themselves as Jews’. Such an all-encompassing definition has serious implications for the understanding of conformity and nonconformity. Williams, for instance, included in his definition those who had abandoned Judaism, and even converted to Christianity but who were nostalgic about their Jewish roots or perhaps felt compelled to defend the community against antisemitism. Similar broadmindedness was expressed by one communal rabbi who claimed that ‘a pork eating practicing Buddhist can feel as much a member of the Jewish community as a haredi Jew’. Whilst such a broad definition captures the true diversity of the community which appeals to many historians, it is not particularly helpful in understanding sources of conformity since haredi Jews, pork eating Buddhists and those who have converted to Christianity, might share Jewish identity but they do not share common values or social norms. It is also debatable whether such individuals would ‘relate to one other’.

Writing about the Glasgow Jewish community, Linda Fleming problematized this

30 Geoffrey Alderman, Modern British Jewry and Williams, Jewish Manchester
31 Williams, Jewish Manchester, pp. 8-9
32 Rabbi Robyn Ashworth Steen, track 1
definition by questioning whether membership of the community is determined by self-selecting individuals or bestowed upon them by wider society. Livshin does not specifically discuss how communal membership is agreed or decided, but her conclusion that political nonconformity was so incompatible with Jewish life that communists and socialists were either excluded from their communities or regarded negatively suggests that membership is determined by conformity to ‘overarching values’ of the community, that is from within. In fact many political radicals still saw themselves as part of the community and were regarded as such by their families and neighbourhoods as well as wider society, as will be discussed in Chapter 3. Todd Endelman’s study of apostasy best captures the way membership of the community was sometimes imposed upon Jews who had converted to Christianity and become assimilated, and who, despite their efforts to disassociate themselves from their Jewish roots, continued to be labelled as Jews by others. Numerous examples of how membership of the community was imposed upon individuals can be found in the MJM oral testimony collection. The most extreme of these was the story of Frances Nemrow who, in the early 1940s, had a rhinoplasty because she felt that her ‘Jewish nose’ instantly exposed her as a Jew, even after she moved to a Christian hostel and changed her name to rid herself of her Jewish identity. This notion of a community imposed and defined from outside is important because it helps to explain the prevalence of stereotypes applied to all Jews irrespective of their situation and also the response of the elite to such stereotypes. It will be argued that the elite frequently intended its organisations to diffuse such stereotypes, imposed upon the community from outside, rather than respond to the actual needs of the immigrant community.

1.3.1.2. Shared experiences

The second part of Livshin’s definition of the Jewish community focused on shared historical experiences. The notion of shared history has been particularly strong since the Holocaust but in Manchester there is little evidence that collective memory acted

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33 Linda Fleming, ‘Jewish Women in Glasgow 1880-1950’ (Glasgow, 2005), pp. 10-13
34 He quotes numerous examples of this, the most famous being Benjamin Disraeli see also Todd M. Endelman, Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History 1656-1945 (Bloomington, 1990), pp.44-46
35 Frances Nemrow JT36, T252
36 See also Williams, ‘The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, pp. 78-90
either as a cohesive communal force or a source of conformity. Even those Jews who arrived in Manchester in the late 19th century from the same countries had different personal experiences. Those whose experiences were similar often reacted to them in different ways, as numerous examples of Russian Jews who experienced persecution demonstrate. The following examples show how immigrant Jews who arrived in Britain in or around 1900 reacted to their experiences of persecution. Jack Cohen’s mother’s response was to keep “the lowest of low profiles, so nobody would notice you and nobody would persecute you.” 37 Mrs. Nemrow also kept a low profile but was convinced that living among Jews would make her an easy target and insisted on living in a non-Jewish area and hiding her Jewish identity. 38 Mr. Clyne’s experiences made him suspicious of authorities and he became a communist. 39

Although the immigrant chevroth implied a certain religious, social and perhaps also cultural cohesion of their members, based on place of origin and a sense of shared history, this should not be generalised. After all, the ‘two communities’ of the 1820s shared mostly German origins, as did members of the Reform Synagogue and the Orthodox Great Synagogue. Perhaps the most striking example of how different the circumstances of the Russian immigrants could be, and the impact these could have on their experience of immigration, is the comparison of Jack Cohen’s parents and Chaim Weizmann, all Russian Jews from traditional families who arrived in Manchester at around the same time. The Cohens arrived separately at the turn of the century and married in Manchester. By 1910, when Mr. Cohen died suddenly, they had had 7 children, the youngest a new-born. Mrs. Cohen was fortunate enough to be found deserving and, after receiving a small loan from the MJBG, opened a shop that sustained her children until they were old enough to work. She never deviated from strict standards of orthodoxy, never learnt to speak English and remained suspicious of non-Jews. 40 Chaim Weizmann’s experiences and his circumstances were vastly different. Upon his arrival in 1905, he was equipped with university education and knowledge of several languages, a small but steady income from his patents and a letter of recommendation from a prominent scientist in his field which soon

37 Jack Cohen J63, T1 S1
38 Frances Nemrow JT 36, T1 S1
39 Clyne sisters J61, T1
40 Jack Cohen J63, T1 S1
generated a job at the University. He felt no connection with Manchester’s immigrant community, including those from Russia whom he considered “a dull ignorant crowd”.41 More striking still is the story of Helen Taichner who survived the war hiding in a coal cellar for nearly six months. Her parents, husband and infant daughter died in the Holocaust. After arriving in Manchester she moved to Cheetham Hill where she had relatives. Not only were they not interested in her experiences, they felt that she was melodramatic as they too had experienced the war through the blitz.42 Such examples represent broader trends within the oral testimony collection. Shared history is a powerful element of Jewish identity but in Manchester it did not encourage communal unity, conformity or give a clear impression of resultant universal values and social norms. It is possible that such shared history is only experienced retrospectively once, as Tony Kushner suggested, the community has had time to reflect on it, rediscover it and reinvent it.43

1.3.1.3. Jewish values

Livshin explained the term ‘set of values’ as a moral code embedded within religion. It is reasonable to assume that even those who had grown lax in their orthodoxy, including members of the Reform, retained a level of attachment to core values of Judaism and viewed them either as sources of conformity or as a link to ‘the community’. How such a moral code translated into the lived lives of individuals was another matter. Martin Bobker spent his first year in school attending Marlborough Road Primary because it took his mother that long to save up enough money for a pair of shoes, which he was required to wear for the Jews School. Afterwards he received his clothing from the Talmud Torah and the Jews’ School clothing fund. It is possible to distinguish between charity based on Jewish religious and cultural values and charity practiced by the elite as a form of social control, consistently undermining the immigrant population. In the Jews School, charity was given publicly. Children were called out to step in front of their class to collect their

41 Chaim Weizmann, a letter to Menachem Ussishkin, 29 March 1905
42 Helen Taichner JT35, T7 S1
donations. Martin Bobker recalled it as the first place where he experienced discrimination:

With all due modesty, I was pretty good at school and I used to wonder why certain teachers were nicer with some kids than others and it was only when I left school and went round looking for jobs and I saw these kids, their fathers were the bosses of these factories and then I realised why they were teachers’ favourites and I was sort of …not so much the favourite. I had the strap many a time, unfairly as well, because you see, I was poorly dressed and it makes a difference. That was the Jews school. You see, the Jews could be quite cruel to one another.

Values, whether moral or religious, were clearly interpreted differently by different groups and individuals within the Jewish community. As we shall see, the collection contains many examples of cruelty between Jews but also numerous acts of kindness, including those shown to Mrs. Bobker by her relatives and close neighbours. Neither of these conforms to a clear pattern, suggesting that people did not consciously navigate their lives in accordance with such values but rather acted instinctively and based on their personal circumstances and relationships. The concept of overarching values is especially complicated when applied to the activities of the elite. Gerry Black is not unusual among historians in providing an impassioned defence of the elite and their philanthropic networks. Unable to completely dismiss their lack of genuine altruism and the self-serving nature of their work he concluded that regardless of the motives they met the needs of the community. This thesis will demonstrate repeatedly the elite’s lack of comprehension of what constituted the needs of the community.

The aim here is not to dismiss Livshin’s definition of community entirely, but rather problematize it. Reflecting on developments of historiography in general Adrian Gregory wrote: “We should abandon History with a capital ‘H’ and accept that there

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44 This also happened in London, see also Jerry White, Rothschild Buildings (London, 2003), pp. 174-175
45 Martin Bobker J43, Track 2
are always multiple and competing histories which do bear a relationship to what happened but which can never be entirely transparent in their relationship to the past.” The same could be said of community in Manchester, which was experienced and understood differently by different groups and also individuals. Aware of the difficulties of providing an accurate definition, the following section will nevertheless attempt to outline some key features of the Jewish community, derived from oral testimony.

1.3.1.4. Defining the Manchester Jewish community

As a practical definition by which to begin the project, the collective term ‘community’ can be said to include anyone who identified as Jewish and who considered themselves to be a member of the community. As Alderman and Williams correctly realised, only such a broad and inclusive definition can capture the diversity of Jewish identities and lead to a more inclusive account of history that can challenge the notion of communal consensus as an elite construct. When considering conformity and nonconformity, however, one must speak of ‘communities’. The Manchester Jewish community consisted of many sub-communities, their membership determined by levels of religious orthodoxy, socio-economic factors, locality, occupation, age, individuals’ aspirations as well as sentimental factors such as familial bonds. Some of these sub-communities were clearly defined, such as those determined by membership of a specific synagogue, while others had more flexible boundaries, such as neighbourhood groups of children. One could simultaneously belong to several groups, either by default or by choice. Whilst it is possible to speak of a certain ‘kinship’ among members of specific sub-communities, based on shared values and social norms, one can never truly determine to what extent these factors influenced individuals’ behaviour, in the words of Yaakov Wise: “it does not follow that one knows the norms applied to actual behaviour of individuals, much less the extent to which behaviour conforms to the norms”.

48 Wise, ‘The Establishment of Ultra-Orthodoxy in Manchester’, pp.43-44
Social norms are understood here as generally accepted behaviours within each group. In some groups these norms are clearly defined and understood by all members. For example, within the ultra-orthodox community, this could include Sabbath observance or a specific set of rules stipulating the behaviour expected of its members in the face of missionary activities. In other sub-communities, accepted social norms were more instinctive and flexible. One could, for instance, consider children growing up in Red Bank and Strangeways as a sub-community, united by confusion about their religious and cultural identity, which was so different to that of their parents. Children developed their emerging dual identities in different ways, drawing upon their attachments to other sub-groups, such as families, school, leisure networks and religious institutions. It was, for instance, common for groups of teenage boys to go out together in the interwar period, seeking relationships with non-Jewish girls. Such dalliances, some of which became serious, were accepted as a norm by their age group, but intermarriage was not. In this way the boys created their own rules, compatible with their identity as young Mancunians, but at the same time conformed to the values of their parents.

The twofold role of each sub-community was to (a) to instil a sense of identity it its members and (b) to generate values and social norms to be shared by its members and act as sources of conformity. Certain social norms were shared across the entire communal spectrum but this should not be mistaken for an expression of unity since various motives and responses to deviance from these existed. One example is the attitude to crime, the subject of chapter 2. An interesting comparison can be made between Louis Rothschild, arrested in 1911 for receiving stolen goods and William Aronsberg, tried for a breach of promise in 1893. After his release from prison Louis established a successful barber shop in Lord Street, Red Bank, and became a family man and valued member of his community and synagogue. His transgression most likely did not go unnoticed, but it did not result in ostracism or otherwise disadvantage his position in the community. In contrast, Aronsberg, whose story will be discussed in greater length later, was rejected by members of the elite

49 Policeman’ notebook dated 1911, Greater Manchester Police Museum
50 Elizabeth Rothschild JT 22, T1 S2
following his trial and died in self-imposed exile.\(^{51}\) No sub-community endorsed crime, of course, but the elite was particularly sensitive to anyone and anything that could have a negative effect on the image of the community and reacted accordingly. When it came to intermarriage, the situation was reversed. Though it was not particularly prevalent or welcomed in any of the sub-groups, the elite tended to overlook the issue, probably due to their extensive interactions with gentile society. There were also matters on which the sub-communities were divided. The elite, for instance, felt very strongly about proving that there were “no better Englishmen in England than the Jews”, manifested through promoting patriotism and opposing pacifism.\(^{52}\) In contrast, the immigrant community, many of whom still spoke no English when the First World War broke out, saw it not as an opportunity to prove their loyalty to Britain but one which allowed them to improve their own situation by taking advantage of war-time economy. In essence, even if different sub-communities agreed on what constituted nonconformity and ascribed it negative value, the practical implication of this ‘negative value’ differed, thus undermining the idea of a communal consensus.

One factor that complicates attempts to provide a clear and concise definition is the changing nature of the community, its values and social norms. The 1880 Manchester Jewish ‘community’ was demographically, religiously, socially and organisationally very different from the 1945 community. A good example of this change is the attitude to Sabbath observance. While in 1880 strict Sabbath observance was the norm within the immigrant community, by 1945 it had become acceptable to work on Saturdays. Typically, change was seen as a departure from tradition caused by external factors, such as assimilation, but this was not always the case. Changes were the result of both internal and external factors and often the two were closely linked. One such example is the emergence of Machzikei Hadass, the community’s ultra-orthodox element, in the 1920s, viewed by the leadership as “a threat to the community’s internal unity and external image”.\(^{53}\) The group, whose history has been documented by Wise, formed a ‘haredi version’ of Chaim

\(^{51}\) See also Williams, ‘Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, p. 80  
\(^{52}\) Ibid, p.75  
\(^{53}\) Bill Williams, Sir Sidney Hamburger and Manchester Jewry (London, 1999), p.33
Bermant’s ‘cousinhood’ by marrying within tight social circles, namely those of the Heilpern, Halpern and Reich families, in order to preserve the group’s core values and networks.\footnote{Wise, ‘The Establishment of Ultra-Orthodoxy in Manchester’, pp.43-44} Williams viewed this development as a response to Anglicisation and the subsequent acculturation of the community.\footnote{Williams, Jewish Manchester, p.125} It is also possible, however, to view this development as emerging directly from the within the community, which never completely lost its Chassidic element. Attempts to preserve strict orthodoxy, though often poorly documented, tended to accompany acculturation, rather than to emerge in response to it. The establishment of the Talmud Torah in Red Bank in 1879, for instance, represented an early attempt at preserving the tradition of Jewish religious learning but was compromised under the anglicising influence of the two Dr. Slotkis (first Israel and later his son Judah) and was rejected by the ultra-orthodox members of the community.\footnote{See also I.W. Slotki, Seventy Years of Hebrew Education (Manchester, 1950) also in Judah Slotki JC, 16 July 1926} The Manchester Yeshiva, established in 1911 and poorly attended until the 1930s, was another such attempt to preserve religious traditions.\footnote{Sydney Needoff JT34, T1 S1}

In many instances, the values and social norms to which individuals subscribed remained unchanged even as their lifestyle altered. One example of this appears in the interview with a local politician, Sydney Needoff. Both Sydney and his father subscribed to traditional orthodoxy but the generational gap between them resulted in their memberships of different synagogues deemed better suited to their self-perceived social identities. English-born and university-educated Sydney joined the Higher Broughton synagogue on Duncan Street, considered ‘a silk hat shul’ and entirely lacking working class members. His father remained a member at Harris Street shul, where he felt at home among “the working class type of people”.\footnote{JC, 16 July 1926}

### 1.3.2. Sources of conformity and nonconformity

The lack of a precise definition of community inevitably leads to difficulty in defining nonconformity. Livshin identified three sources of conformity: (a) internal
sources arising from religious beliefs; (b) external sources, defined as desire to abide by the laws of wider society; (c) a response to hostile environment, either experienced directly or born out of shared history of persecution. Nonconformity is thus defined as deviation from social norms and values implicit in the three categories.\(^{59}\)

The three sources are often easily discernible when applied to individual case studies, but to classify conformity and nonconformity in this way presupposes clarity and consensus as to what constitutes social norms, which did not always exist. Such a definition depicts nonconformists as divorced from the values of their community when, in reality, nonconformity was more nuanced than that. It was possible, for instance, to significantly deviate from some communal norms but still feel a strong overall sense of alignment with the community. This can be observed in examples of people who married-out but retained Jewish identities and practice, sometimes raising their children in faith – some of whom will be discussed in chapter 3. Such a definition also does not recognise those who conformed for reasons other than identification with social norms and values. An example of this would be the Jewish person who married within the faith merely out of personal respect for their parents. To broaden Livshin’s definition, the following section outlines two additional key factors which acted as both sources of conformity and a measure of nonconformity.

### 1.3.2.1. Family

The single greatest source of conformity is the family. This has been recognised by sociologists since the first surveys of the community were conducted at the end of the 19th century, yet historians have been mostly dismissive of the family unit, quoting lack of sources as the reason for such an omission.\(^{60}\) When Beatrice Potter conducted her enquiry into the fast-growing Jewish communities of the East End, she praised the Jewish family values that gave the community its distinct nature.\(^{61}\)

\(^{59}\) Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, pp. 33-34
The family was also central to Russell and Lewis’ *The Jew in London* (1901), an early attempt at the social history of British Jews, which claimed not only that “the beauty of Jewish home life always struck the outside observer,” but also that it was directly responsible for continuity of the community and helped to limit the impact of assimilation.\(^62\)

The family acted as a source of conformity in two ways. Firstly, it gave individuals a sense of identity. Identity, in this context, is tied with language, level of religious orthodoxy, culture and tradition, social network and membership of institutions such as *cheder* or synagogue chosen by parents to reflect their values. Some children identified with their parents’ values and accepted them as their own, some accepted them but redefined them, whilst others rejected them altogether. Most families were held together by bonds that outweighed wider social norms and, as such, displayed greater flexibility in their attitude to nonconformity than be observed in the ‘community’. In this way, for instance, families could accept their children who married out, even if they disapproved, as will be discussed in chapter 4.

Familial relationships were complex and not one sided, as can be seen in the context of political ideology. One particular feature of political nonconformity was its lateral spread among siblings.\(^63\) Whilst parents generally instilled or imposed values on their children, sometimes this role was reversed. It was, for instance, typical of the socially and economically aspiring families, described as the alrightniks, for the oldest son, English-born and educated, to be seen as the head of the family and in charge of business affairs which sometimes caused a shift in how social norms were interpreted. An example of this was the serious discrimination of marriage partners based on their social standing where previous generations prioritised religious observance. In more extreme and relatively rare examples, parents who had become lax not only in observance but in belief, welcomed their children’s rejection of religious values as it allowed them greater freedom.

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The second function of family was to regulate the behaviour of its members. Those individuals who found conformity challenging most often considered the implications for their family rather than community before making difficult decisions. It was common to speak of the ostracism of nonconformists from their communities, such as pacifists and those who married-out, but whilst they inspired gossip they mostly remained living in the midst of the community. Those who moved away tended to do so after rejection from their families. The approach adopted here is to regard the family unit as a microcosm of the community, and to see it as providing useful insights into both the way conformity was encouraged and the way nonconformity was dealt with. At the same time, each family was different and functioned as the most intimate sub-community.

1.3.2.2. Location

The second important source of conformity arises from shared space, which can be observed both in those communities formed because their members so desired it, and in those whose members found themselves living in a Jewish area by default. One of the earliest studies of Manchester’s immigrant communities made a clear distinction between Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, which had different origins and formed separate communities.64 Although initially the groups settled in Cheetham Hill and worshipped together at the Great Synagogue, their differences became increasingly apparent when elite families relocated to South Manchester forming two distinctive and geographically separate communities. The importance of location can first be observed in the decision of the elites to leave North Manchester. It is possible that the move was motivated by desire for fresh air, improved transport facilities and the distinctly intellectual atmosphere of the area but it was inevitably hastened by the arrival of impoverished immigrants with whom the elite did not want to be associated.65

In South Manchester the Ashkenazi elite blended well with the extant German

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enclave that had formed around Elizabeth Gaskell’s home in Plymouth Grove, previously occupied by a Jewish cotton merchant Henry Micholls. Mrs. Gaskell was remembered as a friend by several interviewees in the MJM collection, with mentions of German Jews equally permeating letters of the Gaskell family. For instance, in one of her letters Meta Gaskell described Georgina Behrens, the daughter of Solomon Behrens and a near neighbour, as “a Jewess but in spirit & life in devotion & unselfishness truly Christian”. Although in marriage the German Jewish elites remained insular, generally marrying within their tight social circle, socially they integrated into Manchester’s middle-classes, which had profound consequences for the development of their social norms and values and turned them into ‘well-ordered, educated, peaceable, law-abiding and respectable’ individuals ‘liberal in principle and purse’.

The Sephardi elites also chose leafy South Manchester as their home, but, perhaps influenced by their early interactions with the Ashkenazim through the Great Synagogue, they kept their distance from the “swamp of German ocean” filled with “the noisy German shopkeepers and Eastern European entrepreneurs” and settled in Didsbury. Where the German Jewish elite felt the need to prove their ability to assimilate, either through fear of antisemitism or genuine affinity with British values, Sephardi Jews felt no such compulsion and remained outwardly Jewish. Although the majority were new arrivals in Manchester “their congregations projected the aura of the entrenched Anglo-Jewish-Portuguese Jews who were the pioneers of Jewish resettlement in England.” This air of snobbery was intensified when directed towards the immigrant community in North Manchester. Jack Cohen, who worked for a kosher butcher based in Cheetham Hill and delivered “great big baskets” to the houses of “rich Didsbury Jews”, never came into direct contact with them. Instead, he was expected to use the side door and deal with their servants.

67 Margaret Langdon J143, T1 S2 and sisters Aronovitch J10, T1 S1
68 Irene Wiltshire (ed.), Letters of Mrs. Gaskell’s Daughters (Penrith, 2012), p.156
69 Williams, ‘Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, p.75
70 Williams, The Making of Manchester Jewry, pp.319-326 also in Basil Jeuda JT95, T1 S1
71 Walter P. Zenner, A Global Community: Jews from Aleppo, Syria (Detroit, 2000), p.71
72 Jack Cohen J63, T1 S2
commentator observed that “you needed a passport to go from the north to the south”.⁷³ Not only were Sephardi Jews not as concerned with their wider community, they did not share the German elite’s desire to instil their values into the immigrant Jews of Strangeways and Red Bank with whom they felt little affinity. The Sephardi community remained socially insular and the deliberate spatial arrangement of the community helped them to retain a high level of social, cultural and religious cohesion, shaping their social norms and values.⁷⁴

Values and social norms similarly enforced by shared space could be found in Red Bank and surrounding areas despite the many different communities that settled there. On the one hand the immigrant community was deeply divided; Austrian and German immigrants looked down on those from Russia, Ukrainians looked down on Galitzians and so on.⁷⁵ The emerging ultra-orthodox community was dismissive of the anglicised Talmud Torah and the equally, the Manchester Yeshiva was considered backward by the majority of the community. People were divided by their aspirations, some meekly accepting their poverty, others rebelling against it. But on the other hand, shared space also created a distinctly Jewish environment, which helped instil a sense of identity and conformity. People were surrounded by Jewish shops, schools and leisure institutions, often engaging with them because of their availability and out of habit. In this way, atheist communist families still sent their children to the JLB and kept kosher homes.⁷⁶ The role of shared space, at once dividing and uniting the community is best expressed by one interviewee:

"My mother said ‘you think you're better than anybody in this street, well you’re not, we’re all struggling for a living’. I didn't like their homes, I didn't like their dirt, I didn't like homes without baths, I didn't like our poorness I didn't like anything. I used to beg my mother to leave, at the time when she could afford to leave, she wouldn’t. She wanted to go into Jewish shops, Jewish grocery shops, Jewish fruit shops. She wanted to be with her own. I can't explain - I can't express it properly."⁷⁷

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⁷³ Ibid.
⁷⁴ Basil Jeuda JT95, T1S1
⁷⁵ Dayan Golditch J99, T1 S1, Dinah McCormick J 279, T1S2
⁷⁶ Mick Jenkins J130
⁷⁷ Dinah McCormick J279, T1S2
As Jerry White has argued, certain divisions, such as those based on nationality, decreased over time, while others, like class consciousness, increased and eventually eroded the community. Over time, as Jews moved out of Red Bank and Strangeways, they settled into very distinct geographical communities, much like the elites had done a century earlier. Red Bank became a Jewish area out of convenience, being located close to Victoria Station and providing cheap accommodation, and grew because new arrivals came to join their families and felt more comfortable in a Yiddish speaking environment. New communities which started to emerge in the 1930s were often purpose-built by groups of people who related to one another, based on very specific economic and social requirements and self-identifications. In many cases such developments were driven by young couples who shared the values by which they intended to bring up their children. Often this manifested itself in religious, educational and social organisations which emerged in such areas and which enforced this sense of conformity and shared values.

1.3.3. Chapter outline and a brief historiography

This thesis will focus on four key areas of nonconformity: crime, political radicalism, intermarriage and disability and illness. Focusing on such a broad range of topics has its limitations but it also helps avoid the temptation to generalise behaviour too quickly, since each type of nonconformity displays unique features, and responses to them tend to present an impression of variety within the community, or even ‘communities’. In Britain, such areas of Jewish history remain largely overlooked, as will become evident in the course of this thesis. Little could be added to the excellent general Anglo-Jewish historiographies outlined by Kushner & Ewence and Livshin. Instead, the following section will outline the key aims of each chapter as well as the key sources used for their study.

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78 Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings*, pp.91-95
79 See also Miriam Field JT10, Sidney Hamburger JT 2, T1S2, T2S1, Liz Taylor MANJM 2012.5.24 and Jack Webb JT33, T1, T2, T3
Chapter 2 will focus on crime as the most obvious and easily identifiable type of nonconformity. It will focus on elite responses to crime and argue that Manchester’s attempts to ward off prostitution were born out the elite’s desire to resemble the organisational structure of London rather than as a response to genuine local problems. The Trades Advisory Council was established on the eve of the Second World War to regulate Jewish tradesmen and commercial crimes but, rather than concerning itself with promoting correct behaviour (e.g. conformity), its primary policy was to conceal crime from the public eye. Edward Bristow’s and Lloyd Gartner’s studies of prostitution remain the most comprehensive sources for the study of white slave traffic to date, but more recent studies such as those by Lara Marks, placed in the context of women’s experiences, and Tony Kushner, contextualising prostitution in the refugee experience, challenge deeply rooted narratives constructed around entrapment and recue.81 The Trades Advisory Council represents an underused source, mentioned only briefly by David Cesarani and Geoffrey Alderman, but its minutes give an intimate insight into the inner anxieties and often forceful methods of the leadership.82 Although their criminal nature is debatable, oral testimony offers an interesting insight into youth gangs, a little-studied element of Manchester’s Jewish history. It captures the struggles of English-born children of immigrants to come to terms with their identity and sense of values. On the street, the children and youths pushed boundaries and explored their emerging Mancunian identities, mostly unbeknownst to their families and communal leaders.

Chapter 3 will focus on political radicals, namely socialists, pacifists and familial and communal responses to them. Historians typically focus on factors which led to Jewish involvement in radical politics in an effort to place its origins either directly within the Jewish community or as emerging from without. The two differing approaches have been championed by Lloyd Gartner and Bill Williams in the 1960s

and 1970s and continue to be relevant. Historians such as Joe Buckman and Cyril Pearce have provided regional context that contributed to the growth of radical politics in Leeds and Huddersfield.\(^83\) Four unusually rich oral testimonies will be used to demonstrate the variety of motivations and responses to political radicalism and argue against overreliance on patterns of behaviour. This chapter will closely mirror Livshin’s work on political nonconformity within the Manchester Jewish community but deviate from its conclusion by arguing not only that the community did not respond universally negatively to its radicals, but that to understand the community in terms of such consensus provides a narrow and elite driven understanding of it.

Chapter 4 will highlight the importance of the family unit in understanding how social norms were defined and manifested both as sources conformity and responses to nonconformity. Examples of intramarrige in oral testimony, that is marriage between two Jews from different and sometimes incompatible sub-communities, will be used to argue that the omnipresent fear of out-marriage has been vastly exaggerated by historians and sociologists. Todd Endelman studied intermarriage in the context of radical assimilation, highlighting desire for socio-political assimilation and reluctant assimilation through isolation or social and economic decline as key factors attributing to intermarriage.\(^84\) Bill Williams was less concerned with factors that led to intermarriage and focused instead on the ostracism such couples faced from their communities and families.\(^85\) Paul Spickard combined the two themes in his study of Jewish intermarriage in America.\(^86\) Oral testimony will be used to explore whether this rare consensus translated into practical familial and communal responses to intermarried couples in the form of ostracism and the extent to which assimilation led to intermarriage. This chapter will also highlight the nuances of nonconformity by exploring the extent to which ‘conformity’ and ‘nonconformity’


\(^{84}\) Such as in Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews on Georgian England 1714-1830* (Philadelphia, 1979) and *Radical Assimilation*

\(^{85}\) Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’ (unpublished chapter), p.3

indicate either alignment with or detachment from communal values and social norms.

Chapter 5 will focus on the experiences of those suffering from mental health issues and physical disabilities captured in the case books of the Prestwich Asylum in Manchester and in oral testimony. It will focus first on the leadership’s response to those issues, arguing that it was both inadequate and indicative of the elite’s values: charity, rather than “culturally inbred”, as Stephen Brook had suggested, was a tool to correct behaviour and improve the public image of the community. Asylum inmates, either suffering from genuine mental health issues, physical and learning disabilities as well as social deviants, became casualties of the elite’s (and in some instances also their families’) moral judgement. Oral testimony provides a rather more nuanced impression of disability and disease and familial and communal responses to them, capturing both fears and anxieties but also genuine support networks that formed in crises. No substantial study has supplemented initial surveys of Jews in provincial lunatic asylums compiled by Leonard Smith and Kenneth Collins nearly twenty years ago. Rainer Liedtke’s comparative study of welfare organisations in the Jewish communities of Manchester and Hamburg provides an excellent overview of social care in the community but fails to fully address healthcare. Gerry Black remains the most consistent historian focusing on health care in the community.

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1. The importance of oral testimony

The availability of elite sources and historians’ overreliance on them has created a distorted impression of the Jewish community, from which nonconformists are largely excluded. Such sources do not necessarily represent, as has been argued by

90 Black, ‘Health and medical care’
Williams and Livshin, conscious efforts to hide nonconformity or to deny its existence but they do nevertheless create a very one-dimensional impression of the community, and, by extension of its nonconformists.\(^91\) One way in which this can be observed is in the example of children of immigrants born in Manchester. Elite sources record the efforts of the Jews School to eradicate Yiddish and transform immigrant children into English Jews, to instil a sense of patriotism through the membership of the JLB and reinvent religious orthodoxy so that it would not clash with ‘modernity’, as practiced by the Talmud Torah.\(^92\) Since the majority of the children born in the immigrant community attended either one or more of the above institutions, the overall impression is that the majority either identified with elite values or conformed to them. Such sources do not take into account the everyday lives of the children and their intimate interactions with their environment and, as such, fail to see small acts of nonconformity, like membership of youth gangs, illicit dating or attending football matches on Sabbath. In such an apparently ‘conforming majority’, nonconformity is only noticeable in the most extreme forms, such as criminality.

To understand how the community, or ‘communities’, constructed their sense of self-identity, values and norms and how they responded to various instances of nonconformity in their midst, one must look beyond elite sources. For this reason, oral history represents not only an ideal, but an essential source. Oral testimony places individuals in the intimate setting of their families, friendship groups and wider communities and captures how they saw the community and their place within it. Although this project is not about the merits of using oral history, the following section will briefly outline some key problems and advantages of working with oral testimony, focusing specifically on the MJM oral testimony collection.\(^93\)

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\(^{91}\) Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 3 and Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, p. 17

\(^{92}\) Williams, \textit{Sir Sidney Hamburger}, p.33

1.4.2. About the collection

A large proportion of the MJM oral testimony collection was recorded in the 1970s by the Jewish History Unit of the Manchester Local Studies Department. The unit, led by Bill Williams, embodied the ethos and methods of the Oral History Society, led by Paul Thompson, considered the pioneer of oral history in Britain, and Raphael Samuel’s History Workshop Movement, which championed experiences of ordinary people over traditional hierarchies.94 In this way, the recordings used a life-story format, proposed by Thompson, and focused on everyday experiences of ordinary people, along with members of the elite.95

The original collection contained over 300 interviews, ranging in length from 1 to 14 hours. Additional interviews were conducted over time, notably those with refugees from Nazism recorded by Williams in the early 2000s and the large collection of interviews with members of the South Manchester Sephardi, community recorded by its unofficial historian Basil Jeuda. Today the collection contains around 800 interviews. The majority of the interviews are with Jewish people, although there are also some interviews with their non-Jewish neighbours, colleagues and spouses, and best cover the period between 1890 and 1950s. The collection’s main strengths are its diversity and consistently excellent interviewing technique displayed by Williams, Livshin, and Ricky Burman and its equal division of male and female interviewees.

Although efforts were made to represent all aspects of communal life this was not always possible and as a result the collection has some serious gaps. Some of these gaps stem from trends in wider society and stigma attached to, for instance, homosexuality, crime and disability. Other shortcomings stem from the exclusivity of certain sections of the community, such as its ultra-orthodox members who rarely consented to being interviewed. This project has highlighted a number of gaps in the collection and resulted in a collaborative project, overseen jointly by this author and

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95 Thompson, Voice of the Past, pp. 309-323
the MJM curator, which seeks to address these. The archive also suffers from poor cataloguing and incomplete digitisation. Another contribution of this project has been the digitisation of some 200 interviews, including the creation of standardised time-coded summaries for them.

It would be useful at this stage to focus briefly on theoretical aspects of working with oral history. Since the 1960s oral history has become a popular methodology among historians albeit one still occasionally treated with suspicion. Ronald Grele wrote at length about the criticisms aimed at oral history methodology, which loosely fall into three categories. The first two categories are concerned with interviewing techniques and research standards expected of oral historians and the third relates to the nature of oral testimonies. One could consider these three categories of complaint in the context of the MJM archive. The recording of the first MJM interviews predated the publication of Paul Thompson’s *Voice of the Past*, which contains what is widely upheld as the standard life-story interview guide. As a result, Williams and his team devised their own guide, which, whilst comparable to Thompson’s interview outline, contained themes specific to a study of a minority community with immigrant roots and which reflected Williams’ own interests, namely nonconformists with the community, especially political radicals and the class structure of the community. The interviewing technique is of particular interest here since, whilst not in accordance to the standard of training advocated by Grele, Williams’ approach became influential both for the writing of oral history theory and for the training of future generations of oral historians. Where in terms of content the MJM archive was innovative and has stood the test of time, its format is one of its greatest failings. More recent volumes on the theory of oral history spend considerable time describing technological advancements, such as the additions of video recordings and digital technologies which make interviews instantly accessible, the original MJM archive was recorded on reel-to-reel tape recorders and its conversion to cassette tapes has further compromised the sound quality. Although the archive is now in the process of digitisation, accessibility and sound quality continue to be a problem. Reflecting on the format in which oral testimonies are...

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96 The project ‘Extraordinary Voices’ initiated in March 2018 and is ongoing.
accessed, Penny Summerfield has argued that most historians prefer to work with transcripts, although she conceded these need to be used in conjunction with audio recordings.\textsuperscript{98} This preference for transcripts has been disputed by both Alessandro Portelli and Raphael Samuel who considered transcripts adulterated versions of spoken word.\textsuperscript{99} This study has relied exclusively on the original audio versions of the interviews.

The third category of criticism identified by Grele relates to the nature of oral testimony being coloured by issues of memory and subjectivity. The scepticism about the validity of oral evidence can at least partly be attributed to historians who use oral testimonies as anecdotal evidence without the necessary understanding of the theory. As Lynn Abrams observed, oral history is “controversial, exciting and endlessly promising” and one can easily understand the temptation a well-chosen quote can present to the historian.\textsuperscript{100} Such selective use of oral history is not necessarily problematic, but it becomes so when isolated quotes are taken out of context and used to construct an argument, as the case study of the Shaun Spidah gang will demonstrate in chapter 2. In defence of oral history Paul Thompson has consistently challenged the supposed objectivity of documentary sources on the one hand and offered specific examples of how the objectivity of oral sources can be at least partially verified on the other. This element of verification features in most specific studies based on oral history.\textsuperscript{101} This project has the disadvantage of working with an old archive where such verification is not always possible. Largely this is caused by the time passed since the interviews were recorded, which means that many interviewees have since died and the opportunity to ask further questions has been lost. Documenting nonconformity was not the primary purpose of the MJM interviews and, as such, instances were often overlooked. One obvious example of this presents itself in the study of illness and disability, frequently mentioned by interviewees in passing but rarely followed by more specific questions. Additional questions might have enhanced understanding of the topic, introduced other possible

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{98} Penny Summerfield, ‘Oral History as a research Method’, p. 52
  \item \textsuperscript{100} Lynn Abrams, Oral History Theory, p.1
  \item \textsuperscript{101} See also Alessandro Portelli, \textit{The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories} (New York, 1991) and Penny Summerfield, ‘Oral History as a research Method’
\end{itemize}
interviewees or in some instances led to the discovery of photographic or documentary evidence. Despite the obvious shortcomings, the MJM archive remains a rich and exciting source for the study of nonconformity. Throughout this thesis oral testimonies are used in two ways: Firstly, in the absence of additional sources they are cautiously used as part of a fact-finding mission. In this way one learns about the existence of youth gangs, their purpose and the role they played in individuals’ lives but at the same time, without corroborating evidence from, say, newspapers, one hesitates to commit to placing these within an exact time-frame even when dates are offered. Secondly, the interviews are used to determine individuals’ understanding of the community, which differ even among close friends and family members and where attempts at verification would defeat the primary purpose of the exercise. For this reason the subjective nature of memory, which does not always capture what had actually happened but “what (people) wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” is not generally problematic in the context of this thesis.102 The aim is not to create a chronological outline of nonconformity but rather represent the fluidity of the many communities based on individual experiences, internal and external factors and the community’s interactions with their wider environment. It accepts that history was experienced differently by individuals.

1.4.3. Individual themes

Instances of nonconformity captured in the MJM collection are not restricted to those presented in the following chapters. The limitations of a PhD thesis meant two key factors were considered when deciding on which themes to include: (a) the availability of sources and (b) the extent to which each theme would contribute to the understanding of community and its dynamics. As to the first factor, Williams and Livshin, who recorded the majority of the interviews, had differing opinions on the collection’s strengths. Whilst Livshin considered it “weak in its coverage of certain aspects of nonconformity, such as crime and immorality”, Williams championed those topics and considered the evidence “ample”.103 Their views can at least

102 Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, pp.45-58
103 Livshin ‘Nonconformity’ p. 45
partially be attributed to their differing approaches to conducting interviews; Livshin tended not to ask about certain types of nonconformity whilst Williams often pressed people hard to gain a greater understanding of ‘communal vices’. After an extensive survey of the collection it is possible to conclude that they were both correct. The evidence is indeed ample, but due to inconsistent cataloguing not always easy to find. Over thirty interviews discuss Jewish youth gangs but a search of the museum’s catalogue does not bring up a single one of those and the same can be said for instances of disability, crime and pacifism. But finding relevant material is only one of the difficulties of this project. The inconsistency of the evidence makes a chronological study of any one particular topic problematic. Secondly, considering the importance of each topic for understanding the ‘community’ outside of preconceived patters, the following section will outline key themes and possible ways to expand these.

The topics in this thesis were chosen to represent different aspects of Jewish experience, through different periods of time, of both men and women, but also aimed to showcase previously unused elements of the MJM collection. Chapter 2 focuses on the dynamic between the elite/leadership and the immigrant community, through the study of crime. Youth gangs capture an important struggle of children and young people for identity, largely unbeknown to their parents and communal leaders. This chapter could be expanded by the inclusion of gambling, which accounted for the majority of newspaper reports of crime featuring Jews and is well represented in the MJM archive but remains largely overlooked by historians.

Chapter 3 focuses on nonconformity arising from differing ideologies, captured in interviews with political radicals and pacifists. The topic raises concerns about the way historians consider acts of nonconformity in isolation from other elements of individuals’ lives. Similar divisions based on ideology could be captured in the study of Zionism, the Reform Movement and ultra-orthodox groups, which were, in certain times, considered deeply deviant from the communal mainstream.

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104 Ibid.
Chapter 4 focuses on the intimate world of the family unit, the main feature of interviews relating to marriage and intermarriage. In the context of this chapter, nonconformity is premeditated and executed with full awareness of its possible consequence, yet lacks the ideological conviction of radicals and also the encouragement of another kind of community (such as the Communist Party). The link between family and (non)conformity could be explored further through the study of wife desertion, motherhood and persons who remained unmarried.

Chapter 5 returns to the dynamic between the communal leadership and the immigrant community in the context of illness and disability, and draws into the mix the family unit. It is the only type of nonconformity in this thesis which completely lacked the element of choice. It could be further expanded by a more general study of health and medical care in the community.

1.4.4. Sociological approaches to the study of nonconformity

This thesis has been conceived as a historical study, rather than a sociological one, although, since it is primarily concerned with a community and with its sense of self-constructed identity and social norms, there is an obvious overlap in terms of subject matter. Sociologists, like historians, often rely upon oral testimony as a research method and a window into the inner workings of a community, although the way in which they conduct and utilise interviews often differs. This difference prevented a greater engagement with sociological theory throughout this study. In *The Voice of the Past* Paul Thompson listed numerous instances in which sociologists relied on life-stories of individuals to enhance the understanding of specific sections of society, such as immigrant groups and young delinquents but he also stressed sociologists’ emphasis on statistical analyses and abstract general theory. In an attempt to explain how societies function and develop their sense of social norms, sociologists focus on patterns of behaviour, often forgoing the lengthy process of recording life story interviews generally favoured by historians in favour of more targeted questions. The MJM oral testimony collection, upon which this thesis is based, consists exclusively of detailed life stories, many of which are ambiguous in

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their attitude to nonconformity and thus need to be read against the grain. Individuals’ personal experiences are often at odds with what they consider to be ‘communal attitudes’, capturing varied and sometimes contrasting sets of social norms in individual sub-communities and both varied and unpredictable responses to nonconformity. The broad variety of topics discussed in this thesis and the apparent lack of universal social norms hinder any attempts to statistically analyse individuals’ behaviour or derive a neat theoretical model of nonconformity. Methodological differences between sociologists and historians are, however, only one part of the problem. Despite considerable attempts to engage with existing sociological models, most did not prove compatible in terms of their a priori assumptions, since this study does not ascribe nonconformity exclusively negative value, nor does it necessarily see nonconformity as exception from the norm which warrants punishment. Instead, this thesis embraces ambiguity and variety and treats nonconformity not as separate or marginal from the mainstream but as a natural and essential part of it.

Sociological models of nonconformity not only focus on hypothetical communities, of course, but also on more concrete examples such as James Scott’s famous study *Weapons of the Weak*, based on a small Malay community.\(^{107}\) This particular example might help clarify the problematic differences between historical and sociological approaches to the study of nonconformity. There are a number of parallels between Scott’s study that might have made it useful to the present project, including the use of life stories and the emphasis on religion and class divisions in society. Scott’s theory of nonconformity, which he terms ‘resistance’, differentiates between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ resistance as individuals’ protests against social norms presented to them by the elite. He found that only a few were prepared to take an active stance against such norms and as a result became ‘men without shame’, rejected by their otherwise orderly and close-knit community.\(^{108}\) Passive resistance, which enabled individuals to express their dissatisfaction without compromising their place in the community, was rather more widespread, taking the form of false compliance, slander, sabotage and feigned compliance among other methods.


\(^{108}\) Ibid, p.11
While many of the insights of Scott’s study could be applied to the case of Manchester, there are also some significant differences that end up being more telling. The first relates to the community chosen by Scott, which is small and relatively homogenous, lacking the sort of duality present in every stratum of the Manchester Jewish community where even its leaders were not autonomous but conformed to both external pressures from wider society and internal pressures from London’s centralised leadership. Scott’s ‘men without shame’ stand as isolated figures that have no parallels in their community making it difficult to challenge the negative quality he ascribes them. In Manchester, almost every type of nonconformity appears in multiple shades, often generating different responses from families, neighbourhoods and the wider community. More complicated still is Scott’s theory of nonconformity, which he considers as a deliberate, thought-out protest. As the following chapters will show, nonconformity could just as easily be thought of as being imposed upon an individual such as in cases of illness and disability. Shame, marginalisation and ostracism, whilst sometimes spoken of, were rarely the outcome even for those Jews whose actions could be interpreted as active resistance. And lastly, Scott’s study is restricted to an 18 month period during which he lived with the community and as a result both community and nonconformity appear static, unlike the Jewish community in Manchester whose life stories capture much longer term and more significant change and transition.

Whilst historians’ engagement with nonconformity is relatively recent, sociologists have long been interested in the topic, generating a number of influential studies. The father of sociology, Emile Durkheim, was particularly interested in the consensus within a community which gave it an inner cohesion and a sense of generally agreed social norms, which is obviously relevant to the current project.109 Likewise, the narrow focus here on Manchester’s Jewish population can find parallels with the interest in locality and religion in the findings of Kim Knott’s Community Religions Project, established in Leeds in 1976, to study religious groups in the context of shared space; central to Knott’s research was the interaction

of a community with its environment. One of the most important contributions that this study will make, namely, stressing the diversity and flexibility within the Jewish community, continues to feature as a primary focus of recent sociological studies, such as that by Howard Becker, for whom social norms exist but are subject to change based on how the community responds to its deviants. Many other studies with overlapping concerns could have been adduced, in which special consideration was given to the effect that shared space has on individuals, the way elite social norms were imposed on the immigrant community, or the way they changed over time and based on responses of individual families, and so on. However, none of the models of community outlined by sociologists could be applied to the Manchester Jewish community indiscriminately. Durkheim and Becker spoke of theoretical communities, not specific ones whose individuals do not always comply with roles and patterns of behaviour identified by sociologists, others focused on native, not immigrant, communities or communities studied in narrow time frames. Although new interviews have been recorded for this thesis, it is largely based around an old archive of which new questions are being asked and not always answered. Any conclusions reached in this thesis are speculative in the sense that everyone experienced the community differently. To attempt to sort individuals’ behaviour according to patterns and social roles observed in other communities, or hypothetical communities, would be to do injustice to the large and varied MJM collection, the aim with which it was recorded, and also to the individuality of personalities and life stories which it contains.

1.4.5. A note on chronology

Although attempts have been made to organise sources within each chapter chronologically, the overall structure of this thesis remains thematic rather than chronological. Instead of an unbroken, comprehensive chronological account of one type of nonconformity, different and often contrasting motives and responses to nonconformity are explored in a more impressionistic account, associated with

general periods rather than precise dates. This is not so much a deliberate attempt to
discount the benefits of a chronological approach, but is rather a matter of necessity
imposed by paucity of sources available for the study of Jewish nonconformity.
Many topics considered in this thesis remain severely underrepresented in Anglo-
Jewish historiography and as such this study relies heavily on primary sources, such
as oral testimonies and other archival records. Oral testimonies represent an ideal
source for the study of nonconformity but they do not lend themselves to strict
chronological interrogation, since the witness often could not provide a date even if
they wished to, with the result that a tapestry of testimony tends to create frustrating
gaps that are especially difficult to patch with corroborating and contextual
information from other sources, and the issues are exacerbated by use of an old oral
testimony archive such as the MJM. It so happens that chronological gaps also
characterise some of the archival records used in this thesis, such as the Trades
Advisory Council minutes and the Prestwich Asylum case books, which can only be
studied in narrow time-frames but contain valuable and often previously unexplored
insights into the Jewish community which are otherwise out of historians’ reach. The
broad variety of topics covered in this thesis and the overall emphasis on the nature
of the Jewish community seeks to overcome some of the difficulties arising from
inconsistent chronology.
2. Crime & Communal Response

2.1. Introduction

Jewish criminals can be found in police records, both Jewish and non-Jewish press and to a lesser extent in oral testimonies. Neither source is comprehensive or particularly suited to a detailed and/or chronological interrogation. Instead, this chapter combines available sources and organises them thematically with emphasis on dual identities and reflections on how these were experienced by various Jewish communities in Manchester. The first two sections focus on two significant world events: the first, Jewish involvement in white slavery as a side effect of mass immigration, and the second, the growing antisemitism on the eve of the Second World War and accusations of Jewish exploitation of war-time economy which accompanied it. Each event generated a response from the leadership, namely the formation of the Jewish Association for Protection of Girls and Women and the Trades Advisory Council. Their records capture the struggles of the leadership to combine their values as Jews and as Englishmen but also as provincial leaders seeking independence from London’s centralised leadership. The final part of this chapter, based almost entirely on oral testimonies, focuses on Jewish children and teenagers engaged in local gangs and captures the tension between their dual identities as Jews and as Mancunians.

