Article:
Samson, MGM (2018) Competition or cooperation? Jewish day schools, synagogues and the (re)construction of young people's Jewish identities in England. Children's Geographies, 16 (3). pp. 225-238. ISSN 1473-3285

https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2018.1425373

Competition or Cooperation? Jewish Day Schools, Synagogues, and the (Re)construction of Young People's Jewish Identities in England

Abstract

Diasporic synagogues have historically provided a number of educational and social functions. However, the growing popularity of state-funded Jewish schools in England necessitates analysis of these institutions' changing roles and their implications for performances of Jewishness. Drawing upon interviews with rabbis, and interviews and focus groups with parents and students at a Jewish school, this article demonstrates three challenges for synagogues associated with the recent growth in Jewish day schooling: the instigation of instrumental attendance at services in order to secure a school place; and the co-option of synagogues' traditional functions as both education and social centres. In the process, it illustrates how conceptualisations of Jewish identity are contested, resulting in discrepant attitudes towards Jewish education. Consequently, the article contributes to understandings of the spaces in which young people practise their Jewishness, and highlights the challenges for community leaders in ensuring that Jewish schools and synagogues cooperate rather than compete.

Keywords

Children's geographies, religion, education, parenting strategies, schooling.

Introduction

Many diasporic synagogues have been subjected to a variety of challenges in recent years, including anti-Semitic attacks (The Jerusalem Post, February 5, 2017; Jewish Times, May 20, 2017), diminishing (or low) membership and attendance rates (Pew Research Center 2013; Haaretz, May 26, 2016), and in some cases, closure (Irish Examiner, February 8, 2016; Pittsburgh

Post-Gazette, April 12, 2017). Simultaneously, Jewish day schooling has become increasingly popular in several countries, including Hungary (Kovács and Forrás-Biró 2011) and the USA (Schick 2009). England's Jewish community reflects many of these trends, with synagogue membership in decline since at least 1990 (Casale Mashiah and Boyd 2017), whereas both the number of Jewish schools and the proportion of young Jewish people they enrol have increased rapidly (Staetsky and Boyd 2016). Indeed, Staetsky and Boyd (2016) estimate that 63 per cent of England's Jewish young people now attend Jewish day schools, compared with one in five in the 1970s, including a not-inconsiderable 43 per cent from 'mainstream'[1] Jewish backgrounds, rendering England's Jewish children and adolescents far more likely than those of other faiths to attend a faith school.

It is important to acknowledge that synagogues have traditionally played a significant educational as well as social role in the Jewish community. Diasporic synagogues were originally developed as places of study (Morris 1959) and today are still often referred to as shuls, whilst rabbi translates as 'teacher' (Sacks 1994). Given that the prominence of English synagogues' supplementary schools, regularly termed chederim, historically appears to have been negatively correlated to the relative popularity of Jewish day schools (Miller 2001),[2] it is necessary to analyse the interrelationships between Jewish day schools and synagogues. This article draws upon qualitative methods with rabbis and Jewish school parents and students to highlight some of the ways in which synagogue communities have been affected by the growth of Jewish schools, with implications for broader questions of identity construction, secularisation and community. First, the article argues that the relationship between faith schools and places of worship has to date received minimal academic attention, with a geographical approach valuable to investigating the changing spatialities of young people's ethnoreligious identity construction.