To attempt a statistical study of Jewish crime in Manchester, in the period 1880 to 1945, would likely yield disappointing results.\textsuperscript{112} The Jewish community, whilst not immune to criminality, showed no particular proclivity for a specific type of crime, yet in a sense, it became its defining feature for some observers.\textsuperscript{113} As immigrant

\textsuperscript{112} This assertion is based on a survey of existing prison records, held at the Manchester Central Library and also the records of the Watch Committee held at the Greater Manchester Police Museum.

\textsuperscript{113} The roots of this reputation can be attributed to the mostly German Jewish immigrants arriving in Britain between 1750 and 1815, who formed the demographic foundations for Anglo-Jewry. Many of these were penniless itinerant pedlars who turned to charity and crime upon their arrival in Britain. For a detailed account see also Todd M. Endelman, \textit{The Jews of Britain} (London, 2002), pp. 41-46. The perception of Jews as criminals was also apparent in the memoirs of a Manchester detective Jerome Caminada. Although only one Jewish criminal, a distributor of pirated pictures, was mentioned as directly involved in crime, Jews were consistently referred to as ‘seedy’ and ‘disreputable’. Jerome Caminada, \textit{Twenty-five years of detective life, Vol.1} (Manchester, 1895), pp.
Jews formed large communities in industrial cities of Britain they were viewed with suspicion by the local population, their perceived criminality becoming a stereotype that was hard to overcome. Criminal activities of Jews in Manchester closely resembled those in other cities: petty theft, receiving of stolen goods, illicit gambling, commercial crime, broken marriage contracts and desertion of women, some casualties of the immigration period, others of the fickle heart.\(^\text{114}\) The very existence of crime, regardless of its nature and frequency, only served to fuel antisemitic tendencies and there is no doubt that, as Englander argued, the stereotype of Jewish criminals, based on petty criminals from the East End, contributed to the creation of the Alien Act in 1905, Europe’s first immigration legislation.\(^\text{115}\)

Crime defined how the Jewish community was viewed from the outside and further highlighted the socio-economic gap which existed between wealthy anglicised Jews, the elite, and the majority of the Jewish population, the immigrant communities. The elite sought to eradicate crime and improve the reputation of Jews through their involvement in philanthropy. This both affirmed their social standing in wider society and installed them as self-styled leaders of the Jewish community. This chapter will highlight the way in which Jewish philanthropy, often the only point contact between the two groups, underscored the lack of kinship and cohesion implied in the word ‘community’.

The aim of this chapter is to enhance our understanding of how the Jewish elite derived its sense of self-identity, on a local and national level. It will do so by considering two elite organisations, the Jewish Association for Protection of Girls and Women (JAPGW) and the Trades Advisory Council (TAC), both of which had provincial branches but were economically dependent upon the centralised London


leadership. Elite organisations are typically studied in the context of their interaction with the immigrant community, but they also reveal the anxieties of provincial leaders and their desire for recognition and equality with London’s leadership.

Oral history reveals another group of ‘quasi’ criminals amongst Jewish children, who, like their gentile counterparts, sought membership in street gangs and brushes with the police to relieve the drudgery of their every-day lives. Their stories capture the duality of their identity and are a testimony to the power of street culture: where the elite used coercion to produce respectable English Jews in a struggle to quash stereotypes, the street and poverty blurred boundaries and generated Jewish Mancunians.

2.2. Jewish leadership and its bid for communal control

Most pronounced Jewish response to accusations of crime came from the ranks of the elite and took the form of communal philanthropy. The JAPGW was set up in 1885 to combat white slavery which was rapidly spreading through the docks of London and other port cities, gaining notoriety as the ultimate ‘Jewish Vice’.116 The TAC was established on the eve of the Second World War to regulate Jewish trade and industry and help settle, if not refute, claims of fraud and opportunism so often levelled against Jewish traders. White slavery and commercial fraud are only two of the criminal accusations to which Jews were subjected, but they were very deeply rooted in the British mind-set and seen by the elite as most threatening to the consideration of Jews as good citizens.117 The JAPGW and the TAC represented direct yet differing ways in which the elite addressed such threats.

Although it is claimed that charity is an integral part of Jewish religious practice, most benevolent societies set up by the elite emerged from a wider context of Victorian philanthropy. Members of the elite, many of whom had previously been involved with Gentile charities, often appropriated their models for Jewish purposes,

117 Chapter 5 will address response to another stereotype: the racial ‘inferiority’ of Jews.
sometimes as blatantly as setting up their own committees and adding ‘Jewish’ to the existing name. In Manchester, the Jewish Sanitary Association was a prime example of this practice. Its founder members, Anna Simmons and Abigail Behrens, both acted as ‘Lady Visitors’ with the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association (MSSA), a Christian organisation aimed at helping poor women with domestic and maternal duties. Anna Simmons, wife of the minister of the Reform synagogue, was well known for her work with Christian charities, at one time even organising a Christmas tree and “woolly presents” for the poor children of Ancoats. This bold reproduction of Christian charities had its benefits; on an organisational level, Jewish charities were using a tried and tested framework and, on a social level, it proved their ability to look after their own and their compatibility with English way of life and values. It is perhaps telling that rather than developing the existing Jewish charity, Hebrew Sisters, the ‘lady visitors’ put their energies into setting up a new charity fulfilling the same function. Philanthropy bolstered the social standing of its patrons, both within their communities and without.

This section will provide an overview of the two organisations and their Manchester branches, within both national and local contexts. It seeks to examine the responses of the elite to criminal behaviour and to challenge the idea of a united elite, harmoniously working to protect and defend ‘the fair name of the Jew.’

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118 Good examples of this are Lawrence Cohen, *Care and Conflict, The story of the Jewish Orphanage at Norwood* (Bern, 2014), Kadish, *A Good Jew and a Good Englishman*, Marks, *Model Mothers* and Summers, *Christian and Jewish Women in Britain*, all of whom focus on different examples of local and national charities and their roots in gentile culture.

119 Later renamed Jewish Ladies Visiting Association (JLVA)

120 To an extent the relationship between Jewish and Christian charities was symbiotic. In Manchester, the MSSA supported the JLVA as it provided a welcome relief to its duties. Anna Simmons also managed to utilise her connections with Christian authorities to the benefit of the Jewish community. See also Anne Summers, *Christian and Jewish Women in Britain*, p. 56

121 See also Williams, ‘Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’

122 Mrs. Jacobson, when approached to volunteer for the JLVA, declined the offer “on the grounds that the existing association called ‘Hebrew Sisters Charity’ already does the work which this society intends doing.” JLVA, Committee Meeting Minutes, 3 June 1884

2.2.1. Prostitution and Philanthropy

Mass immigration of Jews from the East wrought changes to both the Jewish family unit and the community as a whole. White slave traffic was the most disturbing outcome of those changes, and certainly one which provoked the biggest reaction from Jewish leadership, the press and historians.\textsuperscript{124} By the 1890s London’s docks\textsuperscript{125} had become the hub of international trafficking of Jewish women brought from Russia to either stay in one of London’s brothels or to be dispatched to another destination.\textsuperscript{126} The involvement of Jewish ‘agents’ in procuring unsuspecting sex workers both added to the growing antisemitic and anti-alien feeling in Britain and confirmed the suspected criminal inclination of immigrant Jews.\textsuperscript{127} The *Jewish Chronicle*, voicing the anxieties of the Jewish elite, took a strong stance against white slavery, in equal measure disputing the idea of ‘Jewish immorality’ and, when no redeeming proof was forthcoming, strongly condemning all Jews involved in the white slave trade. Such reports were often expressed in strong language, such as “burning shame,” “terrible scandal” and “vile and vicious practices” lest there be any doubt of the ‘communal’ position on the matter.\textsuperscript{128} A more proactive response came in the form of the Jewish Association for Protection of Girls and Women (JAPGW), an organisation set up by Constance de Rothschild, Lady Battersea, in 1885, which established itself at an international level.\textsuperscript{129} The JAPGW was modelled on a similar Christian organisation and, like many other Jewish charities, driven by the desire for ‘decency’ and the fear of loss of Judaism, a likely fate of Jews in receipt of Christian

\textsuperscript{125} To a lesser extent other port cities in Britain also featured in white slave traffic. These included Cardiff, Southampton, Dover, Newhaven and Folkenstone, *JC*, 6 May 1904, Liverpool, although not typically a port into which prostitutes were trafficked, offered the trafficker an ideal opportunity for transatlantic trade. It was however, not until 1909 that the JAPGW employed a ‘dock officer’ to regulate travel between Europe and America. *JC*, 3 December 1909
\textsuperscript{126} Gartner, ‘Anglo-Jewry and the Jewish International Traffic in Prostitution’, pp. 131-133
\textsuperscript{127} Fishman, *East End 1888*, pp. 205-206
\textsuperscript{128} Reporting on the murder committed by brothers Morris and Marks Rubens, also traffickers of women and ‘bullies’. *JC*, 30 April 1909 and 21 May 1909
\textsuperscript{129} The *Jewish Chronicle* frequently reported on the international efforts to combat white slavery. *JC*, 21 January 1898 For further details on the establishment of the JAPGW see also Constance Flower Battersea, *Reminiscences* (London, 1922), pp. 418-423
The purpose of the association was summarised by Claude Montefiore, its key supporter and a cousin of Lady Battersea, as “killing three birds with one stone – punishment, rescue and prevention.” When prevention failed, the JAPGW fulfilled its redemptive aim through numerous rescue homes and industrial schools which housed ‘fallen women’ and unmarried mothers. Once ‘reformed’, girls were encouraged to take up positions as domestic servants, work that was so badly paid and lacking in prospects, that even impoverished immigrant girls sometimes chose to pass up the offer. There is doubt about the efficacy of the JAPGW and the response to their efforts by the ‘fallen women’, but, nevertheless, they gained political prominence after a successful campaign for legal reform resulted in the Criminal Law Amendment Act being passed in 1912, which aimed to help prevent white slavery.

The openness with which the elite, usually so concerned with maintaining their good image, approached white slave traffic was unusual but proved to be a clever long-term strategy. The Jewish community was already facing growing anti-Jewish sentiment, and crime, along with exploitation of the job market and the purportedly inferior health of Jews, were at the forefront of anti-immigration rhetoric. By admitting Jewish involvement in crime and working relentlessly to correct the situation, the elite, to some extent at least, pre-empted a backlash. It is also possible to see the development of the JAPGW as part of a larger shift in society, Jewish and Christian alike, which saw many women entering philanthropy, seeking work outside the home and, if not independence, recognition. This early form of feminist awakening faced the usual obstacles of male dominated philanthropy. Although the

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130 The JAPWG retained this link with their Christian counterparts, working in unison and mirroring their progress. For more information see also Summers, *Christian and Jewish Women in Britain*, p. 35
131 Report on the Meeting of the Society for Protection of Girls and Women, the Manchester branch of JAPGW, *JC*, 18 July 1919
132 London based Charcroft House and Sarah Pyke House were among those, they would also accept cases from the provinces. Battersea, *Reminiscences*, pp. 419-420
133 Children of ‘fallen women’ were usually fostered, though their mothers were encouraged to provide for their upkeep. Vivian Lipman, *A Century of Social Service 1859-1959* (London, 1959), pp. 247-255
135 Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, p.109
JAPGW sought to help women and was instigated by a woman, much of the work was deemed too offensive for the fairer sex and was subsequently carried out by men.\textsuperscript{136}

Whether attributed to immorality or arising as a casualty of the immigration period, prostitution was certainly one component of Jewish life, but the sort of organised prostitution and white slavery which affected port cities by and large bypassed Manchester. Despite this, the city’s Jewish elite set up their own rescue organisations. The following section compiles available sources on Manchester Jewish prostitution, scant as they are, to argue that in terms of understanding what is meant by ‘Jewish community’, the Manchester elite viewed themselves as part of a national/London-based fraternity of Jewish elite, rather than genuinely embedded in local Manchester issues.

\subsection*{2.2.2. Prostitution in Manchester}

In Manchester, immigration did play a part in prostitution, but it usually occurred as a response to poverty, hardship and seasonal work experienced by new immigrants, rather than as a result of an opportunistic international trafficking scheme. One commentator blamed sweated labour, viewed as an exclusively Jewish enterprise and particularly common in Manchester, for forcing women into prostitution, as \textit{Spy} reported: “[the sweater] is responsible for the horridly beautiful women who advertise their loathsome trade in our streets… Ninety percent of these women have been forced into their present mode of life by sweaters. Why would they work night and day at cigarette making for a shilling a week when they can live well and wear sealskins? And so they quit the weary drudgery of the sweating den for that of the brothel.”\textsuperscript{137}

\footnotesize{Jewish prostitutes occasionally appeared in the local press although the frequency of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{136} In 1919 the first two women were welcomed on the Gentlemen’s Committee of the JAPGW, this marked a shift in attitude towards women, who, though they still “had much to learn” were no longer shielded from the more distasteful elements of rescue work. See also Susan L. Tananbaum, ‘Democratising British-Jewish Philanthropy’ \textit{Nahim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues}, No.20 (2010), p. 60
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Spy}, 20 April 1895}
such reports does not match those of petty criminals, gamblers or sweaters.  

The earliest press report indicating Jewish involvement in prostitution appeared in the *Manchester City News* in September 1879. Five women were charged with keeping ‘disorderly houses’ on or around Chatham Street, Chorlton on Medlock, which they rented fully furnished from Maurice Youngerman, a Jew. It is unclear whether those charged with running the brothels or their workers were Jewish, but it is clear that Youngerman, a Polish immigrant charging a weekly rent of £2 let the properties knowingly.  

Interestingly, Chorlton on Medlock, an area notorious for “the Social Evil”, was a safe distance away from the respectable Cheetham Hill where Youngerman resided with his wife, three children and a servant. The next report of a ‘disorderly house’, this time run by an immigrant couple in the Greengate area of Salford, appeared in December 1893. In 1911 the Jewish criminal duo Rebecca Fineberg, a prostitute and Eli Dabrovily, a bully, were arrested. Their working arrangement usually involved Rebecca enticing men into a house, getting them undressed and in bed and, whilst the client was otherwise occupied, Eli searched through his pockets to further supplement payment for services rendered. The arrest was recorded in a policeman’s handbook along with photographs and it was noted that both were well known to the police, implying, if not previous arrests, then at least prolonged activity. These instances are the only examples of organised prostitution, albeit in very limited ways. Perhaps the best indication that Jewish prostitution was not a wide-spread problem in Manchester is its infrequency, indicated by the time elapsed between individual reports.

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138 This assertion is the result of a detailed survey of the *MCN, Manchester Guardian* and satirical journals *Spy* and *City Lantern*, carried out jointly by this author and Bill Williams.

139 *MCN*, 13 September 1879 and 1 November 1879

140 1881 Census identifies Morris Youngerman as a Polish Jew, aged 35. His occupation is stated as ‘general dealer’.

141 Quoted in Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p.17

142 ‘Bully’ is a Victorian term describing a man associated with brothels, standing at the door to make sure that customers did not leave without paying. In the case of Rebecca Fineberg it can be assumed that Eli Dubrowski also fulfilled the function of a procurer. For more information on Victorian brothels, including terminology, see also Lee Jackson, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight Against Filth* (Padstow, 2014)

143 Policeman’s Notebook, 1911
2.2.3. Representations of prostitution in Manchester: oral testimony

Oral testimony, though understandably not forthcoming on prostitution, hints at individual and isolated experiences. Julius Leonard, a resident of Strangeways, revealed that one of his friends married a prostitute: “Lassy Levine, he goes as Les now. He married a Jewess, but she was a prostitute, and he knew it at the time and we were amazed when he married her.” He goes on to stress how rare this was: “…even while she was married she still went out looking for clients. And yet you never know of a Jew doing that.” Like Mr. Leonard most interviewees rejected the idea of prostitution as a ‘Jewish vice’, instead highlighting the virtuous nature of Jewish girls and women. This perceived virtue, though not always representative of reality, caused despair among young men, who often cited the primness of Jewish girls as a factor leading to illicit romance outside of the community, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Prostitution was also mentioned by Mr. Phil Glantz, raised by his widowed mother. Mrs. Glantz was described by Phil as “vicious” and “the moralist of the street”. Fearful that her children would follow the same undesirable path as some of their neighbours, she not only beat them regularly, but also offered a thorough “character assassination” of such nonconforming individuals. This included prostitutes, women who married black men, gamblers, drinkers and womanisers. Although specific examples are provided in the interview we can only speculate whether one street could possibly offer so many deviants or whether Mrs. Glantz was simply prone to exaggeration. Mrs. Glantz and her methods of instilling conformity in her children, largely unsuccessful, will be further examined in Chapter 4.

Somewhat surprisingly, known prostitutes were not necessarily shunned by the community or their families. Ben Ainley was less defensive about the Jewish community than many others interviewed; while he had no memory of Jewish brothels from his childhood in Strangeways he agreed that this might have been the

144 Julius Leonard J 157, T2 S2
145 Ibid
146 See also Leila Berg, Flickerbook (London, 1998)
147 Phil Glantz J94, transcript, p. 27
result of his age and naivety, rather than their non-existence. According to him, prostitution was restricted to isolated incidents, and the sort of notoriety which followed it was attached to people rather than brothels, streets or districts. The only prostitute in his acquaintance was a sister of one of his friends: “I know as I used to see her in the house and I saw her in the street. You know, painted up, poor kid.”

Ben Ainley’s youthful innocence may have blinded him to the gruesome realities of impoverished immigrant life, of which prostitution may well have been a part; it is possible that, like him, others were unable to interpret what was happening around them. Frances Nemrow was brought up by a single mother in the Chorlton on Medlock area of Manchester. When she was 10 her mother was arrested after the lodging house she run was raided by the police and she was sent to prison for several months. As a child, Frances did not dwell on this episode although she remembers being upset by her classmates who did not believe her story that her mother was working as a cook in the Isle of Man. Even in adulthood, when recounting the story, she did not find anything odd about the fact that running a lodging house does not usually result in a prison sentence. Frances’s father died when she was 7 weeks old and his family refused to help the young widow and children. According to Frances, they did not like her mother who was considerably younger than her husband and was seen as ‘flighty’ by them. What followed was a traumatic and violent childhood, marred by Mrs. Nemrow’s instability and depression. Certain topics discussed in the interview appear suggestive, such as Mrs. Nemrow’s “extreme purity”, the way she made Frances wear her school uniform at all times to look younger so that men would not notice her or her distress and protestation when she learnt that in high school Frances would be taught ‘about the facts of life’.

One can only speculate about Mrs. Nemrow and the reasons for her arrest, but it is not so hard to imagine an isolated, impoverished and mentally very disturbed woman with no support network turning to prostitution to support her child.

Larry Goldstone recalled Jewish men, especially those working long hours as cabinet makers, occasionally paying for non-Jewish prostitutes who could be seen entering

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148 Ben Ainley J5, transcript, p. 19
149 Frances Nemrow, JT36, T1 S1 & S2, T2, S1
warehouses, though he insisted that prostitutions was “virtually non-existent” among Jewish women.\textsuperscript{150} Prostitution, though not lucrative, was certainly more profitable than sweated labour or factory work. In her interview, Rose Myers recalls the fascination with a young worker in her father’s factory who was known to supplement her income through prostitution. To young Rose, she was an exotic character with “lovely dresses and underwear”. The unnamed prostitute was quickly dismissed from her factory job since Mr. Bloom, who in addition to Rose had eight other daughters, could not risk her bad influence.\textsuperscript{151} That prostitution had a certain appeal to young girls is not all that surprising. Growing up in poverty and bleak surroundings, prostitution would have been an instant way to a ‘better’ life, the price of which most young girls failed to comprehend. The artist Pearl Binder left Manchester for London in her early twenties, along with some friends. In an attempt to shed their sheltered upbringing they made a point to educate themselves about the world, learning about white slavery for the first time. The plight of trafficked women, “fearsome and dark”, seemed very far removed from their experience of prostitution, through a childhood friend. This friend, after becoming a prostitute, underwent a sudden transformation which greatly impressed Pearl and her friends. She became “personable and pretty and well dressed and gracious and perfumed,” making “prostitution sound quite marvellous.”\textsuperscript{152} Although Pearl did not remember it, she assumed that this caused a scandal. The girl, who remains nameless, eventually moved to Israel. Whatever appeal prostitution had was, of course, mostly hypothetical and only a very few girls appear to have acted upon it.

The possibility that women became prostitutes by choice should, nevertheless, not be discounted.\textsuperscript{153} One report that appeared in the \textit{Jewish Chronicle} in 1909 mentioned 37 Jewish women arrested in Cardiff for ‘immoral practice’. Of those 35 were eventually deported but the two that remained quickly organised themselves to provide passage into the city for further 60 Jewish prostitutes, suggesting prostitution also existed outside the narrative of entrapment and exploitation.\textsuperscript{154}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{150} Larry Goldstone J103, T1 S2
  \item \textsuperscript{151} Rose Myers (nee Bloom) J186, T1 S2
  \item \textsuperscript{152} Pearl Binder J28, T1 S2
  \item \textsuperscript{153} Tony Kushner, \textit{Journeys from the Abyss}, p. 62, also in Marks, ‘Race, class and gender’
  \item \textsuperscript{154} JC, 30 April 1909
\end{itemize}
suggestive is the story of Fanny Epstein, a young Jewish woman who disappeared from her father’s home in London in 1891, although at least one historian argued it was in fact Manchester.\textsuperscript{155} Fanny, then only 18, was engaged to be married but, craving adventure, instead ran away with the charismatic and much older Alexander Khan. Together with Fanny’s friend Annie Gould and Alexander’s friend Isaac Stirling they travelled first to Paris and later to Bombay.\textsuperscript{156} When interviewed by Bombay police at the request of her father “Fanny laughed at the idea that she was being coerced, expressed no contrition about the job she was doing, insisted she was entirely her own mistress, and stated that she had no intention of returning to her father. Furthermore, she had no need of financial assistance.”\textsuperscript{157} Fanny and Alexander eventually left Bombay but on the evidence of Stirling, who remained in Bombay with Fanny’s friend Annie, they were apprehended in Marseilles. A trial exposed Khan as a likely trafficker of women with a wife and a permanent base in Buenos Aires but Fanny’s testimony, denying all of the above, prevented prosecution and he was discharged.\textsuperscript{158}

Most of the examples gained form the oral testimony collection lack names and do not include specific dates although from the context can usually be placed in the 1920s and the early 1930s. There are too few verifiable examples to reach specific conclusions, except perhaps to speculate that prostitution was not a significant problem in Manchester. Sympathy or acceptance was expressed directly by Pearl Binder, Rose Myers and Ben Ainley, and indirectly by Julius Leonard and Mrs. Glatz, who, in spite of their reservations did not sever contact with prostitutes in their acquaintance. Mrs. Nemrow who died of cancer when Frances was in her teens was, in her final days, supported by her local rabbi. These responses, however few, are the only examples we have of the sort of attitudes Jews may have extended towards ‘immorality’ in their midst. Although the \textit{Jewish Chronicle} urged for ‘poignant sympathy’ towards families of such deviants, this attitude seems absent from both the \textit{Jewish Chronicle} and the JAPGW records most of the time, where

\textsuperscript{155} David Gilmour, \textit{The British in India} (London, 2018), p. 70
\textsuperscript{157} Gilmour, \textit{The British India}, p.70
\textsuperscript{158} Ballhatchet, \textit{Race, Sex and Class}, p.129
victims of trafficking and fallen women alike are treated as nameless cases. For the elite, whose views were regularly reported, immorality was a danger “not confined to the canker of degradation which is festering in our midst…it is likely to turn the sentiments of our fellow countrymen against Jews in general.” The attitude of the elite was that of fear, rather than sympathy for the plight of the ‘fallen woman’; they showed concern about their position in society, and more generally about antisemitism. They responded accordingly, focusing on punishment and prevention, Claude Montefiore’s third bird, ‘rescue’ remaining largely unslain.

### 2.2.4. Rescue Work in Manchester

Despite an apparent lack of need for it, Manchester formed its own Jewish organisations to combat immorality, first the ‘Rescue and Preventative Work’ division of the JLVA and later the Society for Protection of Women and Girls, which emerged from the auspices of the JAPGW. For women of the elite this presented the opportunity to assert themselves as able organisers, independent of their husbands.

The JLVA was established in 1884 and counted among its members some of the wealthiest Jewish women in Manchester. The names that appear on its Committee are virtually identical to those male counterparts on the Committee of the Jewish Board of Guardians. Despite this apparent connection, co-operation between the two was uneasy and no official link was ever established. The JLVA’s minutes reveal their initial struggles for recognition and funding, arising partly from the patronising attitudes towards their efforts, viewed by the JBG as ‘amateur enthusiasm’. The formation of the Rescue and Preventative Work division in 1886, judged by their workload, was an unnecessary move, perhaps born out of the desire to follow London’s example rather than in response to local needs. Comparatively, the Glasgow Jewish community which, like Manchester had no real prostitution problem outside of the low level of prostitution among destitute immigrant women relying on

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159 *JC*, 30 April 1909
160 Referring to an earlier quote by Claude Montefiore.
161 Miriam Steiner, *Philanthropic activity and organisation in the Manchester Jewish Community, 1867-1914* (Manchester, 1974)
162 MJBG Minutes, October 1884, a copy of letter to the JLVA
seasonal work, chose not to involve itself with the JAPGW in any form, perhaps, as Fleming has suggested, due the feelings of embarrassment the topic inspired in the community. Fleming also proposed another possible reason for this reticence: the Garnethill congregation, the focal point of Glasgow Jewry, was extremely conservative and the sort of direct intervention in prostitution, which was natural to the more liberal Jewish establishments in London and Manchester, was incompatible with their values.

Although rescue work in Manchester officially fell under the auspice of the JLVA, they seemed ill equipped to deal with it. In February 1895, in an attempt at the ‘rescue’ of a young girl, the members approached JBG to fund her rail fare to London, where she was to be admitted to one of the JAPGW homes. The request was rejected, the JBG arguing that the matter did not lie ‘within its province’. This example not only suggests the indifference of the JBG, it also highlights the total dependence on London, which was made formal in 1911 when the Manchester Branch of the JAPGW was established under the name Society for Protection of Women and Girls (SPWG) and superseded the Rescue and Preventative Committee.

Regional branches were founded in Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Southampton in 1911 following the Jewish International Conference for the Suppression of the Traffic of Girls and Women which took place the previous year. The conference also led to the establishment of national branches in Paris, Galatz and Budapest, each branch acting as the central committee for their country, and further plans were laid for the establishment of such committees in Belgium and Holland. The founding of the SPWG in Manchester was not met with universal approval. Evidently, Manchester Jews did not view prostitution as a significant problem and the society struggled to raise funds. By 1919, in an effort to raise their profile, the President of the SPWG, Harold L. Behrens, called a heavily advertised meeting in Cheetham Hill,

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163 Fleming, *Jewish Women in Glasgow*, pp. 116-118
164 Ibid.
165 Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, pp.17-18
166 Minutes of the JLVA, February 1895
167 Officially established in March 1911 by Claude Montefiore. *JC*, 24 March 1911
168 In Germany, rescue work was conducted by B’nei Brith. *JC*, 24 March 1911
where he expressed his distress at the “number of young girls walking about the street behaving in such a manner that their parents would certainly disapprove.” This to him, was a proof that “...evils certainly did exist, and it was no use closing their eyes when so much had to be done.”

Claude Montefiore and Mr. Cohen of the JAPGW, invited as guest speakers, delivered rousing speeches on the topic of venereal disease and stressed the need for rescue work as an “important service to the state.”

The responses to the meeting were perhaps not as desired: no religious authorities, the frontline of all preventative work, were in attendance. The meeting also received criticism from inhabitants of Cheetham Hill, who took offence at the description of their youths, one claiming that “Mr Behrens had observed in one afternoon what I have failed to see in 35 years.”

Not much is known about the work of the society in the coming years other than it gradually assumed a female leadership. In 1934 Gertrude Weinberg was voted simultaneously the president and treasurer. In the same year E.B., a young social worker, was employed part-time as the Society’s only visitor and a secretary. In her interview she recalled the shame felt in the community about their ‘fallen women’. The work was secretive, carried out away from the watchful eye of the community and E.B. eventually destroyed all paperwork related to the cases out of fear that they “would get in the wrong hands.” Her work entailed visiting girls and women ‘in trouble’, referring mostly to unmarried mothers. The typical procedure was to try and find adoptive parents for the baby and help the young mothers return to their communities, fulfilling the society’s aim to “try to get them back”. She remained in her post for a few years, leaving only when her part-time position could no longer be funded. After this the Society gradually dissolved, their work, like that of the JLVA, gradually being absorbed into other Jewish charities.

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169 *JC*, 18 July 1919
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
172 *The Jewish Chronicle* offers annual reports on the organisation’s activities, which reveal little about its success and reception in the community.
173 E.B. J44, T1 S1, T2 S2
174 Ibid.
175 *JC*, 18 July 1919
Very little can be said about the women at the heart of this study, anonymous cases used to illustrate the perceived success of the JAPGW in its official records. The historian can only speculate about the lives of prostitutes or fallen women and wonder how, and if, they were able to ‘return’ to their communities. However, the shame associated with immorality, even in cases where sympathy was felt, is clear from the absence of their names from all accounts. More indicative is the study of elite institutions set up to prevent, rescue and punish undesirable behaviour. Emerging first from a wider context of Victorian philanthropy and as a defence mechanism for a community always prepared to “look after its own,” it quickly became a tool for self-promotion and a means by which to positively shape Jewish self-identity. It was, in one way, the struggle of the women of the elite to assert themselves in a typically male world, offering a helping hand “to their less fortunate sisters” in the process. But the notion of ‘charity’ in such organisations was superficial, marred by the gulf between the elite and the immigrant community which neither sought to bridge. Members of the elite, and especially its Lady Visitors, lived closeted lives and often failed to comprehend the realities of immigrant experiences and what these could lead to. To provide an example, one immigrant youth worker found herself amused at the confusion unwanted pregnancy caused to Miss Henriques, a Lady Visitor who complained: "I don't know how they can get in that way. After all she'd have to take her knickers off!” Equally, whilst reactions of individual families differed, immigrant Jews did not always subscribe to the middle-class ‘rescue missions’ with some unwed mothers finding themselves in the workhouse, asylum or otherwise hidden from the public eye, as will be further discussed in chapter 5. Perhaps most significantly, rescue work also shows the way in which the Manchester elite’s discourse and concerns reflected those of London’s elite.

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176 Ibid.
177 Manchester Jewish Ladies Visiting Association, A record of half a century’s work among the Jewish Poor (Manchester, 1934), p. 5
178 Constance Lisbona J169, T1 S1
2.3. Community under threat: the emergence of the Trades Advisory Council

The TAC was another elite organisation that reflected the fears of the Jewish communal leadership evident in their determination to safeguard the community’s reputation. The perceived reluctance of Jewish men to conscript during the First World War and the profit made by exploiting local economies, struggling with so many men away fighting, damaged the Jewish reputation. In the late 1930s, the proximity of a new war served as a reminder of the sort of dangers and opportunities which accompanied such a fragile sense of communal reputation.\textsuperscript{179} With antisemitism on the rise, Jews found themselves in a “precarious position” and in need of a “responsible organisation to defend the Jewish community from attacks from without”.\textsuperscript{180} The TAC, an ancillary organisation to the Board of Deputies, emerged in 1938 to fulfil this need, as well as to “strengthen goodwill in industry and commerce”.\textsuperscript{181} It also had another role, “a very much more important role, in preventing members of the community from bringing discredit on the community by their activities.”\textsuperscript{182} The TAC attempted to meet this second aim by settling local disputes out of court and out of the public eye, even if not always to the advantage of the plaintiff. A statistical committee, a division of the TAC, was tasked with compiling evidence to prove that the prosecution of Jewish traders, on a national level, was insignificant, but this was regarded as an expedient measure for an organisation whose main ethos was to ‘lie low’.\textsuperscript{183}

In the 1930s the two leading Jewish charities in Manchester were the MJBG, striving to provide relief to families in need, and the Representative Council of Manchester and Salford Jews, set up in 1919, to co-ordinate existing institutions and serve as the unifying voice of an increasingly fractured and divided community.\textsuperscript{184} The organisations shared leadership, still the domain of the elite, and were united in their
involvement with different aspects of trade and commerce. The TAC, founded in Manchester in 1941 as the second provincial branch in Britain, took over this responsibility, and became not only an ‘information bureau’ but also an indispensable ‘defence mechanism.’ Although it was considered innovative, the TAC essentially utilised methods employed by generations of communal leaders, and boosted their position in the process. Like the JAPGW before them, the TAC emerged in a time of need, but proceeded with a typically ‘elitist’ view of what constituted ‘needs of the community’.

2.3.1. The elite: the interdependence of philanthropy and status

By the 1930s the ‘old’ elite retained a certain exclusivity, but their wealth and sphere of influence was diminishing and new members joined its ranks, emerging sometimes from the immigrant population, such as Nathan Laski or Sir Sidney Hamburger. Committees of Jewish philanthropic organisations boasted more or less the same names, bearing testimony to the exclusivity of the leadership. For instance, Mr. Hyman Weinberg, a waterproof garment entrepreneur, presided over both the Representative Council and the Trades Advisory Council and, since its foundation in 1944, acted as a treasurer of the Council of Christians and Jews. His wife, Gertrude Weinberg held the position of both the Treasurer and the President of the Women’s Protection Society. In her role as president, Gertrude succeeded Mrs. Berhrens, whose husband Harold L. Behrens, the president of the JBG and the founder president of the SPWG, retained links with the Society as its Life President. For Harold L. Behrens, philanthropic work was to some extent predetermined by, and represented a continuation of his family’s efforts. His mother, Abigail Behrens, was the founder member and a Lady Visitor of the JLVA.

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185 See also *The Manchester Jewish Board of Guardians, 1867 – 1967: The story of one hundred years* (Manchester:1967)
186 *JC*, 12 July 1940, and 14 May 1943
187 Hyman Weinberg was a founder member of numerous charitable institutions, including the TAC which he led from its inception in 1941 until his retirement in 1972. Williams, *Sir Sidney Hamburger*, p. 225
188 Williams, *Sir Sidney Hamburger*, pp. 53, 193
189 *JC*, 06 March 1914, 04 October 1934 and 17 June 1960
No other family better captures the exclusivity of the elite, their vision and their leadership, than the Laski family. Nathan Laski was neither the first nor the last prominent communal leader to come from immigrant stock, but certainly the only one remembered as “the king of the Manchester Jews”. Laski possessed all the qualities of a good leader, including considerable charisma and prowess in business and politics. He was married to Sarah Frankenstein, a popular Liberal Councillor, and he acted as a magistrate, both of which added to his prestige. He remained the most influential leader in a period spanning two world wars and his “dictatorial inclinations” in this time remained largely unchallenged. Laski held important positions in virtually all elite organisations, religious, political and philanthropic, both official and unofficial. His leadership captured the difficulty experienced by generations of Jewish communal leaders, concerned for the community yet unable to fully comprehend its needs.

The methods of the TAC, of which Laski was not officially a part, but nevertheless presided over their early meetings, were very much born of his communal politics. After his appointment as Justice of the Peace in 1906, he offered counsel in his house on Smedley Road, Cheetham Hill, where it is estimated he resolved over 70,000 cases out of court. He maintained this practice as the president of the Representative Council, in an attempt to reduce the number of Jewish prosecutions. During the Second World War the TAC continued this tradition, with new the incentive, to “counter antisemitism wherever possible.”

Laski showed such passionate devotion to the community that it took precedence over family life, in the words of his granddaughter, Marghanita Laski: “There are certain words one would never have associated with my grandparents – words like gaiety and jollity and fun. The words that seem rather to go with their atmosphere are words like formality and duty.” In March 1899 the Manchester City News

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190 Williams, ‘Jews and other Foreigners’, p. 11
191 Ibid, pp. 10-13
192 Nathan Laski was the president of the Great Synagogue, the JBG and the Representative Council; he was also the first provincial officer to serve on the Board of Deputies of British Jews.
193 See also Monty Dobkin, More Tales of Manchester Jewry (Manchester, 1994)
194 Williams, Jews and other Foreigners, p. 11
195 Marghanita Laski, ‘My Grandfather, Nathan Laski’ in The Manchester Jewish Board of Guardians
published a scathing article on dirty and un-English habits of immigrant Jews residing in Strangeways and Cheetham Hill. The article roused a passionate response from its readers, resulting in a two month debate. Letters were printed arguing both for and against the author, writing under the name ‘A Looker-On’. One of those who took a very negative stance was Nathan Laski who, in defending his community, repeatedly refuted all accusations and stressed the virtues of his co-religionists. His initial response was to invite A Looker-On for a walk through the streets of Strangeways and Cheetham Hill to prove said virtues, in return for a donation to a charity of A Looker-On’s choice. When the offer was rejected and responded to by further accusations about the unsanitary state of Jewish bakeries, Laski threatened libel suit. The debate eventually concluded with the interference of MCN’s editor, who, quoting the Sanitary Committee Report from the previous year, pointed out that 8 out of the 13 bakeries closed for operating on dirty premises were Jewish. The lack of sanitation in Jewish shops was an ongoing problem, one that had been under the notice of Dr. Niven, the Medical Officer of Health, since 1894.

Over the course of his career, Laski opposed Zionism, the building of the Jewish hospital, welcoming refugees and even speaking publicly against Hitler’s fascism. These attitudes, most eventually reversed, were born out of the apologetic attitude of his generation and the desire to emphasise patriotism, loyalty and gratitude to England. On an organisational level the tendency to ‘lie low’ was most obvious in the TAC.

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2.3.2. Manchester Trades Advisory Council

The TAC set up trade divisions to remove friction between Jewish and non-Jewish manufacturers, merchants and traders, to maintain standards of commercial integrity and to ensure good relations between employers and employees. Its methods were uncompromising, above all concerned with discretion; as Alderman remarked, the TAC’s job “was not so much to protect Jews from Gentiles as Gentiles from...”

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196 *MCN*, 25 March 1899 and 08 April 1899
197 *MCN*, 15 April 1899
198 Williams, ‘Jews and Other Foreigners’, pp. 10-11
199 *JC*, 27 June 1941
The individual divisions grew quickly, in spite of the fact that advertising of the TAC was ruled out at the first meeting, in order to maintain a low profile. Their early meetings were predominantly concerned with technical matters of membership costs, the growing trade divisions and securing their own meeting place. As the organisation developed, its purpose became twofold: correction and prevention.

The first was concerned with traders flouting regulations, landlords abusing their situation and charging high rents and shopkeepers reported for keeping dirty premises. Kosher butchers and bakers were a recurring problem, often engaging in price wars. The minutes report on many conflicts with Jewish bakers demanding extra rations of oil on the grounds of the religious needs of the community but actually selling the resultant challah bread at an extortionate price purely for profit. This exploitation, at times of economic distress, was seen as such a problem that it repeatedly appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle*. Fines and warnings were regularly issued, mostly to no effect. The TAC frequently considered removing membership from repeat offenders, but rarely did.

The second part of the TAC’s work was preserving the reputation of the community, with the importance ascribed to such a task reflected in the Minutes books of the TAC during the war years. Building on the work previously done by Laski, it was decided from the outset that the TAC had no obligation to report cases of misdemeanour to the police. In fact, the very purpose of its existence was to avoid the involvement of authorities and resolve issues of petty crime and trade offenses privately, in order to present a respectable image. Often, after an investigation was carried out, the TAC sided with a Jewish person involved in a conflict against a non-Jew, but even in those cases the conclusion was always to ‘lie low’. The women

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201 After initially meeting at Frankeburg House, the headquarters of the JBG, the TAC secured its own offices at 11 Albert Square.
202 Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, p. 178
203 The problem of oil prices recurs throughout the TAC minutes, it is also reported in *JC*, 4 September 1942
abused on the tram on their way to work were told to take an alternative route, the man discriminated against at work was told that the situation was an ‘unfortunate one’ but to look for another job, and there were many other such cases. While the TAC’s minutes mostly report on their success, especially when being given public recognition for improving Jewish-Gentile relationships by non-Jewish lawyers or traders, it is apparent that not all cases were resolved to their satisfaction. Many cases were drawn out over several months, there was a great deal of resistance from traders and there were recurrent cautions against ostentatious celebrations, seen as unpatriotic during the solemn war years. Editors of newspapers printing antisemitic comments or advertisements were frequently discreetly contacted and matters usually successfully resolved. Members of the community were occasionally coerced into ‘doing the right thing,’ such as in case no. 325 M, when a Jewish firm refused to provide its premises to the Government for a Warship Week Campaign. The firm in question was coerced by the TAC to comply, in order to maintain a good impression. As well as suppressing reports of crime, the TAC was also critical of those members of the community who refused to comply with its aims. When the initial attempt to form a legal division failed due to lack of interest among lawyers and solicitors, the TAC did not hold back in their scathing attack claiming that the “feeling of snobbery exhibited by solicitors and doctors is splitting the community.” It condemned “the few miserable co-religionists who place profit before the just interests of our Community…it might be necessary for the Jewish Community to recommend more severe sentences on those who brought discredit to the community.” It took a similar view on those Jewish bankers and accountants accused of “crimes against commercial morality”, in advising their clients of bankruptcy, the laws of which were easily corruptible. In the eyes of the TAC, they were worse than “fraudulent debtors.”

It is clear that the interests of the community were at the heart of the TAC work, but their methods were often damaging to individuals for the ‘good’ of the community. Once again, the Jewish elite acted on the impulse to assuage the wider British

204 Sir Sidney Hamburger JT120, T2 S1
205 The TAC Minute Books, 1941-1945, Volume 1
206 JC, 31 July 1942
207 The TAC Minutes Books, 1941-1945, Volume 2
community, failing to take a closer look at problems and their reception within their own communities.

2.3.3. Inner Conflict

The aims of the TAC and the methods to achieve these were clearly defined from outset, yet the TAC was plagued by conflict. Members of the committee disagreed on how to handle antisemitic press reports and whether to publicly admit to misconduct of members of the community or ignore them. One example of such disagreement was related to the growing reports of Jewish involvement in the black market in Manchester. When Rabbi Altman became concerned with the association of the Jewish community with the black market and the effect it had on growing antisemitism, his idea of issuing a press statement was rejected by most members of the TAC who decided that silence was a more suitable option.\(^{208}\)

Much more serious was the tendency of provincial branches to act independently of their parent organisation, the Board of Deputies. Not dissimilar from the errant bakers, and butchers, the TAC continued to ignore rebukes of “serious internal weakness,” and accusations that they were seeking “to wriggle out of this subordinate status into one of full independence.”\(^{209}\) This conflict peaked when an unnamed official of the TAC circulated to the press “a speech highly defamatory of certain classes of the Anglo-Jewish Community”.\(^{210}\) Provincial leaders were publicly shamed in the *Jewish Chronicle* and reminded of the importance of London leadership.\(^{211}\)

The work of the TAC is best captured in the report on the annual meeting of provincial branches in Leeds in 1942. Professor Selig Brodetsky, the president of the Board of Deputies, gave a speech stressing that Jews should “put the country first and the Jewish Community second.” This was warmly received by Mr. E.B. Laycock, the Chairman of Leeds Chamber of Commerce, who confessed that

\(^{208}\) The TAC Minutes Books, 1941-1945, Volume 1

\(^{209}\) *JC*, 30 October 1942

\(^{210}\) Ibid.

\(^{211}\) *JC* reports on a “blunder worse than a crime” 30 October 1942
conversely it was view of the public that “you put Jews first and the country second… The more you can put this idea across, the better for the Jewish Community as a whole.”212 By the end of the war there were 25 branches in the UK with a total membership of 8,000. TAC had become an international organisation, with branches in France, America, Mexico and Australia.213 In Manchester, Sir Sidney Hamburger became the TAC’s second and last president after Hyman Weinberg’s retirement. He continued mostly as “a one man band” until the 1990s when the TAC was gradually dissolved, its work absorbed by the Board of Deputies and its records largely disposed of. The TAC gained its momentum during the war, its work important, not only as a defence mechanism, but also laying the foundations for the post-war years when it was considered “essential for British Jews to develop activities in defence of their rights as citizens.”214

The history of the TAC is underused in histories of Anglo-Jewry and of Manchester in particular. In Manchester, two volumes of its minute books have survived, but unfortunately not the detailed records of the cases they dealt with and it features in only one interview in the MJM collection. The importance of the committee is clear not just from the frequency in which they appear in the *Jewish Chronicle* and the detail of such reports; its records give an intimate insight into a community made up of individuals with their own interests at heart, rather than the united, responsible community its self-styled leaders attempted to present to the world. At the same time, it reinforces the idea that leadership was concerned, first and foremost, with maintaining a positive reputation for English Jewry. Perhaps the economic and social success of previous generations, as well as their perceived integration, intensified the fears of loss and exclusion. In the words of Sidney Hamburger: "I think it's because we thought that we were vulnerable as Jews, more vulnerable maybe than the Blacks and Muslims or anybody like that, and therefore whenever we thought there was a danger... maybe we're too introspective, we're certainly self-conscious at the fact that

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212 *JC*, 31 July 1932  
213 *JC*, 19 October 1945  
214 *JC*, 6 June 1941, 26 July 1941 and 14 May 1943, The TAC’s work regained its importance during the post war years in the context of Zionism. For more information see also Sir Sidney Hamburger JT120, T2 S1
as Jews there is an obligation on us to present an image of decency."²¹⁵

2.4. Jewish Experience of Gang Culture in Manchester

Jewish involvement in gang crime has captured the contemporary imaginations of film makers and their audiences,²¹⁶ but as an area of Anglo-Jewish history it remains among the most under-researched.²¹⁷ In Manchester, neither communal sources nor local newspapers contain direct references to Jewish gangs.²¹⁸ In contrast, the MJM collection, notably lacking references to crime in its indexes, contains over 30 interviews with former gang members. The extent to which these were ‘criminal’ gangs is debatable, some interviewees recalling them as innocent child’s play while others insisted on their viciousness and stressed the involvement of local police. The word ‘gang’ has a negative connotation, especially in the context of the violent, prohibition-era Jewish gangs of North America or the gangs of East End of London, some with Jewish membership, which provided protection rackets in the early part of the 20th century.²¹⁹ Yet, in Manchester, gang membership is described with relish and pride. Some accounts are personal memories, others stories and legends passed down to the next generation. The subjective nature of the interviews and occasional contradictions within them does not lead to definitive conclusions, rather, they provide an insight into Jewish youth culture in its natural setting: as part of both the Jewish community and the wider working class community of the Strangeways and

²¹⁵ Sir Sidney Hamburger JT 120, T2 S1
²¹⁶ Most recently a highly glamorized version of the Jewish gangster Alfie Solomons appeared in BBC’s Peaky Blinders (2013-2017). Although Alfie Solomons and his brother Harry were well known characters in London’s East End, they are absent from academic accounts. Lacking sufficient evidence, the script writer created a character which combines violent crime of American Jewish prohibition era gangs and bookmaking, which typified gangs of the East End. See also James Morton, East End Gangland (London, 2006), 158-160
²¹⁷ In contrast, American bibliography on the subject is extensive. Good examples of local studies of Jewish gang culture are Jenna Joselit Weissman, Our Gang, Jewish Crime and the New York Jewish Community (Bloomington, 1983) and Robert A. Rockaway, But He Was Good To His Mother, The Lives and Crimes of Jewish Gangsters (Jerusalem, 2000). Rockaway is the leading authority on Jewish gangs of Detroit.
²¹⁸ A survey of local newspapers in the period between 1880 – 1920 was carried out by this author. This lack of evidence was confirmed by a conversation with Dr. Andrew Davies, a prominent historian of Manchester gangs and also by Bill Williams.
²¹⁹ The best known of the East End gangs were the Bessarabian Tigers and the Odessian Gang, which exercised a “reign of terror” over Whitechapel and surrounding areas. For more information on East End’s Jewish gangsters see also John Marriott, Beyond the Tower (Padstow, 2011), 294-297 or James Morton, East End Gangland
Red Bank neighbourhoods; a correction to the records of structured, elite controlled youth organisations such as the JLB. This section will examine the nature of Jewish gangs in Manchester, events that led to their formation and the role they played in helping young Jews develop their own sense of identity and values. They capture the nuanced nature of nonconformity, which is an inherent element of communal life but not always a threat to communal social norms.

2.4.1. Battle for the Belles

The first mentions of ‘gangs’ point loosely to a period at the turn of the century and the early 1900s when Jewish boys, known to enjoy a dance with non-Jewish girls at Belle Vue, were routinely attacked by non-Jewish rivals. The resulting fights were resolved in favour of the Jewish youths, at least according to the MJM testimonies. As remembered by Joe Pollick: “[there] used to be some boxers, Jewish chaps used to murder them - they used to go Belle Vue for instance, they used to call it sheenie corner ‘cos all the Jewish people danced in one corner.” Wolf Benninson’s account is almost identical: “when they used to go to Belle Vue there was fights almost every Saturday night between the Jews and non-Jews you see - the non-Jews used to resent the fact of Jewish boys taking out their girls…” Most fighters used their belts and buckles and occasionally broken bottles.

Dance halls, cinemas, and skating rinks appear regularly in studies of Jewish nonconformity. Relatively cheap and widely available, they provided entertainment for both Jewish and non-Jewish teenagers, marking them as places of both, illicit romance and conflict, occasionally one leading to the other. Belle Vue was one of many dance halls that enjoyed popularity both before and after the First World War. Other popular locations included Finnegan’s and Dyson’s dance halls and

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220 Joe Pollick J197, T1 S1
221 Wolf Benninson J24, T1 S1
222 Leslie Small J228, T1 and Julius Suss J242, T1 S2
223 Rivalty and the Ritz are often mentioned as places of ‘higher standards’, but even those were affordable and well attended by the poorest members of the Jewish community, the residents of Red Bank and Strangeways.
224 Belle Vue’s dances date back to 1856 which marked the erection of the Ballroom beneath the firework viewing stand. In 1937 the Ballroom was renamed ‘Coronation Ballroom’ following its
the Thomas Street Skating Rink.225 Dyson’s of Devonshire Street was noted as a place of conflict, where fights broke out most weeks as expressions of both, romantic rivalry, and a more basic form of tribal identity struggle.226 Casual friendships of co-workers, school or neighbourhood acquaintances, which were the norm in the day, were transformed by night in a room separated by an imaginary line into a “Jewish side” and a “non-Jewish side”. When such perceived boundaries were crossed, a fight would inevitable ensue.227

2.4.2. The Easy Street gang: “We’re a rum lot, wild but not vicious”

Towards the end of the First World War and in the 1920s several Jewish gangs formed in Strangeways and around Cheetham Hill. Julius Leonard, a local resident, described the Easy Street gang, of which he was the leader, “Oh there was a right gang, there was about eight of us. We used to fight like hell now and then.... not with anything to do with antisemitism. We used to get out on Sunday and “hey look at that gang there” and [there] used to be a bundle, but we always held our own.” When questioned about the activities of the gang, his response was: “How did we spend our time.... well we used to meet in the street and we used to go to pictures two or three times a week.”228 Whilst the friendships continued, the ‘gang’ ceased to exist when its members reached their 20s. Keen to assert that they were known to the police, Mr. Leonard nevertheless fails to provide any significant reasons why this was the case, except for one instance when he describes the group’s favourite trick: heating a metal coin, they would leave it lying in the street, waiting for a policeman to pick it up. Maurice Levine, who was not known as a member of any gang, recalled similar tricks with coins, played on unsuspecting girls emerging from one the local factories. In another incident he and his friends tied a string between a street lamp and a garden fence in order to knock off a policeman’s helmet as he did his rounds on Waterloo refurbishment. See also Robert Nicholls, Looking Back at Belle Vue Manchester (Manchester, 1989), pp. 10,23,34

225 For more information of these popular dance venues see also Phil Moss, True Romances at Manchester’s Dances (Manchester, 1998)

226 Hyman Sukonic J239, T2

227 Morris Noar, J189, T1, S2

228 Julius Leonard J179, T1 S2
Although there was no apparent connection between Maurice Levine and Julius Leonard, these memories are very similar. The Easy Street gang, failing to assert themselves as a genuine ‘gang’, instead gives the impression of a group of friends, all residents of Townley Street, who, as they matured from children into teenagers progressed from street play, involving occasional fights, to another common interest: non-Jewish girls, favoured for their lack of ‘restraint’. In this context, Julius Leonard explained: “we always had a pleasant teenage life because we made it ourselves pleasant.”

2.4.3. Neville Solomon, the king of Fairy Lane Hills

Whether they qualified as a ‘gang’ or not, the Easy Street boys were undoubtedly one of many childhood alliances that emerged on the streets of Cheetham Hill and surrounding areas, as Harry Hyman put it: “Each street lived within itself, was a little community.” Territorial rivalry, closely linked to the existence of youth gangs, is most often expressed in descriptions of battles which took place on the hills at the back of Strangeways. Fairy Lane and Mazzeppa Street, the battleground, separated the area into ‘Jewish’ hills and ‘non-Jewish’ hills. The frequency of such battles changes from interview to interview, some recalling it as a weekly event, others as an occasional one. With the exception of one interviewee who claims that the battles were fought for the warm spot in the kilns of a local brick factory, and would therefore be initiated by different sides, most agree that non-Jewish boys were always the initiators. Brothers Yank and Harry Almond have vivid memories of the battles: stronger boys would take frontline positions as stone throwers, their lieutenants, made up of young children, poor throwers and girls, acted as stone collectors, all were shielded with dustbin lids. Sometimes girls are described as standing nearby with Red Cross signs, providing first aid to casualties of the

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229 Maurice Levine, *Cheetham to Cordova, A Manchester Man of the Thirties* (Manchester, 1984), p.8
230 Julius Leonard, J157, T2 S2 & T3 S2
231 Harry Hyman J125, T2
232 Including two interviews with non-Jewish residents and participants. An interview with Edward Hartley J119 and an interview with Henry Hutchinson J124
The fights never went as far as to declare a winner; eventually both sides got bored and went home: “And then it was a battle royal [and] went on for about half an hour or so and it simply just broke up. There was no winners or losers… we just sort of toddled back to our own area.” Serious injuries were rarely inflicted, Yank Almond’s one lasting scar was caused by leaning against a loose nail in a cart behind which he hid during a battle. There was no real organisation, other than a speedy gathering of neighbourhood children when a fight broke out. The average age of the fighters was between 10 and 13 but if the battle was particularly gruesome, one of the older boys from Mazzepa Street would be summoned to help. For Harry and Yank this was usually Neville Solomon, who to them “was like a king in those days.” At the time Neville was about 17, and his career as the ‘king’ of Fairy hills gangs ended when he took a job as a postman. Neville Solomon is a recurring figure, universally admired for his ability to throw stones with such ferocity that “he could make [them] whistle.”

Such fights, although often expressed in strong and animated language, fail to give an impression of anything other than childhood play, and make up the bulk of the interviews on the subject.

2.4.4. The Shaun Spidah Gang

Manchester Jewish gangs have received very little attention from historians to date. In 1981 they made a brief appearance in Stephen Humphries’ oral history project *Hooligans or Rebels*. Although Humphries reached a number of incorrect conclusions, including the assertion that Jewish gangs were motivated by theft, and incorrectly labelling the left-wing activist Benny Rothman as a gang member, *Hooligans or Rebels* (and its three pages on the topic of Jewish gangs) remains the most comprehensive source to date. Using a limited selection of available interviews, Humphries chose to focus on the Shaun Spidah gang and, although there

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233 Jack Cohen J63, T1 S2
234 Yank Almond J7, T1 S2
235 Harry Almond J8, T1
236 Yank Almond J7, T1 S2
237 Harry Almond J8, T1 S 2
is little evidence to support it, he stressed the gang’s notoriety. This misconception has since been repeated by others without any additional evidence so that Shaun Spidah has become a point of reference in academic literature: “the notorious Shaun Spidah gang.” Gill Toffell and Avram George Taylor both refer to Humphries to justify this label, and Bill Williams does not provide any references.

The unusual name of the gang was inspired by the 1921 winner of the Grand National. The story is remembered by Benny Segal and Morris Noar, who both claim responsibility for choosing it. Acting on a tip, the whole group won a substantial amount of money: “And somebody amongst the crowd suddenly starts singing, ‘We are the Shaun Spidah boys,’ and that’s how the name came into being, the Shaun Spidah.” Julius Suss provided a somewhat confused description of the gang, from which it is not clear whether or not he was a member. He was able to identify some other members of the gang as Jack Fink, Benny Segal, Morris Radivan and Louis Elsner, testify to their age, around 17, and the period in which the gang formed, in the early 1920s. The gang’s purpose, and perhaps the reason for its emergence, was retaliation against the frequent antisemitic attacks by a rival O’Neill’s gang, named after Jimmy O’Neill. O’Neill’s attacks were clearly targeted and sometimes vicious, although not all interviews agree on this. According to one interview, Morris Radivan sustained two head injuries requiring medical attention. The attack on him was a turning point, after which “you couldn’t hold the Shaun Spidah gang, they pulverised them.” Jimmy O’Neill is also remembered by Hyman Sukonic: “Oh there was a chap named O’Neill he used to be a milkman, and he used to have this gang, used to come out at night time, parade the streets, and of course the Jewish boys, at that time would also get a gang together and many times the police had organised - sort of reception for both of them, and eventually it died down, and

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239 Ibid, p.189  
241 Benny Segal J214, T1 S1, Morris Noar J189, T1 S2  
242 Morris Noar J189, T1S2  
243 The MJM holds an interview with Morris Radivan, which contains no reference to his early life or his gang membership. Morris Radivan JT108, T1  
244 Julius Suss J242, T 1 S 2
nothing bothered after that”. As well as revenge, the Shaun Spidah gang tried to prove themselves in the face of taunts “that Jew boys can’t do anything”. In one incident they waited for O’Neill to come up Southall Street, pushing his milk float, which they promptly tipped over. Their ‘unanimous’ success against the rival gang emboldened them and led to open provocation and even to the assault of a local policemen. In one such incident Jack Fink, described by Suss as “tough as nails” and with the ability outrun the fastest policeman on the beat, refused to move when urged and allegedly shouted: “I’m not moving for you or King Dick” after which he hit the policeman on the head.

Ben Segal has a very different memory of Shaun Spidah, stating distinctly that its purpose was neither retaliation to another gang nor a response to antisemitism:

“...there was no such thing as a gang, we weren’t motivated [by] anti-Christianity. It was frustration, solely frustration. They went to work at eight o’clock in the morning in the candlelight, these young boys, these adolescents, till eight o’clock at night. Came home, they had very good parents and they would have their tea, whatever it was according to their means, and they would go out of the house, because they had nothing to do in the house, there was no conversation with the parents, see the child may know a bit of Jewish but he spoke English, the parents didn’t know a word of English, when they went to the street corner and they assembled, there was twenty or twenty five on the street corner. It was not a question of anyone coming round, any antisemitism, it was mostly the police, move on. Well, they won't move on, so there was trouble… when there was trouble that’d take place with the police they called it a gang. But it was no such thing as a gang.”

Another Shaun Spidah member, Morris Noar provides some middle ground. Whilst he has a clear memory of O’Neill’s attacks on Jewish boys, which he considered “antisemitism, pure and simple,” he rejects the idea of Shaun Spidah as a gang: “it
was a band of friends”.

Whether or not Shaun Spidah constituted a ‘gang’ or just a group of friends who may or may not have engaged in fights, their age makes them sound more serious and their name makes them stand out. These are the likely reasons why the group received scholarly attention, whilst the more numerous representations of the battles of Fairy Lane hills were overlooked.

2.4.5. The Cry of “Napoo”

One context within which Jewish gangs can be studied is that of communal defence against antisemitism. Although there is some disagreement among the interviewees, most conclude that antisemitism was a key factor in such alliances. But antisemitism was experienced by the Jewish community in different ways. For instance, the attacks on Jewish shops in Manchester following the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915 could be seen as an attack on their immigrant status and German sounding names, rather than directly linked to their Jewishness. Most Jewish shopkeepers were able to overcome such attacks by placing “we are Russian” signs in the window or photographs of their relatives wearing a British army uniforms. A different kind of antisemitism was experienced by Jews in the 1930s following the emergence of Mosley’s British Union of Fascist. Antisemitism experienced by Jewish children and their gangs, mostly restricted to name calling and street fights, was neither one-sided nor did it hinder social interaction with non-Jewish children of their neighbourhoods. Martin Bobker’s memories of his childhood in Strangeways are particularly striking. He was familiar with the common accusation of Christ killing, but only truly understood this when, aged six, he was subjected to a ‘crucifixion’ in the school yard: “they got hold of me and they… against the iron railings of the school, they stretched my arms against them and one of the kids said,

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249 Morris Noar J189, T2
250 The gang operated in smaller numbers but when in need the cry of “napoo” would bring to their aid other members. See also Manchester Evening News, 26 April 1917
251 Notably, Beatrice Shaw J219, T1 S2 and Jack Cohen J63, T1 S2 both claim that the gangs were strictly territorial and had mixed membership.
253 Wolf Benninson J24, T2 S1 and Sarah Silver J233, T1 S1
‘Let’s crucify him, like they crucified Our Lord’”.254 Despite this, Martin became friends with non-Jewish boys. Name calling such as ‘sheenie’, ‘yid’ and ‘smog’, feature in the majority of the 35 interviews but, as one interviewee described, Jews were not the only injured party: “There was racism on both sides.”255 We know from both Jewish and non-Jewish interviewees, for instance, that non-Jews were often referred to in derogatory terms such as ‘yoks’ and ‘baites’.256 Jewish discrimination of their Gentile neighbours will be discussed further in chapter 4.

Williams, who wrote about the non-Jewish Napoo gang, chose to focus on its apparently antisemitic and anti-alien element.257 According to him, the Napoo gang of Butler Street, Ancoats, was active for just two years during the First World War.258 Its members, numbering around 50-60, were descendants of Irish Catholic immigrants and were largely unskilled market or mill workers. Carrying with them weapons such as razors and iron bars they attacked Jewish shops and generally terrorised Jews of Strangeways, which included random attacks on women, cutting off their hair.259 Williams considered the Napoo gang a direct result of the anti-alien atmosphere during the war on the one hand and a criticism of the perceived lack of patriotism of Russian Jews, exempt from conscription, on the other. Kushner reinforced this view by placing the Napoo in a national context and comparing their activities to the antisemitic riots that took place in London and Leeds in the same period.260 The gang’s short life span was attributed to the decisive action of the Jewish community, assured of their status and intensely territorial, who formed their own counter gang which both retaliated and protected.

Although this theory of the antisemitic aspect has some merit, in particular when one

254 An a transcript of an interview with Martin Bobker J43, p.16
255 Jack Cohen J63, T1 S2
256 Bill Hammer J113, T1 and Harry Hutchinson J124, T1, Ada Goldstone J101, transcript, p. 46, Morris Noar J189, T 2
257 Bill Williams was referenced as the chief advisor in Stephen Humphries, Hooligans or Rebels, and this position was also reinforced in conversation with Dr. Andrew Davies.
259 Humphries quoting from a private letter he received from Larry Goldstone in Humphries, Hooligans or Rebels, p.191
draws parallels with Jewish anti-fascist activities in the 1930s, as Williams does, there is little or no evidence in support from the MJM testimonies.\(^{261}\) Most people had only vague memories of the Napoo and some even thought it was a Jewish gang. Several testimonies placed the activities of the gang into the 1920s and this time frame is confirmed by studies on youth culture in which the Napoo appear.\(^{262}\) Generally, rather than any antisemitism, members of the Napoo are remembered for their striking dress code, consisting of dapper navy suits, trilby and a pink neckerchief, which were, as one commentator remarked, “a uniform borrowed from an American gangster film.”\(^{263}\) Although Williams claimed that the Napoo did not feature in local press, there is one article which appeared in *Manchester Evening News* in 1917. The Napoo gang, it reported, terrorised the districts of Collyhurst, Blackley and Harpurhey with petty thefts and violence and consistently avoided capture.\(^{264}\) Although the date of this report places the Napoo in the period suggested by Williams, the localities where they were gaining notoriety separated them both from the Jewish community, Ancoats where they supposedly originated, and from the dance halls of Belle Vue identified in most interviews.\(^{265}\) Another unsubstantiated claim appears in Peter Walsh’s study of Manchester gangs, which claims the Napoo were an ‘Italian Gang’.\(^{266}\)

Due to insufficient evidence, the Napoo gang will likely remain part of local legends, subject to speculation and vulnerable to misinterpretation, such as the largely unsubstantiated account offered by Williams. Antisemitism was certainly one element of Manchester’s gang culture, but once territorial battles, fights over girls or, as in Martin Bobkers’s case, crucifixions, were over, the children and youths returned to a generally peaceful co-existence. Antisemitism, in their case, was skin deep, and fulfilled a specific function. Gang altercations were at once an expression

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\(^{261}\) The issue of “variance between historian’s analyses and individual’s experience” was raised when Williams presented his research during a public talk in Manchester. See also Bill Williams, ‘Manchester History Workshop’ in *History Workshop*, 22-24\(^{th}\) April 1978


\(^{263}\) Ibid.

\(^{264}\) Young Ruffians, *Manchester Evening News*, 26 April 1917

\(^{265}\) To confuse matters further, one of the interviews claims that the Napoo came from Greengate, Salford. See also Wolf Benninson J24, T1 S1

\(^{266}\) Peter Walsh, *Gang War* (Reading, 2005), p.3
of tribal identity and a mode of entertainment and, for young Jews, a way in which they became aware of their surroundings, outside of the Jewish community.

2.4.6. Scuttling and other gang culture in Manchester

An alternative context to antisemitism in which to study Jewish gangs of Manchester is that of local ‘native’ gang culture. The period 1870-1900 was marked by the emergence of local youth gangs in most industrial cities’ working class districts.267 In Manchester, the scuttlers, as they were known, emerged in the most impoverished areas of Manchester and Salford such as Ancoats, Hulme and Greengate. Membership was usually determined by place of residence and ranged from 10 years of age up until the early 20s. Gangs provided relief to the depressing environment, long working hours and bleak future prospects. For their members, gangs also provided a way of asserting themselves, gaining the respect of peers and introducing some excitement into their lives. On several occasions members were arrested and tried for manslaughter, but for the most part the aim was ‘merely’ to scar and maim.268 Most injuries were inflicted in territorial battles between different gangs but they also enjoyed wreaking havoc on unsuspecting passers-by. Press reports testify to high levels of organisation and inner coherence, making scuttlers elusive to the police and, in the event of capture, frustrating to authorities in their refusals to testify and general resistance to punitive measures. Early attempts at reformation by flogging or sending the young delinquents to Belle Vue jail proved counterproductive, as these only served to boost their status within the gang, and even the local policemen had no confidence in the decision to increase police presence on the streets of the afflicted areas.269 In the end, it was a much gentler approach, targeting the cause, rather than punishing the result, that spelled the end of the scuttling period; the formation of Lads’ Clubs.270

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267 Others well known gangs included the peaky blinders and sloggers in Birmingham and the hooligans in London. See also Charles Russel, Manchester Boys, Sketches of Manchester Lads at Work and Play (Manchester, 1905), pp. 51-54
268 The most notorious ‘scuttler’ murder was that of Joe Brady, of the Bengal Tiger gang by Owen Callaghan of Angel Meadow. Callaghan was tried for manslaughter and sentenced to 20 years in Strangeways prison. Andrew Davies, ‘Manchester’s Original Gangsters’, The Guardian, 21 August 2011
269 Ibid
270 Andrew Davies, The Gangs of Manchester (Preston, 2009), pp.337-343
The stories of the scuttlers highlight the struggles experienced by Irish immigrant families in Manchester. However bleak the reality was for the parents, the move represented new opportunities, which were neither appreciated nor understood by their children. Similar generational gaps existed in the Jewish community. Benny Segal’s recollection, quoted earlier, highlights this gap and the role the Shaun Spidah gang had in providing relief from the everyday frustrations of home and working life. There are further similarities between the scuttlers and the accounts in the MJM collection. The scuttlers were, among other things, Manchester’s first youth cult, characterised by a uniform of clogs, bell-bottomed trousers, “flashy” silk scarf, belts with buckles which doubled up as weapons and hair cut short on the sides and back with an overlong fringe sweeping over the left eye, clearly visible under the peaked hat. The Napoo clearly emulated the scuttlers, at least in their dress code. It is possible that, rather than a strong reaction to the political situation which manifested itself in antisemitic attacks, the Napoo gang was conceived as a way of introducing some excitement to the war-time generation, marred by loss of ideals, unemployment and depression.

Jewish children growing up in the impoverished immigrant districts of Cheetham Hill, Red Bank and Strangeways were certainly familiar with the scuttlers. Leslie Small heard stories from his father who, in his youth, fought with Angel Meadow scuttlers: “Clogs and belts round their hand you know, and having a go, and the Yiddisher boys used to have a go at them because they weren't scared or anything. Remember the majority of them... were immigrants, foreign immigrants and they were tough. They weren't scared of having a go.” Wolf Benninson recalled playing ‘at scuttlers’ as a young child: “When I was about eight or nine, we used to sort of imitate the scuttlers and we used to get a long cord and tie a big bunch of sticks or rubbish at the end of it and twirl it around and at our opponents and call ourselves scuttlers.”

271 Charles Russel, *Manchester Boys*, p.51
272 Leslie Small J228, T1
273 Wolf Benninson J24, T1 S1
Another non-Jewish account of youth gangs, perhaps one that best expresses sentiments of Jewish children, is Ewan MacColl’s memoir. The folk musician and a communist grew up in Salford in the 1920s and 1930s, and considered gang membership as the most powerful memory of his childhood. The following quote reflects his view on the street culture, essential in the life of a working class child:

“The street was our universe and our university. It was where we fought and discovered love and friendship, acquired the skills which would help us to survive. The street was our stage, our race track, our gymnasium. It was our jungle, our prairie, our untamed ocean. It was anything we wanted it to be. It bore no trees, no flowers, no autumn harvest or fruit or vegetables, but it observed the seasons with games and pastimes.”

The language of MacColl’s childhood memories is redolent of the Jewish gangs. He was a member of the Square Street Gang, a relatively innocent and childish group, involved in occasional fights. The membership in such gangs was determined by the formation of other neighbourhood gangs who became their natural enemies. The stories capture at once the innocence of such pursuits and the impact they had on one’s identity, perhaps becoming, for the first time, aware of their surroundings and circumstances and making sense out of them. For Ewan MacColl, this realisation emerged as he became a member of the gang, a moment marked by a secret initiation ceremony of “MC” an abbreviation for “midnight crap” performed as a group activity in the croft: “…I suddenly became aware of myself and the world around me…we had come together because we had chosen to do so, we had chosen each other. I was beginning to have an identity.”

Much of the Jewish elite’s pressures and efforts were directed towards children, both through education and through youth clubs. But street play, complete with name calling and stone battles, proves, that away from the watchful eye of the elite, immigrant Jews assimilated naturally, by blending in with the culture of working class Manchester districts and emulating earlier generations. Whilst their foreignness, religion, language and tradition united Jews and separated them from

274 Ewan MacColl, *Journeyman* (Manchester, 2009), p.69
275 MacColl, *Journeyman*, p. 78
the rest of the population, poverty and proximity, which permeated every aspect of their life, acted as a powerful uniting factor. The children, struggling to make sense of their Jewishness and Englishness, unwittingly became Mancunians.

2.5. Conclusion

The JAPGW, and its Manchester counterparts, and the TAC capture the way the Jewish elite derived its dual sense of identity, as Englishmen and as Jews. The former emerged from and was evident in their dedication to principals of the middle-classes with whom they identified. The latter was linked to accusations of proclivities for crime and immorality attributed largely to the immigrant community but to which, by the virtue of their ‘alien’ status, the elite were not entirely immune. Communal control, most often practiced through philanthropy, represented a merging of this dual identity. The two organisations studied in this chapter capture not just their lack of sympathy with the immigrant community, but a genuine concern for preserving the communal image born out of anxieties of the elite, who, for all their apparent achievements, remained outside the mainstream. Crises such as white slavery and an impending war highlighted old insecurities and led to the creation of organisations such as the JAPGW and the TAC. Though they shared the overall aim to preserve the communal reputation, the two organisations took different approaches, perhaps born out of trends within wider society, concerned with rescue and reformation of fallen women.276 By openly admitting Jewish involvement in white slave traffic and taking steps to prevent it the JAPGW assumed ‘damage control’ mode. The TAC, despite the very real problems concerning Jewish involvement in the black market, focused their energies into concealing them, rather than addressing them. In both instances, the organisations also hint at the relationship between the provinces and the London leadership, which was, at times, problematic and contentious. Though they sought independence, provincial leaders failed to fully engage with local issues and derived their identity from the London-based elites and their organisations.

Oral testimony represents the only source for the study of Jewish youth gangs and

276 See also Bristow, *Vice and vigilance* (Dublin, 1977)
their interactions with their wider environment. The lack of further evidence makes such interviews both valuable and vulnerable to exploitation. The boastfulness and emphasis on the illegality of their activities, which is a key feature of many such recollections, as well as their frequent contradictions, make one question to what extent these are memories of what happened and to what extent they reflect “what (people) wanted to do…and what they now think they did”. Williams argued that such gangs should be viewed in the context of local antisemitism but this is largely unsupported by the evidence. It is also methodologically problematic since he used exclusively Jewish sources to reconstruct the emergence, activities and demise of a non-Jewish gang. Humphries’s short account of the Shaun Spidah gang suffers from numerous misconceptions and misrepresentations, partly because of its placement in a national, rather than local context. Unless further evidence resurfaces, Manchester’s Jewish and some non-Jewish gangs will remain confined to local legend and their nature speculative. They do, however, provide a window into the lives of children and teenagers completely absent from records of elite organisations. They capture young children increasingly detached from the values and lifestyles of their parents, exploring their environment, and their sense of identity within it. By fighting side by side in territorial skirmishes they strengthened their sense of Jewishness, and a sense of community, but also gained understanding of their places, as Jews, within wider society. In the process, they also absorbed and engaged with local history, which had become a part of their heritage, such as scuttling. Name-calling and, in one memorable instance, a crucifixion, are suggestive of the more worrying attitudes of gentile parents but oral testimonies show how these were interpreted by children in the context of play, for, however bloody and vicious these battles were, they were remembered with fondness. Likewise, fighting in dance halls signifies not only social and religious divisions but also the unifying force of illicit romance.

277 Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli p.45
3. Pacifists and Socialists

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will focus on the difficulty in attempting to interpret individuals’ choices according to patterns of behaviour based on consensus which rarely existed in the community but which is nevertheless frequently attributed to it by communal leaders and historians alike. The first section compares the interviews of Frank Allaun and Benny Rothman, communist contemporaries growing up on opposite sides of Manchester. The second part compares memoirs of two absolutists, Emmanuel Ribeiro and Leonard Cowan, compiled by their sons. The aim is to consider the role of the family and the wider community in instilling conformity and also their response to nonconformity. The final section of this chapter, though brief, tells the story of the Manchester Yeshiva and has dual importance. On the one hand it provides an insight into possible experiences of war outside of heroic narratives of voluntary enlistment of war heroes or the equally heroic plight of absolutists; on the other it represents an institutional rebellion against the values of the elite on the grounds of religious solidarity.

The case study presented here is political radicalism, captured in the stories of two communists and two pacifists, and the pattern by which these are examined is Livshin’s three-fold model of conformity. According to this model, Jews derived their sense of identity by conformity to (a) internal communal factors, such as religion, culture and heritage (b) external factors, defined by the laws and values of wider society and (c) awareness of outside responses to the community, which could use the action of even one individual against the whole community, in the words of Neville Laski: “The community is always blamed for the fault of any individual Jew”.278 Livshin used this pattern to demonstrate the severity of radicals’ nonconformity and their marginal position within their community. This chapter adopts an alternative approach by arguing that the extent to which the sub-communities within the Jewish community and their members responded to such nonconformity differed from the pattern suggested by Livshin.

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pattern of conformity differed, generating neither unified communal identity nor unified response to nonconformity. Although in Manchester there was a considerable overlap between left-wing politics and the peace movement, socialists/communists and pacifists will be studied separately to highlight some of the subtle differences in these kinds of nonconformity.\(^ {279} \)

The first part of this chapter will focus on the oral testimonies of two communists, Frank Allaun and Benny Rothman, contemporaries whose lives seemingly followed very similar trajectories. Both emerged from traditional Jewish families but rejected religion at young age, became involved in left-wing politics, married out and became estranged from their families. Both Frank and Benny showed a certain disregard for the law, in the name of the right cause. Benny was arrested twice, once for his participation in the 1932 mass trespass and the second time, in the late 1930s, for his involvement in a street fight with Mosley’s blackshirts.\(^ {280} \) In 1943, when strike action was prohibited, Frank staged a protest against Mosley’s release from jail and was briefly suspended from work. Later that year he was arrested for causing an obstruction when he delivered a pro-communist speech on a street corner.\(^ {281} \) For Livshin such similarities meant that both fitted her pattern, yet, the comparison of their testimonies will highlight major differences in the way they derived their sense of identity and social norms.

The second part of this chapter will focus on war and pacifism as experienced by two individuals and through a communal institution. The stories of two absolutists, Emmanuel Ribeiro and Lionel Cowan, recorded by their sons Alec and Kenneth, represent the most extreme and marginal form of pacifism but also the only detailed accounts of Jewish pacifist experience available to us. Ribeiro was a principled objector for whom pacifism was an extension of his socialism. It will be argued that his family’s ambiguous attitude toward him, captured in Alec Ribeiro’s memoir, mirrored that of the wider Jewish community. Cowan’s pacifism was almost accidental, and, although he was isolated in his position as a Jewish pacifist during

\(^{279}\) Among those who stress this link are Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*; Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’ and Alison Ronan, *Unpopular Resistance* (Manchester, 2015)

\(^{280}\) Benny Rothman JT19, T2; Bernard Rothman, *The 1932 Kinder Trespass* (Oldham, 1982), pp.37-44

\(^{281}\) Frank Allaun JT1, T2 S1 & T3 S1
the Second World War, far from causing ostracism, it brought him closer to his Jewish roots. In one sense, Lionel’s nonconformity in one arena generated conformity in another. As well as focusing on the place of pacifists within their communities, this section will consider the changing boundaries of nonconformity and how this affects the interpretation of past events. The story of the Manchester Yeshiva, like that of the TAC studied in chapter 2, will be used to demonstrate the tensions and disagreements that existed among the Jewish leadership in Manchester.

Although Livshin argued that radicalism was viewed negatively by the Jewish community, oral history and personal memoirs provide alternative conclusions. By giving an insight into the range of lived lives of individuals, such sources capture the broad and varied responses of the wider Jewish community to its radicals. They challenge Livshin’s conclusion on two grounds: firstly, although Livshin’s three sources of conformity are sometimes easily discernible, it will be argued that Jews do not consciously navigate their lives by them. Secondly, it will be argued that rather than acting as a source of conformity, internal communal factors sometimes cause divisions within the Jewish community, rendering it almost incapable of reaching a consensus on any one particular topic, so that the very idea of conformity is problematised.

3.1.1. Sources of conformity and approaches to the study of nonconformity

If we are to take Livshin’s model into consideration, political radicals, a term which Livshin applied to socialists and pacifists, deviate from all three sources of conformity. Socialism either emerged from, or preceded, loss of religion, thus separating individuals from traditions of their communities. For pacifists, ‘State Judaism’, represented by the Chief Rabbi, ruled against any possible religious basis for conscientious objection. Both communists and pacifists were viewed with suspicion by HMG and, in the most extreme cases, this resulted in a prison

282 Hyman, Jews in Britain During the Great War, University of Manchester Working Papers in Economic and Social History, No.51 (Manchester, 2001), p. 31
Jewish involvement in radical politics also fuelled the stereotypical impression of Jews as predisposed to radicalism and disregarding British values. Livshin argued that political radicalism was incompatible with Jewish communal life as it “challenged the religious basis of solidarity and the social structure of society and... threatened the accepted ways in which the community has sought security in a Christian country,” and concluded that the community ascribed its radicals “negative value”. Livshin’s argument built on an earlier study by Williams, according to which, Jewish radicals, among others, were excluded from their communities: “Those who embraced atheistic Socialism, secular Zionism, or Christianity [or those] who simply lapsed into religious indifference, might remain Jewish in terms of religious law, but they could no longer be counted as part of that collective local expression of a people with a common destiny - the Jewish community.”

There was an awareness of external sources of conformity and outsider perceptions felt by the Jewish leadership who, as has already been argued, established a broad range of communal organisations to encourage certain kinds of behaviour believing that ‘behaving in a correct way would not only turn Jews into good citizens of this great and glorious country, but make them better Jews’. The process of Anglicisation of the immigrant community was designed to ‘wipe away all evidence of foreign birth and foreign proclivities’ but, whilst the result did indeed generate English Jews, often disconnected from their immigrant parents, it would be incorrect to assume that this implied any deep consensus on social norms and values or concept of ‘conformity’. The lack of consensus within the community was most often felt in the context of the schism between the elite and the immigrant community. For instance, in this chapter, ‘conformity’ becomes synonymous with...

283 A number of Manchester Jewish socialists appear in the Home Office Deportation Order files as well as MI5 files. See also Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, pp.47, 99-100, 150
285 Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, pp.34, 196-222
286 Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, pp.1, 3
‘patriotism’. This is particularly problematic since many immigrant Jews were not British citizens and did not speak English but also because, had they conscripted, they would be fighting on the side of Russia, which they viewed with disdain. Whilst most immigrant parents showed no objection to the Jews School, despite its discrimination of Yiddish culture, many opposed to the JLB and its military focus, based on their experiences as Russian Jews. It is clear that the three sources of conformity, if taken into account at all, were understood differently by different subgroups of the Jewish community, resulting in differing responses to perceived nonconformity. The previous chapter demonstrated, through the example of the TAC, that whilst the elite might have been socially more cohesive than the immigrant community, they too were prone to disagreements and sometimes failed to reach consensus. This will be discussed again in the context of the Manchester Yeshiva and its response to the refugee crisis in a later part of this chapter.

Communal organisations designed to encourage conformity to elite values were not universally effective. Their records, written to commemorate their achievements, are typically celebratory, but oral testimonies suggest that the immigrant community, at which such organisations were aimed, was, while aware of their purpose, unconcerned by it. Jack Freedman, for instance, described the way the JWMC, established to promote respectable behaviour, was turned by its members into a gambling den. The Jews School, in its effort to turn children of immigrants into British Jews, contributed to the loss Yiddish, and by extension, the culture of their parents which caused a crisis of identity and, in some instances, contributed to individuals’ attachment to other kind of communities, such as youth gangs or political groups. In this sense, conformity to elite values sometimes generated other types of nonconformity.

The immigrant community was not entirely unconcerned with external sources of conformity or outsider perception. When presented with his sons’ decision to join the Communist Party in the early 1920s, Mr. Abrahamson considered it a “betrayal of

288 Jack Freedman JT7, T1
Jewish people who in this country had freedom”. Formerly a member of the Bund, he abandoned socialism soon after arriving in Britain. His new-found patriotism was not merely born out of gratitude to Britain, but rather more deeply rooted in fear of antisemitism, expressed in his belief that Jews “better keep quiet and be seen and not heard, if they’ve got to be seen at all”. Mr. Abrahamson’s opinions may have well been shared by other members of the immigrant community, but they were rarely acted upon. One such example is Mick Jenkins, whose family embraced communism, deviating from all of the proposed sources of conformity. Within their neighbourhood they were considered “daft and cranky” and their house referred to as the “Bolshevik house” but, far from being shunned, Mick insisted that they were “never ostracised or ill-treated [but] accepted as part and parcel of the community”. In South Manchester, Vera Bolchover’s mother disapproved of communism but allowed her children to host YCL meeting in the family home because “she loved them”. Familial bonds and neighbourhood alliances often made it possible to overcome disapproval and it seems that it was entirely possible for radical Jews to remain valued members of their communities. Immigrant parents, having perhaps experienced persecution, certainly were aware of external pressures of conformity and feared antisemitism that came hand in hand with the increased visibility of Jews, such as through radical politics. However, this did not always generate a predictable response. Many other factors contributed to the way the family and the community treated its radicals, including familial relationships, parents’ political affiliations and individuals’ relationships with their neighbourhood and wider community. Having established the limited nature of two of Livshin’s three sources of conformity, this chapter will now focus on the Jewish community itself as an internal source of conformity.

289 For more on David, Ted and Ben Ainley’s communism see Frank Allaun JT1 T2 S1, Ben Ainley J5, T1 S1Mick Jenkins J130 T1 S2
290 Ben Ainley J5, T1 S2
291 Mick Jenkins J130, T2 S2
292 Vera Bolchover MANJM 2015.14
3.2. Socialists

3.2.1. Frank Allaun

Frank Allaun was remembered by his obituaries as a journalist, Labour politician and a dedicated peace campaigner. Although his nonconformity was hinted at, mainly in the context of his peace work and his left-wing politics, much of it remained deliberately obscured.293 Throughout his life, Frank made conscious efforts to disassociate himself from both the Jewish community and his privileged background. The following section, based on his oral testimony, seeks to consider how such an attempt to disentangle oneself throws light on the idea of the Jewish community and how it might be experienced by an individual.

Although he mentions that his family had Jewish friends and acquaintances, Frank’s interview lacks a description of the Jewish community and the role it may have played in either instilling values or reprimanding those who deviated from them. It is possible that any such communal connection was downplayed by Frank, who, over time became ashamed of his privileged background and sought to hide it. He clearly saw his family’s wealth as incompatible with his political outlook, first as a communist and later as a Labour MP campaigning for social housing, and made a continuous effort to distance himself from it.294 In the first instance, this was achieved by taking a job at Metropolitan Vickers factory soon after he joined the Communist Party, which “seemed to have collected half of the militants in Manchester.”295 In later life, according to his son David, Frank made a point to never own more than two cheap suits and refused to wear a watch, which he considered a status symbol.296 Perhaps it is for this reason that Frank emphasised his father’s business failure, following the depression of the 1930s, and the family’s subsequent economic decline. It is also possible to look at Frank’s childhood community (or

293 Frank Allaun was the vice-president for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the president of Labour Action for Peace (LAP). His obituaries appeared in The Guardian, 27 November 2002, The Telegraph, 29 November 2002 and The Times, 27 November 2002 but notably not in The Jewish Chronicle.

294 See also Frank Allaun, Heartbreak Housing (1968) and No place like home: Britain’s housing tragedy (from the victim’s view) and how to overcome it (1972), both pamphlets are available in the Working Class Movement Library.

295 An interview with Frank Allaun, JT 1

296 Hyman Davies, Frank Allaun 1913-2002 (Manchester, 2003), p.5
lack thereof) in terms of the segregation that existed within the South Manchester Jewish community. The Allauns were an Azkhenazi family living in an area populated almost exclusively by wealthy Sephardi Jews who formed a tight knit group, socially and in business. There are numerous interviews in the MJM collection that describe the segregation that existed between the “aristocratic Sephardi Jews” and the “uneducated” Ashkenazi Jews of Red Bank and Strangeways.  

The Didsbury Sephardi community that surrounded Frank’s childhood home also retained a greater level of cultural and religious cohesion than the largely assimilated Ashkenazi families. For instance, Rosie Levy, a member of the Sephardi community, recalled being the only Jewish girl in Withington School for Girls to not participate in Christian prayers and finish early on Friday. She recalled Margaret Langdon, daughter of a distinguished Ashkenazi family, mocking her for this but retaliated with “Are you ashamed of being Jewish?” The two groups were separated not only by culture and levels of assimilation but, to some extent, by their religious practice. Vera Bolchover, Frank’s next-door neighbour, attended Minerva College, a Jewish boarding school in Leicester, but struggled to follow Hebrew classes, where pronunciation was aimed at the school’s Ashkenazi’s majority.

The only Jewish friends named by Frank were Victor Shammah, Marcel Roditti and Mario Lavado, all of whom were Sephardi Jews. Victor Shammah lived across the road from Frank and, along with his brother, attended Clifton College, favoured by wealthy Jewish families. Marcel Roditti was Frank’s next door neighbour and described by him as a well-read intellectual. Considering that Frank was not sure whether Marcel was Jewish, it seems that their friendship was based on proximity and shared political ideology, rather than a religious affiliation. Politically, Shammah and Roditti were a major influence in Frank’s life – the former inspiring his pacifism and the latter his atheism. Like Frank, his friends broke away from their families, yet, in spite of their friendship and proximity, they chose different routes. Whilst

297 Rosie Levy J164, T1 S1
298 Ibid
299 Vera Bolchover MANJM 2015.1.4, Track 1
300 It has been argued that Anglo-Jewry in the interwar period was in the hands of a Clifton educated elite. William D. Rubinstein, The decline and fall of Anglo-Jewry?, *Jewish Historical Studies*, Vol.38 (2002), p.17, see also Vera Bolchover MANJM 2015.1.4
Victor Shammah helped establish the Didsbury branch of YCL, whose meetings were held in the family’s mansion “The Bordeaux”, Frank had no involvement with it, choosing instead to attend the YMCA in Manchester. One can only speculate whether Frank’s isolation from the Jewish community, implied in his interview, was the result of the division between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews or something that he deliberately nurtured in his effort to distance himself from his background. In the absence of an apparent Jewish community, one must turn to Frank’s family as a proxy for it.

Frank’s father, Harry Allaun, was a successful hat and cap manufacturer, who owned a large warehouse in Great Bridgewater Street. Harry emerged from several generations of English-born Jews but Frank’s mother, Hannah Fein, was one of many children born to immigrant parents. This disparity in their background did not generally cause friction, with both parents dedicated assimilationists and equally lax in their religious observance. Their membership of the Orthodox Wilbraham Road synagogue was perfunctory at best, with generally only Frank attending on a Saturday whilst Harry Allaun went hunting. They soon became members at the Reform Synagogue, where the family could sit together. This seemed more suited to their egalitarian values, although, even then, their attendance was restricted to the High Holy Days. At home, the family’s cook maintained a kosher kitchen and candles were lit on a Friday night but, outside of the house, Harry was known to enjoy crab and shrimps. Tony Kushner has written about the tendency of immigrant Jews to reinvent and romanticise their histories in the “chicken soup with everything approach” but this is not evident in Frank’s interview. His earliest recollections include the Union Jack, proudly displayed at the end of the First World War, frequent political discussions at the breakfast table and, above all, his father’s life-long obsession with the masonic movement. If religion, tradition and culture are the tenets of Jewish identity, the Allauns failed miserably to instil such principles in their children. Frank’s parents, thoroughly assimilated and fiercely patriotic, did not see their dedication to an English way of life as contra to their Jewish identity, they simply redefined what it meant to be Jewish. Their religious laxity and desire to bring their children up as English was in no way unusual and would have likely not

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301 Kushner, ‘The End of the Anglo-Jewish Progress Show’, p.78
earned them the label of nonconformists, yet, it undoubtedly led to both their children’s confusion and eventual abandonment of Judaism, Frank becoming an atheist with distinct Christian sympathies and his sister Rae converting to Christianity.

Frank abandoned religion at the age of 16, citing books as the major influence. More likely, it was a combination of factors. In line with his parents’ assimilationist tendencies, Frank was educated in non-Jewish institutions. His memories of the Manchester Grammar School (MGS) contrast sharply with those of Jewish pupils from North Manchester, who often experienced antisemitism. The contempt was not just to be found within the non-Jewish ‘rugger crowd’, whose members, Dr Rich recalled, often taunted the Jewish children with overtly antisemitic cat-calling, such as “Come on, let’s have a pogrom!” It was also shown by “snobbish, anglicised Jews”, sons of wealthy cotton merchants who were driven to school in a Rolls Royce and felt more at ease with the English students, in spite of their apparent antisemitism. Frank, though his family only drove a Lagonda, belonged firmly to the ranks of English born, Anglicised Jews. The difference between the Jewish communities of North and South Manchester was not just a matter of wealth. For Jews from North Manchester, attending grammar school meant greater career prospects and future financial stability but it often came at a price. Dr. Rich described in detail the financial strain his studies had on the family, not just in terms of books he had to buy and travel costs but also the loss of profit resulting without him joining his father’s business. Harry Allaun, on the other hand, insisted on paying fees even though Frank was entitled to free tuition, a gesture no doubt intended to strengthen his social standing. For most of his adult life, Frank championed the underprivileged. Conversely, though Hyman Davies argued otherwise in his biography, during his school years,

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302 Dr Louie Rich J 273, T1 S1
303 Ibid
304 Ibid
Frank claimed to have been largely ignorant of any antisemitism or discrimination experienced by fellow Jews, once again bringing into question his affinity with the Jewish community. On the other hand, his participation in the school’s mock election as a Conservative candidate, a nod to his father’s political views, indicates that Frank derived his sense of identity from his family and his father in particular.

After school Frank took an office job at Hindley, Hammer and Co. and started a night course to train as an accountant, largely to pacify his father who thought that “accountancy was a good money making profession”. His frustration with his job and his love of sports led him to the YMCA. The unemployment and depression of the post-war period took its toll on young people, who lacked opportunities and purpose and the YMCA, with its sport facilities and evening lectures, offered them comradeship. Intellectually and politically it represented a particularly fertile environment and, like many other young Jews before him, Frank found himself drawn to communism. Although he no longer shared his family’s values, he was determined to mend his relationship with his parents who, though they respected his decisions, were disappointed by Frank’s rejection of religion and his increasingly left-wing views. The situation altered when the long term unemployment of two YMCA members led to their suicide. Frank decided to quit his job and moved to Glasgow where he took the post of a manager at Collete’s, a radical book shop. Around the same time he also joined the Communist Party and became an enthusiastic campaigner. During an open air meeting in Wytheshawe Park, Frank met his first wife, Lillian Ball. His intermarriage, which should not be seen as a natural consequence of his politics, since his second wife was Jewish, will be discussed further in chapter 4.
There is an evident disconnect from the Jewish community throughout Frank’s interview and instead, the role of the community is fulfilled by the family. That Frank derived his sense of identity from his parents is obvious from the way he attempted first to emulate his father and later mend their failing relationship by following a career path chosen by him. Frank’s parents embodied elite values, but their assimilation and only very rudimentary attachment to Judaism failed to inspire affinity with the community in their children. In this sense, it could be argued that conformity to external values sometimes resulted in deviation from internal values and social norms. Livshin argued that radicalism challenged ‘religious solidarity’ but, in Frank’s case, such solidarity was already severely undermined by the division which existed between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews in Didsbury. To define the community and nonconformity through the three sources has its merits but it also implies an element of cohesion and consensus of what it means to be Jewish that did not necessarily exist.

3.2.2. Benny Rothman

Unlike Frank Allaun, whose Jewish identity was derived from, and largely restricted to, family life, Benny Rothman grew up in an area occupied almost exclusively by Jewish people, many of whom were new immigrants. His own parents, Isaac and Fanny, came from Romania, although his father had travelled extensively before he settled in Manchester. Isaac was remembered by Benny as a pragmatic and reflective man who valued education and encouraged his children to read even though the family only took a Yiddish newspaper. Religiously, Isaac Rothman considered himself an agnostic, openly critical of the ‘religious hypocrisy’ of his neighbours. He particularly disliked betting, which took place in the synagogue every Saturday morning and attracted many of its more orthodox members. Isaac Rothman may not have been a devout man, but he valued tradition and was an active member of his community. Fanny Rothman descended from generations of distinguished Talmudic scholars including, according to a family legend, the Chief Rabbi of Austria, and adhered to religious orthodoxy. She kept a traditional home and made sure that the children received Hebrew tuition, determined to instil her values in them. When Benny’s father died, on his 12th birthday, Fanny took over his ironmongery stall at the Glossop market and left her children in the care of her father, vice-president of
the Elizabeth Street shul, who was to significantly influence Benny.

Though their circumstances were vastly different, Frank and Benny shared a love of learning. Benny attended St. John’s school, which instilled in him love of books. At the time when Frank Allaun defended the Conservative party in a school debate, Benny encountered the ‘outside world’ for the first time, following the establishment of his school’s newspaper.  

Shortly before his father’s death, he passed the exam to Manchester Central School, also attended by his two older sisters. Although he proved himself a talented student, his attendance came to an abrupt end when a job opportunity presented itself: “I came home from school…and my sisters and my mother said there was a job for me and I need to leave school and take it. And that’s how I came to leave school and start up in a firm that dealt in cars.” In his interview, Benny wistfully recalled meeting a former school master when working who was “very friendly, and I could see the sorrow on his face that I was just running errands.” Benny stayed at Tom Garner’s garage for eight years; it was there that he was first introduced to communism and eventually dismissed for it.

Like Frank, Benny was a keen sportsman and joined the YMCA as well as the Clarion Cycling Society, eventually helping to form the British Workers Sports’ Federation. All three groups attracted left-wing speakers and members, sometimes members of the CPGB, SPGB and ILP. Although they eventually helped to shape Benny’s worldview, they did not trigger his engagement with communism. Feeling bored in the evenings, he signed up for evening classes on ‘Advertising and salesmanship’ and ‘Economic geography’ at the YMCA, conveniently located on the same street as Tom Garner’s, in the hope of advancing his career from a mechanic to a salesman: “to a young kid it looked very, very attractive walking around in a posh suit and driving all day.” This did not go unnoticed by fellow Tom Garner employee, Bill Darnley, who “made a beeline to cut me down to size” It was Bill Darnley who first took Benny to a communist meeting, which was, apparently,
mostly concerned with the circulation of The Daily Worker and must have made a big impression on Benny because he left with 50 copies and sold them at work, a move which eventually led to his dismissal: “I was arguing with all and sundry about the rights and wrongs of socialism and communism and it was a good opportunity when rationalisation came along for them to say goodbye.”\footnote{Ibid, p.7} Contrary to Livshin’s model of nonconformity, which considers socialism incompatible with internal sources of conformity, Benny’s family remained quite unperturbed. Benny’s youngest brother even sympathised with socialism but was critical of any organised activity. If Benny tried converting them to socialism, he failed, for his family were certainly not communists, but they showed no opposition to his involvement with radical politics and were happy to read the Daily Worker, which he regularly brought home.\footnote{Ibid, p 29}  

It was in 1932, soon after his dismissal from Tom Garner’s, that Benny took part in the Mass Trespass. A keen rambler, he felt deflated when a walk in Derbyshire was cut short by local landowner’s intervention “…we were turned back very rudely, very threateningly and we went back to our camp there and we brooded over it, we were upset, we were humiliated, you know a few girls on the ramble and we came back with our tail between our legs and we decided that if there had been a lot more of us, they wouldn’t have been able to turn us back, very simple logic.”\footnote{Ibid, p.22} The Mass Trespass was organised just a few weeks later and Benny, along with 3 other Jewish men, were arrested and spent several months in prison.\footnote{The Guardian, 27 November 2002} If Benny’s family or his immediate community had negative views about this, it was not obvious from his interview. After his return from prison, Benny went to Burnley for a brief time, fearing that he was “too well-known” in Cheetham Hill to get a job. These fears proved unfounded since, on his return to Manchester he got a job for a local garage run by Sid Abrahams, who was apparently quite unconcerned about Benny’s criminal history: “Sid Abrahams wasn’t interested in my politics or anything like that…he was only interested in one thing and that was making him money.”\footnote{Benny Rothman J289, transcript, p.22}
from facing ostracism form the community, Benny attracted many Jewish customers who preferred to do business with Jews.

Benny met his wife Lily through the BWSF which she joined along with her two brothers. The fear of intermarriage, the “going over the bridge”, was clearly embedded in Jews and Benny decided not to tell his family beforehand: “Instead of facing up to it, like an intelligent person, I did it surreptitiously, just left them the wedding invitation and then of course it was all hell let loose and virtually for 20 years I never saw my family. The kids were grown up by the time I first saw my mother and sisters again”. Although he expected a negative reaction, he was nonetheless stunned by the hostility, blaming not so much their religious orthodoxy but “that famous or infamous word: tradition. What will the neighbours say? I think that that was at the base of everything.” Benny’s estrangement from his family and the Jewish community, following his marriage, dominated his interview and will be discussed further in chapter 4.

Even more than in Frank’s case, Benny’s family and the wider Jewish community seemed relatively unconcerned with his politics, even when they resulted in loss of employment and a prison sentence. His eventual expulsion from the Jewish community was unrelated to his radicalism. Unlike Frank, Benny retained some sense of his religious identity, continuing to fast on Yom Kippur long after he became an atheist and had embraced communism, claiming “it went against the grain to eat on that day…I did have lingering traces, even after I’d more or less finished with religion”. His interview captures a variety of interpretations of Jewish identity and conformity. His father was an agnostic who saw the hypocrisy of the Jewish community around him and its sense of values and norms, spoken of, but not upheld. His mother was deeply orthodox but her sense of self-identity was increasingly detached from the realities of her lifestyle, lax and integrated. Benny was a communist, married to a Christian, and an outcast in his family, yet he continued to regard himself as a Jew and maintained certain traditions. Rather than

323 Benny Rothman JT 19, T2 S1, T3 S1  
324 Benny Rothman JT19, T3 S2  
325 Benny Rothman J289, T2 S1
instil a narrow sense of conformity, the diversity of the immigrant community allowed Jews to carve identities for themselves that often managed to combine seemingly incompatible ideologies and lifestyles, such as Judaism and Socialism.

3.3. Jewish Pacifists in Manchester

The stories of Emmanuel Ribeiro, Lionel Cowan and the Manchester Yeshiva are presented in the following section in order to consider Jewish experiences of wartime pacifism and the communal response to it. The aim of this section is three-fold: firstly, it will consider the way historians restore pacifists into the narratives of their communities and to what extent this is influenced by changing attitudes to both the war and the peace movement. Secondly, as previously applied to communists, this chapter will challenge that it is fair to assume any kind of consensus within the wider Jewish community, in this case supposedly reflected in negative attitudes towards pacifists. Thirdly, it will present the variety of reasons why Jews became pacifists and their implications for studying conformity.

3.3.1. Historical reconstructions of pacifism

Williams argued that the restoration of Jewish nonconformists into the historical narrative of their communities is often hampered by their “disappearance from the communal record”.\(^{326}\) Whilst this is not true of socialists, such restoration of Jewish pacifists and conscientious objectors suffers not only from the lack of available sources, but also form the historical distance.\(^{327}\) This has inevitably led historians to focus on individual experiences of pacifists, sometimes lending their studies a celebratory quality. Williams, in his attempt to restore Lionel Cowan, a pacifist during the Second World War, to the communal narrative, placed him among other “exceptional people” who went above and beyond the call of duty to help others with

\(^{326}\) Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p.1
\(^{327}\) Many Jewish pacifists and objectors did not identify as Jewish in official records. In other instances, we know of Jewish involvement in the peace movement but have no way of tracing individuals’ stories. One such example is the story of Rev. Harris from Liverpool who provided the necessary support for Jews wishing to register as conscientious objectors. None of those he helped have been identified by name. See also Evelyn Wilcock, The Revd John Harris, *Jewish Historical Studies*, Vol.30 (1987-1988), pp.163-177
whom they shared no personal ties. Pat Starkey, who also focused on Cowan in her work on pacifists and conscientious objectors in the North West during the Second World War, praised the courage shown by objectors during the 1914-1918 period in the face of often harsh treatment, claiming that their experiences demonstrated that “cowardice was not a dominant characteristic of those who refused to fight”. Even Evelyn Wilcock, historian of Jewish pacifism, was not entirely exempt from this element of glorification. Her study of the pacifist, Reverend John Harris, depicts him as an individual prepared to disagree, not only with his immediate community, represented by Liverpool’s Prince’s Road synagogue, but with the entire Anglo-Jewish leadership. Her chapter on pacifism during the Second World War took on a celebratory quality referring to the “current of common humanity flowing even in the Holocaust” and moral choices of Jews to “resist when necessary...government and social pressure to conform.” It is not the purpose of this study to bestow or deny such celebration, but doing so has problematic implications for understanding Anglo-Jewish history and in particular the experience of Jewish pacifists. Those whose stories have been preserved, like Emmanuel Ribeiro, often represent a small and extreme minority within the wider peace movement, yet, in the absence additional sources, they become representative of the general Jewish pacifist experience. Not all objectors were heroes or martyrs. The limited availability of sources is often responsible for producing such accounts. For instance, the story of Rev. Harris only became known because he agreed to provide support for Jews registering as conscientious objectors and the fact that it roused such an interest in the Jewish community suggests that they numbered not as few as the leadership would have liked. No information is available about those whose objection he facilitated but, if it were, perhaps it would change the way we interpret Harris’s position. For those Jews who were a part of the wider peace movement, such as the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) and the Peace Pledge Union (PPU), their personal stories often merged with the history of the

328 Williams, ‘Jews and other foreigners’, p.379
329 Pat Starkey, I Will Not Fight (Liverpool, 1992), p.16
330 Evelyn Wilcock, Pacifism and the Jews (Stround, 1994), pp.1-10
organisation. Both organisations were prolific in their pamphlet production but did not highlight their individual members. Jews applying for an appeal or imprisoned for their objection sometimes appeared in the *Tribunal*, the official publication of the NCF, or the mainstream press, but such accounts were usually brief and devoid of personal information.

The most comprehensive study of Manchester’s Jewish pacifists appeared in Livshin’s ‘Nonconformity in the Manchester Jewish Community’. By stressing the link between pacifism and left-wing politics, Livshin highlighted the regional context of the peace movement which is often overlooked but is, in the words of Cyril Pearce, a historian of the peace movement, essential as any attempt at “a national picture…perpetuates the nonsense that England or even worse Britain, can be viewed as the homogenous whole which it very clearly was not.” The overlap of politics and the peace movement was particularly strong during the First World War when the city’s estimated 400 conscientious objectors belonged either to a pacifist organisation such as the NCF or political groups with distinctly anti-war stances, such as the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) or, as was often the case, both. During the First World War 18 Manchester Jews joined the ILP, at least some of whom were attracted to its anti-
military stance. Among them were Ben Ainley and Gabriel Cohen, who according to Gabriel’s brother, Jack Cohen, “swore they would never join the army…they would go to prison because they were against the war.” 335 Ben, Gabriel and their friend Jonny Rosenblum also attended NCF meetings: “We went on the very simple argument that this is a war. People are killing each other. Young life is sacred. This was the elementary moral attitude that we took up.” 336 Being part of an official group allowed Ben Ainley to channel his pacifism into action, in his case singing outside Strangeways prison in order to boost the morale of the conscientious objectors within it. 337 Whilst Ben and his friend were too young to be conscripted or face a tribunal, Moses Baritz, a member of the Socialist Party, who was not, attempted to flee to America and was eventually arrested and interned in New York. 338 Although the link between left wing politics and the peace movement provides important context, it can also be misleading since, with the exception of a handful of oral testimonies, it is impossible to determine whether Jews joined the ILP due to their pacifism or whether they only embraced it after being exposed to it at meetings. For instance, Ben Ainley concluded that war-resistance was simply “part of [his] own nature” but admitted that he might have been indirectly influenced by his parents. His father fled Russia to avoid army conscription and Ben’s mother used to sing ballads about mothers whose sons died in the war. At the age of 10 Ben wrote a school essay expressing his anti-war sentiments, quoting his mother’s songs. 339 His friends did not share his sentiments and simply opposed to war on the grounds of their socialism. Depending on the reasons behind their pacifism, one might argue that Jewish pacifists were either deviating from internal sources of conformity or acted in accordance with them as, while the Jewish leadership, including the Chief Rabbi, supported the war at the time, the matter of scriptural support of either war or pacifism was and remains contested. 340 To further problematise communal responses to the three sources of conformity discussed in

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335 Jack Cohen J63, T1 S1
336 Ben Ainley J5, T2 S1
337 Ibid.
339 Ben Ainley J5, T2 S1
340 See also Polner and Goodman (eds.), The Challenge of Shalom
this chapter, one can draw on the example of Ben Ainley’s father. Mr. Abrahamson appears to have simultaneously rejected socialism, despite having endorsed it in Russia, out of loyalty to Britain and fear of provoking antisemitism and instilled in his son pacifism, based on his experience as a Russian army deserter and a member of a community marred by war.

Whilst pacifism was often linked to left-wing politics, it sometimes existed outside this context, emanating from personal experiences of loss, ones personality or deep religious conviction and was neither intended as a deviation from sources of conformity nor seen as such. In ‘Going Against the Grain’, Mark Levene argued against over reliance on patterns. Utilising oral history, he demonstrated how our understanding of history and nonconformity can be influenced by preconceived and deeply rooted ideas of how Jews behaved during the First World War based on Vladimir Jabotinsky’s and Revered Michael Adler’s accounts of the war.341 His first example, Arnold Harris, was a Russian born Jew who came to London as a young child. Almost every element of his story contrasts with accepted patterns of behaviour within the Jewish community. His family were members of the ultra-orthodox section of the East End community but, unusually, also dedicated Zionists. Although Harris considered himself “a rationalist agnostic and humanist” he continued to attend synagogue, keep kosher, observe Jewish holidays and even teach Hebrew and religious classes as his father had done before him, thus undermining Livshin’s sources of conformity. Pondering on his place in the community, he referred to himself as “a human bundle of contradiction.”342 Contrary to popular views of history, Harris, as a Zionist, not only showed no enthusiasm for Jabotinsky’s ‘national military revolution’, but seemed completely oblivious to its existence. Choosing to opt out of war out of “plain fear”, he spent the war years bribing doctors to sign certificates for invented ailments and eventually fleeing to Ireland under a false name. Levene’s second example, Henry Myer, came from a long line of English-born upper class Jews and considered himself primarily an


342 Levene, ‘Going Against the Grain’, pp.77-78
Englishman. When choosing a school, Myer rejected Clifton College favoured by Anglo-Jews of similar status and instead attended Westminster in hope of meeting members of the aristocracy. When the war broke out he volunteered with enthusiasm worthy of a true patriot. He rejected Zionism or any kind of Jewish nationalism as unpatriotic and when in 1917 he accepted a senior officer position with Jabotinsky’s Judeans it was not so much out of sympathy with their Jewish nationalism but rather with the desire to provide a proper leadership to an otherwise helpless group. Within a very short time, his close contact with Zionists and with Palestine had turned Myer into if not a Zionist at least a sympathiser whose allegiance to “King and country” had transferred to the “service to Zion”. ³⁴³ Rather than treat these examples as deviating from the ‘norm’, Levene argued that the problem lay not so much with the individual accounts but rather in the way we have been conditioned to view Jewish history in terms of expected patterns of behaviour.

Although Livshin recognised the differing motivations that led individuals to become pacifists, she appears to have readily accepted the position of the Chief Rabbi and the Jewish leadership, narrated in terms of irrational jingoism, as the general attitude of the Jewish community. ³⁴⁴ There is in fact no reliable way of measuring how the community felt about the war and their involvement in it. Many of those who chose to fight did so for financial gain or believing they had no other option but statistically their willingness to fight has been interpreted as patriotism. ³⁴⁵ Equally, some of those opposing the war considered their beliefs in line with Jewish religion and even patriotism. Livshin is also guilty of uncritically accepting pacifists’ claims that their position was isolated and that they faced severe opposition. Oral history is merely a reflection on past events, and in the case of pacifists, it is particularly important to consider the historical distance. Whilst their decisions to object were made without knowing the outcome of the war they are defended retrospectively. ³⁴⁶ As Adrian Gregory has noted, pacifists’ testimonies often exploit

³⁴³ Ibid, pp.80-88
³⁴⁴ Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, p.89, Such jingoism was frequently expressed on the pages of the Jewish Chronicle. One such example is the now famous quote “Britain has been all she could be to Jews, Jews will be all they be to Britain” quote in Hyman, Jews in Britain During the Great War, p. 7
³⁴⁵ Such as in Pearl Binder J28 and Jack Copeland J71
this distance and stress the isolation of their predicament as well as their martyrdom.347

3.3.2. War through the eyes of pacifists

The following section will examine two experiences of war and pacifism. The first is based on a memoir compiled by the son of Emmanuel Ribeiro, and contains reflections on communal attitudes to pacifism and the impact it had on the family. Whilst the element of martyrdom is certainly a dominant feature, the memoir also hints at tolerance and acceptance continuously extended to the family. The second example is based on an interview with Lionel Cowan, recorded by his son Kenneth over a period of two decades. Whilst it does confirm his isolation, it reveals a genuine affinity with the Jewish community that emerged directly from his experience as a pacifist. Such a motif is generally absent from historical accounts of Jewish pacifism and demonstrates the variety of ways in which the community and conformity was understood by different individuals.

3.3.2.1. Emmanuel Nunes Ribeiro

Emmanuel Ribeiro, born in or around 1880 to immigrant parents, was a staunch socialist and a pacifist from his youth. His tribunal accepted his position as a conscientious objector, but as was standard practice, ordered him to do work of national importance. As an absolutist, Ribeiro refused. The petition addressed to David Lloyd George in June 1917 on Ribeiro’s behalf claimed that: “work of importance to the nation he is eager to do, but his conscience forbids him to undertake it as a conscript.”348 Failing to comply, Ribeiro was arrested on 17th January 1917 and, after appearing before Manchester Magistrates’ Court two days later, fined £2 and sent to Bury Barracks. It was there that his protest started in earnest, with Ribeiro refusing to put on a uniform and initiating a hunger strike.349 Although hunger strikes and subsequent force-feeding were a well-publicised

348 The Ribeiro Petition, Manchester Jewish Museum, MANJM: PD298/1
element of the female suffrage movement in the pre-war years, Ribeiro was the first conscientious objector to go on a hunger strike whilst in the custody of the Army.  

Unable and uncertain how to cope with such a case, the Army quickly transferred Ribeiro to Lord Derby’s War Hospital in Winnick, where he remained until March of the following year, receiving twice daily feeds through the feeding tube. This treatment continued after his transfer to Wormwood Scrubs Prison until his release in June 1918. In total, Ribeiro endured 17 months of force-feeding. Refusal to cooperate and hunger strikes were commonly employed by absolutists, a minority group within the wider peace movement, but the practicalities of force-feeding were so painful and gruesome that many chose to abandon their stance. Those who prevailed were, like Ribeiro, treated with extreme violence and their objection was interpreted as “degenerate, effeminate, and unhealthy, not to mention inherently dangerous”. Although newspapers like the Manchester Guardian were dedicated to exposing particularly bad cases of cruelty, every effort was made to keep information out of the public eye. Ribeiro’s case was an exception and his story was widely publicised, inspiring an intense reaction from the general public. The Tribunal published reports on Ribeiro’s condition, as witnessed by his friend: “Ribeiro was forcibly fed during our visit, but we were not allowed to see the process, although we saw the tube etc. brought in. It was over in a few minutes and when we returned he was ill and giddy from the effects of the treatment. He was

350 Marion Wallace Dunlop was the first suffragette to go on a hunger strike in 1909. Although it was entirely of her own initiative, her action was immediately mirrored by other suffragettes and drew attention to their cause. The debate that surrounded the issue of force-feeding divided doctors, politicians and the public continued up until the outbreak of the First World War. See also Ian Miller, A History of Force Feeding: Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics, 1909-1914 (ebook, 2016), pp.35-60 also in Ian Miller, ‘Necessary Torture? Vivisection, Suffragette Force-Feeding, and Responses to Scientific Medicine in Britain c.1870-1920’, Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences, Vol. 64, No. 3 (2009), pp. 333-372

351 The financial efficacy of Ribeiro’s hospital stay was eventually discussed in the parliament. Hansard, 1/05/1918

352 Miller, A History of Force Feeding, pp.127-128, Miller provides more examples of the sort of treatment meted out to objectors. In addition to force-feeding, this included being placed in a straight-jacket and verbally abused, treatment that went not only unpunished but that was deemed correct and necessary. Ibid, pp. pp.131-133, Also in Lois S. Bibbings, Telling Tales about men (Manchester, 2009), pp. 7, 115, 141

353 Graham, Conscription and Conscience, p.60, Coincidentally, John W. Graham was among those urging compassion for Ribeiro, his letter was printed in the Manchester Guardian, 12 October 1917, For more information on the censorship of information and corrupted inquests designed to cover up such cruelty see also Miller, A History of Force Feeding, pp.131-133

354 MEN, 20 June 1917 and 26 October 1917, the Daily Herald, 12 October 1918 and 27 June 1918
evidently suffering from very strong movement of the heart. He pressed his hand hard on his left breast, seemed pale and exhausted and for a time could only speak with a difficulty. I consider that the condition of Ribeiro is alarming, his health being much worse than when I last saw him, I fear he will die if not quickly liberated”.355 This description mirrored Ribeiro’s letter addressed to his wife Bella the previous year: “They force a gag into my mouth which causes terrible punishment, then a tube was put in the mouth and forced into my stomach…with six men holding me down from moving…On Tuesday evening I was out of bed…I resist after falling on the ground, they, with all hands holding me on ground, forcibly-fed me there. This I say is scandalous. It is not only inhuman but barbarous torture of the worst kind.”356 The letter was printed in the Manchester Guardian after Constance Lytton, a prominent suffragette who had also endured force-feeding, took personal interest in the case and approached Bella Ribeiro. Lytton’s sister, Lady Emily Lutyens, argued in the Manchester Guardian that, “apart from the question of humanity, it would seem to be a waste of manhood of the nation in this time of war to employ six able-bodied men to torture one defenceless man. The whole process is stupid, useless, wasteful and disgusting”.357 In July 1917 a petition was addressed to David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, asking for Ribeiro’s immediate release and absolute exemption from military service. The public interest in Ribeiro’s case and the fact that the petition was signed by a number of distinguished names, including Emily Lutyense, George Lansbury, Catherine Marshall and Bertrand Russell, demonstrates the complexity of the issue of conscientious objection and attitudes to it.358

Although Ribeiro is one of the most high profile pacifists in Britain, relatively little is known about his personal life. The harsh treatment he received is often seen as proof of the marginal position occupied by pacifists in the Jewish community and wider society. More broadly, it supports the assumption that most Jews were
essentially patriotic and supported the war. Therefore, Alec Ribeiro’s memoir provides an important insight into how Ribeiro was seen by his family and his community. Ribeiro was trained as a gold and silver engraver but his professional life was distinctly unsuccessful, eventually leading to the breakdown of the family. His lack of success was, at least in part, linked to Ribeiro’s very open socialist views, recalled by his son as “a constant dream in which all men who worked manually belonged to a thing called a Trade Union, formed by working more for their own protection, enabling one man to speak for hundreds and in using the strike threat as a weapon to enforce a better price for the sale of labour, shorter hours of toil, better conditions at work.” The family sometimes moved for work but Ribeiro seemed to have little regard for their comfort when it came to pursuing either his politics or business ambitions. At one time the family lived in Blackburn, where Emmanuel had found a well-paid job with Mr Standworth, who had a chain of umbrella shops. This prosperous period came to an end when Emmanuel decided to start his own company, selling cheap umbrellas assembled by his wife Bella. The venture was an instant failure, the first of many recalled by Ribeiro’s son Alec whose memoir emphasised his father’s lack of business acumen, referring to various schemes as “ludicrous venture[s] by a man, totally ignorant of business and also quite ignorant of his own shortcomings.”

In his memoir, Alec was keen to stress his father’s isolated position, as a socialist and a pacifist. He wrote of Trade Unions being “dirty words in the days of his youth” and recalled the “large menacing crowd” that gathered outside their house “to kill” Emmanuel when he was home on compassionate leave. At the same time, his memoir reveals numerous incidents suggesting that the family were far from shunned. Although their poverty was in part self-inflicted and linked to Emmanuel’s socialism, Alec recalled help they received from the few Jewish families in Blackburn, who, “being co-religionists”, provided them with food parcels, in spite of the fact that Ribeiro was an atheist. His former employer, Mr. Standworth, even gave Bella money to prevent her from going hungry and offered Emmanuel his job back. When they decided to return to Manchester, they were welcomed by Abe and Rachel

359 Ribeiro, Ribeiro Memoir, pp.12, 49
360 Ibid, pp.3, 53
Salzedos, Ribeiro’s cousins, who helped them find their own house. Despite Emmanuel’s atheism, the family retained tenuous links to the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue, where Ribeiro once applied for a job and relied on their clothing fund. Alec Ribeiro’s memoir and Ribeiro’s granddaughter’s interview also make it clear that the family kept a kosher home and were culturally intensely Jewish. Alec’s description of the menacing crowd chanting outside the house on the day of his compassionate leave seems incompatible with the family’s continual existence within the wider Jewish community. Ribeiro returned to Manchester after the war and resumed his position in the community, setting up greengrocers serving mostly Jewish customers. Alec Ribeiro’s attitude to his father is confused at best. At one point he wrote “I saw the abject poverty, the squalid homes in which my mother struggled to bring up her children and I condemned my father for permitting it.” In other parts he defended and even admired his father. It is possible that his feelings mirrored those of the wider Jewish community.

The disparity between Alec’s description of Emmanuel’s isolation and the many instances suggesting he and his family were able to live comfortably within the community can be interpreted in several ways. As Benny Rothman’s case would suggest, the power to expel rested with the family, not the community at large. It is possible that, since the Ribeiro family accepted Emmanuel, so did the community, however begrudgingly. The other possibility is that Alec Ribeiro’s memory, a retrospective interpretation of events, deliberately or subconsciously exaggerates Emmanuel’s martyrdom in an attempt to make sense of it. The most likely explanation is that there was a variety of responses within the community. Ribeiro clearly and consciously deviated from all three proposed sources of conformity but it is difficult to determine whether his nonconformity was viewed exclusively negatively and what this meant in practical terms. Livshin claimed that if there was any sympathy, the community were too scared to show support. Jonathan Hyman assumed Ribeiro “must have been the source of much embarrassment and

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361 Belinda Black, Track 1; Even after the family’s relocation to Chorlton, a non-Jewish area, of Manchester, they retained their links to the Jewish community, choosing, for instance, to announce their children’s marriage in the Jewish press. *JC*, 30 May 1930
362 Ribeiro, ‘Ribeiro Memoir’, p.6
363 Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, p.90
awkwardness for the establishment”. \(^{364}\) Whilst both might be true in the broader context of Anglo-Jewish history, there is little evidence of how, if at all, this affected the Ribeiro family as members of the Manchester Jewish community. The Ribeiro case attracted a great deal of attention and support from the general public, including financial support for the family during and after the war, suggesting that his nonconformity was at the same time ascribed both negative and positive value.

### 3.3.2.2. Lionel Cowan

The threat posed by Hitler and growing fascism on the continent represented such danger that many dedicated pacifists felt compelled to momentarily suspend their opposition to war. \(^{365}\) Frank Allaun spent his lifetime campaigning for peace and, even on his deathbed, only emerged from delirium to inform his daughter “he had received a word from unimpeachable authority that war had been abolished and henceforth the world would live in peace.” \(^{366}\) For the duration of the Second World War, however, Frank not only abandoned his pacifism, but actively supported the war effort by working on munitions at the Vickers-Armstrong factory. \(^{367}\) Frank’s change of heart during the Second World War is far from unusual and, though it might have been felt more intensely by Jewish pacifists, was not restricted to them. During the interwar period, pacifist groups grew in popularity, partially in response to the disastrous loses during the First World War, attracting some very high profile members, including Labour party politicians George Lansbury and Charles Trevelyan or Manchester’s Lord Mayor, Joseph Toole. \(^{368}\) By 1940 the membership of the PPU had reached 113,000 nationally but dropped by about half in the remaining war years, summed up by one former member, who claimed: “Hitler cured

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\(^{364}\) Hyman, *Jews in Britain during the Great War 1914-1918*, p.34


\(^{366}\) Davies, *Frank Allaun*, p.37

\(^{367}\) Frank Allaun JT1, T1 S2, T2 S2, T3 S2, This was a deliberate move by Frank as Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company dedicated the entire war period to furthering war effort. Frank started working for them as an engineer in 1940. For more details on the exact nature of the company during the war years see also John Dummelow, *1899-1949* (Manchester, 1949), pp. 165-188

me of pacifism”. This was especially true for Jewish members who considered Hitler ‘the worst aggressor in history’. Whilst Frank Allaun simply ceased to be a pacifist in this period, others adopted the label of ‘pacificists’, that is, pacifists who considered war wrong but occasionally necessary. The stakes were high for Jews refusing to fight during the war; they not only faced accusations of cowardice from general society, they were arguably seen as turning their back on the plight of European Jews. It is quite possible that Lionel Cowan was the only Jewish pacifist in Manchester during the Second World War. Yet, in spite of his isolation, it was his pacifism that returned Lionel back into the communal fold.

Lionel was born into a Jewish family living in Broughton, an impoverished, predominantly Jewish area, in 1905. The family’s religious observance seemed somewhat lax but they did keep a kosher home and both Lionel and his brother Bob attended cheder. The outbreak of the First World War did not seem to make a huge impression on Lionel who was much more concerned with his parents’ increasingly fraught relationship. His father’s conscription was not quite as traumatic as for so many British families, he was sent to Blackpool where he served as an army cook for the duration of the war. For Lionel, his father’s absence provided respite from his parents’ constant fights and even benefitted the family practically, when the occasional trip to Blackpool brought with it an extra portion of meat to supplement their rations. But the war did take its toll on the Cowan family in other ways; although his parents never divorced his father did not return home after the war, choosing to stay in Blackpool for work instead. Lionel’s religious observance also

369 Starkey, I Will Not Fight, p.5
370 A letter from Dr Lehrman of the Liverpool Greenbank Drive Hebrew Congregation addressed to Lionel Cowan in 1940, quoted in Starkey, I Will Not Fight, p.8
371 This terminology is in fact very confusing and highlights generally accepted misconceptions about the peace movement, which has never been a homogenous body. From its inception in the late 18th century it was loosely split into a minority group of absolutists, those who rejected war and militarism completely, and the much more widespread group of reformists, which was not entirely opposed to the existence of the armed forces (regarded as useful in its potential defensive role) but which sought to challenge the political causes of friction and conflict leading to war. The term pacifist is actually the correct but rarely used English version of pacifist. Martin Ceadel, ‘Pacifism and Pacifism’ in T. Ball & R. Bellamy (eds.), The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 471-492
372 Starkey, I Will Not Fight, p.8; the Manchester Guardian reported on a tribunal of John Michael Rosenblum, a Jewish conscientious objector in Leeds. It was noted that he was the only Jew to appear before the tribunal which, at that point, had presided over 400 cases. Manchester Guardian, 16 December 1939
suffered, as, in the absence of her husband, Mrs. Cowan either neglected, or was happy to abandon, all religious practice and accepted Lionel’s decision to forgo his bar mitzvah.\textsuperscript{373} By far the most dominant childhood memory is his membership of the JLB, an institution of the elite designed to instil British values and, in particular, pride in military tradition in young children.\textsuperscript{374} This experience was important in several ways; firstly, regardless of his parents’ religious laxity, it placed Lionel firmly within the Jewish communal experience. Indirectly, Lionel’s love of organised JLB activities, including camping, probably led him to joining the International Trampling Tours which later put him in contact with international pacifist groups. And thirdly, it was in the JLB that he first experienced anti-war sentiment. It was incomprehensible to Lionel that some parents, particularly those of Russian descent, were so strongly opposed to the organisation:

\ldots there were a number of parents in the Jewish district who would not allow their boys to join the brigade, as it was called, and I was very puzzled about this, because the mothers used to say \textquoteleft\textquoteleft we don’t want our boys conscripted in the army, we knew a great deal about this from where we came, and we’re not having our boys in, practicing to be soldiers.\textsuperscript{375}

This sentiment puzzled Lionel, and he failed to comprehend the brutality of the First World War. His main impression of the war was the disappointment he felt when a national JLB camp, originally organised for 1915 in Heysham, was cancelled and instead replaced by a small local branch camp in 1917.\textsuperscript{376} The First World War and its aftermath were the impetus for so many Jews’ pacifism, however Lionel remained oblivious.\textsuperscript{377}

By the late 1920s, Lionel’s departure from Jewish tradition and the community was almost complete. At his brother’s wedding he and his mother felt isolated and Lionel was unable to follow the Hebrew service.\textsuperscript{378} When Mr. Cowan died in 1928, Lionel

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{373} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{374} See also Kadish, ‘A good Jew and a Good Englishman’
\item\textsuperscript{375} Lionel Cowan, p. 10
\item\textsuperscript{376} Ibid, p. 16
\item\textsuperscript{377} See also Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, pp. 88-91
\item\textsuperscript{378} Lionel Cowan, p. 26
\end{footnotes}
struggled with the funeral arrangement: “Well the first thing was to get in touch with the Jewish authorities, which was the Board of Guardians, and they said: “Well, are you a member of a ‘shul’? We’d got no idea about those things.” After the arrangements were made, Lionel was told to go home and sit shiva for 7 days but even this proved problematic: “I’d never heard of it, I’d got no idea.”

In 1929 Lionel attended an exhibition at the Friends Meeting House and it was then he suddenly decided to actively “work for peace”. His anti-war sentiments were further enforced when in 1930 he joined the newly formed International Trampling Tours and travelled to Germany. This trip brought him into contact with large pacifist groups such as War Resisters International and continued to influence his pacifism. If, as Livshin argues, Jewish pacifists were either a by-product of socialism or a route to it, then Lionel is an exception, as it was a chance encounter with a Quaker exhibition that inspired him and triggered a life-long dedication. It was on his second ITT tour in Austria that Lionel met his future wife, Ilse Maas. In 1933, just months after Hitler came to power, Lionel travelled to Berlin to meet her parents for the first time. The change in atmosphere was tangible even in London when Lionel boarded a Lufthansa place: “a small metal plane with a huge swastika on the tail, and I nearly turned tail when I saw that…and this is how I had to go.”

In total Lionel travelled to Germany three times, the last trip for his wedding in December 1934, followed by a short honeymoon in Dresden and Prague. Whilst many Manchester Jews had families on the continent and in Germany specifically, Lionel was in a unique position to experience the situation first-hand during his early visits to Ilse. Unlike the numerous ‘pacifists’, Lionel’s pacifism intensified as the situation in Germany worsened. In the 1930s Lionel became a member of the South Manchester Peace council (SMPC), a group that brought together communists, members of the Labour Party And Quakers: “…right at the beginning of the war, when pacifists had really got no idea where they were going or what they could do, excepting that they would stick firmly to their principles and this would have to be

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379 Ibid, p. 27
380 Ibid, p. 28
381 Williams, ‘Jews and Other Foreigners’, p. 380
382 Lionel Cowan, p.38
383 Ibid, p. 44
384 Ibid, pp. 46- 48
the cornerstone of life and take whatever comes…we kept together, a group of us…” 385 Their work consisted largely of writing and distributing pamphlets, attending protests carrying placards and making anti-war speeches. 386 Many of his speeches were done in public places such as Platt Fields Park and left him open to criticism. 387 Britain’s long military history and the glorification of soldiers were very deeply rooted and Lionel soon realised that recounting the tragedies that occurred in the First World War did come across as “distinctly antipatriotic and attacked ideals British people held dear.” Cowan accepted criticism stoically, considering it “…all part and parcel of what I had to learn. So that was the beginning of my experience in the peace movement.” 388 By the time of his marriage, pacifism was not just a notion that Lionel sympathised with, it had become his identity. As he was by then living in Withington, he had little contact with the Jewish community from which he emerged, making it impossible to gauge their reaction towards him.

Contrary to Livshin’s model, pacifism did not render Lionel incompatible with the community, but rather awakened in him a sense of communal identity. Apart from peace propaganda he also spent a considerable amount of time to help first Ilse’s family and later others to flee Germany, his contacts with the Society of Friends proving useful. 389 As the situation on the continent worsened and the prospect of war became imminent, the criticism pacifists experienced in the early 1930s turned to abuse. They were, according to Lionel, considered ‘pariahs’ and complete outsiders shunned by the majority. It was perhaps crucial for Lionel that he had the support of his wife who accompanied him to all meetings and speeches he gave. Although she understood the situation in Germany better than most, she also felt uncomfortable to support a war on ‘Germans’ as it was impossible to wage “war against the SS and Hitler alone.” 390 Whilst he has the support of Ilse, Lionel’s pacifism complicated his relationship with his parents-in-law who were living with them. There was never any argument, but the tension was palpable, with Mr. Maas pointedly listening to

385 Ibid, p.88
386 Lionel Cowan, p.56
387 Manchester Guardian, 13 June 1938
388 Lionel Cowan, p.55
389 Ibid, p.51-55
390 Ibid, p.56
Churchill’s speeches whilst Lionel turned his back on them.\textsuperscript{391} Although the \textit{Jewish Chronicle} was eager to point out that “conscientious objector attitude has found little if any interest among British Jews,” reports of Jews seeking exemption on religious grounds occasionally appeared on its pages.\textsuperscript{392} Any attempt to portray Judaism as opposed to war was immediately shut down with quotes from distinguished scholars, such as the Chief Rabbi Dr. Hertz who insisted that “there is no basis for such a claim in Judaism” or by using exaggerated language, making war not only justifiable, but imperative in order to “fight Amalek, the archetype of evil…alive again to-day in a German uniform”.\textsuperscript{393}

To make his stance, Lionel decided to register as a conscientious objector and face a tribunal even though he suffered from colitis, a serious medical condition which, at the time, was difficult to treat and which would have undoubtedly granted him exemption on medical grounds.\textsuperscript{394} His first tribunal was held in March 1941 with just one character witness. Lionel chose a colleague from the ITT, a Quaker and fellow pacifist Jack Sutherland, to represent him but the tribunal was unsuccessful. The situation was made worse by a report of the tribunal published in the \textit{Guardian}. The popular view on pacifism was so negative that Lionel was forced to resign from his job at Renold’s: “so this appeared in the press, and although nobody said anything to me at that time, it was obvious that it had been noted, and when I say noted, noted by people who counted, and it wasn’t very long before it was obvious again that they wanted me out, and out as soon as possible.”\textsuperscript{395} At his second tribunal Lionel was given full exemption and advised to proceed as his conscience dictated him. Far from the image of ‘shirkers’, in Cowan’s experience most objectors were quite keen to contribute to their county: “…they were prepared to work on the land, they went to the fire service, they provided first aid and some even went into the army to do, just medical work.”\textsuperscript{396} In an effort to find some “humanitarian activity which was not dictated by the war authorities, and which would be helping ordinary people” Lionel joined the fire squad in early 1940 at the Burnage Babies

\textsuperscript{391} Ibid, p. 90
\textsuperscript{392} For examples of this see the \textit{JC}, 2 February 1940, 9 February 1940 and 22 March 1940
\textsuperscript{393} \textit{JC}, 2 February 1940 and 14 June 1940
\textsuperscript{394} Lionel Cowan, p.59
\textsuperscript{395} Ibid, p.63
\textsuperscript{396} Ibid, p.68
Hospital. His duty was to put out fires from bombs, preventing them from spreading in the hospital. Many members of the fire squad were fellow pacifists/conscientious objectors. Fire watching was often taken up by men in preparation for their tribunal to heed the advice of Judge Burgis who presided over the tribunals in Manchester and urged: “A man who has a conscience about military service must have a conscience in other matters. We expect him, for instance, to have a conscience about dealing strictly and honourably with this tribunal. It is by his behaviour in other walks of life that this tribunal will decide whether he has a conscience where military service is concerned.” Through his marriage to Ilse and largely through his work with refugees, Lionel returned to religion. Determined to keep religious observance after moving to Wilmslow in 1939, Lionel established a small synagogue made up almost exclusively of European refugees living in the area and working as domestic servants.

Although his first venture into pacifism was accidental, Lionel became a dedicated absolutist. Arguably, his determination to help German refugees showed greater affinity with the Jewish community than that demonstrated by Manchester’s Jewish leadership. His establishment of the Wilmslow community also shows a practical way in which he facilitated local religious observance for refugees, arguably in line with internal sources of conformity. Where Alec Ribeiro showed a certain ambiguity towards his father, there is no criticism evident in Kenneth Cowan’s attitude. This difference can be understood not in the context of their pacifism, but in the context of their personalities. Lionel Cowan was a dedicated and present father and husband and, eventually, a valued member of his community. His pacifism was channelled into very practical, communal pursuits both within and without the Jewish community. In contrast, Emmanuel Ribeiro had a complicated relationship with his wife and children. Alec Ribeiro described him as an unsuccessful and frustrated man, not above usurping his children’s business and exercising total control over it, including financial. Throughout his life he placed “his own ambition…[before] his

397 Detailed account of what fire watching involved can be found in Fire Watcher’s Log (Mauldeth), M599/2/1/1
398 Lionel Cowan, p. 84 See also Starkey, I Will Not Fight
399 Manchester Guardian, 1 October 1940
400 Lionel Cowan, p. 91
immediate family’’.\textsuperscript{401} This aspect of how nonconformists might be perceived by their families and communities, based less on their deviance from specific factors than their personalities, is rarely considered. It could be argued that just as Jews did not consciously behave according to patterns of conformity, nor did they respond to the nonconformists in their midst in accordance with such patterns. Where patterns, such as Livshin’s, place individuals together on the grounds of their nonconformity and stress their distance from the community and its values, oral testimonies and personal memoirs highlight their individual personalities, their membership of communities based not on ideology but on personal qualities and relationships with their community. People were not defined by their nonconformity any more than the community was defined by its response. Ultimately, as the anthropologist David Graeber argued, people did not organise their lives to “prove some academic’s point”.\textsuperscript{402}

3.3.3. Manchester Yeshiva

Of course not all objectors were principled, though the stories of ‘deserters’ and ‘shirkers’ are very hard to unearth. Moses Baritz and Arnold Harris, both of whom fled Britain to avoid conscription, have already been mentioned. Lack of enthusiasm or patriotism is not uncommon in the MJM collection but only Pearl Binder recalled (or was willing to admit) that her brother was so terrified of the upcoming war that his parents sent him to America.\textsuperscript{403} Students of religious institutions were exempt from conscription, which caused a sudden popularity of the Manchester Yeshiva on the eve of the Second World War. Although information on the subject is scant, it represents an important contrast to the ‘heroic’ stories of Ribeiro and Cowan, and for that reason, warrants inclusion in this chapter. On an organisational level, the Manchester Yeshiva also provides an important insight into how the leadership derived its sense of self-identity, and the way conformity simultaneously to Jewish and English values was occasionally problematic and even mutually exclusive. The Manchester Yeshiva was founded in 1911 by ultra-orthodox members of the

\textsuperscript{401} Ribeiro, ‘Ribeiro Memoir’, p.48
\textsuperscript{402} David Graeber, Lost People (Bloomington, 2007), Preface
\textsuperscript{403} Pearl Binder J28, T1 S1
community. Its committee comprised of orthodox rabbis and wealthy businessmen, an unlikely alliance of two groups fulfilling their own individual needs. For its religious members, the yeshiva was a way of preserving Jewish tradition, for its funders it was an opportunity to attain control and influence, and whilst they had neither the ambition nor the necessary skill to become Talmudic scholars, it also honoured sentimental ties to tradition.  

Although the community’s ultra-orthodox element was religiously cohesive, it lacked popular support and effective leadership and the Yeshiva was on the brink of collapse by the 1930s. Yet, on the eve of the Second World War it not only experienced a surprising revival, like the TAC it proved itself capable of confidence not shown before and broke away from the communal leadership.

Sydney Needoff was introduced to the yeshiva by his father-in-law Mark Bloom who was among the wealthy businessmen that comprised the yeshiva’s committee. Sydney’s first impression was not favourable as he witnessed the wife of the Rosh Yeshiva (head of Yeshiva) pleading for wages which had not been paid for such a long time that the family were no longer given credit in shops. The institution, it seemed, was viewed by most as a throwback to the ‘old days’ with no place in the modern Jewish community and, as such, received no financial or ideological support from it. It was during this first visit that Sydney and his friend Walter Wolfson were appointed joint senior vice-presidents.

As a capable businessman, Sydney immediately set out to change the public perception of the Yeshiva, with the dual aims of securing steady income from the community and recruiting new students. Satisfied with the progress, Mark Bloom purchased and donated a new building on Seymour Road and gradually the Yeshiva was resurrected. By the late 1930s it boasted some 40 boys and men, including those from communities outside of Manchester, as its full-time students. To bridge the gap between immigrant parents and English-born children it also provided afternoon classes for boys attending the Manchester Grammar School. In the late 1930s the

404 Wise, ‘The Establishment of Ultra-Orthodoxy in Manchester’, p. 32  
405 Sydney Needoff JT 34, T6 S2 & T7 S1  
406 Dayan Golditch J99, T1
Yeshiva started to receive letters from European yeshivas, pleading to take on some of their students who were facing uncertain futures. Manchester’s Jewish leadership, represented by Nathan Laski and his son Neville, discouraged any large scale immigration out of fear it would provoke antisemitism. Their attitude was, as Williams argued, born out of a long tradition of communal leadership “deferential to the British state and culturally subservient to what it saw as the British identity.”

Perhaps the Yeshiva’s leaders felt solidarity on religious grounds, or perhaps their own position as a minority group within the Jewish community that was constantly struggling to survive helped them understand the plight of those seeking refuge. Either way, rather than compromise and offer refuge to a small and financially viable group, the head of the Yeshiva challenged “how can you pick so many to save and allow the rest to go to their death, you must take them all”. All 120 students received a visa to travel to Manchester. The upcoming war, however, also attracted another kind of potential student. Many members of the community, previously oblivious to the plight of the Yeshiva, developed a sudden desire for their sons to become Talmudic scholars. Conveniently, their scholarly status would also make them exempt from war duties; a privilege many parents were prepared to pay handsomely for. Despite a constant need for extra funds, the Yeshiva nevertheless stood its moral ground and refused.

The story of the Yeshiva, so far largely overlooked by historians, has dual significance. In the broadest sense, it challenges both the ‘celebrated’ patriotism of the Jewish community and also the supposed consensus therein, either ideological

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407 Sydney Needoff JT34, T7 & T8
408 Williams, ‘Jews and other foreigners’, p. 10
409 The claim that the Yeshiva brought over 120 European refugees appeared in Manchester Talmudical College, 40th Anniversary Souvenir Report (1951), p. 75 and was confirmed by Sydney Needoff, JT34 T8 S2. The Yeshiva’s records identify around 60 students by name and no other information to support the original claim has been found. See also Williams, ‘Jews and other foreigners’, p. 297. In 2017 a letter resurfaced on an online auction site, written by a Rabbi Khalish from Bratislava in 1938 and addressed to the head of a Yeshiva in New York, pleading with him to accept his two sons as students. It is unknown whether there was any response to the letter but the sons, David and Simon Khalish, received a place at the Manchester Yeshiva. One explanation for the discrepancy in numbers is that the Manchester Yeshiva did indeed offer places to all applicants, but those seeking refuge likely sent out numerous letters and may have received a place elsewhere. Rabbi Khalish’s letter is currently in the possession of Simon’s daughter, Shani Khalish. This information is based on conversations with Shani Khalish.
410 See also Williams, ‘Jews and other foreigners’, pp.288-299, Wise, ‘The Establishment of the Ultra-Orthodoxy in Manchester’, pp. 25-56 and Slotki, Seventy Years of Hebrew Education
or practical, such as that based on fear of repercussion to openly promoting pacifism. By demonstrating that many parents placed concern for their children above feelings of patriotism, real or imagined, it could be argued that (non)conformity is in the eye of the beholder. In this sense, Jewish parents either complied with internal sources of community, by protecting their family, or they deviated from external sources of conformity through their lack of patriotism. The strength of communal patriotism also appears questionable when extrapolated from the contents of the TAC records, which showed both the immigrant community and the leadership in a distinctly negative light.

3.4. Conclusion

Livshin’s classification of radicalism as deviance from three sources of conformity is useful and generally not problematic in the context of her own study, seeking to contextualise radicals within both local and wider society. Her study is mostly concerned with mapping out the chronology of Jewish involvement in radical politics but the assertion that the community viewed its radicals negatively is nevertheless problematic. It also undermines the main purpose of her study: the restoration of nonconformists to the communal narrative. Instead, her conclusion sees radicals not as members of their families and multiple communities, but as an isolated and incompatible minority within the largely conforming majority. In this sense, nonconformity is not only a way of enhancing our understanding of the Jewish community, but also an opportunity to stress its conforming and unified nature.

This chapter has used the three sources of (non)conformity and studied them in the context of lives of individual radicals. Of those, Ribeiro and Cowan were exceptional, not for their opposition to the war, but for their specific brand of pacifism. Others, like Allaun and Rothman, represented wider trends within their communities, specifically the impact the family and locality has on individuals’ sense of community and conformity. The overall aim was to demonstrate that, despite the apparent similarities between them, they were motivated by different factors, determined by their personalities and by their relationship with the
community, or even communities, which, in turn impacted upon their families and communities responses to them. In the context of their radicalism, none of the individuals faced major backlash from the community. Frank Allaun’s parents, though they disapproved, were adaptable and his eventual estrangement was self-imposed. Benny Rothman was rejected by his family but this was unrelated to his politics. Alec Ribeiro described riots outside the family home but this memory is problematic. Undoubtedly, Ribeiro’s pacifism inspired strong feelings and serious abuse from medical practitioners administering force-feeling and also political leaders. But his was an unusual case, receiving publicity and popular support, including from distinguished public figures. Even during his imprisonment people from all over the country sent the family letters of support and money, and questions were being raised about the Governments’ treatment of conscientious objectors.

Clearly, even imprisonment, a relatively clear marker of nonconformity, can sometimes be more complex. It is, however, the internal source of conformity that is most ambiguous. To suggest that tradition, culture and religion not only bind the community but determine its members’ behaviour is to unjustly reduce variegated, subjective and therefore fluid influences to a series of static tethers. The Manchester Jewish ‘community’ was made of a large number of sub-communities, some displaying greater inner cohesion than others. By virtues of birth, Jews may have shared certain cultural markers but rather than infer conformity, these were variously interpreted by individuals, often becoming fulcra for division. In this chapter, the clearest division and its impact on individuals was that between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews. Factors which united the Sephardi community separated them from their Ashkenazi neighbours. Similarly, the Ashkenazi elite’s dedication to English (external) values compromised their Jewish identities, as has been observed in the context of Frank Allaun and his parents, but also on an organisational level such as the leadership’s opposition to refugee immigration. The family unit, as a microcosm of the community, represents by far the most confusing and unfathomable source of community. Deviation from religion on an ideological level was, in Benny Rothman’s case, tolerated, but deviation on a practical level caused a family breakdown. Equally, Ben Ainley’s pacifism conformed to his parents’ values but his communism was seen negatively by them, despite the fact that they were facilitated by the same organisation. Such apparently incompatible and confusing communal
identities make oral testimonies so valuable. By defying pattern and expectation they are a reminder, as Mark Levene has argued, of just how much historians have been conditioned to look for such patterns.
4. The importance of marriage

4.1. Introduction

Although the MJM oral testimony collection is particularly rich in examples of intermarriage, these are generally limited to the interwar period. The first section of this chapter provides a brief timeline utilising naturalisation papers and records of conversionary groups as well as other sources to demonstrate that, prior to the First World War, marriage between Jews and non-Jews was not particularly prevalent, and to explain why it became more common in the interwar period. It also discusses the sometimes contentious terminology surrounding intermarriage. Although the wider project is primarily concerned with examples of nonconformity, this chapter also explores the general role fulfilled by marriage, which, as well as ensuring continuity, served to affirm and in some instances improve individuals’ religious, cultural and economic status. Against the backdrop of hypothetical consensus against ‘marrying out’, the second part of this chapter discusses the potentially divisive nature of Jewish marriage, drawing on the many examples of ‘intramarried’ couples in the MJM oral testimony collection. The final two parts of this chapter consider the experiences of those individuals who ‘married out’, structured around the notions of assimilation and ostracism championed by sociologists and supported by some historians.

The previous chapter problematised Livshin’s understanding of the communal response to political radicals as universally negative and challenged the notion that such a consensus was possible. The community was, however, capable of reaching a consensus in its condemnation of intermarriage, which, in a rare display of unity, seems to have been shared across all sections of the Jewish community. This chapter will focus on examples of intermarriage and consider how such a perceived consensus translated into the lived lives of individuals and its implications for the study of nonconformity.

The aim of this chapter is twofold: firstly, it will highlight the importance of marriage to understanding the Jewish community, and by extension sources of conformity, despite the lack of interest Anglo-Jewish historians have shown in the
It has often been said that Judaism is a religion that “lives at home” yet the family unit, a microcosm of the community, is consistently overlooked by historians in favour of a more generic and vaguely depicted ‘community’. By focusing on examples of intramarrage, that is, marriage between Jews that defied social norms and familial expectations, one can demonstrate that, despite the apparent consensus, attitudes towards marriage reproduced familiar divisions and fault lines within the community. When studied closely, these divisions capture how social norms, which served to regulate behaviour, differed among the Jewish sub-communities of Manchester. Some of these divisions were obvious, such as between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews, others, based on less tangible frictions between members of the immigrant community like politics, economic status and country of origin, were less obvious but nevertheless present. The presence of such differing sets of social norms confounds the possibility of consensus.

The second aim relates to the concept of nonconformity through intermarriage, which will be considered in the context of assimilation and ostracism, outlined as key elements of intermarriage by both historians and sociologists. Oral history remains the most useful source for the study of intermarriage. Though popularly considered ‘taboo’, intermarriage (like marriage) was discussed candidly in a large number of interviews in the MJM oral testimony collection and constitutes the best represented example of social and religious nonconformity. The limitations of this thesis make it impractical to include the large number of interviews the collection offers (40+), but considerable effort has been made to represent their variety. By using oral testimony, which provides an intimate insight into communal life absent from other sources, this chapter will attempt to determine why Jews intermarried and how the community responded to them, outside of traditional sociological theories of

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412 Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen, Track 2
intermarriage. It will be argued that stories of those who married out, were expelled from their home and lost to the community were largely unsubstantiated cautionary tales designed to prevent intermarriage in the first place and that the consensus against intermarriage, seemingly universal and unanimous, was largely hypothetical and not reflected in the lived lives of intermarried couples and their wider families.

4.2. Terminology and timeline

4.2.1. The importance of terminology

Before delving into the study of intermarriage, some aspects of terminology must be clarified. The three terms that are most frequently used in scholarship and contemporary debate to describe marriage between Jews and non-Jews are (a) out-marriage, (b) mixed marriage and (c) intermarriage.\textsuperscript{414} The purpose of this section is not merely to provide an overview of terminology but to highlight the potential bias implied in historians’ choice of such terms, particularly evident in the use of the term ‘out-marriage’ by Bill Williams.\textsuperscript{415} Intermarriage, loosely defined as a marriage between a Jew and someone not born Jewish, is the most neutral and inclusive of the terms, though flawed in its lack of clear differentiation from a conversionary marriage.\textsuperscript{416} The term ‘married-out’ is interpreted by many as offensive but, regardless of whether it is intended to convey a specific judgement value, it is the term most frequently used by the interviewees. Apart from being subjective, it is also misleading in suggesting that, by marrying a non-Jew, one in some way opts ‘out’ of either their community or faith. Those with positive experiences of intermarriage tend to use the equally imprecise and misleading term ‘mixed marriage’ to convey

\textsuperscript{414} For further reflection on the issues of terminology see also Bernard Farber & Leonard Gordon, ‘Accounting for Jewish Intermarriage’, \textit{Contemporary Jewry}, Vol. 6, No.1 (1982), pp.45-75
Although there is no agreement on official terminology, intermarriage remains the most frequently used term even by those with personal agenda, such as communal rabbis opposed to intermarriage.\(^{418}\) Those choosing alternative terminology almost universally do so to convey or to prioritise a particular nuance of intermarriage. Emma Klein and Colin Holmes, writing about Jewish identity and antisemitism respectively, used multiple context dependent terms.\(^{419}\) In contrast, the term mixed marriage and its variant ‘mixed faith marriage’ was most notably used by Rabbi Romain who began writing on the subject after coming into contact with many intermarried couples in his professional capacity.\(^{420}\) Based on her extensive survey and interviews with intermarried couples, Nicola Zemmel proposed the terms ‘combined marriage’ and ‘united marriage’ as more appropriate substitutes in the context of her study.

Williams chose repeatedly to use the term ‘out-marriage’, possibly preferring to mirror its prevalence in oral history, though it is more likely that he used it to stress the perceived marginalisation of intermarried couples. He argued that those who married out chose to “reject the advice of the community’s leaders, to defy communal taboo, and to pursue personal goals at odds with collective destinies.”\(^ {421}\) According to Williams, with the exception of those Jews whose non-Jewish partners converted to Judaism, intermarriage “entailed the total loss to Judaism of subsequent generations, and in the case of women threatened the severe, and possibly fatal, erosion of Judaism in their children.”\(^ {422}\) In summary, Jews who intermarried deviated from religious and communal values and in turn the community rejected them.\(^ {423}\) Williams viewed such examples as radical nonconformists and, with only a

\(^{417}\) The term also carries racial connotations since anthropologists use it to discuss cross-racial relationships. See also Augustine Barbara, *Marriage Across Frontiers* (Clevedon, 1989), quoted in Zemmel, ‘Intermarriage’, p. 13

\(^{418}\) Jonathan Sacks, *Will we have Jewish grandchildren? Jewish Continuity and How to Achieve It* (London, 1994)


\(^{420}\) Romain, *Till Faith Us do Part*

\(^{421}\) Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, pp. 2-4

\(^{422}\) Ibid.

\(^{423}\) Ibid, also in Williams, *Jewish Manchester*, p.9
few exceptions, considered them ostracised from their community.\textsuperscript{424} It will be argued in this chapter that this is both inaccurate and unhelpful to those wishing to understand the Jewish community without prejudice. This chapter will present a pluralistic view of intermarriage, mirroring experiences of the Jewish community in Manchester and the oral testimony itself, and utilise the terms ‘intermarriage’, ‘out-marriage’ and ‘mixed marriage’ in their specific contexts.

\subsection*{4.2.2. Intermarriage before the First World War}

Having established the use of terminology, it is also necessary to provide a timeline for the study of intermarriage. Though it has not proven possible to convincingly authenticate this, the general consensus among historians is that intermarriage was rare before 1918.\textsuperscript{425} Having found no evidence to contradict this, this section will outline the limited ways in which instances of intermarriage in this period can be studied.\textsuperscript{426}

It was not until the 1980s, when demographic research showed just how much the Jewish community had shrunk since the post war decades, that intermarriage started to be considered a real threat by the leadership.\textsuperscript{427} But even then it was identified as only one element, however significant, of a more general indifference and weakening sense of Jewish identity that had become a feature of the community.\textsuperscript{428}

The idea that assimilation, which will be discussed later, led to the decline of Anglo-Jewry, was rejected by Cesarani as a sociological construct based on “primitive and...
often silly methods”. He was particularly dismissive of the idea of intermarriage, in any meaningful way, contributed to this decline, as historically, only “the aristocracy sought Jewish wives, so that it could lay its hands on some of that legendary Jewish wealth.” We may not be able to determine the frequency of intermarriage in the pre-war period, the factors that led to it and the communal response to it, but this should not diminish the fact that intermarriage, however infrequent, was a feature of Jewish life, and one that interested and concerned ‘the community’.

One of the sources which can be used to infer the leadership’s opposition to intermarriage is the *Jewish Chronicle*, voice of the Jewish establishment. Its negative stance was both explicit in its support of traditional Judaism and more subtly expressed in its high coverage of society weddings, which Cesarani interpreted as an incentive to marry within faith. Intermarried couples occasionally appeared in the census data, but such records are speculative and reveal nothing of the personal stories of those involved. Some early instances of intermarriage were captured in the records of conversionary groups which ventured to Manchester from the 1840s. The two most significant of these were the London Society for the Promotion of the Gospel Among Jews, the world’s largest missionary group devoted to evangelising Jews, and the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews. Their offer of “free board and lodging during the enquiry stage” and “free education and free maintenance of Jewish children brought up in the Christian faith” held little sway over the community and any success they enjoyed was fitful and episodic. Independent missionaries were only marginally more successful, perhaps because...

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429 Cesarani, ‘The Alternative Jewish Community’, p. 50
431 Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, pp.12-13, 69
432 For an example of how early census data can be used to determine intermarried status of a couple see Hilary Thomas, *From Wolkowisk To Wallgate and Other Journeys* (Wigan, 2014), pp.22-23
434 Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 7, Missionaries also offered free medical care, see also Annie Butler, *Edward Meacham, Medical Missionary* (London, 1896) and Black, ‘Health and medical care’, p.100-102
they operated under the guise of charity, offering medical advice, clothes and even Christmas gifts, and their missionary nature was less explicit.\footnote{435} Christian missionaries targeted only the poorest and most desperate sections of the community and along with extreme poverty, separation from family and the Jewish community and descent into crime, they identified intermarriage as one of the reasons for conversion, although it is usually impossible in such cases to determine whether conversion was the result of intermarriage or vice versa.\footnote{436}

Equally sporadic were instances of intermarriage which appeared in applications for naturalisation. One example is the case of Abraham Kushner, a Polish Jew who became a British subject after the war. At the time of his application, in 1917, he had been living in England for nearly 10 years, most of the time lodging with “illiterate Jews” in Strangeways. In 1917 he married an Irish Roman Catholic, Josephine Gaugram, and converted to Christianity. Although the documents reveal little about Abraham’s life, we know that the couple were living with Josephine’s parents in Salford, perhaps confirming Williams’s suggestion that those who ‘married out’ abandoned Judaism and faced “rejection by their families [and] ostracism by the community”.\footnote{437} Contrary to Williams’s assertion however, Abraham did not experience “the refusal of work by Jewish immigrant employers”, and continued to work as a presser for a Jewish factory run by Mr. Mistovski, suggesting that he retained at least some links with the Jewish community.\footnote{438} Such records serve as a useful indicator that intermarriage, however rare, was a feature of Jewish life, but their content is both speculative and their frequency so low that even a more comprehensive survey would be unlikely to significantly enhance our understanding of what led Jews to intermarry and how the community responded to it prior to the First World War.

\footnote{435} For an excellent example of an independent missionary, a Jewish convert named Kalk, see also JC, 28 November 1888 and Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, pp.9-10
\footnote{436} The limited success of the Israel Napthali, a Manchester agent of the London Society for the Promotion of the Gospel among Jews in the 1840s was closely linked to intermarriage. For individual cases see also William, The Making of Manchester Jewry, pp. 148-149
\footnote{437} Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 10
\footnote{438} Abraham Kushner, naturalisation documents, HO 144/1.1.503
4.2.3. Interwar period

The majority of the oral testimonies in the MJM collection were recorded in the 1970s with people who were born in the period 1895-1920. As a result, most stories of intermarried couples fall within the interwar period and, whilst this emphasis may be unintentional, it nevertheless correctly reflects the increase in intermarriage rates during this period.439 This section will outline some of the key factors that led to this increase, including internal communal factors as well as general changes in society.

The steady flow of new immigrants that ensured that the community retained its foreign element ceased with the outbreak of the First World War. In conjunction with the elite’s anglicizing efforts, the community became increasingly, though not universally, de-Judaised and detached from tradition.440 Yiddish, the primary language of Jewish families, gradually became something parents used only when they did not want their children to understand after the immigrant *chevroth*, which fulfilled a social, as well as religious function, had been shunned in favour of the dance hall.441 It has been argued that this foreign element, which was fast disappearing after the war, acted as a deterrent to possible intermarriage, for immigrant Jews were not only disinterested in interacting with the outside world, they were ill equipped for it.442

Aside from the internal developments arising from the shift in immigration patterns, the Jewish community was also affected by changes in wider society. The interwar period, typically spoken of in term of disillusionment, unemployment and economic

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439 Cesarani, ‘The Alternative Jewish Community’, p. 51, The increase of intermarriage during the interwar period resulted in the London Beth Din banning unconverted wives of Jewish men from synagogue membership in 1945. Lipman argued that although intermarriage had increased in this period, it was still rare and posed no real threat to the community’s integrity. V.D. Lipman, *A History of the Jews*, pp. 221-222
442 This argument was put forward by Dr. Yaakov Wise who saw the present day haredi community’s traditional dress code and Yiddish speaking as a measure designed to minimise young people’s interaction with the outside world and prevent possible out-marriage. The author consulted Dr. Wise on the haredi community on 5/12/2008. For a further description of what is meant by ‘foreign element’ see also Englander, ‘Policing the Ghetto’, pp. 31-33, Traditionally, adherence to Jewish dietary laws fulfilled much the same purpose, minimising interaction with non-Jews and by extension preventing intermarriage. Alan Unterman, *The Jews: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Brighton, 1999), pp. 190-191
fluctuations, was also marked by an expansion in leisure provisions. Rambling societies and cycling clubs were growing on an unprecedented scale and, as Williams noted: “Few social groups formed in the 1930s, whatever their primary purpose, failed to include rambling as part of their programmes.” Socially, such groups provided the opportunity for young people to mix outside their usual social circle and enjoyed almost universal appeal. The 1920s and 1930s, regarded as a period of female emancipation, also saw an increase in female employment and resulted in growing independence. Rambling societies facilitated this new-found independence by providing women with the freedom to “dress like men, look like men and act like men”. For Jewish youths whose relationships were typically conducted within the bounds of familial and communal expectation, rambling provided a route to potential nonconformity through illicit relationships, occasionally leading to intermarriage. Equally important was the growing popularity of cinemas and dance halls, synonymous, in Manchester, with the newly emerged ‘teenage culture’ of which Jews were active participants.

The effect of such changes in society was largely restricted to the younger generation. For many Jewish parents their only experience of the wider society came through interactions with their Christian neighbours, whom they perceived as morally inferior due to their penchant for alcohol and their lack of parenting skills. Had Lara Marks used oral history, the Clyne sisters’ interview would have provided useful supplementary descriptions of the ‘model mothers’. The sisters recalled seeing young Christian children sitting outside the local pub, waiting for their parents to

444 In Manchester this included the Clarion Cycling Society, Manchester Rambling Club, British Workers Sports Federation and the YCL’s Challenge club as well as ‘Red’ sports clubs. For more information see also Jones, *Sport, politics and the working class*, p. 78, Livshin, ‘Nonconformity in the Manchester Jewish Community’, pp. 113-118, Denis Pye, *Fellowship is Life: The Story of the National Clarion Cycling Club* (Bolton, 1995) and Hilda Cohen, *Bagels with Babushka* (Manchester: Gatehouse Project, 1989), pp. 44-47
445 Williams, ‘Red Rambler’, unpublished essay
448 Williams, ‘Red Rambler’
449 See also Fowler, *The First Teenagers*
come out, as commonplace in Strangeways and Red Bank and their stories are confirmed by numerous interviews. Non-Jews were universally referred to as ‘Yoks’, ‘Goyim’ or ‘Baites’, derogatory terms which reflected the generally contemptuous communal attitudes.\textsuperscript{450} Even families such as the Clynes, communists with distinctly ‘liberal’ attitudes to non-Jews, were not immune to certain prejudices and their children grew up believing themselves to be smarter than Christian youths. The Clyne sisters’ spoke mockingly of their Christian neighbours’ poor dress sense. Their inability to match gloves to a hat or obtain a properly fitted dressed was referred to as “the real shikse dress”.\textsuperscript{451} Beck Caskett who grew up on the edge of the Jewish community further explained this sense of Jewish superiority: “I think that culturally we were a little bit ahead of them. We were interested in the arts, we were interested in theatre”, in contrast, non-Jews “weren't interested particularly in the arts or culture or reading or being a blue stocking, they were a little contemptuous of that sort of thing.”\textsuperscript{452} Whilst young Jews may well have subscribed to the prejudice expressed by their parents, this seldom acted as a deterrent to their interaction with non-Jews, as demonstrated by the example of the Clyne sisters, most of whom married out. Jewish parents feared intermarriage but through their relative detachment from wider society, they remained largely ignorant to its likelihood. Negative communal attitudes towards intermarriage are generally assumed but there is little evidence that the community, represented in this instance by both the leadership and the parents, took active steps to prevent it. There is, for instance, no evidence in the oral testimony archive that immigrant parents were opposed to their children’s attendance of dance halls or cinemas. The \textit{Jewish Chronicle} dismissed fears of orthodox parents about mixed dancing and theatre going as “narrow-minded…parasitic growths which like dank mould…clustered in the ghetto.”\textsuperscript{453}

Although Jewish youth clubs, such as the Maccabi and even the JLB, served to keep Jewish youths in the communal fold and prevent nonconformity through intermarriage, they were not conceived with this aim in mind, fulfilling this function

\textsuperscript{450} Morris Noar J189, Dinah McCormick J279, the Clyne sisters J61, Julius Leonard J157
\textsuperscript{451} Clyne sisters J61, T1 S2
\textsuperscript{452} Beck Caskett J54, Track 2
\textsuperscript{453} \textit{JC}, 17 March 1911, also quoted in Cesarani, \textit{The Jewish Chronicle}, p. 113
coincidentally. When the Waterpark Tennis Club was set up in Broughton in the early 1930s, like the Maccabi, it generated many Jewish marriages. The club’s owner, the property developer Adolf Cassel, did not establish the club out of concern for his daughters’ marriage prospects, as one might expect from a man proud of his orthodoxy, but was responding to them being turned away from the non-Jewish Higher Broughton tennis club. This was, perhaps, another instance in which immigrant parents failed to understand, and fear, what social contexts led to intermarriage.

4.3. Intermarriage or Intramarriage?

4.3.1. Sephardi-Ashkenazi Intermarriage

Although the term ‘intermarriage’ is generally understood as a marriage between Jews and non-Jews, in the community it was also frequently used to describe Jewish marriages deemed unsuitable and incompatible. Whilst the consensus against intermarriage out of faith gives an impression of homogeneity, ‘intramarriage’ brings to focus the divisive nature of the community where economic, geographical and religious boundaries outweighed shared heritage and identity to the extent that such marriages were sometimes considered problematic and active steps are taken to prevent them. Although such marriages did not pose the usual concerns that accompanied out-marriage, such as loss of Jewish identity and continuity, they deviated from the unique social norms of the individual communities that existed in Manchester.

The most visible form of intramarriage, at least as one sees it in historical literature...
and oral testimony, is that between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, which often generated opposition form Sephardi families. Moses Lisbona belonged to the earliest group of Sephardi immigrants to Manchester, arriving in the 1870s with his wife and three of their nine children.\textsuperscript{459} Due to the size of the Sephardi community, the majority of the Lisbona children married into Ashkenazi families which, according Moses’ granddaughter, Constance Lisbona, was a source of considerable distress but was also seen as inevitable.\textsuperscript{460} In Manchester, the marriage pool for Sephardi Jews was limited. Many families overcame this by travelling to the countries of their origin in order to obtain wives, but ‘intramarrige’ was still relatively common, as synagogue marriage records indicate.\textsuperscript{461} Ironically the best description of the difficulties of a Sephardi-Ashkenazi union comes from Cissie Laski, whose marriage to Neville Laski was a successful one. According to Cissie, in Manchester the segregation between the two groups was so extreme that intermarriage was unthinkable. Neither of their families provided much opposition to their relationship although it should be noted that they were not necessarily considered representative of their respective communities. Cissie was the daughter of Moses Gaster, a distinguished thinker and Haham who offered no opposition but expected Neville to join a Sephardi synagogue and follow Sephardi customs, Cissie asserting: “We baptised him!”\textsuperscript{462} The couple moved to Manchester shortly after the war and settled in Didsbury, then the heart of the Sephardi community. Cissie disliked Manchester, considering it boring compared to London, and was shocked by the striking division between Askhenazi and Sephardi communities in the city. There is an interesting ambiguity in her attitude to this division, since, on the one hand she engaged in philanthropy aimed at increasing interaction between the two groups, but, on the other hand, she did not manage to overcome her own prejudice to the extent that not even Neville’s family escaped her scrutiny. Speaking about Sarah Laski, her mother-in-law, Cissie reflected: “Though my mother in law became an Alderman or

\textsuperscript{459}The remaining six were born in Manchester. Constance Lisbona J169, T1 S1

\textsuperscript{460} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{461} See also Alice Mesrie JT62, T1 and Bahie Labaton JT63, T1 for experienced of Syrian women who came to Manchester as a result of an arranged marriage. Eric Sassoon JT61, T1, Vera Bolchover MANJM 2015.1.4, Rosie Levy J164, T1 S1 and Rachel Barash J15, T1 S2 offer further insights on Sephardi marriage, arranged and often conducted abroad, For specific examples and statistics on Sephardi-Ashkenazi marriage see Lydia Collins, The Sephardim of Manchester, Pedigrees and Pioneers (Manchester, 2006), p. 25-26,

\textsuperscript{462} Cissie Laski J144, T1 S1, also in Doreen Harrison J117
Councillor, or whatever she was, to my mind she never got out of where she was born”. When Nathan Laski, her father-in-law, needed to impress, he turned to Cissie to organise a party for him at her home in Didsbury, not only because Sarah “didn’t seem to keep up with him” but also because their house, with only a “couple of scruffy little maids” was not up to the task. In contrast, Cissie employed Winston Churchill’s former nanny for her children. Cissie Laski J144, T1 S2

Little is known about how the Laskis reacted to the marriage; it is possible that they saw their association with the Gaster family as an improvement of their status. If they had reservations, they were likely overshadowed by those for their other children’s marriage status. Their daughter Mabel suffered from an unspecified disability, remaining unmarried and their son, Harold, abandoned Judaism for socialism and married a non-Jewish woman. Marghanita Laski, ‘My Grandfather, Nathan Laski’ and Anthony Blond, Jew Made in England (London: Timewell Press, 2004), p. 104

Based on the Laskis, one might infer discord over Sephardi-Ashkenazi marriages arose out of class consciousness. Sephardi Jews were considered the wealthier and more refined section of the community, even though this was not universal. But the opposition often stemmed from the perceived cultural incompatibility of the two as well as romantic ties to the synagogue and the community. Sephardi Jews in Manchester were a small group with an unusually high degree of inner cohesion, stemming from their immigrant status, strict Orthodoxy and business connections. Zenner, A Global Community, pp. 70-72
children “dutiful, decent, a useful middle-class…Victorian outlook”.\textsuperscript{466} Had he been alive, such a description would have undoubtedly come as a heavy blow to a man considered “the king of Manchester Jews”.\textsuperscript{467}

A more light-hearted example of cultural incompatibility appeared in the interview with Estelle Hakim. When presented with their Sephardi son-in-law, Estelle’s mother was alarmed when he did not enjoy her typically Ashkenazi meals and worried he was ill.\textsuperscript{468} Estelle embraced Sephardi diet which at least ingratiated her to her husband’s family, but not all differences could be overcome with such ease. Romantic attachments to communities and synagogues should not be underestimated. The Lisbonas, for instance, lost their wealth during the war and were forced to move to a smaller house in Broughton. But despite their altered circumstances, they never socialised with ‘the Easterners’. In a display of unity, they continued to receive wedding invitations from the Sephardi families that previously represented their social circles but had long since relocated to Didsbury. But the desire to marry within their community cannot be attributed solely to desire for cultural cohesion. Oral testimonies confirm that most Sephardi Jews in Manchester considered themselves superior, financially, religiously and intellectually to the Ashkenazim and looked at marriage as a means to maintain or further improve their status. The study of Sephardi-Ashkenazi unions highlights two important functions of marriage: to affirm one’s cultural identity and to maintain or improve social standing. That such marriages could be sometimes considered problematic is perhaps the clearest indication that differing social norms existed within the many groups within the Manchester Jewish community and how these served to maintain identity, culture and continuity.

4.3.2. Class, nationality and marriage

Whilst the Sephardim maintained a strong degree of separation from the wider Jewish community in Manchester, remaining largely cohesive, the Red Bank and

\textsuperscript{466} Marghanita Laski, ‘My Grandfather, Nathan Laski’
\textsuperscript{467} See also chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{468} Estelle Hakim MANJM 2012.51.9, Track 1
Strangeways communities were frequently perceived through the lenses of poverty, immigration and Yiddish culture and wrongly regarded as homogenous by historians and Jewish leaders alike. Immigrant Jews may well have related to one another in terms of their immigrant experience, Jewish identity and proximity but divisions caused by nationality, politics, levels of religious observance and economic status created boundaries within which different social norms applied. Those who crossed such boundaries, such as through marriage, often faced resistance, if not opposition, from their families.

Although Ashkenazi Jews were able to communicate with one another in Yiddish, giving an outward impression of homogeneity, nationality was a deeply divisive factor. Statistically, this is confirmed by the very existence of the numerous chevronth, often named after a place of origin of its congregants suggesting their kinship and cohesion distinct from the rest of the community.\(^{469}\) The MJM collection contains numerous examples of negative attitudes between Jews of different nationalities, some of which relate directly to marriage. Judith Emanuel, a member of the Manchester Jewish Socialist Group, recalled stories of her German grandparents’ devastation upon meeting their Polish daughter-in-law, Judith’s mother. Marriage to a ‘Polak’, they though, was socially degrading and considered as “bad as marrying out”.\(^{470}\) Although she did not use the term ‘intermarriage’, similar sentiment was expressed by the artist Peal Binder, who recalled her parents’ arranged marriage: “The fact that they’re both Jewish doesn’t cover over the fact that one is a Pole and the other a Russian. My mother always despised Russians”.\(^{471}\) To mirror earlier references to cultural divisions, like Mr. Hakim’s distaste for Ashkenazi diet, Mrs. Binder, a highly-strung, nervous woman who suffered from frequent headaches, considered herself superior to her husband whose robust health she attributed to his ‘peasant’ background. An army deserter with no interest in fighting ‘anyone’s war’, Mr. Binder nevertheless found himself volunteering for the Boer war at his wife’s insistence. Their relationship never improved and although they did not separate, they communicated exclusively through their children or

\(^{469}\) Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, p. 272
\(^{470}\) Judith Emanuel, Track 1. For an excellent example of attitudes and interactions between Jews of different nationalities see also Dinah McCormick, J279, Track 2
\(^{471}\) Pearl Binder J28, T1 S1
through Pearl’s aunt Esther who lived with the family. Esther’s own marriage, also arranged, deteriorated when her husband “bolted with someone else” although it is not clear whether nationality was a factor in this case. Pearl concluded: “Mine is a rather curious story, it’s an unsuccessful Jewish family.”

There have been other interpretations of what constitutes intermarriage, including Dinah McCormick’s conviction that it was a term best applied to unions between “Labour voters and Tories” who were much more incompatible than Christians and Jews. For Sydney Needoff, a local politician, intermarriage between Jews and Christians was beyond the pale but he also offered interesting insights into other types of highly unsuitable marriages, including intramarriage between Orthodox and Reform Jews, inter-racial marriage between Jews and black people, including those who were Jewish, and a marriage between two Jews of differing social and economic standing. Phil Glantz grew up in Moreton Street in Strangeways, which was home to several black families, and was able to confirm the undesirability of intermarriage between Jewish women and “African coloured men of ship” who were considered “the lowest of the people arriving in England”. Three Jewish women in his neighbourhood entered such intermarriages and, at odds with the alarm and distaste they inspired, were able to give their children typical Jewish upbringings. Phil recalled one as a distinguished and popular member of the JLB, even winning a prize at a summer camp. The response of the community to such families presents an interesting case study. On the one hand they were considered scandalous and became the source of local gossip, even serving as a deterrent for the younger generation. When Clara Weinberg, also from Strangeways, questioned her mother about why their neighbour’s baby was black, she was told it was because his mother looked at a black man. Clara grew up afraid to even glance at a black man, believing it would result in giving birth to a black baby. The fact that such families remained within the Jewish community and not only continued to practice Judaism but passed it onto their children raises questions about the level of ostracism suggested by Williams.

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472 Ibid, T1 S2
473 Dinah McCormick J279, T3 S2
474 Sydney Needoff JT 34, T6 S2
475 Phil Glantz J94, T1
476 Clara Weinberg J254, T2 S1
Phil Glantz believed the community was suspicious of such families and that their children had limited prospects of marrying within their community, yet they remained active and even popular members.477 Similar ambiguity sometimes appears in the stories of couples who married out, suggesting the need to revise or remove the term ‘ostracism’ as a consequence of nonconformity.

The social position, economic standing and levels of religious observance of the families into which their children married were of great concern to many parents. Sydney Needoff’s own romantic pursuits are a good example of the sort of anxieties marriage engendered in Jewish youths and their families. When he met May Bloom at a dance he was so entranced that he proposed before the night was over despite the fact that she was there as his best friend’s date.478 Panic replaced elation when, in the morning, he realised he knew nothing about her family. After enquiries were made and Sydney and his father were satisfied, the marriage went ahead but, according to his testimony, he had been prepared to reconsider if this had not been the case. Like the Laski family, the Needoffs were an aspiring middle-class family and an advantageous marriage was essential.479 Rachel Barash who was Sydney’s neighbour in Higher Broughton, confirmed Sydney’s attitude as typical of their social group, even if she deviated from it by marrying a Polish immigrant from Strangeways. Rachel had previously visited houses in Strangeways as a volunteer for the School Camps Association, but visiting her husband’s family was the first time she did so socially. The shock of it (“I’d never seen anything like it!”) was lessened by the fact that they were an educated and cultured family. Her own family, part of the anglicised elite, found it harder to accept their new relatives’ poverty and their strict orthodoxy: “My people, of course, at the beginning when I first started to go out with my husband, were horrified, until they got to know them.”480 Similar to the Laskis, the differences between Rachel’s and her husband’s background were overcome by a shared sense of aspiration. In a more striking example, Nellie Lee, a Christian woman married to a Jewish man, was held in low regard by her husband’s family

477 Phil Glantz J94, T1
478 Sydney Needoff JT34, T6 S1
479 Sydney’s sister Fanny, for instance, rejected proposal from a man she considered lacking in ambition. Ibid, T5 S2 and T6 S2
480 Rachel Barash J15, T1 S2
though they thought equally poorly of her sister-in-law who was Jewish but came from a poor family.\textsuperscript{481} In South Manchester, Thelma Chadwick discovered a marriage certificate suggesting that her parents married in a secret civil marriage in Manchester a year before their ‘official’ wedding took place in Sheffield. Although she could not confirm this, she assumed they did so due to her grandparents’ opposition to Thelma’s father who was Jewish but “a penniless Irishman”.\textsuperscript{482} Opposition to such unsuitable unions was mostly expressed by the couple’s parents but not restricted to them. Sidney and Gertrude Hamburger’s families were friendly and encouraged, if not orchestrated, their children’s budding romance, but Sidney had his own agenda. An ardent Zionist, he demanded his future wife shared his passion. During their courtship he provided Gertrude with a reading list and quizzed her on her knowledge of Zionist history. His final condition before the marriage could take place was that their first-born son would be named Herzl.\textsuperscript{483} The examples of Sydney Needoff and Sidney Hamburger offer a different angle on the generational gap which existed between immigrant parents and their English born children. Their sense of conformity, embodied in their desire to marry within the community, came from their family and the values passed down from their parents. Their additional requirements, such as Sydney’s desire to choose a wife that would further his social standing and Sidney’s insistence that his wife shared his passion for Zionism mark a change from the previous generation where such compatibility was not necessarily a factor in marriage arrangements. The interwar period was a transitional one, in which the community redefined its sense of tradition and identity. For the two Si(y)dneys, their sense of tradition happened to be compatible with their modern attitude to marriage, whereas for Rachel Barash and others it was not.

Although they conformed to social norms, even inter-Jewish marriages could be considered nonconforming in the event of their breakdown, occasionally resulting in a more or less public scandal. Gartner has focused on the most extreme example of this in the context of white slavery but other, and sometimes equally traumatic,
examples can be found in Manchester. Reflecting on her family’s history, Rachel Barash spoke of the stigma attached to divorced women. Nobody dared to ask whether her mother-in-law’s first marriage ended in divorce or annulment, but the family were treated so badly after she married for the second time that they were forced to leave Poland. Wolf Benninson’s mother also came to Manchester following her divorce. Aware of the stigma and its effect on her future prospects she decided to leave her child behind. Although her new family knew about her past, they never asked questions, considering it “something locked up in her heart”. The scandals relating to Mrs. Barash and Mrs. Benninson were restricted to their families and their immediate communities but reports of broken and unsuccessful marriages also frequently appeared in the local press. In 1901 the *Manchester City News* reported on a broken engagement between Nathan Harris and Ettie Reubens. The young couple from Strangeways, engaged to be married, opened a joint account at the Post Office, agreeing to regular contributions. They were also repaying a joint loan to Ettie’s father. Nathan consistently failed to pay his share and in the end forged Ettie’s signature and emptied the account. When arrested in Kettering, he falsely claimed that the money had been used to purchase an engagement ring. The engagement ended not only with a broken heart but also with a scandal and three years of penal servitude for Nathan. The fate of Ettie and Nathan, like that of many such couples whose personal failures found their way onto the pages of local press, remains unknown. There is no way to determine how, if at all, their deviation from social norms and, in Nathan’s case, the law, affected their place in the community and their future marriage prospects. Scandals relating to public figures, such as William Aronsberg, offer much more detail and make at least partial reconstruction possible.

Aronsberg was a Russian immigrant who arrived in Manchester as a child and rose to prominence, both in his professional career as an optician and as a regular contributor to local philanthropic causes. Like many members of the elite, Aronsberg

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484 Gartner also focused of the legality of immigrant marriages, divorce as a result of long term separation and generally accepted social norms, such as the position of unmarried women. Gartner, ‘Anglo-Jewry and the Jewish International Traffic in Prostitution’, pp. 129-175
485 Rachel Barash J15, T1 S2
486 Wolf Benninson J24, T1 S2
487 *MCN*, 20 June 1901
was prone to certain grandeur. His home in Victoria Park was said to have boasted a vast collection of autographed letters from aristocrats and other distinguished figures he counted among his personal friends and he also claimed to hold 100 keys to civic and communal institutions which he had ceremonially opened. Among his most notable achievements were his long stints as Manchester’s JP, a Guardian of the Jewish Poor, an elected officer of the South Manchester Synagogue as well as the Life Presidency of three immigrant synagogues. ⁴⁸⁸ Despite appearances, Aronsberg was not a fully-fledged member of the elite. That his position of what Williams termed ‘an exclusive club’ was tenuous and depended on his “untarnished respectability and evident civic esteem…high repute and prestigious contacts” became obvious following his appearance in Manchester assizes in 1893. ⁴⁸⁹ After the death of his first wife, Aronsberg, then aged 56, pursued and became engaged to Amelia Sutton, the 27 year old daughter of a Sephardi merchant, Ezra Sutton. During their courtship, Aronsberg showered his young bride with elaborate gifts, including his personal memoir, and promised to keep her “like a little queen”. ⁴⁹⁰ Their wedding was to take place in 1892 in the presence of, among others, the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster, the Bishop of Manchester and Lord Rothschild, but for reasons unknown the engagement was initially postponed and eventually cancelled altogether. In 1893 Aronsberg appeared before the assize Courts, sued by Amelia for £500 for a breach of promise. The case attracted much attention from the local press; Spy’s editor in particular relished the more salacious details, including Miss Sutton’s alleged eight lovers, eventually concluding: “She whom he thought to make his mate is now his checkmate.” ⁴⁹¹ Despite the numerous reports in the Manchester Guardian, it remains unclear what passed between the couple but the scandal proved fatal to Aronsberg’s membership in the elite circles. Publicly humiliated, he filed for bankruptcy and died in self-imposed exile on Corfu. Shame and scandal, whatever their source, were powerful motivational sources of conformity. There is much that remains obscured in Aronsberg’s case, such as whether his bankruptcy was the cause or the result of his broken engagement. His

⁴⁸⁸ Aronsberg also claimed to be a personal friend of Disraeli. For a comprehensive list of his achievements reported in the Jewish Chronicle see also Williams, The Making of Manchester Jewry, pp. 298, 428-429
⁴⁸⁹ Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 21
⁴⁹⁰ Manchester Guardian quoted in Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 22
⁴⁹¹ Spy, 19 August 1893 and 21 October 1893
voluntary exile may have been based on his own awareness of social norms from which he deviated or imposed upon him through exclusion from the elite circles, as Williams had argued, suggesting that deviating from social norms entailed shame and ostracism. The immigrant community from which he emerged, and with which he retained links, remained loyal to him even after his trial, either out of gratitude for his avid support of the immigrant chevroth or possibly because they were less concerned about the possibility of a public scandal.

Stories of broken engagements and doomed romance rarely attracted the attention of the *Jewish Chronicle* which had little interest in issues concerning life within the immigrant community and no intention to publicise scandal. In the rare instances that it did report on Jewish marriages deviating from the norm, it did so in order to raise awareness of legal matters relating to marriage, which, if unchallenged could pose serious legal implication for the individuals and undermine the authority of the Jewish leadership.\(^492\) This included issues of wife desertion, *agunot*, marriage ceremonies and divorces carried out by immigrant rabbis which were considered invalid in Britain, and ‘false marriage’ in which bridegrooms wooing unsuspecting ‘Jewish maidens’ turned out to be white slave traders engaged in international trafficking.\(^493\)

The examples included in this section depict marriage as a crucial element of Jewish communal life that inspired a great deal of anxiety in Jewish parents and children alike. The generational gap between immigrant parents and their children sometimes led to their differing expectations of marriage. The immigrant generation, whose marriages were largely attributed to the matchmaker, were determined to preserve respectability, regardless of the cost. Divorce was rare and any discontent was concealed, in the words of Pearl Binder: “They hide over the rifts.”\(^494\) In contrast, the interwar generation, born and brought up in Manchester, mostly chose their own

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\(^{492}\) One example of this is the religious divorce of Sheina and Elia Friedberg from Riga, which took place in Manchester in the presence of Rabbi Schlossberg. The divorce was pronounced invalid as was Elia’s subsequent remarriage. *JC*, 16 October 1908

\(^{493}\) Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England*, pp. 183-185

\(^{494}\) Pearl Binder J28, T1 S1, also in Dr. Rich J237
partners. Such matches were based on romantic love and shared values. However, circumstances and changing attitudes are only one part of the story. Much depended upon individuals’ own personalities, as indicated in the different choices made by Rachel Barash and Sydney Needoff. Unsuitable and unhappy marriages are of particular interest when they led to either divorce or scandal. The former was viewed by the immigrant community as breaking from social norms or conformity and had a serious impact on the individual families which, in the two quoted examples, resulted in emigration. The latter posed a threat to the established elite which saw itself responsible for maintaining the image of respectability. One interesting observation that emerges from this section is how little we know about Jewish marriage and Jewish family life in general. Domestic felicity cannot be assumed, as Gartner observed, but the richness of oral history on the subject opens the possibility for future study. Williams blamed the lack of available records pertaining to intermarried couples, which makes the reconstruction of their stories impossible, on the ostracism intermarried Jews faced from their communities. In reality, we know just as little about marriage and family life within the bounds of the Jewish community.

4.4. Assimilation

The most sustained study of socio-religious nonconformity in Anglo-Jewry in general, and concerning marriage in particular, can be attributed to Todd Endelman, although it should be noted that, as a historian of radical assimilation, he was naturally drawn to cases of intermarriage with the most extreme outcomes that were not always representative of the wider Jewish community. Endelman’s placement of intermarriage in the context of assimilation is neither surprising nor unprecedented, as historically, the two often went hand in hand. Most notable is his study of the early Sephardi community in London, which yielded a distinct pattern of assimilation leading to intermarriage and subsequent conversion to Christianity as an aggregate effect of their past experiences of integration in their countries of origin.

495 With the exception of the Sephardi community, there is no mention of a matchmaker in the community, other than in the context of the previous generation. See also Estelle Hakim MANJM 2012, 51.9, Solomon Reich J 203 and Ruth Mandel MANJM 2012.50.54
496 Gartner, The Jewish Immigrant in England, p. 166
497 See also Lipman, A History of the Jews, pp. 112, 206, 221
and their social, economic and political aspirations.\textsuperscript{498} A pattern of ‘marrying up’ into the aristocracy and genteel society developed as a sort of exchange of money for status. This pattern was later replicated by German Jewry, though Endelman argued that whilst in England it was more or less optional, for aspiring German Jews radical assimilation by intermarriage and conversion was a necessity.\textsuperscript{499} The Ashkenazi elites were less prone to such assimilation from the outset, partly due to their more traditional experience of Judaism and their origin in countries where segregation was still a feature of Jewish life.\textsuperscript{500} Intermarriage and conversion, though they did occur and occasionally even followed similar trajectories to Sephardi Jews, never quite matched the Sephardi community in their scale. The other groups identified by Endelman as most likely to intermarry as a result of assimilation were those on the opposite end of the social scale: those involved in crime, separated from their families or living away from Jewish communities.\textsuperscript{501}

In Manchester, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi elites displayed an equally high degree of conformity when it came to marriage, despite their very different levels of assimilation. In North Manchester, the constant influx of new immigrants created a community more or less self-sufficient and detached from the outside world. Brought together by trauma, poverty, tradition and proximity, they nevertheless lacked the inner cohesion of the elite. Any unity within the immigrant community was an illusion, best captured in the words of Pearl Binder “The Jews were Jews, so they were all one and yet, in other ways, they weren't all one”.\textsuperscript{502} Nationality, level of religious observance and political allegiances have already been stressed as factors that created deep divisions within the immigrant community, but they also rendered it tolerant to being different. This section will focus on examples of intermarriage in oral history and attempt to determine the role assimilation played in the phenomenon, specifically as a factor leading to intermarriage. It will be argued that whilst intermarriage did sometimes lead to greater assimilation, both of Jews into

\begin{footnotes}
\item[498] Endelman, \textit{Radical Assimilation}, pp. 9-34
\item[500] Another contributing factor what the delay in entering upper-class circles, contributed to the social and cultural background of Ashkenazi Jews. See also Endelman, \textit{The Jews of Georgian England}, p.251
\item[501] Endelman, \textit{The Jews of Britain}, p.67
\item[502] Pearl Binder J28, T1 S1
\end{footnotes}
general society and Christians into the Jewish community, it was very rarely a direct result of the sort of socio-political assimilation proposed by Endelman.

4.4.1. Factors leading to intermarriage

Although at least a basic level of assimilation was a necessary prerequisite for intermarriage, it rarely served as a key factor in the way suggested by Endelman.\textsuperscript{503} The inclusion of assimilation in studies of Jewish continuity and intermarriage is not restricted to Endelman and works of sociology, but remains popular rhetoric even today.\textsuperscript{504} An opposing trend has emerged simultaneously, represented, for instance, by the demographer Barry Kosmin, who has argued that the community is in transition, redefining what it means to be Jewish and not necessarily deviating from its norms.\textsuperscript{505} The examples quoted in this section will be considered in the dual contexts of assimilation and transition, with the aims of considering whether assimilation was the key factor leading to intermarriage and enhancing our understanding of the Jewish community in this period.

Non-Jewish youth organisations, particularly those with radical elements, such as rambling societies and cycling clubs, have often been viewed as potential sources of religious and social nonconformity. Yet those who met their non-Jewish partners through such groups did not join them seeking marriage and the same could be said for non-Jewish places of entertainment like dance halls and cinemas. Both venues, which were also responsible for many Jewish marriages, offered social and sexual freedom and facilitated nonconformity, but did not generally challenge traditional attitudes to marriage. For those who did marry out as a result of such interaction, it was not a premeditated rebellion but either an expression of existing detachment from communal values or a case of falling in love. Rather than a marker of assimilation, youth clubs and dance halls were favoured by young Jews largely conforming to the social norms of their families and communities but also curious to explore their

\textsuperscript{503} Endelman, \textit{Radical Assimilation}, pp.9-34
\textsuperscript{504} Such as Jonathan Sacks quoted in Klein, \textit{Lost Jews}, p. 2
\textsuperscript{505} An interview with Barry Kosmin quoted in Klein, \textit{Lost Jews}, p. 3; This subject is dealt with in depth in Parelman Judd, \textquoteleft Intermarriage and the Maintenance of Religio-Ethnic Identity\textquoteright and an interview with Rabbi Robyn Ashworth Steen, Track 1 and 3
identities as Mancunians, which were incompatible with their home life.

There are numerous interviews in the collection that represent such duality in young people’s identities, but perhaps the best is the example of Julius Leonard, one of only three interviewees who made a conscious decision to ‘marry out’.506 As a young man Julius and his friends, all Orthodox Jews, deliberately targeted non-Jewish girls who had lower expectations and were more open to sexual encounters. Sexual purity was expected from Jewish girls, with Julius confirming that they were “very restrained”. The lack of restraint displayed by English girls who, according to Julius, were open to “kiss and a cuddle and even lovemaking”, usually carried out in the cinema, was seen favourably: “I was never happier than when I was in the company of English girls. I remember the English girls of yesterday, my time, were vastly superior to the English girls of today. You never saw fourteen year old tarts going in pubs in those days.”507 Jewish girls were not only restrained but had much higher expectations, in line with their parents’ values, in Julius’s words: “The English girls, you could talk to them and be at home with them and the Jewish girls were always ‘I’m superior to you kind of thing’. They were more than standoffish, they were real snobs, they always made you feel low, they always made you feel inferior.”508

Julius initially dated Jewish girls but was repeatedly interrogated about his financial prospects by their fathers. This expectation and inflexibility in the “hungry twenties” offended him and Julius decided to marry an English girl.509 The very possibility of Julius’ pursuit of English girls could be attributed to assimilationist tendencies but such a notion is challenged by the immigrant community’s high degree of conformity in marriage. The circumstances of his out-marriage, however, remain complicated. It was not so much a case of rejection of tradition and the values of the community, but rather a protest against its strict and divisive social norms, including

506 The others are Dinah McCormick, whose story appears in this chapter, and Helga Gorney, a German refugee who came to Manchester as a domestic servant. Helga felt shunned by the established Jewish community who viewed her with suspicion. This feeling of alienation led to her decision to marry a Christian Englishman to ensure that her children would not have to experience antisemitism. In reality, she married a Jewish refugee Kurt Gorney. In Helga’s case both external and internal communal factors contributed to her decision. Helga Gorney, MANJM 2012.50.27
507 Julius Leonard J157, T2 S1
508 Ibid.
509 Ibid
the emphasis on economic status, which naturally placed him on the margins of the
marriage market. Had he been more successful in his career, perhaps conformity
would have been a more natural response to such pressures, as it had been for his
friends, all of whom enjoyed their youthful dalliances but married within the
community. The dual identities and the sometimes conflicting social norms implied
therein are also evident in the differing standards Julius’s friends applied to girls they
dated and to those they married, valuing the lack of restraint in the former but sexual
purity in the latter.

There is only one example in the collection that demonstrates, without any
ambiguity, how greater assimilation was directly responsible for intermarriage and it
is unusual since it was a Christian girl who married into a Jewish community. Fanny
Lazarus recalled her Catholic neighbours from Red Bank whose daughter became
friendly with Jewish girls and spent most of her time among them, even attending
synagogue on a weekly basis. After leaving school, she applied for a job in a Jewish
factory proclaiming proudly “I’ve been going with a Jewish family ever since I can
remember” when questioned about how she would fare in an exclusively Jewish
environment.\(^{510}\) Some years later, despite her family’s protestations, she converted
into Judaism and married into the Starr family.\(^{511}\)

The most important factor preventing intermarriage was not awareness of social
norms, but one’s relationship with one’s family and the wider community. Close
familial bonds often served to prevent intermarriage even if individuals allowed
themselves, like Mr. Leonard, to explore their emerging English identities by dating
non-Jews. Many of those happy to casually date non-Jews knew they would never
marry out, quoting their obedience to and respect for their families as deciding
factors. Thelma Chadwick did not share her parents’ fear of intermarriage and was
happy to date non-Jewish boys but always knew she would marry within the Jewish
community out of a sense of duty to her parents.\(^{512}\) In some instances, it was
individuals’ own sense of Jewishness and place in the community that prevented

\(^{510}\) Fanny Lazarus J146, T1 S1
\(^{511}\) Ibid.
\(^{512}\) Thelma Chadwick JT 28, Similar factors were also mentioned in Lipman, A History of the Jews in
Britain, p.112
them from forming more serious attachments, such as that demonstrated in the interview with Margaret Langdon. Born in 1891 to one of the most distinguished Jewish families in Manchester, Margaret grew up at the heart of the ‘cousinhood’, a small cluster of wealthy cotton merchants united by marriage as well as business partnerships. Although her family were anglicised and assimilated, her attachment to the community and her strong sense of Jewish identity ensured her conformity. When she fell in love with a non-Jewish man who worked for her father, she made the difficult decision to not marry him. This was in no way motivated by her family who promised to support any decision she made. After much deliberation and withstanding her partner’s persuasion, she decided that she could not imagine bringing up children in a mixed marriage.513

The evidence pertaining to intermarriage seems to suggest that whilst young people were increasingly engaging with the outside world, this did not generally lead to lasting deviance from traditional values. Perhaps a more accurate term than assimilation would be ‘acculturation’, defined by sociologists as learning values and manners of the wider society whilst retaining religious and cultural integrity.514 The community was changing and greater mixing with their wider society, previously inconceivable and undesirable, was becoming common and even normal. Intermarriage was mostly a matter of chance and if assimilation contributed it, it did so not through individuals’ identification with values of their wider community but rather by the changing expectations of young Jews, which did not necessarily entail deviation from their parents’ values and social norms.

4.4.2. Jews without a community: the importance of locality

The group identified by Endelman as perhaps the most likely to break away from Judaism were Jews who ventured outside the bounds of larger communities into places with either very small Jewish settlements or no Jews at all. Although his argument is applied in the context of Georgian and early Victorian periods, its principle can easily be appropriated for more recent history.515 The following section

513 Margaret Langdon J143, T3  
514 Parelman Judd, ‘Interrmarriage and the Maintenance of Religio-Ethnic Identity’, p. 252  
515 Endelman, Radical Assimilation, pp. 53-54
will focus on stories of Jews with links to Manchester growing up in such isolated communities and consider whether their isolation, in which greater assimilation is implicit, and detachment from the community contributed to nonconformity through intermarriage. It will be argued, contra Endelman, that in the absence of a wider community providing additional pressure to conform, Jewish parents were forced to place greater emphasis on passing on Jewish values. Most were acutely aware of the potential dangers of intermarriage and took active steps to prevent it, at least in terms of self-consciously inculcating Jewish identity and values. In Manchester, with the possibility to be surrounded by Judaism in every possible way, this role was delegated to the wider community.

Thelma Chadwick grew up in Crewe, a small Cheshire town which was home to only one other elderly Jewish couple. Neither of her parents came from Crewe and it is not clear what brought them there. Thelma’s father, Samuel ‘Harry’ Diamond, grew up in Dublin and travelled to Cornwall at the age of 15. Harry’s dream to become an actor crumbled when it emerged he possessed no talent and he joined a ‘quack dentist’ with whom he travelled to Sheffield. By the time he met his future wife, Hilda Marks, he was working as a commercial traveller for a furniture company. The Marks family, based in Sheffield, were decidedly middle class and had high expectations for their daughter. As expected, they were fiercely opposed to her choice of husband but the marriage went ahead and the young couple settled in Crewe soon after. Separated from the Jewish community, the Diamond family grew increasingly lax in their religious observance. Their initial attempt to order kosher meat from Manchester was quickly abandoned and they became what Thelma described as “completely anglicised and not at all observant”.⁵¹⁶ The majority of their acquaintances were non-Jews and Harry belonged to a local conservative club where he played snooker. Despite their lack of opportunities to be with other Jews, Harry and Hilda retained strong Jewish identities and looked forward to Jewish company during the high Holy days which they spent either in Blackpool or in Hanley, both of which had small Jewish communities.⁵¹⁷ It is difficult to gauge how, if at all,

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⁵¹⁶ Thelma Chadwick J28, T2 S2
⁵¹⁷ See also Shula P. Moreland, Jewish settlement in Staffordshire: the early years 1811-1901, in *Jewish Historical Studies*, Vol.42 (2009), pp.97-120, Norman Franks JT 18, T1 S1 and Jewish
Thelma’s parents tried to instil a Jewish identity during her early childhood. When her mother suffered from a nervous breakdown following the First World War, young Thelma was sent to North Wales with her nursemaid to ensure her mother’s peaceful recovery. While there, she regularly attended Protestant and Baptist churches, even developing a preference for the former. Not content with being a passive observer she felt compelled to participate by kneeling down.\textsuperscript{518} When she was later enrolled to a primary school run by Ursuline nuns she ignored her parents advice to not say prayers and joined in, merely substituting ‘Jesus’ for ‘God’ as a concession to her parents.\textsuperscript{519} As a teenager in boarding school, she befriended two sisters from Alderley Edge whose father was a parson. When visiting she enjoyed attending church with them. Thelma always knew she was Jewish but for a long time she did not understand what it meant and, even once she did, she was not convinced that it mattered in terms of interaction with non-Jews and or the potential for intermarriage.

At the age of nine, perhaps starting to realise her lack of a sense of Jewish identity, Thelma’s parents made an increased effort to introduce her to Judaism. Unable to conform to a Jewish way of life, they at least wanted to give Thelma a sense of having ‘roots’ to ensure the kind of social conformity possible in a distant community; to instil in her a sense of Jewish identity that separated her from others, most notably in terms of marriage aspirations. Initially, this included lectures on famous Jewish musicians and actors, delivered by her mother, no doubt to instil pride in her heritage. Thelma told the story with relish, believing it to be a humorous idiosyncrasy, but such Jewish pride is clearly mirrored in other interviews. Frances Nemrow, who also grew up isolated from the community, received similar lectures and learnt to use them to her own benefit, obtaining money for films with ‘Jewish’ actors. However, neither of the girls was convinced.\textsuperscript{520} Perhaps realising the futility of their efforts when Thelma proudly brought home the ‘Child of Jesus’ award from school, her parents decided to send her to Minerva, a Jewish boarding school in

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\textsuperscript{518} Thelma’s nursemaid attended Protestant Church but her fiancé Willie Hughes was a Baptist. They took it in turns to attend both churches. Thelma Chadwick JT28, T3 S1
\textsuperscript{519} Thelma Chadwick JT28, T1 S1, T2 S2, T3 S1
\textsuperscript{520} Frances Nemrow JT 36, T1 S2
Leicester they could ill afford. It was not until her first day of school that Thelma realised how limited her knowledge of Judaism was.\(^{521}\) Having visited the school once before, coincidentally on the first night of Hanukah, she asked when the candles would be lit assuming it was a nightly ritual. Although the school failed to ignite Thelma’s enthusiasm for Judaism, it did result in life-long friendships and a sense of identity that kept her firmly anchored in the Jewish community.

Thelma’s parents did not stop her from socialising with non-Jews, which at any rate would have been impossible in Crewe, but they were clear in their expectations for her to marry within the Jewish community, both out of a sense of conformity to social norms and in order to ensure the continuity of their own values and identity as Jews. That Thelma was aware of their fears and respected them, even if she did not relate to them, is evident from the story of her 21\(^{st}\) birthday party, to which she invited non-Jewish boys but allocated them Jewish surnames to allay her parents’ suspicions. According to Thelma, her parents were so desperate for her to marry a Jew they were willing to “marry her off to any non-gambling, non-drinking Jewish man”.\(^{522}\) Stories of her teenage years show that this might not have been an exaggeration. When the Ackerman family from New York arrived in Crewe, complete with two eligible sons, Mrs. Diamond set her hopes on either one becoming her son-in-law. This, Thelma believed, had little to do with the family’s fortune but rather their Jewishness. Mike Ackerman briefly pursued Thelma but eventually married a local non-Jewish girl.\(^{523}\) Another potential courtship, perhaps more serious this time, came when the Sanofsky family moved to Crewe from Liverpool. They were the first Orthodox Jews Thelma encountered and a source of fascination to her. She was briefly engaged to their nephew, Alfred Abrams but their relationship came to an abrupt end when they relocated to Liverpool. Exhausting the local marriage pool, Thelma’s parents brought their self-imposed exile to an end and set out to obtain as many party invitations as they could with the aim of securing a Jewish husband for their daughter. The net was cast wide and the family attended

\(^{521}\) See also Zoe Josephs (ed.), *Minerva, or, Fried fish in a sponge bag: the story of a boarding school for Jewish girls* (Birmingham, 1993)

\(^{522}\) Thelma Chadwick JT28, T2 S2

\(^{523}\) The Ackerman’s family business, Chester Barrie, was started by Simon Ackerman, a Polish Jew who had made his fortune in New York. In the 1930s they relocated to Britain opening a shop in Saville Row and setting up factories in Crewe and Chester.
parties in Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool or Newcastle every weekend. Whilst her parents were hoping for introductions to a suitable young man, Thelma enjoyed the fresh supply of party dresses and new-found social life. Although she shared none of her parents’ fears of intermarriage and happily socialised with non-Jews, including as boyfriends, she was essentially obedient and aware of her responsibilities towards her parents as their only child. By her own admission she knew she would “never marry out”.524 She married a Jewish man but was not opposed to her own children’s intermarriage. For Thelma, her conformity was not linked to her sense of Jewish values and her identification with social norms that existed within the Jewish community; instead, it was born out of respect and a sense of duty she felt to her parents. In contrast, her parents’ sense of Jewish identity and values was deeply rooted, the transmission of which was of principal concern, despite their apparent nonconformity.

Thelma’s interview might be richer in detail than others but it is not unparalleled in the collection. Stanley Cohen grew up in Macclesfield and, until the outbreak of the Second World War, his family were the only Jews in town. Unlike the Diamond family, the Cohens made considerable effort to remain as Orthodox as their circumstances allowed them. Stanley remembers collecting kosher meat from the train station and regular trips to the South Manchester Synagogue where he and his brother attended cheder. Painfully shy, Stanley rarely left his mother’s side. His parents worried about his lack of independence but also his lack of experience of the Jewish community and his identity as Jew which was based entirely on their own example. Soon after his bar mitzvah Stanley was dispatched to Aryeh Boarding school in Brighton. As in Thelma’s case, he quickly settled into his school life: “I didn’t like it, the idea of being taken from my parents. But in actual fact I made friends very quickly”.525 Once back in Macclesfield, Stanley was also nudged in the right direction when it came to marriage. His parents encouraged him to join the Maccabi Club and the Waterpark Club in order to meet a Jewish girl.526 Whilst Stanley had perhaps a greater sense of Jewish identity than Thelma, identifying with

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524 Thelma Chadwick JT28, T3 S1
525 Stanley Cohen, Track 1
526 Ibid.
his parents’ values rather than merely respecting them, in both cases the family comes across as the most important source of conformity. Community, defined here as shared space and institutions, makes it easy to overlook one or more types of nonconforming behaviour, as the example of the Clyne family will show. Isolated, only the most dedicated will remain committed to observing the rules of kashrut, regular synagogue attendance and adherence to the liturgical year. The majority, like the Diamond family, will become reluctant nonconformists. But in more fundamental matters, such as a sense of identity, attitudes to marriage and by extension to continuity, the family presents itself as a far more important source of conformity.

Assimilation did play its part in the increased occurrence of intermarriage in the interwar period, but not in the way it the way suggested by Endelman. For Endelman, assimilation led to intermarriage in two ways. The first was conscious assimilation, based on a desire to further one’s economic, political or social standing. The second was a natural assimilation which occurred when one’s Jewish values and identity eroded, perhaps as a consequence of physical separation from the community or by choice. There no is evidence in Manchester for out-marriage motivated by furthering one’s position, although marriage within the community, especially its elites, certainly fulfilled this role. During the interwar period, the emerging nouveau riche families, like the Needoffs, attempted to replicate this pattern of marriage to strengthen their position in the community. The second type of assimilation, occurring naturally, is more problematic. Young Jews were increasingly more comfortable in non-Jewish settings partly, as a result of the very targeted Anglicisation campaign by the elite but also through their own experiences as Mancunian Jews, as argued in chapter 2. This sometimes led to weakening of traditional values and very rarely, contributed directly to out-marriage, which remained largely the result of unplanned romantic attachments.  

Rather than seeing assimilation as a source of gradual detachment from Jewish values, it should be seen as an inevitable feature of a community in transition and a shift in what constituted Jewish values. In the immigrant district where religion and

527 Lipman, A History of the Jews in Britain, p.112
tradition permeated every aspect of their life, young Jews rejected social outlets preferred by their parents’ generation as well as their views on marriage and relationships. This did not always lead to nonconformity, as suggested by Mr. Leonard’s isolated position among his friends, but rather, as in the case of Sydney Needoff and Sidney Hamburger, redefinition of existing traditions and marriage expectations. In isolated communities, most Jews automatically became practical nonconformists but aware of the implications for their children, many such families put considerable effort into ensuring other types of conformity.

4.5. Ostracism

The theme of ostracism and marginalisation as suggested by Williams recurs throughout the interviews, almost always expressed by those with no personal experience of intermarriage. Judith Emanuel, Stanley Cohen and Phil Geller were among the many who spoke of families going into mourning for their children who married out but when questioned directly they became confused, struggling to recall specific incidents. Stanley reflected that his conviction that ostracism followed intermarriage was something “you just knew”. It other instances interviewees were asked leading questions. In an interview with Bill Williams, Julius Suss recalled a family in the neighbourhood whose son married a Christian girl. He was then asked whether this “shamed the family”. The answer was, of course, in the affirmative. But even this story shows ambiguity that is a familiar feature of many interviews relating to out-marriage. When Williams asked whether the family were “looked down upon” Julius was certain they were not and since their daughter married ‘well’ there were apparently no lasting repercussions. From the content of the oral testimony collection, Williams’s conviction that Jews who ‘married out’ were ostracised seems largely unevidenced; it contains only two concrete examples which, by the interviewees’ own admission, were unusual. Ostracism is nevertheless a popular notion in sociological studies on intermarriage in minority groups. Paul Spickard’s study on intermarriage in America was able to not only confirm Endelman’s earlier observations that those located at opposing ends of the social

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528 Judith Emanuel, Track 2, Stanley Cohen, Track 1, Phil Geller, Track 1
529 Julius Suss J242, T1 S2
530 Such as Parelman Judd, ‘Intermarriage and the Maintenance of Religio-Ethnic Identity’, p. 265
scale were more likely to marry out, but also that ostracism was one possible outcome of such unions. This section will look at examples of those who married out and consider their families’ reactions against the perceived threat of ostracism. More broadly, it will consider the implication of familial responses to intermarriage in terms of conformity to the social norms of the Jewish community.

4.5.1. Elopement

Whether or not they were ostracised following their marriage, the fear and anticipation of it was certainly felt by Jewish men and women who entered relationships with non-Jews. Despite the differences in their circumstances, many intermarried couples either found it difficult to tell their families of their upcoming nuptials or feared they would be discouraged. As a result, elopement emerged as a recurrent event in many of the interviews. The examples quoted in this section will suggest that stories of ostracism were in most cases merely cautionary tales designed to prevent intermarriage and that such ostracism rarely occurred.

When Frank Allaun married Lillian Ball he did not tell his parents until the night after. Benny Rothman’s marriage to Lilly Crabtree also came as a surprise to his family: “I simply had some little invitation cards printed and I left them, one Christmas Eve, at home in a prominent position. I may have or may not have left a letter with my next door neighbour who was a friend of mine to give directly to my mother.” Max Clyne was slightly more accommodating, coming home and shouting “I’m going out to get married!” before leaving for his wedding. To avoid confrontation, Louis Aronovitch decided to travel to America to marry his non-Jewish girlfriend, presenting the news to the family as ‘fait accompli’. Perhaps most extreme was the story of Dinah Glanz, who failed to inform her family of her marriage to Jack McCormick. The couple decided to get married on the spur of the moment, in Dinah’s words: “I don’t know what made me do it, I just decided one

531 Such as Spickard, Mixed Blood, pp. 85 and 359
532 Frank Allaun JT1, T1 S2
533 Benny Rothman JT19, T3 S2
534 Louise and Sarah Aronovitch J10, T1 S2
day”. Instantly regretting her haste, Dinah returned to her mother’s house, hid her marriage certificate and pretended nothing had happened until it was found by accident six months later.

The way families reacted to the news depended on what kind of relationship they had with their children and what motivated their opposition in the first place. Frank Allaun correctly assumed that his parents would not react well to his relationship with Lillian but in his case, this was as much a reaction to Lillian’s communism and her family’s working class status, both of which were unpalatable to Frank’s middle class conservative parents, as it was to her lack of Jewishness. Once the marriage was announced there was very little opposition and the young couple even moved in with Frank’s parents. Any reservations they may have felt about their non-Jewish daughter-in-law disappeared with the arrival of their first grandchild. It is possible that the Allauns’ acceptance was more of a resignation. Frank had already abandoned his religion, education and his respectable job in favour of becoming a factory worker and an outspoken campaigner for communist causes; an opposition to his choice of wife was unlikely to yield any results. On the other hand, his parents were clearly determined to maintain a relationship with their son and their love for him likely contributed to their response.536

Generally accommodating to his communist and anti-fascist activities which often landed him in trouble, Benny Rothman’s family were less understanding when it came to his marriage. Although he retained contact with his brother and his Jewish friends, Benny’s mother and sisters went into mourning and refused to see him for the next twenty years. The severity of their rejection shocked Benny who had noted his family’s increasing laxity in matters of religious observance and knew they were in regular contact with non-Jews, through work and socially. Although he had made a few attempts to see his family, he was met with hostility each time and his anger at their hypocrisy prevented him from making continued effort to reconcile with them. Their reconciliation came when Benny received a telegram from his brother telling him of their mother’s heart attack. He was shocked by her appearance, altered by

535 Dinah McCormick J279, Track 2
536 Frank Allaun JT1, T6 S1
illness “I didn’t recognise my mother, I couldn’t have picked her out of a crowd.” Mrs. Rothman died soon after meeting her grandchildren and her daughter-in-law for the first time. Benny’s example raises a particularly important point about Anglo-Jewish historiography. Although the story of Benny’s political activities is well known, little has been written about his personal life. Historians repeatedly stress the ‘alarm’ caused by one’s affiliation with communist causes but, as has been argued in the previous chapter, Benny’s politics did not cause much friction in the community or in the family. Conversely, his intermarriage, generally overlooked, not only led to his estrangement from Judaism and by extension that of his children, but also dominated his four-hour interview.

At only 20, Max Clyne was the first of the seven Clyne siblings to get married and the first, though not the last, to marry a non-Jew. It is not clear if his parents knew of his non-Jewish girlfriend before his abrupt announcement. Their opposition to the marriage was somewhat surprising, in the light of their own nonconformity. The Clyne family lived at the ‘poor end’ of Moreton Street and although they remained traditional to the extent of keeping a kosher home, lighting candles on Friday night and sending their children to cheder, but, according to their children, they only did so because they were surrounded by such tradition. Mr. Clyne was a Russian immigrant who arrived in Manchester imbued with radical politics and introduced his children to left-wing ideology from early childhood. In the community the Clynes earned similar notoriety to the Jenkins family who lived around the corner from them and held YCL meetings in their home, dubbed the ‘Bolshevik house’. The Clyne family home was always open to fellow comrades in a similar fashion and was, according to Benny Rothman, considered ‘a safe house’ and used by many youngsters, Jewish and non-Jewish, as their drivers’ licence address because “they were always there”. In spite of their detachment from religion, the Clynes were determined that their children would marry within the community. Like their adherence to rituals the meaning of which they no longer believed in, this was partly born out of habit as for their own generation, intermarriage would have been highly

537 Benny Rothman JT19, T3 S2
538 Joe Clyne, J59
539 Hilary Jones MANJM 2015.1.3
unusual, and also fear for their children’s place in the Jewish community. Their other concerns were of a more practical nature, feeling that their children would be happier among their own people and also that Jewish boys were steady and could provide. Mr. Clyne was particularly strict with his daughters, even resorting to physical violence when he suspected Esther of going out with a Christian. All of this had little effect on the girls, who felt no reservations dating non-Jewish boys and even bringing them home, though they would be introduced as comrades rather than boyfriends. Max’s abrupt and aggressive announcement, attributed by his sisters to his nervousness, accounted for much of the opposition. His mother was hurt. No details were given of how reconciliation occurred but any rift was seemingly only short-lived. When Freda Clyne married Felix Selvi, a non-Jew, her father did not attend the wedding but “was easily won over” and even offered to help Felix financially, planning to move in with the couple. Like Freda, Bella Clyne married a Spanish republican refugee, facing little opposition from the family. Max Clyne’s intermarriage, although initially viewed negatively by his family, ultimately did not lead to ostracism but it also rendered his parents more tolerant to the subsequent intermarriage of his sisters. This reaction has many parallels in the collection, with implications for the sense of what was and was not acceptable among the wider community. The extent to which the Clyne sibling’s intermarriages represent nonconformity could be argued, since, along with Jewish social norms, they were also brought up with communist principles and much more egalitarian views on marriage. Their family’s emphasis on Jewish marriage is surprising in the context of their own nonconformity. It can be explained rationally, in terms of a fear of antisemitism and poor economic prospects based on their negative experience of Christian families in Strangeways. The other explanation is based on their identity as Jews, unrelated to traditions or social norms of the community, but expressed as a more tribal sense of belonging that makes continuity imperative.

Louis Aronovitch decided to move to America to marry his non-Jewish wife as they both feared opposition from their families and communities. The news of his marriage came as a shock to Louis’s sisters who feared that he was manipulated by his “much older” wife whilst the family were split up during the First World War.

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540 Clyne sisters J61, T1
Louis is one of the very few intermarried Jews from the MJM collection who abandoned his religion in favour of total assimilation. In America he adopted a new name, Joseph Fleming, and converted to Christianity. He remained in contact with his family through letters and even came to visit with his new wife. Whatever their feelings were, the family received the couple graciously. Some years later Louis’ brother went to visit him in America and remained there working for him. His sister Sarah concluded: “It was a tragedy but it turned alright, she made him a good wife”.⁵⁴¹ Although Louis became estranged from his family and community, it was not the result of ostracism but rather his anticipation of how his family might respond to the news of his marriage.

Some six months after Dinah Glantz’s marriage to Jack, her friend accidentally discovered her marriage certificate and read it out loud to Mrs. Glantz. To contextualise, Dinah’s trepidation was in no way unreasonable, Mrs. Glatz, a formidable woman who brought her large family up singlehandedly, was no stranger to physical violence. She was described as an immensely charitable woman who insisted on helping anyone in need but as a deeply religious woman she “despised” those with lower standards, especially the local Christian families, many of whom were rowdy drinkers and negligent parents. She regularly beat her children in a struggle to instil the same values and distrust of anyone stepping out of line. It is difficult to determine the success of her efforts. Dinah’s oldest brother felt happy to date non-Jewish girls, even if he knew he would never marry one, he put this down entirely to fear of his “mother’s right hand”.⁵⁴² Another brother married a Christian woman but made it his condition that she converted to Judaism so that their children would remain Jewish. Dinah’s oldest sister was the most traditional of all the siblings and in age and outlook closer to the immigrant generation. On one occasion she pretended that Dinah was not her sister rather than admitting to having a non-Jewish brother-in-law. In contrast to her siblings’ relative obedience, Dinah rebelled from a young age. Being the third daughter in an extremely poor family, she felt she had to assert herself. As in Julius Leonard’s case, her decision to marry a non-Jew was not just a matter of rebellion but emerged simultaneously from the poor

⁵⁴¹ Louise and Sarah Aronovitch J10, T1 S2
⁵⁴² Phil Glantz J94, T1
treatment she received from Jewish boys and her perception of unreasonable distinctions between boys and girls and Jews and non-Jews. Jewish boys found her independence difficult. More than once her mother reminded her “you are too proud and too independent and they think that you are laughing at them, they don’t like that kind of person”. In turn Dinah struggled with the familiarity between the Jewish families of Strangeways all of whom seemed to known each other. Dating Jewish boys was like going out with her brothers: “I knew them too well, knew their families, it wasn’t for me!”543 After starting work at the age of 16 she developed close friendships with her non-Jewish colleagues and started dating non-Jewish boys. Dating typically took place in dance halls, Dinah favouring the Ritz and Ashton Palais. Although dance halls feature frequently in the interviews, often as a backdrop to illicit romance, they are usually stories told by men. Dinah’s memories add another dimension to the dance hall dynamics. Whilst Jewish boys were seeking “whatever they could get” from non-Jewish girls, the well-brought up girls were left abandoned and sometimes, such as in Dinah’s case, turned their attention to Christian boys. Pearl Binder, Dinah’s contemporary and friend, had similarly negative experiences of dance halls. In her case, she felt shunned by Jewish boys for her lack of dowry, further confirming economic status as a divisive factor when it came to marriage: “No one danced with me at all. I thought…let's have a whole evening with not being danced with. For the Jewish boys, I suppose, the marriages would be arranged and the girls would have to have a dowry. Well, in my family such a thing was just not possible. You know, we lived from hand-to-mouth almost, very respectable, but there was no money.”544

Although Mrs. Glantz initially refused to meet Dinah’s first boyfriend, she eventually relented and Jack became a regular visitor at her home as she was at his mother’s house. Once the news of their marriage became public, Mrs. Glantz’s reaction was not what Dinah had feared and anticipated. Weeping, Mrs. Glantz said “Whatever he was, he wasn’t diseased to me. It was only a heart disease and anyone can get that!” Once the initial confusion was over and Dinah explained that her marriage certificate said ‘father deceased’ and not ‘diseased’ Mrs. Glantz was happy

543 Dinah McCormick J279, T3 S1
544 Pearl Binder J28, T1 S1
enough with the news. She liked Jack and resigned herself to the fact that he was not Jewish but resented his lack of ambition and Dinah’s inevitable poverty. Several years later Mrs. Glantz found it very hard to accept the news of her daughter’s pregnancy, considering it irresponsible to bring a child into the world what was “neither fish nor fowl”. When David was born she refused to see him for 9 months until a chance encounter when she admired a friend’s baby in a pram only to be told it was her own grandson. Mother and daughter reconciled and enjoyed a close bond until her death. Her dying words: “Jack loved my chips” were seen by Dinah as proof of the affection she had for her non-Jewish husband. Like others’, Dinah’s story was ambiguous when it came her position in the Jewish community. As an intermarried couple the McCormicks did not receive wedding presents and had to buy furniture on credit, but in other ways, such as place of residence and social life, they remained very much part of the community. When Dinah took David to be circumcised at one month old the Jewish doctor was surprised she took so long. Dinah’s embarrassment over her intermarriage was waved aside as she did not marry in church. In spite of Dinah’s initial fear over her mother’s reaction, the McCormicks lived in a very comfortable mixed marriage, each maintaining their own religious identity and enjoying a double share of holidays.

In most cases, fears of ostracism were unfounded. Immigrant parents who feature in all examples in this chapter, retained traditional attitudes to intermarriage, reflecting notional social norms but they were also willing to overlook these in order to maintain relationships with their children. Stories of ostracism are largely unsubstantiated but the fact that fear of such reactions led to elopement and, in Louis Aronovitch’s case, even to flight, shows that it is not to be discounted from encouraging conformity. It is possible that such tales are inspired by earlier experiences of intermarriage in the pre-First World War generation which, as Williams correctly stated, are out of historians’ reach. The increased tolerance of Jewish parents to intermarriage did, however, not alter their own values and understanding of social norms and should not be seen as a symptom of greater assimilation.

545 Dinah McCormick J279, Track 5
4.5.2. Responses to intermarriage

Although it has been argued that (a) the thought of intermarriage did not generally preoccupy Jewish parents more concerned with the suitability of their children’s Jewish partners and (b) that intermarriage, once it occurred was generally tolerated and only rarely resulted in ostracism, it should be made clear that Jewish parents remained opposed to intermarriage in principle. This section will focus on the nature of their negative attitudes and consider what these can tell us about the social norms in the community and how these were interpreted by individual families.

The fear of loss of religious and cultural identity was not always the strongest reason for opposition to intermarriage. The two most extreme reactions to out-marriage, captured in the interviews of Benny Rothman and Nellie Lee, which did in fact result in ostracism, where each motivated by different factors. When Benny Rothman married out his family went into mourning, motivated by concern for their own image; in his words: “What would the neighbours say? I think that was at the base of everything”.\textsuperscript{546} Although his story was extreme, notions of shame as a source of conformity recur in the interviews. Constance Lisbona recalled her own sister’s intermarriage, which the family were not happy about but accepted. On the day of the wedding, however, Mrs. Lisbona “chose to have one of her bad headaches and didn’t go”. According to Constance, her opposition was based entirely on fear of “what people would think.”\textsuperscript{547} This sense of shame and concern for reputation was not unique to Jews. Jewish parents might have been oblivious to the illicit dalliances that took place in dance halls and cinemas, but Christian parents were certainly aware of them and their potential to shame the family. Benny recalled his wife’s parents’ anxiety when it came to marriage: “they were very, very much afraid that I would leave her at the altar, because that was not an uncommon thing, a usual thing. It’s happened in many cases that people gave way to domestic pressure on the question of marriage.”\textsuperscript{548} When Nellie Lee started to date Hymie Levy, her mother became hysterical: "If you don't give him up, I'll drown myself. Nothing'll come of it. I've heard of these Jews before, they get Christian girls in trouble and then they

\textsuperscript{546} Benny Rothman JT19, T3 S2
\textsuperscript{547} Constance Lisbona J169, T1 S1
\textsuperscript{548} Benny Rothman JT19, T3 S2
leave them, they just disappear”. The extent to which Jews viewed shame as a motivator for conformity is unclear. Concerns over ‘what the neighbours will think’ were not expressed by all, but emerged in the interviews as one possible interpretation of social norms. Whilst shame, felt either by intermarried couples or their parents, was an element of intermarriage, the generally positive or neutral experiences of intermarried couples suggest that once the initial shock subsided, so did the feeling of shame. Intermarried families might have been a talking point, but there is no evidence that intermarriage of an individual in any way tainted the future prospects of their family. Total ostracism was a widespread notion or expectation, but not a widespread reality.

Many interviews express ambiguity, speaking of negative communal attitudes at odds with their own experience, unable to see this paradox. Among those was Mick Jenkins who recalled intermarriage as rare, even in the interwar period, and the community’s reaction as unequivocally negative: “They took it very badly indeed, very badly...they would have very grave difficulty maintaining relationships with their own families and with the Jewish community. In the majority of cases...they moved out of the area.” In the event of his own out-marriage he seemed surprised to be questioned about communal reactions to it. He stressed that there was no negative reaction to his marriage or his non-Jewish wife in the community but there was “a bit of a feeling in the family.” His mother was upset but this lasted less than a week, after which she helped the couple choose some furniture. The Jenkins’ wider family, who retained strong levels of Orthodoxy, also accepted Mick’s wife, somehow “squaring non-operation of Jewish law with Jewish identity”. Like the Clyne family before her, Mrs. Jenkins felt initially upset about Mick’s departure from this particular tradition despite her own lifestyle and ideology being at odds with traditional Jewish life. This ambiguity suggests disconnect between generally accepted social norms and internal values and affections that governed familial relationships. For some parents, like Mrs. Rothman, deviation from the norm represented an unsurmountable obstacle, although for most, cohesion of their family

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549 Nellie Lee J150, T1 S1
550 Mick Jenkins J130, T2 S1
551 Ibid
552 Ibid.
Reponses to intermarriage were linked to parents’ own level of conformity but there was no pattern of how this manifested itself. Parents of those who intermarried were, as a rule, more religiously observant than their children. Whilst outwardly conforming, some had experienced growing detachment from tradition, ideologically and practically. Their children’s intermarriage brought this departure uncomfortably into focus, to which they reacted in different ways. Some were distressed and felt reminded of their own failure to instil Jewish values in their children, others welcomed it with relief. Among the latter was Mrs. Ainley, who moved in with her son Ben and, much to her Christian daughter-in-law’s consternation, requested weekly bacon sandwiches. 553 Others continued to conform to social norms but felt were able to reflect on the difficulties arising from such strict conformity. Pearl Gollenbeck recalled numerous intermarriages which occurred in her neighbourhood. Sophie, Pearl’s close friend, caused a scandal by marrying her non-Jewish boss, who was already married to someone else when the relationship started. Pearl was not judgmental, appreciating her friend’s independence. When Pearl’s own nieces married “goyim” she felt happy they married wealthy and successful men, “better than they would have married Yiddishe”. The girls’ father, a deeply religious man, was distressed but their mother, Pearl’s sister, was happy, saying “they are marrying for love and I didn’t, mine was a Shidduch.” 554

Emphasis on ostracism exacerbates the illusion that the community acted out of a common consensus but the examples in this chapter show this was not the case. Social norms, never clearly defined, were interpreted differently by individual families and changed over time by engaging with them. On the whole, intermarriage was rare and only occurred with any regularity within the immigrant communities of Redbank and Strangeways, who, although concerned about their reputation to a degree, were more inclined to deviate from social norms than members of the elite. The size of the community and its crowding, which attracted criticism in the context of sweated labour, also afforded various forms of social and religious

553 Ben Ainley, J5
554 Pearl Gollenbeck J104, T3 S1 also in Elizabeth Rothschild JT22, T1 S2
nonconformity. Most streets housed a variety of such nonconformists, including those who married out or whose marriages failed and became a talking point. This variety diluted, even if not removed, the potential scandal and gossip that accompanied intermarriage. Factors which divided Jews of Redbank and Strangeways paradoxically also rendered them more tolerant to difference.

4.6. Conclusion

The first aim of this chapter was to highlight the centrality of marriage to the study of community and its microcosm, the family unit. This has been achieved, in the first instance, by the inclusion of a large number of personal stories that highlight marriage or intermarriage as a fundamental element of their life-story. Such interviews also reflect the variety of experiences of Jewish marriage. Crucially, we have learnt that instances of intramarriage, that is marriage between Jews that defied social norms and expectation, whilst they may not appear nonconformists from without, can be equally undesirable and are often labelled as such from within. Examples from the Sephardi and Ashkenazi elites, the alrightnik families as well as several sub-groups within the immigrant community were included, with emphasis placed on their differing sets of social norms, each prioritising different values. The elite communities were not homogenous but they did demonstrate cohesion and conformity that was largely lacking within the immigrant community. Although the Sephardi community in particular retained a relatively high level of orthodoxy, their conformity in marriage was perhaps in equal measure a reflection of their social norms as it was of their aspirational tendencies. For all sub-communities of the elite, including the alrightniks, marriage represented an opportunity to cement or further one’s social standing. The social norms of the immigrant communities are less easy to discern, as there were many factors that blurred boundaries. Shared space and immigrant experience perhaps gave an impression of homogeneity but marriage often highlighted the difference in individuals’ nationality, aspirations, politics, economic status and orthodoxy. Some individuals and families were simultaneously members of several sub-groups within the community, sometimes having conflicting implications for conformity, as the Clyne sisters’ example showed.

Concerning assimilation and ostracism, highlighted by sociologist and some
The variety of experiences and attitudes towards intermarried couples show that assimilation and the loss of Judaism through intermarriage is a sociological construct, without much basis in lived experience, since only very few of the examples indicate real and lasting erosion of Jewish identity. The experiences of immigrant parents were naturally different to those of their children but this should be seen as acculturation rather than assimilation. For the most part, Jewish children were able to explore their Mancunian identities without severely undermining the values of their parents as demonstrated by the courting rituals of Jewish youths. The community underwent a transition as a result of its new setting and this was reflected not only in the experiences of the children but also in the aspirations their parents had for them. One example of this is the shift in emphasis parents placed on the suitability of their daughters’ potential husbands. ‘Man of learning’, which represented the ideal husband in Eastern European Jewish communities, was quickly replaced by a ‘man of means’ as demonstrated by many examples in this chapter.

Whilst there is no doubt that the wider Jewish community viewed intermarriage with fear and suspicion, ascribing it a negative quality, stories of ostracism have been largely exaggerated and often based on isolated and rare examples. The experiences of intermarried couples in interwar Manchester show that the community was capable of pluralism and accepted intermarried couples in their midst without compromising their own conformity; it was apparently possible to simultaneously disapprove and to accept. Thus Cesarani’s view of the community as governed by the very narrow Jewish establishment rejecting anyone deviating from the social norms imposed by it, including those who intermarried, seems unnecessarily harsh and is, in this particular context, not supported by evidence.

The idea of consensus is undermined by the variety of responses to intermarriage but also the variety of reasons that motivated people to marry within the community. Endelman looked for patterns but individuals did not always act in a predictable way. Some liberal, nonconforming families surprised their children with their strong opposition to intermarriage, whilst some of the more Orthodox families accepted it. For some parents intermarriage magnified the generational gaps opening between
them and their children, for others it made them face up to their own laxity and departure from tradition. For most, their opposition was motivated by the visceral and almost tribal affinity with the Jewish community, for which they had no rational explanation. In this, oral history mirrors works of sociologists who remained undecided whether barriers between minority groups, such as the Jewish community, were erected from without or from within as a mechanism of self-preservation.
5. Disability and Disease in the Jewish Community

5.1. Introduction

Illness and disability represent the most under researched type of nonconformity in this thesis largely due the stigma that surrounded the topic which extended far beyond the studied period. The limited sources impose a particularly impressionistic approach in this chapter, in that it attempts to bring together personal accounts, mostly captured in oral testimonies, medical notes and records of Jewish organisations attempting to provide relief to those in need. The first part of this chapter considers the role Jewish health played in the anti-alien debate that accompanied the period of intense immigration and the elite’s response to it at both national and local levels. The second part provides close reading of the Prestwich asylum records, which capture not only contemporary attitudes of medical professionals towards those with mental health issues and physical disabilities, but, arguably, can also be seen as representative of wider communal attitudes. This section is further supplemented by limited but detailed oral testimonies with those who either experienced lengthy institutional care or belonged to organisations providing relief. The final section compiles the oral testimonies of those who either had personal experiences of illness and disability or second-hand accounts capturing familial and communal attitudes to it. For greater clarity, the different conditions are treated separately, with the important result that this does generate conflicting conclusions about the way the family and the wider community responded to serious illness more generally.

The relative absence of those with disability, disease and mental illness from Anglo-Jewish histories is not merely indicative of the negative communal attitudes towards them, but also of the limited response of the Jewish leadership in provision of care. Contrary to the claims that Jews always ‘look after their own’, implied in the reports of most philanthropic organisations and championed by historians like Gerry Black and Stephen Brook, the majority of Jews suffering from disease and disability became casualties of indifference and disappeared from communal records.\footnote{Black, ‘Health and medical care’, p. 93, Brook, The Club, p. 243}
restoration into the communal narrative is complicated by the lack of evidence, as will become apparent in the course of this chapter. The first objective of this chapter is therefore to include stories of Jews in Manchester living with mental health issues, disability and disease, previously omitted from histories of the Jewish community.

Three main sources will be relied upon here for the study of illness and disability in or around Manchester: the Prestwich Asylum’s case notes, oral testimony and reports in the *Jewish Chronicle*. The overlap between the three sources is minimal and instead, each provides information about different aspects of the experiences of those with disability and illness.

Prestwich asylum records place together individuals suffering from physical and mental illness as well as those deemed socially deviant, such as alcoholics, criminals and unmarried or deserted mothers, although the reasons why they were placed there are not always clear. Patients were admitted to the asylum either by the MJBG or their families, who relied on the asylum out of necessity or as a punitive measure. Necessity could be loosely defined in two ways: (a) some families lacked the resources and support networks to look after their loved ones and (b) others sought to preserve the family’s reputation and the marriage prospects of their other children. Many conditions were little understood and feared as a result, inspiring feelings of shame and judgment in families and their immediate communities. This was especially evident in close-knit sections of the community, such as the South Manchester Sephardim and the ultra-orthodox communities, bound by very narrow social norms where anyone who was different represented a threat to the order and the self-constructed image of the community. In some instances the asylum also fulfilled a punitive measure by removing problematic individuals from their communities and families based on moral judgment. Although one can speculate, it is not possible to determine whether individual Jewish asylum inmates were shunned by their communities or whether their families simply lacked the resources to look after them. The second aim of this chapter is to consider patients’ case notes in order to gain insight into how the individuals and their families coped in crises and what this means for the understanding of the Jewish community. It will also consider the extent to which asylums served as punitive institutions for those...
who deviated from social norms.

The *Jewish Chronicle* captures communal responses to Jewish lunatics. Although voices calling for the establishment of a Jewish asylum could occasionally be heard, these were outnumbered by the elite’s view that such an institution was neither necessary nor financially viable. Instead, the problem was resolved by the establishment of Visitation Committees which aimed to provide for religious needs of Jews in extant institutions. Their activities exposed the low value Jewish leadership placed on individuals who were perhaps unlikely to recover and become upstanding citizens, severely undermining the principles of Jewish charity they claimed to promote. This had profound implications for how the Jewish community constructed its self-image and therefore on how those who did not conform to that image were treated.

Oral testimonies capture attitudes of families and their immediate communities absent in the asylum records. To reflect the variety of responses people with disability and illness attracted from their community, learning difficulty, hearing and sight loss, suicide and tuberculosis will be considered separately. Institutionalisation of children with learning difficulties often significantly eroded their Jewish identity and removed the possibility of future inclusion in the community, whereas it improved lives of people with hearing and sight loss. Familial and communal responses were not universal and depended on other factors, such as familial bonds, individuals’ personalities and the nature of their wider community, but such categorisation helps to outline possible attitudes to this kind of involuntary nonconformity.

It will be argued that the elite’s fear of social deviants and its emphasis on the good public image of immigrant communities was derived primarily from their concerns for their own position in wider society. It will be argued that in setting up visitation committees for patients of asylums, they acted not to meet the needs of the community, but to respond to the anti-alien debate taking place during the most intense period of Jewish immigration. The elite could do little to deny or disprove notions of Jewish predispositions to certain diseases or the perceived physical inferiority of Jews that were popular on the continent and beginning to interest
medical professionals in Britain. They could, however, show that they were able to ‘look after their own’ and do so in a way that complied with social norms of the middle-classes, with which they wished to associate themselves.\textsuperscript{556}

5.2. Disability and mental health in the socio-political context

Mental illness, disease and disability are not completely absent from Anglo-Jewish histories but the discourse is dominated by their socio-political context, effect on Government policy, public opinion and the responses of the Jewish leadership. Mass immigration at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century challenged the fragile position of the elites in wider society and heightened their fear of ‘social deviants’, including those with disabilities and mental health issues, who were seen as inciting antisemitism and jeopardising the public image of the community.\textsuperscript{557} The growing numbers of Jewish lunatics and trachoma and tuberculosis sufferers in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century prompted discussions about the perceived physical and mental inferiority of Jews, generating a response from the Jewish leadership. It will be argued in this section that this response was born out of the socio-political context, rather than out of internal communal factors such as charity which, in Jewish tradition, is considered a duty and a virtue and which Sidney Hamburger referred to as “the highest element of Jewish thinking”.\textsuperscript{558} The activities of the ‘givers’ were not tailored to the needs of the ‘receivers’, highlighting not only the very different interpretation of Jewish values by different sub-communities, but also the way the elite consistently imposed their own values upon vulnerable individuals.

5.2.1. Aliens Act and the involvement of medical professionals

One of the outcomes of the increased immigration of Jews to England at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century was the debate over immigration controls which culminated in the Aliens Act being passed in 1905. Jews were not the only immigrant group in Britain but certain factors made them the most visible one. Among these were their tendency

\textsuperscript{556} One response to the latter was the JLB. Williams, ‘The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, p.75
\textsuperscript{557} Marks, Model Mothers, p. 26-28
\textsuperscript{558} Transcript, Sidney Hamburger JT120, p.12
to gather in areas with an already high proportion of Jewish residents, leading to overcrowding, as well as their dominance over certain job markets, such as tailoring, although in this instance it is debatable whether this was a matter of choice or necessity. The distinct manner, appearance and language of Jewish immigrants ensured a level of social conformity by preventing out-marriage, as has been argued in the previous chapter, but also represented the most obvious marker of their foreign status.\textsuperscript{559} Much of the anti-alien debate was based on fears arising from the effects of Jewish immigration on the labour market. Jews, it appeared, were willing and able to work hard, sometimes as many as 100 hours per week, for very low salaries which apparently “did not materially injure their health”.\textsuperscript{560} This led to the replacement of the traditional antisemitic polemic centred on Jews being ‘Christ killers’ by a new stereotype, the ‘homo economicus’.\textsuperscript{561} Satirical journals, like \textit{Spy}, produced an alternative label, referring to Jews as “foreign vampires enriching themselves at the expense of honest Englishmen”.\textsuperscript{562}

The anti-alien debate was not only a reaction to the immigrant ‘invasion’ but also reflected fears over domestic affairs. The second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century was marked by the decline of military and economic power and what was perceived by some as a deterioration in public health. Fears over the declining health of the nation, at the time in the grip of a tuberculosis epidemic, led to the emergence of Social Darwinism and the revival of scientific racism.\textsuperscript{563} It is hardly surprising, given this climate, that new fears materialised about the immigrant community, focusing on their physical and genetic inferiority.\textsuperscript{564} In the period prior to the passing of the Aliens Act, the \textit{Lancet} and the \textit{British Journal of Medicine} regularly published articles in support of the perceived predisposition of Jews to mental illness, ophthalmic disease and degenerative conditions of the nervous system which could,

\textsuperscript{559} Marks, \textit{Model Mothers}, p.29
\textsuperscript{560} Black, ‘Health and medical care’, p. 107
\textsuperscript{562} \textit{Spy}, 5 August 1893
\textsuperscript{563} This trend was much more prevalent in Germany and America. See also Michel Worboys, ‘Tuberculosis and race, in Britain and its Empire, 1900-1950’ in Waltraud Ernst & Bernard Harris (eds.), \textit{Race, Science and Medicine, 1700-1960} (London, 2001), pp 144-150, Black, ‘Health and medical care’, p.104
\textsuperscript{564} Gainer, \textit{The Alien Invasion}, p. 113-115
without appropriate immigration restrictions in place, pose a threat to the nation’s health.\textsuperscript{565}

C.F. Beadles, the Superintendent of Colney Hatch Asylum in London, was frequently quoted offering grim statistics about not only higher occurrences of insanity among the asylum’s Jewish patients, but also their severity and the likelihood of relapse. He quoted heredity, early marriage, overcrowding, sexual excess and “the worry, anxiety and excessive zeal in acquiring riches” as possible causes, betraying the antisemitic bias to which medical professionals of the period were not immune.\textsuperscript{566} But the medical profession was not unanimous in their attitude to Jews and much of the evidence they offered was highly dubious. Dr. Mott’s study of the heredity of insanity, published in the \textit{British Medical Journal} in 1910, revealed how little scientists knew about the heredity of certain conditions, particularly those relating to the Jewish community. As his research was conducted in Colney Hatch, an asylum which housed almost all the Jewish asylum inmates in London, he was also able to conduct a comparative study based on race. His research was based on a survey of patients’ family history, looking for multiple cases of insanity within the same family. In Glasgow’s Govan asylum this method proved largely unsuccessful as mental illness was so stigmatised that patients’ families were reticent about divulging sensitive information and, in the case of the asylum’s Jewish patients, the situation was further complicated by their overwhelming lack of English.\textsuperscript{567} In London, Dr. Mott reached very different conclusions. Whilst he did find that Jewish patients showed slightly higher incidence of hereditary insanity, which was partly linked to “their temperament”, he also suggested that this could simply be the result of them having closer familial bonds. Jewish patients were visited by their families more regularly than other inmates and their relatives, eager to contribute to their recovery, were also more forthcoming in providing family histories.\textsuperscript{568} Whilst in Germany studies indicated that Jews represented a significant

\textsuperscript{565} For an examples see Bernard Harris, ‘Pro-alienism, anti-alienism and the medical profession in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain’ in Ernst & Harris (eds.), \textit{Race, Science and Medicine}, pp. 189-218

\textsuperscript{566} ‘The Insane Jew’, \textit{Lancet}, 27 October 1900, p.1219

\textsuperscript{567} Collins, \textit{Be Well!}, p. 119

proportion of asylums’ inmates, there was no evidence to this effect in Britain, nor was there any conclusive scientific proof that Jews were either predisposed to insanity or more frequently hospitalised for it.569

The debate surrounding the health of Jewish immigrants was not one-sided. Medical Officers of Health who worked in Jewish communities across the country were quick to refute claims of the perceived physical inferiority and predisposition for certain diseases. In some instances, it was argued, Jews enjoyed better health than their non-Jewish neighbours although this was attributed to their lifestyle choices rather than genetics. Most praiseworthy was the character of Jewish mothers, considered to be models to other mothers.570 This sentiment was expressed by Medical Officers of Health in London, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester.571 In Sheffield Dr. Scurfield even called for “Jews to establish missions for the teaching of motherhood in our big towns”.572 Manchester was deemed the city with the Heathiest Jewish population, based on its significantly lower mortality rates.573 The other areas where Jewish health fared significantly better than that of the non-Jewish population, at least statistically, were absence of alcoholism and associated medical conditions and rare occurrences of venereal disease.574 Some historians, such as Gerry Black, emphasise such statistics which, in fact, tell us very little about the health of the community and even less about communal attitudes to disease and mental health. This chapter seeks to look beyond statistics and explore what happened to those who did not meet the exacting standards of maternal virtues, sobriety and sexual purity imposed on them by social norms, statisticians and in some instances historians.

Although the debate surrounding the Aliens Act and the involvement of medical professionals in it included both pro-alien and anti-alien voices, this duality was not always reflected in institutions providing care for Jewish patients. The contrast

570 Marks, *Model Mothers*, pp. 1, 77
571 Harris, ‘Pro-alienism, anti-alienism’, pp. 204-207
572 Quoted in Harris, ‘Pro-alienism, anti-alienism’, p. 208
574 Black, ‘Health and medical care’, p.107
between the attitudes of Superintendent Beadles, who was directly involved with Jewish patients, and Dr. Motts, who merely observed them, is one example of this. A key outcome of the debate surrounding immigrant health is its implication for the definition of nonconformity. In Britain, the lines between race and poverty were blurred since, in the context of the Jewish community, they were often perceived as synonymous and the focus of medical professionals on Jews was less connected to their race than it was to their status as foreigners. In this sense, although Jewish lunatics and those with disabilities featured in the anti-alien debate taking place at the turn of the century, their nonconformity was determined primarily by their status as foreigners “adrift from society’s mainstream”. Toleration may well have been held out to the elites, as Williams had argued, but their foreign status was not forgotten. The elite’s response to the health crisis outlined by the anti-alien debate was not motivated by concern for those afflicted, but rather concerns for their own image and fell severely short of the actual needs of the community.

5.2.2. The Leadership response

Scientific reports which contributed to anti-immigration legislation simultaneously fuelled popular xenophobia. This much is apparent from reports that appeared in the local press. One example is the report entitled ‘The Jews Physically and Mentally’ which appeared in the Manchester City News, arguing that the ‘vital forces’ of Jews deserted their limbs in order to expend all their energies in their heads, which could lead to insanity. Such reports caused embarrassment to the established leadership and generated a response in the form of a Visitation Committee to hospitals and lunatic asylums, established under the auspices of the United Synagogue in London in 1881 and in Manchester and Liverpool in 1883. Although there were individuals within the elite’s philanthropic organisations who showed genuine

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575 Tuberculosis, for instance, was considered “social disease in terms of class, occupation and urbanisation” whereas in America and Germany it was deemed a racial problem. Worboys, ‘Tuberculosis and race’, p.144-150  
576 Collins, Be Well!, p. 115  
577 Williams, ‘Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, p. 4  
578 MCN, 19 September 1891, The idea of “mental illness as the cost of the greater genius of the race” was particularly prevalent on the continent. See also Sander Gilman, The Jew’s Body, pp. 131-133  
579 Marks, Model Mothers, pp. 110-111
concern, the elite’s response on an organisation level was, at best, lukewarm and appeared more motivated by concerns for their public image than compassion with the most disadvantaged members of their community. Black has defended their approach on the grounds that charity met communal need regardless of its motivation.\footnote{Black, ‘Health and medical care’, pp. 109-111} This chapter seeks to challenge this idea on two grounds. Firstly, by placing the activities of the leadership in the context of the socio-political debate surrounding immigration, it seeks to challenge the idea of communal solidarity and the traditional notion of Jewish unity based on shared values, including charity. Secondly, it seeks to challenge the perceived efficacy of such organisations and argue that they did not meet the needs of the community.

When the first reports appeared in medical journals pondering the suspected predisposition of Jews to insanity, the \textit{Jewish Chronicle} responded by reporting on some cases, tentatively attempting to establish whether ‘melancholy’ was a result of general immigration or whether Jews were genetically predisposed to it, with no conclusion being reached.\footnote{JC, 25 September 1857, 5 November 1869, 29 November 1861 and 5 December 1873 Also in Collins, \textit{Be Well!}, pp. 116-117} The community was clearly divided on the matter of its lunatics. In one letter published in the \textit{Jewish Chronicle} ‘A silent observer’ bemoaned the “crying need for an asylum for the insane” but rejected the idea of a specifically Jewish institution on the grounds that the community was “already overburdened”.\footnote{JC, 11 June 1869} The elite expressed what could be described as ‘detached sympathy’ towards those in lunatic asylums. Their first practical initiative took place in 1872 and resulted in the successful relocation of Jewish inmates of lunatic asylums in Middlesex to Colney Hatch, this centralisation making visitation and other provisions more viable.\footnote{Smith, ‘Insanity and Ethnicity’, p. 36} The provisions were organised by the United Synagogue’s Visitation Committee Fund and included prayer meetings, visits by one Reverend Green (who was the only Visitor) and matzo at Passover, however the fund did not stretch to kosher meat.\footnote{Smith, ‘Insanity and Ethnicity’, pp. 36-37 also Kenneth Collins, ‘Asher Asher: Victorian physician, medical reformer and communal servant’, \textit{Jewish Historical Studies}, Vol.37 (2001) p. 170, Alex M. Jacob, ‘Aron Levy Green, 1821-1883’ \textit{Jewish Historical Society of England}, Vol.23 (1973-1975), p. 102} The provisions were intended to bolster the

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inmates’ links to the community but their overall success is debatable. Conflicting reports continued to appear in the *Jewish Chronicle* expressing alarm regarding the Christian influence of the institution that saw Jewish inmates reciting Christian prayers at mealtimes and even provided specific examples of Jewish inmates in considerable distress over non-kosher meat they were encouraged to eat. 585 Such concerns and debates about the possibility of a Jewish lunatic asylum were generally dismissed by the editor and some correspondents who stressed the “enormous expense which a separate lunatic asylum would entail upon the community”. 586 To placate concerns rising in the community, long letters from readers were published to outline the exemplary care they or their families received in Colney Hatch. In one such letter, a former inmate described in detail its “walls lined with oil paintings” and “splendid cages full of singing birds”. He described summer picnics in the woods replaced in winter by weekly balls. The gardens were a place where “doctors, patients and attendants played the handsomest cricket matches as if they were schoolfellows”. 587 The question of religious observance was glossed over on the grounds that those with ‘wondering minds’ were not responsible for their actions or speech. 588 Perhaps more telling was Reverend Green’s own experience of his visits. The day before his death in 1883 he attended a *bar mitzvah* during which he told a story of one of his visits to Colney Hatch. During this visit a man, apparently unaware of his surroundings, became suddenly animated after hearing the term *bar mitzvah* by chance and proceeded to lucidly recite his own portion which he had learned years ago. Afterwards he became withdrawn once again. 589 The moral of the story was likely positive, given the occasion, but it paints a sad picture of the cultural isolation Jews faced in the alien environment of the asylum and its possible effects of their recovery, which the limited visits of Reverend Green did little to counteract.

The Manchester elite, represented by the MJBG, ignored the plight of Jews in asylums until 1883 when they were approached by the Liverpool Jewish Board of Guardians suggesting the creation of a joint visitation committee. This was met with

585 *JC*, 23 July 1875
586 *JC*, 9 March 1877 and 4 May 1877
587 *JC*, 30 July 1875
588 Ibid.
589 *JC*, 16 March 1883
little enthusiasm and the suggestion that: “…if they desire, we shall be glad to forward their communication to the synagogue authorities.”590 Synagogue authorities were only too aware of the potential scandal which the neglect of the Jewish inmates of gentile institutions, and their unprotected exposure to Christian influences, might provoke and the Manchester and Liverpool Jewish Visitation Committee (MLJVC) was established by the end of 1883.591 Like other elite organisations, it was a highly administrative enterprise which was more concerned with the work of its visitors whose labours were, according to the Jewish Chronicle, “second to none.”592 Rather less emphasis was placed on those in receipt of the visits: asylum and prison inmates and those confined to hospitals.593 The first meeting of the newly formed MLJVC took place in January 1884 and it was decided that, closely mirroring the Visitation Committee of the United Synagogue, their activities would be confined to the religious needs of the inmates. Specifically, appointed visitors would “take note of any infringement or modification of discipline bearing on their religious observance” and intervene whenever their religious practice was placed at risk.594 In practice, this meant that the inmates were supplied with prayer books and the promise of a Jewish burial.595 Though modelled on the work already carried out in London, the MLJVC also displayed some unique features: it covered a much larger area and it brought together two provincial communities and, within them, representatives from the Orthodox, Reform and Sephardi communities. Williams, suspicious of their motives and success, nevertheless commended the rare co-operation between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, however annual reports reveal that it was not without its difficulties.596 By the end of the committee’s first year the Portuguese Synagogue was criticised for its ‘indefensible position’ in objecting to the burial of Ashkenazi asylum inmates in their cemetery. This was attributed to the “conservatism and pernicious exclusivism of the Sephardim”.597 Two years later the situation appeared to have resolved itself and the Sephardim were praised for their “exemplary broad-

590 MJBG Minute Books, 23/06/1883
591 Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, pp. 24-26; JC, 11 January 1884
592 JC, 15 November 1872
593 Liedtke, Jewish Welfare in Hamburg and Manchester, p. 131, JC, 27 September 1883
594 Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 24
595 JC, 5 December 1884
596 Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 25
597 JC, 5 December 1884
The effectiveness of the MLJVC is difficult to determine. They carried out around 180 visits per year across Lancashire, prioritising hospitals and prisons. As asylums were generally mentioned only in the context of burials, it is likely that the prospect of individuals’ recovery and subsequent rehabilitation into the community was seen as unlikely, affecting the frequency of the visits. Whilst hospital patients received regular kosher meals from as early as 1886 no effort was made to include asylums in this provision until 1920. In 1921 it was decided that Prestwich would become the central institution to which all Jewish patients would be transferred, nearly 50 years after a similar decision was made in London. Far from giving an impression of genuine concern for those in need, the MLJVC considered the increased co-operation between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews in Manchester to be their main achievement, with no sustenance offered to the distinctive cultural and religious needs of immigrant asylum patients. In setting up the visitation committees, the leadership was not responding to the problem of increased instances of insanity or disease in the community, but to the increased visibility of Jews, whose foreignness, seen as a source of their physical inferiority, affected the elite in a way their poverty and hardship did not. Philanthropy served to enhance the position of the elite in wider society by proving that Jews could look after their own and showed little compassion or unity of values, so optimistically expressed by Sidney Hamburger or Black. Smith, a historian of the asylum, described the work of the Visitation Committee in London as a ‘considerable success’, but the evidence from Manchester suggest this was not the case. The MLJVC failed to meet its primary aim – to provide for the religious needs of the most disadvantaged members of their communities. The lack of the elite’s interest in Jewish asylum inmates is of particular concern when compared with the efforts, financial and otherwise, exerted to shape immigrant children into English Jews, though a comprehensive range of institutions. It exposes the primary aim of elite-operated philanthropy as the promotion of conformity to social norms derived from wider society, in this case directly at odds with the

598 JC, 18 June 1886
599 JC, 8 October 1920 and 7 October 1921
600 JC, 18 June 1886, Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 26
601 Smith, ‘Insanity and Ethnicity’, p. 36
concept of charity as “the greatest *mitzvot*”, ‘designed not to glorify the benefactor
nor to expose the recipient to humiliation’.  

5.3. Prestwich Asylum

5.3.1. Manchester provisions for the care of lunatics

The majority of Manchester’s Jewish lunatics received care at the Prestwich Asylum. Before delving into the Jewish experiences of the asylum, it is perhaps necessary to provide a brief background to the institution and explore how changes in wider society in Manchester and developments in psychiatry related to the Jewish community. The aim of this section is to highlight the extent to which traumas of immigration contributed to mental illness, something which was apparently overlooked by both the visitation committees and asylum doctors. More importantly, it will highlight the dual function fulfilled by the asylum which (a) acted as a safety net for the most vulnerable families and (b) fulfilled a punitive function by removing individuals deemed nonconforming, either by the elite or the family, from their communities. Each community, including communities in wider society, had varying levels of tolerance to people seen as deviating from social norms. For instance, the low number of elderly Jews in Prestwich, as well as the establishment of the Home for Aged, Sick and Incurable Jews in 1898 to ‘maintain respectable and indigent persons of the Jewish religion over the age of 60’, the only organised residential health social care in the community until 1920, could suggest that the Jewish community placed value on the elderly and their care. In contrast, those with disabilities and mild learning difficulties as well as homosexuals and unmarried mothers were perhaps seen as threatening the marriage prospects and reputation of the family. Their potential to encourage undesirable behaviour in the community subsequently sometimes led to their lengthy institutionalisation.

Asylums, institutions offering care for “pauper and criminal lunatics”, first appeared

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602 Brook, *The Club*, p. 243
603 Delamere Jewish Fresh Air Home and School was established in 1920 to care for school-aged children failing to thrive.
604 Williams, *Jewish Manchester*, p. 75
in Britain following the passing of the County Asylum Act in 1808. By the 1850s, asylums were not only widespread but many were adding extensions to accommodate the ever-increasing demand. Lancashire had four county asylums: Lancaster Moor, established in 1816, Rainhill in Liverpool and Prestwich in Manchester, both established in 1851, and Whittingham, established in 1873. By the 1880s the combined capacity of the four Lancashire Asylums was over 4,000, second only to Middlesex, and a further 3,000 lunatics were confined to workhouses, private asylums and prisons.

Prestwich Asylum could initially accommodate around 350 patients with the annexe added in 1884 boosting the capacity by providing a further 1,200 places. This need for expansion can be seen in two ways. Firstly, the emergence of clinical psychiatry and particularly the ‘mad-doctor’ claiming expertise in a new field, often relying on pseudo-scientific methods, contributed to the popularity of the asylum system. Ill-equipped to provide a correct diagnoses and effective treatment, asylums instead segregated people at odds with societal norms, including alcoholics, epileptics, the elderly, the disabled, those suffering from mild learning disabilities and others. If such conditions were seen as problematic before, their removal from communities and long term incarceration in the asylum only served to increase the stigma. This was especially true for the immigrant Jewish community, where respectability and healthy pedigree were often significant bargaining chips in a congested marriage market. There is certainly evidence that unmarried Jewish mothers, homosexuals and alcoholics were sent to Prestwich by their families, perhaps to hide their shame or to prevent judgment from their communities. Prestwich did not accept child patients but records of other asylums, such as Brockhall and Swinton Home, both of which catered for children, provide limited evidence that Jewish parents deliberately institutionalised their children suffering from disabilities, as will be discussed later.

607 Andrew Scull, Charlotte MacKenzie and Nicholas Hervey, Masters of Bedlam: The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade (New Jersey, 1996), pp. 3-9
The second factor contributing to the rapid expansion of the asylum was Manchester’s growing industry and intense immigration into the city. Immigration was accompanied by overcrowding, displacement and often the breakdown of the family unit, all of which contributed to the rising numbers of lunatics. The most numerous immigrant group across the four Lancashire Asylums were Irish immigrants, which in the 1870s, represented some 25% of Prestwich’s cases. Jewish immigrants were a notable ethnic minority in Prestwich, their numbers generally comparable to certain Christian denominations.\textsuperscript{608} The majority of Jewish inmates in Prestwich were new immigrants and whilst in many ways their specific conditions and presentation of symptoms resembled those of Irish inmates, these were compounded by factors unique to the Jewish community, including language barriers, the need for kosher meals, which was not met by the asylum, as well as antisemitic attitudes arising occasionally from the bias of the medical profession discussed earlier.

The extent to which Jewish families and communities understood the asylum system, which both isolated Jewish inmates due to their occasional lack of English and render them nonconformist in matters of dietary rules, is unknown. The asylum was feared in the community but it also likely acted as a safety net for those families unable to look after their loved ones. For some Jewish families the asylum was a necessity for others it provided a convenient way of dealing with those incompatible with the values and norms of their family and community.\textsuperscript{609}

5.3.2. **Jewish Experience of the Asylum**

The records of Jews in the Prestwich asylum have thus far received remarkably little attention from Jewish historians. Smith was the first to focus on individual reports, although his interest was not in the experiences of the inmates but, like the opening section of this chapter, on the role race and culture played in developments in

\textsuperscript{608} For very detailed statistics see also Cox, Marland and York, ‘Emaciated, Exhausted and Excited’, pp. 501-518

\textsuperscript{609} See also Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Affliction* (London, 1993), pp. 381-388
psychiatry. His study featured three provincial asylums: Prestwich, Rainhill and the
Birmingham Lunatic Asylum, chosen carefully to reflect three Jewish communities
relatively similar in their size, history and involvement in local industry.
Uninterested in diagnoses and what led to them, Smith quoted extensively from case
books of the three asylums in order to argue that the antisemitic and/or anti-alien
attitude of the period and the inability to interpret what constituted ‘normal’
behaviour for religious Jews, such as refusal of non-kosher meals and absorption in
prayer, often led to the incorrect understanding and treatment of symptoms,
effectively hindering the patients’ recovery. Perhaps aware of the difficulty of such
retrospective reconstruction, Smith hesitated to commit to a clear conclusion.
Instead, he rather pragmatically noted that the relationship between the Jewish
patient and the asylum system was a ‘complex one’ and warranted more exploration
and comparison with other minority group experiences. His study was later mirrored
by Collins, who focused on evidence from Crichton Royal Infirmary in Dumfries
and Govan Parochial Asylum, both of which catered for Jewish lunatics from
Glasgow.610 Their findings largely corresponded but as Collins was also interested in
communal response to illness, he argued, with little evidence, that Jews preferred to
care for their families at home and only resorted to institutionalisation as a last
resort.611 Although rich in detail and well researched, Collin’s work suffers from a
distortion based on his understanding of the community as portrayed by its elites and
defined by their institutions. He does little to acknowledge the schism between the
values of the ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’ and as a result the experiences of ordinary
people are marginalised.612

The following section will focus on Prestwich Asylum records in the period between
1890 and 1904, limited by availability.613 Jonathan Andrews has argued that asylum
records are most useful to medical historians, as they reveal much more about their
authors than they do about the patients.614 It is also possible, however to use them to
at least attempt to understand the factors which aggravated, if not caused, illness and

610 Collins, Be Well!, pp. 115-130
611 Ibid, pp. 126
612 Ibid, pp. 173-175
613 The records are subject to strict closure period.
614 Jonathan Andrews, ‘Case Notes, Case Histories and the Patients’ Experience of Insanity at
Gartnavel Royal Asylum, Glasgow, in the Nineteenth Century’ quoted in Collins, Be Well!, p. 119
the impact these had on the family and consider them against the two key themes that accompany asylum confinement: necessity and punishment.

5.3.3. Diagnosis: uncertain

Although Smith was unconcerned with the patients’ diagnoses, considering it futile to interpret individual conditions in the context of modern medicine, it is occasionally possible to utilise diagnostic details to gain insight into individuals’ lives and speculate about the responses of their families and wider support networks.

The Asylum was a highly administrative institution which kept detailed records of its patients, containing, as was stipulated by law, basic demographic data, diagnosis data, including medical history in cases of recurrent attacks, reports of progress, discharge or death. In some cases they also contained additional personal information provided by the patient’s family. In the period 1880-1904, a total of 86 Jewish patients were admitted to Prestwich and the majority were diagnosed with acute mania or melancholia, conditions that in modern terms roughly equate to manic episodes and depression, respectively. Interpreting this diagnosis in medial terms is indeed difficult as the records (a) give no clear indication of how diagnosis was determined and (b) differently diagnosed conditions often presented with similar symptoms. In one example, 25 year old labourer David Paskelinsky was diagnosed with acute melancholia. According to his notes he was “very violent, incoherent and struggling to escape from some imaginary danger”. Hyman Wagner’s symptoms were similar, his file stating: “Has delusions that people follow him about to injure him and makes false statements about him, is vaguely exalted” but he was diagnosed with acute mania. Only one Jewish patient was diagnosed with senile dementia. At 69 years old Alexander Cohen, a widower, was one of the oldest inmates. He liked to tell everyone about his imagined years as a captain in the British Army, and referred to

616 PA 8161,14/07/1891
617 PA 8502, 9/09/1892
himself as ‘Captain Kosher’, claiming to have responsibility over all Jewish slaughter houses in Manchester. Charles Cohen and Sarah Levittan were the only Jewish patients diagnosed with dementia, a term equating to schizophrenia or epilepsy. Charles’s case notes perhaps reveal more about contemporary attitudes to such conditions than they do about his symptoms, his file referring to him as “dull and stupid and demented.” Sarah’s file offers more detail. She was brought to the asylum after suffering from an epileptic fit which caused “weakness in the right side of leg”. Her fits were a regular occurrence since childhood and sometimes caused her to be suicidal or violent. Her case is a clear reminder of the negative attitudes people with disabilities sometimes had to endure. Although Sarah was considered “affable and of fair intelligence” she received no schooling due to her illness and once admitted to the asylum was offered palliative care only.

At least one of the patients was a suspected homosexual: 23 year old Morris Daniels was admitted to the asylum after jumping from a window in a suspected suicide attempt. The cause of his melancholia was stated as sexual intemperance and “unnatural intercourse”. After another suicide attempt and no obvious improvement, he was moved to the Annexe, which was reserved for long-term cases with little hope of improvement. Although such records tell us little about the individuals to whom they refer, they give insights into contemporary definitions of nonconformity. Sexual deviants, the elderly and those with learning difficulties were placed among those whose inclusion into the Jewish community was so problematic that asylum hospitalisation, which entailed their total exclusion from the community, loss of religious Judaism and sometimes their Jewish identity, was seen as preferable.

Whether or not they caused insanity, certain factors clearly aggravated it and their consideration helps to understand the way families utilised the dual functions of the asylum that both provided medical care and respite for families and removed undesirable individuals from society. Among the male patients, the most prominent

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618 PA 10798, 25/04/1902
619 PA 9300, 24/04/1895
620 PA 13348, 30/07/1904
621 PA 8411, 17/05/1892
cause of suffering was linked to their living conditions, poverty, overwork and job insecurity. Many patients were severely malnourished and talked incessantly of their business failures. One such case was Barnett Goldstone, a 20 year old machinist who had been out of work for 6 weeks and was convinced that a girl was following him and seeking to marry him against his will. He was admitted to the asylum after threatening to strangle himself, and diagnosed with melancholia caused by masturbation. Another typical case was that of one of the youngest patients, 17 year old Marks Palavanskie, formerly a water-proofer. His manic state was attributed to hunger and overwork and he too was moved to the Annexe.

Although re-admittance was more typical for women, Hyman Wagner, a 21 year old water-proofer, appeared in the case books twice. He was initially diagnosed with mania, attributed to ‘pecuniary trouble’ and work-place issues. As one of the less coherent cases he was almost instantly transferred to the Annexe but unexpectedly released into the care of friends. Less than 3 years later he was re-admitted, his situation worsened and he appeared to have lost all of his hair. Hyman Lewis Falk, Job Bloom, Mark Cohen and Nathan Nathan were all diagnosed with mania or melancholia caused by alcoholism, suggesting perhaps that alcoholism did occur in the Jewish community but was well hidden, sometimes by removal of alcoholics to the asylum.

For women, the causes of their illness were less uniform. One clearly identifiable factor was desertion, which represented a growing problem for the leadership. During the national Conference of the Jewish Board of Guardians in 1900, wife desertion was on top of the agenda and the topic that received most attention. The Board felt that by providing support to deserted wives and children it would “place a premium on desertion” and encourage errant husbands to treat it as ‘poor man’s divorce’. To encourage conformity, deserted wives were dealt with harshly, most often separated from their children in the workhouse. Several deserted wives also

622 PA 8585, 13/1/1893
623 PA 8518, 23/09/1892
624 PA 8502 9/09/1892 and PA 9274, 21/03/1895
appeared in Prestwich asylum. Among them was Rebecca Levitsky suffering from mania and claiming her husband was dead.\textsuperscript{626} Annie Glass was deserted 2 years prior to her admission and although she had a sister, conflicts between them became so unbearable that they resulted in Annie’s institutionalisation.\textsuperscript{627} Minnie Lipsis’s notes clearly capture the devastating effects of desertion. The young mother was deserted shortly after the birth of her third child and although she improved in the asylum, she remained a long term patient, the fate of her children unknown.\textsuperscript{628} Such stories are reminders of not only the harsh realities of immigrant life and the frequent lack of support networks, but more specifically of the unfeeling attitudes of the elite, such as those expressed by the Portsmouth delegate to the Conference of JBG who concluded that “in many foreign families the wife ceased to have the least care for her personal appearance after marriage, with the result that she failed to retain her hold upon the affections of her husband.”\textsuperscript{629} In this context the fate of deserted mothers embodied the moral judgment of the leadership, who only bestowed the ‘deserving’ status on those willing and able to endorse their values. Charity was not designed to help the needy but to improve those rather more malleable.

For many Jewish women in the asylum, childbirth was the trigger for their illness. Rachel Herman, who saw “heaven and angels ascending”, was diagnosed with recurrent mania. At 38 years old she was the mother of 10 children, including a newborn, and undertaking her third stay in Prestwich.\textsuperscript{630} Another recurring patient, Sarah Moscovitch, the 39 year old mother of 7, was admitted 4 months after the birth of her youngest child. During the studied period she was admitted to the asylum three times, but despite the severity of her symptoms, which included setting her house on fire, was deemed recovered each time.\textsuperscript{631} Although all of the above examples recovered, at least until their next child was born, not everyone did. Ada Cohen, aged 41, was first taken to Crumpsall Workhouse, known for its lack of kosher provision, a week after the stillbirth of her son. Her health further deteriorated and she died of
acute melancholia and exhaustion soon after her transfer to Prestwich.\footnote{PA 12133, 9/2/1901}

In several cases the cause of illness was attributed to failed love affairs. Bertha Issacs, a 19 year old tailor’s finisher was diagnosed with acute mania following a break-up.\footnote{PA 12417, 20/2/1902} Rachel Cohen, a 30 year old woman, also single, could be heard calling out to her lover.\footnote{PA 11393, 3/1/1898} In rare cases, mental break-downs were accompanied by other side-effects of such affairs. Sarah Cohen, a 25 year seamstress gave birth weeks prior to her admission despite being registered as single and living in a lodging house in Cheetham Hill.\footnote{PA 12821, 20/3/1903} There is no mention in her file to indicate what happened to her child. Although the circumstances of their admissions are unclear, we known that the leadership took active steps to reform ‘fallen women’ by sending them to the Sarah Pyke and Charcroft homes in London. It is likely that some cases were sent to the asylum by either the leadership or their families in order to conceal their shame.\footnote{See also chapter 2.}

For most Prestwich patients, the outcome of their treatment was not good. From the 29 men admitted between 1890-1904 only 4 recovered. The remaining 25 either died in the asylum or became long-term patients. For women the outlook was statistically much better. Out of the 57 women admitted, 29 either died or became ‘chronic cases’ in the asylum’s annexe and 28 were either recovered or discharged into the care of families and friends. There are several possible explanations for this imbalance. In Britain, most Jewish men assumed the role of breadwinners, which meant that they were able to support their families in their wives’ absence but likely struggled to provide care for large families.\footnote{See also Burman, ’The Jewish Woman as Breadwinner’, \textit{Oral History}, Vol.10, No.2 (1982)} This would suggest that the asylum was seen as a kind of hospital where people got better and would explain why some women were repeatedly admitted and allegedly improved. This explanation poses problems when one considers the generally low recovery rates and the fear of the asylum, evident in oral testimony. Praise was lavished in Jewish women and their maternal virtues, which were closely linked to the fact that they ceased to work after they married, but the MJM archive also offers strong evidence that when needed, women proved
capable and organised breadwinners. In at least one instance this was combined with taking care of a husband who was unable to work due to ailing health. In many cases, however, it would have been extremely difficult to care for a large family, provide financially and care for a husband suffering from violent delusions, as many of the male patients in Prestwich did. In such cases it is likely that the asylum would have served as a safety mechanism, allowing women to work and helping the family to survive.

The immigrant community was not entirely reliant on the MJBG for relief and formed its own support networks. Among these were the Russian Jews’ Benevolent Society, established in 1905, and the Provincial Independent Tontine Society established in 1922, which provided interest free loans to workers in need, such as during sickness. Although no records survive, it is likely that numerous friendly societies formed prior to the First World War but the help they could distribute was limited, as was their membership, being determined by the worker’s ability to make regular contributions, a sort of ‘badge of skilled workers’. Jewish inmates of Prestwich represented the poorest and most desperate section of the community, as is evident from their case notes and photographs, and it is debatable whether they would qualify for memberships of such societies. We know from Dr. Mott’s study that Jewish patients in Colney Hatch were frequently visited by their families, but it is impossible to establish whether such emotional support networks also existed in Manchester. Oral testimony offers no real insights, but the general feeling was that once someone was admitted to Prestwich, that was the “last you saw of them”. The female patients in Prestwich challenge this notion due to their relatively high recovery rate. Their stories also (a) challenge the myth that those with mental illness were shunned by their families out of shame as they repeatedly returned to the family and presumably the community and (b) enhance our understanding of maternal

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640 Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare in Hamburg and Manchester*, pp.211-212
641 Dr Rich J273, T3 S2
experiences that do not correspond with the paradigm of model mothers observed by Medical Officers of Health and enthusiastically promoted by the elite. Nevertheless, illness and disability, often a direct consequence of the immigrant experience, had a major impact on the family, whether it condemned them to the workhouse when support networks provided by wider family and community failed or were absent, or whether it led to the woman assuming sole responsibility for her family’s care. The MJM collection contains numerous testimonies that describe the hardship of widowed mothers attempting at once to raise their children and to provide for them financially, often resulting in their poor health and premature death. Although such information is mostly absent from the Prestwich records, behind each asylum patient was a family, whose fate was invariably affected as a result of such institutionalisation.

5.4. Personal Experiences of the asylum

Given the patients’ low recovery rates and the possible shame associated with mental illness, only three MJM accounts of personal memories exist to describe life in the asylum, its effect on one’s Jewish identity and the response of the Jewish community. One of these is an interview with a former social worker, E.B., who visited women in the Prestwich Asylum. Her position as a visitor also included dealing with unmarried mothers and facilitating the adoption of their babies, already discussed in chapter 2, suggesting that mental illness in the eyes of the elite, fell to the same category as immorality. The remaining two interviews are with Israel Shalom and Geoffrey Shulman, both of whom experienced lengthy institutionalisation in Brockhall Asylum in Lancashire. In the early 1980s both Israel and Geoffrey became residents of the Outreach Community and Residential Service, a Jewish organisation established in 1978 which provided accommodation, care and support for people with learning difficulties, including those in the process of rehabilitation following long-term institutional care. Their stories, though they

642 Such as Jack Cohen J63 and Martin Bobker J43
643 Most recently Pathways Associates Community Interests Company recorded personal histories of those who lived, worked and had relatives in Brockhall and Calderstones, a project that lasted from November 2015 until March 2018 and was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. For more information see also, http://www.lancslearningdisabilityinstitutions.org.uk/ (accessed on 1/06/2018)
will be discussed in the context of the Jewish community, were part of a trend in general society that condemned people noncompliant with social norms, including those with disabilities or learning difficulties, sexual deviants and alcoholics, to long-term stays in asylums which fulfilled punitive as well as medical functions.\textsuperscript{644} Whilst Prestwich’s case notes yielded only limited and speculative information about communal responses to disability and illness, the three interviews give a clear account of the indifference to such individuals expressed by both the family and the Jewish leadership. The experiences of Israel and Geoffrey, both members of the exclusive Sephardi community of Didsbury, suggest that the community, already noted for their inner cohesion and emphasis on marriage within its narrow social circles, took active steps to minimise anything that could threaten their position, including permanent institutionalisation of their children with learning and physical disabilities. Their stories also show how individual families responded to such situations differently, suggesting that even if one can identify the social norms that existed within a specific community, one cannot fully account for the behaviour of individuals or self-identification based on intimate familial relationships as well as other factors. E.B.’s interview is the only source that clearly demonstrates that the immigrant community were aware of and utilised the asylum’s punitive function for those deemed socially deviant by their families.

\section{5.4.1. Asylum Visitors}

During the first year of the MLJVC it was decided that visits to Jewish women in prisons, hospitals and asylums would be carried out by Lady Visitors of the JLVA.\textsuperscript{645} Any sensitivity shown by providing a female presence was negated by the fact that most Lady Visitors were members of the Reform Synagogue and had no grasp of Yiddish or the specific cultural and religious needs of immigrant Jews. It was also a deviation from the MLJVC’s main principle of providing exclusively for religious needs of inmates: whilst Jewish men were visited by synagogue authorities, women received visits by wealthy housewives. No details survive of what took place during such visits or how they were received, but by the end of 1885 the Ladies

\textsuperscript{644} \textit{The Guardian}, 7 April 2002
\textsuperscript{645} JLVA Minutes, 5 January 1885, 2 March 1885
“agreed that no good is to be obtained from visiting lunatics” and terminated their visits quoting the low number of Lady Visitors as the main reason. Presumably the duty of visiting fell to the MJLVC, at least until the Society for Protection of Women and Girls engaged a social worker, E.B., in 1934. E.B. visited women with genuine mental illnesses but also those placed in Prestwich by their families and excluded from their communities based on the moral judgment of their conduct, such as those having children out of wedlock. Her first visit to Prestwich in 1934 provided a stark contrast to the idyllic description of Colney Hatch included earlier. It is worth citing E.B. at length:

I’ve seen something today that was just too terrible. I said we ought to close the ward up, close the doors and close the windows and burn it down. I was very upset about one girl, she was a lovely girl, and she had a sister who was rather dominating, and they lived not with their own parents, they were killed abroad and they were brought to England to live with a relative but the relative wasn’t very keen to have them. And one sister played up to the relative, she did exactly as she was told but the other didn’t always and she became ill, mentally ill. And I used to visit her in the mental hospital. And apart from me and her sister at first, I must admit her sister went to visit her at first but after a time she got tired of going but I went but unfortunately she died in the mental home. And she really had no right to be there in first place… the relative, if she’d come to strangers I could have gotten her a place somewhere, and that was a lost life of a beautiful young girl. Oh I was upset.

E.B.’s impression of the asylum was not that of a place where patients were cured but concealed to ensure a fictional sense of communal health, reflecting moral judgement upon the undeserving in very different social categories. Alcoholics, homosexuals, single mothers, people with disabilities and learning difficulties and others defying social norms, absent from communal records and sometimes even oral history, could generally be found in the Prestwich asylum.

646 JLVA Minutes, December 1885
647 See also Thomas S. Szasz, The Age of Madness (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 198-202
648 E.B. J 44, T1 S2
5.4.2. Memories of the Asylum: growing up in the Asylum

Israel Shalom was born in 1925 as the youngest son of a wealthy cotton merchant in South Manchester. At the age of two he was placed in Swinton Home, an institution for “the mentally defective children,” where he remained until the age of sixteen.\textsuperscript{649} The extent of his learning disability is not clear. At the time of his interview, then in his 70s, Israel was classed as disabled due to his blindness and severe mobility issues linked to diabetes, which he only developed in later years. His support workers were unable to determine whether he suffered from a mild learning disability or whether his idiosyncrasies were the result of lengthy institutionalisation. Israel had very few memories of his family who seldom visited. His mother died young and was remembered by him as “always crying” and suffering from a respiratory complaint. Perhaps it was his mother’s illness which made her unable to care for seven children, one of whom had additional needs. Another possible explanation was linked to the decline of the Lancashire cotton trade, which caused a dramatic change in the family’s economic situation. For reasons about which we can only speculate, Israel’s parents decided that Swinton was the best place for him. The ‘home’, although newly opened in 1927, was run along the lines of the Victorian institutions to which it was annexed. Israel recalled the strict headmaster who used to cane the children’s hands until they stung “like a wasp.”\textsuperscript{650} The children received vocational training and Israel felt particular pride in his wood-working skills.\textsuperscript{651}

At the age of sixteen Israel was transferred to Brockhall, another Victorian-style institution, where he remained for 48 years. Israel’s description of the institution was unflattering: “The rules were strict there you know…they used to tie you up at night and keep you in the ward”. However, his identity was, to a large extent, derived from his time there.\textsuperscript{652} The wards at Brockhall were arranged alphabetically and Israel found himself surrounded by non-Jews. According to his case worker, Paul Sutton, Jewish patients in non-Jewish institutions were stigmatised due to their religion. In response, Israel started to suppress his Jewish identity. The ease with which he was

\textsuperscript{649} Elizabeth Dickie, ‘Communal Attitudes to those with Learning Difficulties and Individual Responses’, unpublished essay, 1995, in possession of the author, p.15
\textsuperscript{650} Dickie, ‘Communal attitudes’, p.29
\textsuperscript{651} Dickie, ‘Communal attitudes’, pp. 27-31
\textsuperscript{652} Israel Shalom quoted in the Taking Care of Ourselves Exhibition, MJM, March – December 1998
able to shed his Jewishness is not surprising, since he was separated from his family from the age of two and with no-one to explain Jewish traditions he had limited and often erroneous ideas about what it meant to be Jewish, such as his belief that “Jews were buried upside down”. Although his life was completely devoid of Jewish ritual and culture, Judaism still represented a scary, isolating and binding reality.

Already rejected by his family, Israel worked hard to be accepted at Brockhall and became so adjusted to the hospital life that he found it hard to lead a more independent life in Outreach. Even after six years at Outreach he still kept the strict timetable of his hospital days. His religious identity remained a struggle and he not only rejected kosher meals but retained his voracious appetite for bacon sandwiches. The anxiety his Jewishness inspired in him and the anticipation of criticism or antisemitism was particularly evident in his interaction with the mostly non-Jewish staff at Outreach, to whom he repeatedly stressed that he was “only half-Jewish” or “not a bad Jew.”

Although we do not know what motivated Israel’s parents, their lack of contact with him from such a young age lends itself to one possible conclusion. The previous chapter explored the inner cohesion of the Sephardi community in South Manchester, which generated a high level of conformity in marriage. It is possible, that the exclusivity of the community, along with their strong sense of social and cultural norms, generated intolerance towards those deviating from them, even if not doing so consciously. In the already narrow marriage pool, a family on the brink of losing their fortune was disadvantaged and the presence of a child with learning disabilities represented a further obstacle. For Israel, institutional care and the total seclusion from his Jewish roots evidently led to a crisis of identity. Where Smith’s study merely assumed that Jewish patients were treated with hostility, based on the language of their reports, Israel’s interview directly confirms this. Neither staff, lacking both the understanding and sensitivity to deal with Jewish patients, nor inmates at Brockhall, accepted Israel despite his best attempts to fit in. Far from

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653 Dickie, ‘Communal Attitudes’, p.37
654 Paul Sutton JT 41, T1 S1 & 2
655 Paul Sutton quoted in Dickie, ‘Communal attitudes’, p. 36
offering relief, rehabilitation in a Jewish environment in his 70s caused another crisis for Israel who did not understand what it meant to be Jewish or how to be so. His story shows that whilst communal attitudes and responses of families to nonconformity change over time, those considered nonconformists are not always able to adapt and take advantage of such developments.

In spite of the many similarities with Israel’s story, the interview with Geoffrey Shulman provides a very different experience of institutional care. Like Israel, Geoffrey was born in 1925 to a South Manchester Jewish family but unlike Israel, Geoffrey gave a vivid account of a happy family life. His Jewish identity was instilled in him through synagogue attendance, his *bar mitzvah*, kosher home and celebration of festivals, which continued even after his move to Brockhall in 1942.

The reason for the move is not clear, but is either linked to a minor learning disability or a car crash that happened shortly before his move to Brockhall and which gave Geoffrey a pronounced limp. Brockhall was seen as a modern institution well equipped to provide the best possible care for someone like Geoffrey, although he was unhappy with his new situation. He described the move as “horrible” and Brockhall as a place with “a lot of rules”. The lack of sympathy and understanding of his Jewishness were hardest to cope with. No kosher provisions were made and although synagogue attendance was permitted, no effort was ever made to provide transport. The Rabbi who was supposed to visit Jewish patients at Brockhall rarely made an appearance, in Geoffrey’s words: “If it was very busy he wouldn’t come to us.” When the Manchester City Council organised a communal *seder* for residents of local hospitals, Brockhall was omitted from the list, possibly due to its low number of Jewish cases.656

Whilst it would be wrong to say that Geoffrey was unaffected by his lengthy institutionalisation, he was better equipped to adapt to his new-found independence and return to the community than Israel, largely due to the continued support from his family. Despite living in a non-Jewish environment, largely ignorant of his needs as a Jew, Geoffrey managed to retain a very clear sense of his Jewishness and after

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656 Dickie, ‘Communal attitudes’, pp. 33-34
moving to assisted accommodation provided by Outreach, he became an enthusiastic participant in Jewish communal life, attending synagogue, keeping kosher and reading Jewish newspapers. His childhood in a family where he learned by example and his continual relationship with his family, who not only visited regularly but also took him out of the hospital to celebrate festivals, was perhaps the greatest difference between himself and Israel. But this was facilitated by his family and not the Jewish community and its leadership, highlighting the impact the family had on individuals’ sense of identity and conformity. Whilst Israel and Geoffrey’s institutionalisation could be attributed to similar factors and social norms within the Sephardi community, their families’ differing responses also show how these were interpreted by individual families.

Families responded differently to mental health crises. Some believed that, away from the watchful eye of the community, people with disabilities would be spared from laughter and ridicule they might otherwise experience in their communities. The anxiety felt by Israel who, in order to fit into the non-Jewish environment, suppressed his Jewish identity and the lack of sensitivity displayed to Jewish patients shows this sentiment to be misguided, at the very least. Unlike Israel, Geoffrey continued to maintain Jewish dietary rules, although no kosher meals were provided. He recalled an incident when he was given bacon and told “Get it down”, although it was eventually exchanged for boiled eggs. The almost complete lack of provision for the religious and cultural needs of Brockhall’s Jewish residents highlights the Jewish community’s indifference to them. Although the evidence is limited, it is possible to argue that Israel and Geoffrey’s total exclusion from the communal life of a group bound by very strict social norms, is representative of the mostly negative communal attitudes towards disability. Their stories also show the range of responses from families within such narrow social norms and the effect these had on individuals’ identity and conformity.

657 Dickie, ‘Communal attitudes’, p. 37
658 Paul Sutton JT 42, T1 S1
659 Dickie, ‘Communal attitudes’, p. 34
5.5. Disability and mental health issues in the community

Examples of people with disabilities and mental health issues appear in the oral testimony archive frequently but their total number is impossible to gauge as, unlike descriptions of intermarriage, they are usually brief and vague and, as a result, often not catalogued correctly. Despite their limitations, such examples nonetheless remain the only sources which place Jews living with illness and disability directly within the communal fold where attitudes can be observed even if the extent to which these attitudes, captured in individuals’ interviews, are representative of the whole community is arguable. The following section will outline the most common types of disability and illness that appear in the collection.

5.5.1. General communal attitudes to disability

There are only four interviews in the collection which describe communal attitudes to disability, all speaking from professional perspectives. These include Dr. Louis Rich, the Medical Officer of Health for Cheetham Hill, Paul Sutton, director of Outreach Community and Residential Services, Sidney Hamburger, who was heavily involved with Jewish welfare organisations in Manchester and Joy Wolfe, a trustee at Langdon College. They were unanimous in their view that it was not a myth that shame and secrecy sometimes accompanied disability and disease and remained the norm until recently, particularly within the most orthodox sections of the Jewish community.

Dr. Rich grew up in Strangeways in the 1920s. A son of immigrants, he defied his father’s wish to join the family grocery business and trained as a gynaecologist and later became the Medical Officer of Health in Cheetham Hill. He was able to give an insight into the physical and mental health of the community. He believed that insanity was common in the immigrant community and was directly linked to their poverty, poor living conditions, lack of job security and generally tragic circumstances. His assessment was consistent with the Prestwich case notes. He provided an intimate description of streets infested with rats, children dying of diphtheria, young people dying through poor living standards and overwork and large families barely managing to feed and clothe their children descending into
Dr. Rich also had a more personal experience of disability. When he married his wife, Anne Marks, he was met with resistance from her mother. Anne was one of 12 children in the family and the only one who received no official schooling, something which was attributed to her suffering from polio. Whilst the other children were encouraged to work to supplement the family’s meagre income, it was assumed that Anne would neither work nor marry. Dr. Rich recalled: "When I married Anne, [her mother] resented it very much indeed, because she looked on Anne, who was going to be permanent slave. When I changed the situation by marrying her, she never liked it a bit. And I came to the conclusion then — and I think I may be right, that when a man gets married, the first thing he should do is hang his mother in law!" A similar example already appeared in the Prestwich records where Sarah Levittan, suffering from epilepsy, was denied education even though her cognitive abilities were unaffected by her condition.

Paul Sutton worked with many care users who had endured lengthy but unnecessary institutionalisation for minor physical and learning disabilities, which he attributed to the tendency of the orthodox community to conceal disability. He spoke of such individuals as being ‘hidden in the closet’. What led to such attitudes was not always clear. Some parents clearly felt ill-equipped to deal with their child’s special needs and felt they would better cared for in a specialised institution. However, often they were motivated by concerns for their other children and their future marriage prospects. Either way, lengthy institutional care was not unique to the Jewish community and was, at the time, seen as an adequate response to disability, whether it aimed to protect the individual, their family or wider society.

Paul’s professional observations were mirrored by Sidney Hamburger, who described the attitudes of the close-knit ultra-Orthodox community towards disabled

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660 Dr. Rich J273, T2 S1  
661 Dr. Rich J273, T5 S1  
662 See also previous section on the Prestwich Asylum  
663 Paul Sutton JT 41, T1 S1 also in Andrew Scull, ‘The Asylum, Hospital and Clinic’ in Greg Eghigian, *The Routledge History of Madness and Health* (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp.101-113
children who “were regarded almost as a slur on parents and the child was locked up in the attic, if not physically, mentally and culturally.” 664 Parents mostly chose to deal with such children “in the house” but in those cases where they chose institutional care, the children were usually dispatched away from the watchful eye of the community and looked after in non-Jewish institutions. Ultra-orthodox communities were sustained by marriage within tight social circles, which in most cases meant consanguineous marriage. Such marriages ensured the survival and continuity of the often small communities but they also threatened it by the possible consequences for the health of their children. Their exclusion was perhaps deemed as a necessary sacrifice. This attitude prevailed until the 1970s and Sidney Hamburger offered further insights by suggesting that the paradox of the most religiously observant section of the community depriving their children the opportunity of Jewish life was seen by them as justifiable, as their disabilities were often wrongly viewed as extreme enough to render any attempts at inclusion futile. 665

Joy Wolfe also pointed to the ultra-orthodox community as one refusing to engage with mainstream communal charities and showing a tendency to conceal disability out of shame and a desire to preserve reputation. 666 There are examples in the collection that confirm this view, but also those that challenge it. The following section will focus on different responses to mental health issues, disability and learning difficulties, ranging from tolerance and kindness to occasional cruelty, portraying a community aware of difference but not unanimous in its response to it.

5.5.2. The village meshuggener

Attitudes to those deemed ‘lunatics’ or ‘slow’ varied. Many conditions were little understood and, as a result, individuals would either be deliberately kept away from their wider community, such as children who were not sent to school, or would become isolated as a result of their inability to interact and fit into their communities.

As the Chasidic tale has it, every village has its “resident meshuggener”. In

664 Sidney Hamburger JT 114, T1 S1
665 Ibid.
666 Joy Wolfe, Extraordinary Voices
Manchester, this position was taken up by Sam Silver, also referred to as ‘Meshuggy Sam’. He was remembered by Nat Marks, Martin Bobker and Julius Leonard, the latter giving the most vivid description.\(^{667}\) The Silver family, consisting of Sam, his wife and two children, were well-known in the neighbourhood of Craigie Street in Strangeways in the 1920s. While it is clear that all members of the family suffered from some form of learning disability, the exact nature of their condition remains unclear. The family was a source of amusement to local children, who gave Sam his nickname. Julius Leonard recalled an incident when Sam’s son climbed on top of a roof and the neighbourhood children, forming a mob, chanted: “Jump, jump!”\(^{668}\) Mr. Leonard, who was a teenager at the time, had fond memories of Sam: “Now Meshuggy Sam was the greatest character you’ve ever seen. He was mad. His wife was mad, his son was mad…his daughter was as mad as a March hare….” Sam was remembered for his vast collection of medals, consisting of buttons and safety pins, which he claimed to have received from members of European royalty, and his love for the police to whom he would shout out and salute in the street. A certain level of compassion, if not affection, towards Sam is apparent from the fact that he was welcomed as a volunteer in the local police station and allowed to ride on trams and buses for his amusement, free of charge. Though he seemed an amusing character to the neighbourhood’s children, the sadness of Sam’s situation was not completely lost on them. Julius Leonard remembered the day Sam’s wife was taken to Prestwich Asylum: “Meshuggy Sam’s wife used to go out on a big tip where there were all rats and everything, and she used to pick all the crusts out and eat them, so they came and took her away and put her in Prestwich.”\(^{669}\) A similar fate befell Sam’s daughter, Gertie, following a very public fight with her father, after which an ambulance arrived to take her to the Asylum. It was assumed that she remained in Prestwich for the rest of her life. When another ambulance arrived to take Sam to Prestwich he managed to hide in the local butcher’s shop. The butcher, who occasionally employed Sam, willingly provided refuge as well an escape route: “he locked the door and he went away so the two ambulances went next door and they had a drink of tea and while they were having tea, somebody says through the window, ‘Sam

\(^{667}\) Nat Marks J177 T1 S1, Martin Bobker J43, T2S2 and Julius Leonard J157, T3 S1

\(^{668}\) Julius Leonard J157, T3 S1

\(^{669}\) Julius Leonard J157, T3 S1
they’ve gone for tea’. He was downstairs like a shot, run to the phone box, phoned the detectives at Willis Street and detectives came down and told the ambulance men ‘You get back where you belong, leave him, he’s alright’.”

The Prestwich Asylum invoked fear in the community, who knew that once “the horse drawn yellow cab” had arrived for someone, that was the “last you saw of them.”

This episode was in fact the second time the street rallied around Sam. Some years prior to this incident, Sam and his wife took in a lodger who manipulated the family into signing the house over to him. When they found themselves on the street along with their furniture, their neighbours confronted the lodger and successfully restored Sam to his home.

The kindness shown by the community to Sam Silver did not apply to every such case. Even within Sam’s own family, no real warmth was extended to either his wife or children. Wolf Benninson, also from Strangeways, had a very different memory of how people like Sam, whom he considered ‘backward’, were treated. Though he spoke in plural, only Sammy Jackson, Wolf’s school classmate, was mentioned by name in this interview: “He [the teacher] used to sneer at Sammy Jackson, he referred to him as Sabby Jackson and he was always on the front row.” Well, we realize nowadays many a child is backward, perhaps his hearing is not good or his sight isn’t so very good, perhaps it’s the approach of the teacher somehow. But if a chap was a little bit backwards he was pushed down and down and had his spirit broken entirely.”

The value of such stories is twofold. In the first instance, however limited and imprecise they might be, they capture lives of vulnerable individuals otherwise absent from historical records. Secondly, they capture the variety of responses to disability and illness. The only indication of why some people, like Meshuggy Sam, were shown kindness whilst others, including Sabby Jackson and even Sam Silver’s

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670 Ibid.
671 Dr Rich J273, T3 S2
672 Julius Leonard J157, T3 S1
673 The meaning of the slang word ‘sabby’ has likely changed over time, from the context of the interview it means ‘dim-witted.’
674 Wolf Benninson J24, T3 S2
extended family, were treated cruelly is the manner of their engagement with their wider communities. Meshuggy Sammy was seen as endearing character who engaged with his community and in turn his community accepted him and looked after him. Sabby Jackson and Sam’s wife were portrayed as isolated figures, somewhat unfathomable to those who remember them. In the context of this chapter, people with disabilities and illness are treated as a named sub-group within the community but they were actually seen as individuals and communal responses to them depended on their personalities, role in the community and their level of interaction with their wider networks. This represents an important dimension in understanding whether an individual was perceived by the community as threatening, and tells us where sensitivities to communal self-definition lay.

5.5.3. Deaf and Dumb and blind

Deafness and blindness constitute the most common type of disability described in the interviews. Oral testimonies capture a range of attitudes, but similarly to intermarriage, it appears that it was quite possible for individuals to fear disability and at the same time accept family members who were disabled and even provide care for them. This was also a perfectly respectable disability, as far as the wider community was concerned, with the elites keen to publically demonstrate their concern and support.

From as early as the 1870s, Manchester was singled out by statisticians as having a comparatively high proportion of ‘deaf and dumb’, due to the working conditions in the industrial city. In the absence of appropriate facilities in Manchester, Jewish children with hearing loss were sometimes sent to the Deaf and Dumb Home in London. Those suffering with eye problems were typically sent to the Asylum for the Indigenous Blind in Old Trafford (Henshawe’s), which included Jewish names of

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675 In 1871 Lancashire and Cheshire was the only district which saw an increase in in the ‘deaf and dumb and blind’ rates. The numbers were closely rivalling London. D. Buxton, The Deaf and Dumb of Great Britain, American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb, Vol.19, No.2 (April, 1874), pp. 75-78
676 Clara Weingard J254, T1 S1 also Lipman, A Century of Social Service, p. 50, Lipman, A History of the Jews, p. 34, Black, ‘Health and medical care’, p. 95
both inmates and patrons in its annual reports between 1880 and 1945. The aim of both institutions was to provide its inmates with new skills which would “elevate their character” and render them “useful members of society” by increasing their prospects of employment. How successful they were in obtaining work in their communities varied; oral testimonies suggest that some were well liked and supported by their communities, others became mocked and ostracised.

Fanny Bor’s mother came to Manchester after experiencing two major pogroms in Odessa and Kishinev. It was during the Kishinev pogrom that she sustained head injuries which led to gradual hearing loss and eventual deafness. Although Fanny’s mother became very adept at lip reading, she never mastered English and her integration in Manchester was limited. If she found her situation traumatic, she hid it well from her children who considered her undeterred. Fanny recalled numerous incidents in which Mrs. Bor managed by simply repeating Yiddish instructions until people either understood or gave in. This method was used when visiting sick relatives in the hospital with a remarkable degree of success, bypassing visiting hours and yielding free bus rides.

Minnie Davies, whose father Phillip Moskovitch was ‘deaf and dumb and blind’ gave the most comprehensive account. After the death of her mother, Minnie and her siblings, still children at the time, assumed responsibility for him. At least one of them, but usually more, lived with him to provide day to day support. Although there is an air of embarrassment in the interview, with Minnie whispering: “my father was deaf and dumb and blind” and stating “I am not ashamed but I don’t want it on paper,” the interview gives a vivid impression of not just a close-knit family but a strong sense of community. Phillip was able to communicate with his children using broken Yiddish, Minnie even provided a few examples of words which he

677 Manchester Evening News, 24 February 2011, Abraham Moss was a key supporter of Henshawe’s, see also Sidney Hamburger JT2, T3 S1 and Julius Emanuel JT8, T3 S2, For a full list of Jewish supporters of Henshawe’s see also Henshaw’s Institution for the Blind, Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended on 31st March 1934, p.10,

678 Henshaw’s Institutions for the Blind, Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended on 31st March 1881, p.6

679 Fanny Bor J45, T1 S1

680 Minnie Davies J75, T1 S1

681 Minnie Davies J 75, T1 S2
mispronounced, and he recognised them by touching their hair, Minnie’s sister’s curly hair simplifying the task. The children had to accompany their father to see family members living outside of Red Bank but he retained a level of independence, each morning crossing the road to attend Fernie Street synagogue, and he continued mending broken shoes to earn his living. It was noted that he was particularly skilled at weaving rugs which he made as wedding gifts for family members, suggesting that he might have been a patient at Henshaw’s where such a skill set was encouraged, but Minnie did not mention it in the interview nor was she asked about it. Phillip was so adept at household tasks like emptying the ashes and lighting the fire, that when the family moved, the new gas fireplace was a source of much panic. This was clearly an instance when communication was difficult for they feared he would accidentally dislodge a gas pipe. There is no hint in the interview of any sort of ostracism or marred marriage prospects. Phillip himself was married twice, outliving both his wives. All five of his children had successful marriages. Their immediate community, on the street, rallied around the family. Minnie and her sister were taken under the wing of ‘Mammy’ Goldstone, the street’s matriarch, who taught them how to buy fish and meat when their mother died. To local children, Phillip was not a source of amusement like Meshuggy Sam, but rather a valuable source of toffees, which he used in lieu of payment when he needed to be accompanied to more distant locations.682

In the context of the study of nonconformity, Clara Weingard’s interview represents the most useful source. Clara was born in Strangeways after the First World War and although she was the second oldest in the family, she was in fact her mothers’ fifth child.683 During the war all four Weingard children contracted scarlet fever, three died and the fourth, Clara’s brother, sustained significant hearing loss: “and when it all finished he was left deaf and dumb – cos he lost all his speech, and his speech is very guttural, even today. But, very clever. A brilliant mind.”684 Until the age of 16 he attended the Deaf and Dumb School in London where he learned wood-work, later working as a cabinet maker in Manchester. He was at an advantage as the Deaf

682 Ibid
683 Burman & Livshin, ‘Growing up in Manchester Jewry’, pp. 56-63
684 Clara Weingard J254, T1 S1
and Dumb school pioneered lip-reading and its graduates were better able to express themselves. Others were less fortunate, as Clara recalled: “unfortunately in those days, if you were deaf-mute you were less than nothing. They used to call them Shtummers, and mock them”. She recalled her brother’s friend, also a ‘shtummer’: “He used to love to touch my hair and he used to go ‘mmmm’, he had no speaking voice but he used to sort of growl. But I wasn’t frightened of him, with knowing my brother.” Lacking education and the ability to communicate, this friend was condemned to heavy manual labour in the street: “And all the kids used to mock him: ‘The shtummer, the Shtummer!’”

Clearly, in the Weingard family, Clara’s brother was valued and loved, especially given the tragic circumstances that led to his deafness. Yet she was aware of the difficulties of the position of people with disabilities in the community. Her honest account makes one question whether Minnie Davies’ whispering and desire to not record things on paper betray less than sympathetic communal attitudes than those she described. The above examples have two important implications. Firstly, they very clearly place people with hearing and sight loss in the communal context, suggesting that those were not the kind of disabilities that people hid, perhaps because they were often the result of accidents or environmental damage and posed no threat to their families, although their full ‘membership’ of the community depended on the extent to which such individuals interacted with the community. Secondly, they show that institutional care was, at least in some instances, seen by families as a positive way to improve their children’s future prospects. Clara’s brother’s acceptance in the community was undoubtedly made easier due to the training he received at the Deaf and Dumb School which made him not only able to communicate with people around him but facilitated his job, making him a useful and valued member of the community. Others who had not received such training found themselves on the margins, professionally and often socially.

685 Black, ‘Health and Medical Care’, p. 95
686 Clara Weingard J254, T1 S1
687 Ibid
5.5.4. Suicide

The most tragic outcome for those suffering from depression or mental breakdowns was suicide. In Jewish tradition, suicide is condemned theologically, legally and socially. Theologically, one who commits suicide is understood to have tried to supersede God’s role in giving and taking life. Kaplan and Shoeneberg even argued that suicide is “more reprehensible” than homicide as it removes the possibility of repentance.688 The halakhic implications of suicide relate to more practical issues such as rituals surrounding the funeral and mourning. Though it is condemned, a degree of sympathy for those who commit suicide and their families is apparent in the confusing definition of suicide, specifying that one has to act ‘wittingly’.689 In practice, this means that suicide can only be committed by responsible adults who announce their intentions. In cases no such announcement had been made, two witnesses must testify that the person was in full possession of their faculties.690 This blurred definition often allowed families to mourn properly for their loved ones and preserved their respectability. That considerable effort was often made to disprove suicide is apparent from some of the interviews. Grace Levy, a member of the Sephardi community of South Manchester, recalled the aftermath of Joseph Btesh’s suicide, with “no suicide verdict at the inquest”.691 Similarly, Dinah McCormick told of a young mother who killed herself but whose death was put down to the effects of postnatal depression. Regardless of whether death was officially deemed a suicide, the fact that we learn about it in oral testimony suggests that such incidents rarely escaped the watchful eye of the community.

The ‘alleged’ suicide of Joseph Btesh was one of four such cases remembered by Grace Levy. In her interview she also mentions Vivian Hamwee, driven to suicide by a broken engagement and by the death of his sister, Joe Levy, who killed himself after the death of family members and Danny Cohen who committed suicide due to financial problems. Interestingly, while Grace stresses the stigma attached to suicide and the way people “clammed up” about it, she is happy to share the names of

689 Ibid.
690 Ibid.
691 Grace Levy MANJM 2005.123/9, T1 S2
individuals. The reluctance to give names frequently accompanies accounts of acts of nonconformity, such as in cases of prostitution and crime, though most people are happy to talk about them. It is not always clear whether the refusal to identify someone is due to respect for their families or the fear of being viewed as someone who spreads gossip. Grace Levy’s openness is perhaps an indication of her own attitude, which is sympathetic.

Dinah McCormick’s memory of the suicide of a young mother she befriended was more intimate and was relayed in a much more animated way. Struggling to cope with the demands of motherhood and domestic life, she begged Dinah for advice. Marriage seemed to expose the deep social division between the young couple. Dinah described the husband as a “big fat Austrian peasant” whilst the young woman was “gorgeous looking and wealthy.” Both were deeply bound by the traditions of their respective families, which proved to be a source of constant conflict and gradually eroded the marriage. Whilst the husband forbade his wife to get any form of domestic help on the grounds that “his mother had brought up a very big family without having anyone to help her” his wife refused to leave him, as her family told her: “you shouldn't break up a marriage - a woman must live through this.” The dispute escalated into cruelty and ended in the young mother’s suicide. According to Dinah the cause of death was attributed to postnatal depression. As argued in Chapter 3, this is another example of how Jewish marriage, rather than intermarriage, could be marred by the social and economic divisions within the immigrant community and result in a public scandal.

Suicide was a common feature of Larry Goldstone’s childhood and youth in Red Bank, where the canal was not only the dumping grounds for the local residents’ refuse, but also a place well known for suicide attempts. Larry witnessed two such incidents, recalling the police pulling out unidentified bodies. Like Grace Levy, Larry also recognised the stigma and disgrace surrounding suicide in the Jewish community, which resulted in the peripheral location in Jewish cemeteries of the

692 Ibid.
693 Dinah McCormick J279, T3 S1
694 Ibid.
graves of those people who committed suicide.\textsuperscript{695} Out of respect for their families, who still lived in Manchester at the time of his interview, Larry was not prepared to mention names of those friends who had committed suicide. The first one was his childhood friend who died at the age of 18. Larry’s surprise that somebody from “a well-to-do family of educated people and businessmen, the last lad you’d except to commit a suicide,” perhaps reflects the widespread understanding of the role that poverty and hardship played in most cases.\textsuperscript{696} This suicide, it would appear, was committed ‘wittingly’ for he announced to his friends “that the world was cruel, couldn’t see a reason to live, people are cruel to one another. He was disgusted by the human race.”\textsuperscript{697} The second person remembered by Larry was also a young man in a privileged position, at the time studying to become a rabbi. He also saw no purpose in life. Although this is not explicit in the interview, it is possible that the two suicides were a result of the widespread sense of gloom and depression which followed the First World War, as they both died in the early 1920s. Larry’s final experience of suicide, which took place in the 1930s when a young rabbi, friend of Larry’s, could not cope with the rising fascism on the eve of the Second World War, could be explained in a similar way.\textsuperscript{698} Although such conclusions are speculative, they match Frank Allaun’s description of the desperation war and unemployment induced in the YMCA members. Two of Frank’s friends, both non-Jewish, also committed suicide for such reasons.\textsuperscript{699}

Larry Goldstone’s surprise that even wealthy people could have reasons to commit suicide shows that although poverty and trauma of immigration were key factors contributing to mental illness, they were not the only factors. Suicide represents the most extreme type of nonconformity, a total breakdown of religious and social norms; yet the stories of those taking their own lives are told with respect and sympathy. Nonconformity is not a static quality as individuals and the community change, but suicide represents finality which cannot be overcome. Perhaps it is this that led, in the examples above, not only to expressions of sympathy but also the

\textsuperscript{695} He estimated that Blakely Cemetery had 24 such graves. Larry Goldstone J103, T1 S2
\textsuperscript{696} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{697} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{698} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{699} Frank Allaun JT1, T1 S1
willingness of Jewish authorities to overlook the obvious in order to allow families to retain dignity. What the interviews do not tell is how such families coped with their loss, whether they received support from the community or whether they remained stigmatised.

5.5.5. The stigma of tuberculosis

One category of individual that was particularly problematic for the neighbourhood was those suffering from infectious disease and specifically tuberculosis. The supposed predisposition of Jews to tuberculosis, though not as contentious as lunacy and some hereditary conditions, also featured in the anti-alien debate. Even Dr. Koch’s discovery of the tubercle bacillus in 1882, proving that heredity was not a factor, provided little respite for the communal leadership since tuberculosis was particularly prevalent in working-class districts suffering from overcrowding, such as those inhabited by Jews. The London elite took a direct approach to help prevent and treat the disease, even though, like their Manchester counterparts, they were not typically pro-active in general matters of communal health, arguing that it was best left to local hospitals supported by donations from Jewish benefactors in an effort to ‘express notions of local identity and patronage’. 700

In London the Sanitary Committee was established as a visitation body of the JBG assessing and improving sanitary conditions of Jewish homes. By 1895 Jewish Almshouses and Convalescent Homes were established in London providing pioneering tuberculosis treatment. 701 In Manchester the inspection of Jewish homes, provision of carbolic soap and education on matters of hygiene fell to the Lady Visitors who occasionally referred “smelly houses” to the MJBG for a closer inspection. 702 How successful they were at improving sanitation and preventing the spread of disease is arguable. Their work was certainly commended by the Manchester City News, but such reports were generally published alongside articles

700 Vanessa Heggie, ‘Jewish Medical Charity in Manchester’, Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester (2005), pp. 11-112
702 JLVA Minutes, 10 April 1985
referring to “the Jewish home [being treated] in every respect as if it were a rural farm”. 703

The closest thing to residential care for Jewish patients was the Delamere Fresh Air Home and School established in 1921 to provide care for ‘pre-consumptive’ children in an attempt to prevent the illness. This was not so much a community project but one attributed directly to Margaret Langdon who more-or-less single-handedly secured the necessary funding and found and negotiated its premises. Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, whilst being ‘finished’ in Paris, Margaret received a letter offering her the position of Honorary Secretary of the Chinley Holiday Home, which she accepted. Chinley was established under the auspices of the JLVA to offer holidays to immigrant children. It has already been argued that the elite lacked insight into what constituted the needs of the immigrant community and Chinley was no different. Instead of providing health care, for which there was significant need in the immigrant community, it offered children two weeks holidays in the country. Margaret found this frustrating to the point that when she put together plans for Delamere, she initially refused to have women over the age of forty on the Committee. Having observed that many immigrant children suffered from respiratory conditions which, along with making them more likely to develop tuberculosis, also compromised their education, she conceived Delamere to tackle both issues simultaneously. After the Second World War, Delamere catered for children with learning difficulties. One of the difficulties Margaret Langdon faced was acquiring the premises, despite having secured the funds. The property owner, fearful she would “bring the plague into the country”, initially refused to sell.

The stigma attached to tuberculosis is also clearly captured in oral testimonies. Affected families knew that it was something that you “kept absolutely quiet about” since, according to Dr. Rich, they were perceived as “having lost caste... something below the general level of the people. It was something that you were ashamed of admitting that you had…it was a disgrace and people shunned you, because they had an instinctive feeling that they would catch it from you”. Dr Rich recalled the Grotman family of Hightown, whose father succumbed to tuberculosis leaving

703 MCN, 11 March 1899, 18 March 1899
behind several children, one of whom had also contracted the illness: "it reflected on
the family, they were treated almost as lepers, you see. It was something that you
were very unhappy about and people…treated you in a mean kind of way".\textsuperscript{704}

Unusually, contracting tuberculosis was a ‘happy’ experience for Frances Nemrow
but also one that indirectly aggravated her mother’s mental illness. Frances’s mother
came to Manchester in the early 1920s following the sudden death of her husband.
Widows, it was noted by Dr, Rich, were dealt a particularly heavy blow. He recalled
them “crying and screaming” and “in a terrible hysterical state” at funerals,
sometimes knowing that they were destined for the workhouse.\textsuperscript{705} Not much is
known about Mrs. Nemrow’s mental health immediately after her husband’s death
but her daughter’s interview speaks of deep and lasting depression, violence and
delusions. Frances recalled, for instance, how her mother used to sing and talk to her
dead husband and sometimes to God. She was also prone to lashing out, one time
breaking Frances’ leg in such a way that she spent months in hospital and developed
a lasting limp. Poverty and illness meant that Mrs. Nemrow struggled to care for
herself and her young daughter and the family often went hungry. Poor lifestyle
contributed to Frances’ already failing health, which included rheumatism and brittle
bones. At the age of 5 her health issues became so serious that she was taken to a
convalescence home in South Manchester and from there to Whittington Hospital
after it transpired that she had tuberculosis. Upon her arrival, she was unable to
walk, speak or interact with the other children, something she attributed to her
mother’s inability to care for her, physically and emotionally. The TB ward, “a sad
place for abandoned children”, gave Francis security and the emotional and physical
nourishment she craved.\textsuperscript{706} As a result, she thrived but her happiness was short-lived.
Her illness coincided with Mrs. Nemrow’s engagement to a wealthy Jewish man
from Cheetham Hill which came to an abrupt end when he learnt of France’s
diagnosis. Frances reflected that tuberculosis was “aids of their time”.\textsuperscript{707} Apart from
highlighting popular attitudes to the illness, Frances’s case is also a stark reminder
that not all Jewish mothers possessed maternal virtues. Hers is perhaps the only story

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{704} Dr. Rich J273, T3 S2
\item \textsuperscript{705} Dr. Rich J273, T2 S1
\item \textsuperscript{706} Frances Nemrow JT 36, T1 S1
\item \textsuperscript{707} Ibid, T1 S2
\end{itemize}
in the collection capturing the direct impact of mental illness on the family.

The ostracism of families affected by tuberculosis represents the only category in this chapter that clearly conveys the community’s negative attitude to them. But such ostracism was motivated neither by direct deviance from specific social norms, nor did it carry the sort of moral judgment that accompanied instances of immorality or crime. Many families were already at breaking point and could not afford exposure to a contagious disease like tuberculosis, the potential loss of earnings or, in the worst case scenario, loss of life. Ostracism of those known to be infected by their immediate communities was in this context a natural and necessary consequence.

5.6. Conclusion

The first aim of this chapter was to include stories of Jews with disability and illness previously omitted from communal histories. Prestwich Asylum records and oral testimony capture such stories but they also have limitations which render any conclusion speculative.

Although the asylum inspired fear in the Jewish community, most of those suffering from mental breakdowns were admitted to Prestwich by their families who, at least in some instances, hoped for ‘recovery’, as the frequent readmission of female patients suggests. In other cases, when communal support networks failed, it is possible that the asylum acted as a safety network for families by relieving the financial and emotional burden of care, allowing them to function and survive. However, the asylum was not always a last resort for such care, relied on out of necessity. Homosexuals, alcoholics, single mothers and those with disabilities appear in the asylum records and when combined with oral testimony of E.B., the communal social worker who visited female asylum inmates in the 1930s, it is clear that, at least in some instances, Jewish families relied on the asylum to remove undesirable members from their community. It is not always possible to differentiate between these two possible attitudes to institutional care. In addition, chapter 1 has already focused on E.B.’s work with ‘fallen women’, arranging adoption of their babies and attempting to reinstate them within their communities, sometimes with
the support of their families. Whilst communal attitudes to illness, disability and immorality were rarely positive, they were not always entirely negative and in many instances the strengths of the family unit prevailed.

Oral testimony offers further insights into how the community viewed those with disability and disease, capturing a variety of responses. Social workers and communal leaders stressed unsympathetic responses, born sometimes out of shame other times linked to lack of understanding of individual conditions. The MJM collection contains evidence to both support and disprove such conclusions. Whether or not immigrant Jews were aware of the anti-alien debate and its focus on Jewish health, the community also feared the possibility of the heredity of disabilities. Lack of understanding of certain mental and physical conditions fuelled these fears and led to the concealment of such individuals, either at home or in the asylum, to preserve the family’s respectability. It is difficult to determine, based on available evidence, to what extent families acted out of concern and belief that help would be provided in the asylum and to what extent such institutions served to segregate individuals unable or unwilling to comply with the social norms of their communities. Stories of Israel Shalom and Geoffrey Shulman are very suggestive of such negative attitudes but also show, through their differing experiences, the individual response of their families even within those communities governed by very narrow social norms, such as the Sephardi community. More broadly and following on the study of intermarriage, they highlight the importance of family in giving individuals a sense of identity and instilling conformity in them. In the context of other disabilities, institutional care sometimes had a positive impact on individuals’ lives and it is less easy to place these in the context of removing social deviants. Many individuals with disabilities had positive experiences of the community. Crucially, disability or illness represented only one element of their life and whilst some were defined by it, most were not and were instead considered in the broader context of their lives, including their relationship with the wider community. Infectious disease remains the only type of illness viewed unmistakably negatively, due to the obvious threat it represented to the community.

Contrary to the popular myth of ‘looking after their own’, Jewish elites delayed any organised provisions for those with disabilities or mental health issues until the
situation presented genuine potential for communal scandal. Their response is best seen in the socio-political context of the anti-alien debate, which reminded the Jewish leadership of its own tenuous position in wider society which, despite their best efforts, continued to regard them as foreigners. For this reason they established visitation committees to provide for the religious needs of Jewish inmates of lunatic asylums and hospitals and inspected Jewish homes to promote hygiene and prevent the spread of infectious disease. In terms of immigrant health, their response was inadequate and betrayed the low value placed of individuals suffering from illness and perhaps unlikely to recover. Nevertheless, the visitations received adulation on the pages of the Jewish Chronicle. This particular brand of elite philanthropy was far removed from traditional notion of Jewish charity, given anonymously and for the benefit of the receivers.

Apart from the visitation committee, the elite also had another link to the Prestwich asylum. The MJGB either directly referred cases to the asylum or condemned individuals to the asylum indirectly, by refusing relief. While oral testimonies highlight women as capable breadwinners, able to care for their families following their husband’s death, the asylum records capture the fate of those rather less robust and deemed ‘undeserving’ by the leadership, such as women struggling to come to terms with desertion, bereavement or other family crises. Equally, they illustrate cases of men whose poverty, living conditions and overwork severely eroded their physical and mental health, contrasting stereotypical impressions of Jews as able to endure extreme working conditions, typical of the anti-alien debate. Even though restricted by a narrow timeframe and containing limited personal information about individuals, Prestwich records provide a valuable insight into the lives of unsuccessful Jews, which are generally absent from the MJM collection.
6. Conclusion

6.1. Communal identity

The MJM oral testimony collection captures a broad range of Jewish voices and with them the individual and subjective nature of Jewish identity and the many possible interpretations of the ‘community’ and its sense of values and social norms. The key outcome of accepting and embracing this variety is the difficulty in defining the community and subsequently communal responses to nonconformity in terms of either consensus or a specific pattern of behaviour. In the most extreme instances of nonconformity, such categorisation of patterns of behaviour may be tempting and is sometimes prompted by oral testimony itself. One example of this is the general claim that those who ‘married-out’ were ostracised and moved away from their community. This claim has often been taken at face value by historians, such as Livshin or Williams, despite the fact that in most instances no concrete examples can be given.\footnote{Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, p. 214, Williams, ‘Nonconforming Jews’, p. 10} One is then forced to consider, on the one hand, communal stereotypes, and on the other, the examples that appear to refute such stereotypes. If such a predictable pattern of nonconformity towards a stable community existed, it would perhaps help us understand how the Jewish community derived its sense of identity and social norms, but it is unlikely that it would provide any real insight into how individuals interpreted such social norms or the impact nonconformity had on them. For instance, and continuing the example of marriage, we know that intermarriage was universally discouraged by Jewish parents, but the reasons for this differed in as many ways as the responses to it. A pattern of conformity might connect the stories of Louis Aronovitch and Benny Rothman, both of whom moved away following their out-marriage, though one moved voluntarily and embraced Christianity, whilst the other was rejected by his family but nevertheless retained a sense of Jewish identity.\footnote{Sisters Aronovitch J10, T1 S2 and Benny Rothman JT19, T2 S1 & T3 S1} Likewise, in the case of medical treatment, the experiences of Israel Shalom and Geoffrey Shulman, both of whom spent most of their lives in institutional care as a result of their disability, offer two very different
possible interpretations for what motivated families to take such a step, one suggesting shame, the other genuine concern.\(^7\) Interviewees often speak of the ‘community’ and its response to nonconformity but what they actually express is their own experience or interpretation of social norms. We accept that interviews with two siblings will provide very different, and potentially conflicting, impressions of the same family but it remains difficult for historians to accept that similarly pluralistic experiences and definitions also apply to the wider Jewish community. Had Meshuggy Sam and his family, whose stories appeared in chapter 5, been interviewed about their experiences of the Jewish community, they would likely provide very different answers, each valid and none more representative of the community than the other. The first aim of this thesis was to give voices to non-elite sources in order to promote a greater understanding of the community. Such an understanding cannot be gained through the study of statistics or imagined consensus but rather by qualitatively engaging with the tangible lives of those who considered themselves to be part of that community.

This inclusive and individual sense of community inevitably leads one to ask “if Jewish can be everything, is it anything?”\(^7\) Despite the evident discord between the various sub-communities, a somewhat unfathomable sense of ‘Community’ exists and is captured in most interviews. This overarching community is not defined by specific beliefs or behaviours, but rather by a combination of (a) a sense of community defined from the outside which marks all Jews as ‘outsiders’ in this country and (b) a sort of tribal identity. The former is best captured in the records of elite organisations, which, it has been argued throughout this thesis, responded not to the needs of the immigrant community but to this sense of ‘otherness’ imposed upon them. The latter is most evident in oral testimony. Interviewees often describe recognising the ‘Yiddishe face’, such Mrs. Glantz who accepted her daughter’s son, born of mixed marriage, because he looked like her.\(^7\) Shared space generated shared history which also played its part in enforcing this tribal feeling, though in a different way than the “divinely shaped collective destiny” linked to Biblical events.

\(^7\) Dickie, ‘Communal Attitudes to those with Learning Difficulties and Individual Responses’
\(^7\) Rosman, How Jewish is Jewish History? quoted in Endelman, ‘Anglo-Jewish Historiography’, p. 39
\(^7\) Dinah McCormack J279, T3 S1
and enforced by subsequent experiences of persecution, discussed by Livshin.\textsuperscript{713} Memories of growing up in specific areas, often remembered in highly romanticised terms which may or may not be representative of reality, nevertheless express a sense of familiarity and affinity such as that captured in the stories of street fights or dance hall romances. The very existence of nonconformity made such feelings of kinship possible in the sense that it provided variety, allowing individuals to feel accepted regardless of their behaviour or ideology.

The importance that people ascribed to this communal identity varies and depends upon a range of additional factors. For some individuals, being part of a community defines every aspect of their life, as expressed by one Ultra-Orthodox Jew: “it means everything to me”.\textsuperscript{714} For others their sense of Jewish communal identity is diluted by belonging to other communities and developing concurrent ‘identities’. Collective communal identity sometimes defies logic, in the sense that secular Jews who have abandoned organised communal life and Jewish religious belief may continue to feel strong affiliations with the community, whilst some of those firmly embedded in communal life act in direct contradiction to its values. Examples of this confusion can be found throughout this thesis, such as Frank Allaun who was completely divorced from the community and Judaism but whose Jewishness made him abandon pacifism during the Second World War.\textsuperscript{715} In contrast, many orthodox Jews continued to exploit the war-time economy for their own profit without losing sleep over the fate of their co-religionists on the continent, as captured in the TAC records. Equally striking is the contrast between Lionel Cowan, a pacifist during the Second World War who single-handedly obtained visas for a large number of refugees and established a synagogue to allow them to maintain their religious identity, and the official leadership, supporting the war as both Englishmen and Jews, attempting to suppress refugee immigration out of fear it would attract antisemitism.

\textsuperscript{713} Livshin, ‘Nonconformity’, p. 22
\textsuperscript{714} Chava Rappaport, Track 1
\textsuperscript{715} Frank Allaun JT 1, T1 S2
6.2. Communal identity and social norms

Focusing on individual sub-communities of the Jewish community gives one a better insight into how such groups derived their sense of self-identity. Individual sub-communities typically displayed a level of cohesion based on social, economic and religious factors, which was reflected in their sense of social norms, although these were interpreted differently by individuals and their families. The availability of elite sources means that the elite sub-groups are the easiest to identify. This thesis has downplayed the religious division which existed between the German elites belonging either to the Reform or the Orthodox synagogues, mostly because in terms of communal control and involvement in philanthropy, they shared similar values. Up until the Second World War there was arguably little difference between them in terms of religious observance, at least in the eyes of immigrant Jews. The German elites were integrated and in some cases assimilated into wider society and, at least to some extent, identified with its values. The anti-alien debate taking place at the end of the 19th century highlighted sweated labour, overcrowding, crime (including political radicalism), and perceived physical inferiority as particularly Jewish deficiencies. The very fact that the elite responded to such accusations suggests that whilst they did not identify with the immigrant community in terms of identity and values, they were aware that wealth and status did not necessarily render them impervious to the label of ‘outsiders’. The nature of their response, often unfeeling and lacking in understanding of what constituted the needs of the immigrant community, was the indication of the elite’s dual identity since, by appropriating Christian philanthropic models, they highlighted the extent to which their own values corresponded with those of wider society, proving themselves as worthy and fully-British citizens. Despite their close relationships with wider society the elite also had a strong Jewish identity captured mostly in their attitude to marriage, which often occurred between cousins and served to combine their wealth and further boost their position in society.

The Sephardi community of South Manchester, largely overlooked in histories of the Manchester Jewish community, was small in number but fiercely exclusive by self-definition. Their inner cohesion, examined in this thesis in the context of marriage and attitudes to disability and illness, made them perhaps less tolerant to
nonconformity, although even in this case no firm patterns should be drawn. Israel Shalom and Geoffrey Shulman clearly demonstrated that families interpreted social norms differently. In another example, the Shammah family, allowing their children to run YCL meetings in their mansion, despite their apparent disapproval, shows that even if one was aware of social norms and identified with them, there were other factors, such as the family, that took precedence. The community’s stress on nationality when it came to marriage, their adherence to religious orthodoxy and their strict maintenance of their cultural and economic situation through socialising and marrying within their own extant groups could perhaps be regarded as paradigmatic of the many sub-communities within the immigrant community where such boundaries also existed and were frequently expressed in oral testimonies but were blurred by shared space and almost universal engagement with elite institutions.

Within the immigrant community, the most distinctive sub-communities were ‘the alrightinks’ and the ultra-orthodox groups. The former emerged from the immigrant milieu but identified with the values of the elite. The most prominent representative of this group was Nathan Laski, a Polish immigrant who assumed leadership of most communal organisations during a period spanning two world wars and who was widely regarded as the leader of Manchester Jewry. The extent to which Laski retained affinity with his immigrant roots is debatable since, while he defended them to outside attacks, he remained socially and religiously distant from them. A later generation of alrightniks, including the Needoff, Lee, Hamburger and Barash families, showed greater flexibility, many retaining strong religious identities and links to the immigrant community through charities and institutions that were more intent upon helping than controlling the behaviour of individuals, such as the Manchester Yeshiva or the Jewish Hospital. In social matters, however, they showed a similar ruthlessness to that of the old elites, as became apparent in the context of marriage. The ultra-orthodox element of the community was maintained by strict social exclusion from the rest of the community and marriage within a few select families. They represent a problem in the sense that they are the easiest sub-group to identify and one that displays the greatest inner cohesion and conformity to self-determined social norms, yet they are also the group we have the least information about.
Social norms that existed within each sub-community served a dual purpose. Firstly, they gave individuals a sense of identity distinct to their group and a sense of heritage, culture and values. Secondly, they regulated individuals’ behaviour, although the extent to which this was understood and applied is unclear. Many communities displayed flexibility when it came to interpretation of social norms, in the sense that deviation from them was not always understood as nonconformity but in terms of disagreement. The elite, for instance, assumed responsibility for presenting and maintaining the good image of the immigrant community, but disagreed on their response to crime. For example, some TAC members wanted to publicly address Jewish involvement in the black market, others wished to conceal it. Similarly, the intense argument against the opening of the Jewish Hospital, despite the obvious need for it, was treated as a disagreement between those in favour of the hospital and those against it, but in reality one group promoted assimilation and the other communal help thus subscribing to very different and conflicting values. To some extent this flexibility was linked to the fact that social norms were not clearly defined. Some institutions, like the JWMC had a very clear set of norms and rules, which were written down and understood (but not observed) by all members. Social norms within communities, however, were understood more instinctively and rarely existed in this definitive format. The other factor contributing to this flexibility is that just as the community was not a homogenous group, neither were its nonconformists. The response to them depended on their engagement with the community, their relationship with their family and also the level to which they posed a threat to communal life. This threat was understood in different ways. Fear of attracting antisemitism was, for instance, not as prevalent as fear of the new and unknown, such as disability or relationships (including friendships) with gentiles. More worrying still was the potential for nonconformists to influence those around them illustrated, for example, by Mr. Bloom’s fear that his daughters would be led astray by a prostitute that worked in his factory. The most tangible fears were those which presented clear and present dangers to the neighbourhood, such as infectious diseases.

Paradoxically, it is in the testimonies of conforming individuals that we learn most about the supposed ‘consequences’ of deviating from social norms, not those who
actually undertook such deviation. Thus interviewees talk about the likely negative outcomes of intermarriage, disability, crime and radicalism but the realities of those who followed this path do not often correspond, suggesting that social expectations more often served to prevent nonconformity rather than reflect punishment for it.

Whilst differentiation between sub-groups allows for a more inclusive definition of the Jewish community and a greater understanding of how identity and social norms were constructed, it is still an imperfect approach. Although an effort has been made throughout this thesis to avoid reliance upon patterns, such patterns still naturally emerge. Sometimes this is a matter of semantics, for instance, although their occasional disagreements have not been concealed or downplayed, the term ‘elite’ still implies a certain unity of its members. Sometime patterns appear as a result of working with oral testimonies. Unable to include all oral testimonies on each subject, selecting those deemed representative can give one an impression of patterns of behaviour not always reflective of reality.

6.3. **Nuances of nonconformity**

Rather than ascribing it negative value from the outset, this thesis aimed to provide a more nuanced model of nonconformity. This was achieved in two ways. Firstly, it considered the most obvious and serious instances of nonconformity such as crime, lack of patriotism and intermarriage and examined how these were experienced by individuals and their families, often disproving stereotypical claims of ostracism. Secondly, most chapters highlighted other, less obvious and mostly overlooked types of nonconformity. For instance, chapter 2 focused on the pseudo-criminal nature of youth gangs and chapter 4 focused on the divisive nature of marriage within the Jewish community. Chapter 5 on disability and illness differed from the other chapters in that it focused upon a type of nonconformity over which individuals had no control. It is the most problematic type of nonconformity due to the fact that families, perhaps in an attempt to conforms to the social norms of their neighbourhoods or perhaps because they were unable to provide care for their loved ones, imposed other types of nonconformity, such as the relegation of religious observance.
Nonconformity, as captured in the MJM collection, is an inherent and natural feature of the community. As such, it can have both a positive and a negative value. This value is most often attributed to individual acts of nonconformity by the family and less frequently by the wider community. In this sense, nonconformity is in the eye of the beholder. As has been argued before, intermarriage may have been viewed negatively in principle, but in individual instances it represented a love match rather than an unhappy, arranged marriage or economic improvement for the family both of which were seen as positive. Institutionalisation of individuals with disability in some instances served to protect their families’ reputation and carried a moral judgement but in others it facilitated their return to the community as its useful and fully integrated members, such as in the case of Clara Weingard’s brother. In his case, his disability represented the survival of an illness which killed three of his siblings. Youth gangs and even teenage dalliances often went unnoticed by parents but had they not, they would have likely caused alarm and conflict. However, these can also be seen in a positive light. They portray young Jews on imaginary crossroads, pushing boundaries and living out their dual identities. Most gang members became very ordinary (conforming) members of the community, such as Neville Solomon, once a king of the gangland territory who became a postman, or Morris Radivan, member of the supposedly ‘notorious’ Shaun Spidah gang who later organised voluntary social care groups. Youthful rebellions represent an important rite of passage that, in most instances, actually served to affirm a sense of Jewish identity and a place within the Jewish community.

Another problem of ascribing nonconformity a wholly negative value is its implication for conformity. If nonconformists deviated from the social norms and values of their communities then conformists inevitably aligned themselves with those same values. However, this was often not the case. It was entirely possible for Benny Rothman, communist and atheist, to fast on Yom Kippur and consider himself a Jew. The Clyne family, also communists, were nonconformists in marriage, in ideology and socially, one of their children getting arrested during the mass trespass the other having two children out of wedlock, but they continued to maintain the lifestyle of Orthodox Jews out of habit and because they were surrounded by it. In contrast, the Diamond family, living away from the community,
deviated from almost all religious and cultural norms but retained a very strong sense of Jewish identity. An interesting comparison might be drawn between people like Dinah McCormack who married a non-Jew but remained Jewish in practice and belief, and those like Thelma Chadwick who married within the community to please her parents but felt no affiliation with their values and did not maintain an observant life.

This thesis sought to enhance our understanding of the Jewish community and its sense of identity and social norms. The main aim was to challenge the elite-dominated reading of history through the inclusion of voices from below, well represented in the MJM collection but rarely heard. In the first instance it challenged the very narrow understanding of nonconformity as a deviation from widely-accepted social norms, and the placement of nonconformists as a minority apart from the conforming majority. To conclude, it has been argued that no such consensus existed within the Jewish community. Within individual sub-communities there were perhaps notional social norms, which coloured how the parts of the broader community saw itself. The reality, however, was often in conflict with such notional social norms, but was frequently lived out without social consequence. Nonconformity is problematic and nuanced, but an essential and natural part of every community. To unjustly relegate it to the margins is to deny the variety of experiences, motivation, identities and responses that existed within the network of Jewish communities.
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