Jewish schools and synagogues: a neglected relationship

In the last 15 years, faith schools have attracted considerable interest in a range of social science disciplines, including educational studies, religious education and sociology. However, in spite of growing attention within geographies of education research to educational spaces beyond the 'formal' institutions of the day school and university (Wainwright and Marandet 2011; Kraftl 2013), and geographies of religion work identifying 'new' spaces where young people construct religious identities (Hopkins et al. 2011), little geographical research has explored faith schooling (see Kong 2013). This is surprising because geographers' attention to questions such as the (re)construction of space, processes of representation, inclusions/exclusions, citizenship and social inequalities would appear to be highly productive in faith school debates. Schools represent important spaces where particular politics of representation and culture are lived and challenged through education (Mills and Kraftl 2016), whilst faith schools specifically can play a clear (and contested) role in shaping young people's ethnoreligious identities, values and behaviours (Kong 2013). Furthermore, even though geographies of education research has attended to diverse forms of identity, including class (Butler and Hamnett 2012), disability (Holt 2007), and gender and sexuality (Hyams 2000), Judaism and Jewish identities have received unexpectedly scant attention within geography more generally (see Mills 2016; exceptions include Valins 2003; Kudenko and Phillips 2010). In response, through exploring the relationship between Jewish schools and synagogues as sites of young people's identity construction, this article aims to contribute to internationally-significant (and necessarily cross-disciplinary) debates regarding faith schooling and the spatialities of ethnoreligious identities in secularising society, and the place of Jewish schools specifically within the larger Jewish community.

Such an approach is important in part because previous research, regardless of academic discipline, has largely failed to intensively investigate the interactions between Jewish faith schools

and synagogues. Instead, it has generally concentrated (at best) on the former, such as in terms of curriculum issues (Schoem 1984) or students' social, cultural, religious and human capital (Kaplowitz 2015). A rare exception is provided by Pomson and Schnoor (2008, 85), who argue that Jewish schools in the United States of America may act 'as a substitute for the synagogue by providing a surrogate community' as they mirror synagogues' historic sociological functions as houses of meeting, study and prayer. However, rather than exploring the implications for these institutions further, the researchers present this development quite positively as a means of facilitating students' personalised construction of a Jewish identity. Research into other faiths has also tended to neglect the relationship between faith schools and places of worship, although significant contextual differences exist. A notable anomaly is provided by Rymarz and Graham (2006), who found that Australian Catholic school students did not generally participate in parish-based youth groups, instead limiting themselves to school-based activities. Given that these researchers' sample was heavily skewed towards those who regularly attend church and other religious organisations, it may be inferred that other students participated even less in the wider religious community. Other studies have suggested a deleterious impact upon places of worship, such as Francis and Lankshear (2001), who found voluntary church primary schools to have a positive effect on the number of confirmands, yet involvement in wider church activities often declined subsequently.

The relationship between synagogues and state-funded Jewish schools in England has become particularly pertinent, at least in theory, following a Supreme Court ruling in 2009 that adjudged that selection based on matrilineal (i.e. genetic) descent under halakhah (rabbinic law) is racially discriminatory.[3] The ruling followed the controversial rejection of a self-identifying Jewish boy by the Jewish Free School (JFS) in North London for not being religiously (as opposed to ethnically) Jewish. The school adjudged in such a way by arguing that the boy's mother had

converted into Judaism through a non-Orthodox (and therefore supposedly 'illegitimate') synagogue, in line with Orthodox Judaism's invalidation of other movements, rendering the boy, in JFS' eyes, also a non-Jew. In order to avoid basing admissions on prospective students' halakhic status, state-funded Jewish secondary schools under the religious authority of the Chief Rabbi (United Synagogue schools) have developed tests of Jewish religious practice, the criteria of which are achieved through completing a Certificate of Religious Practice (CRP). Although the specific details of the CRP vary by school, all versions require evidence of synagogue attendance (normally at Shabbat),[4] a child's involvement in formal Jewish education and either a parent or child's involvement in recent, unpaid/voluntary, Jewish communal, charitable or welfare activities. Schools that do not fall under the Chief Rabbi's authority do not necessarily mandate the CRP, but they have tended to generate similar admissions criteria.

Interestingly, in spite of synagogues' new centrality to England's Jewish day schools' admissions practices, several articles in the Anglo-Jewish media indicate rabbinical disquiet towards these institutions. For instance, Romain (2007, 2008) argues that faith schools are undesirable because they segregate religious groups and, in the case of Jewish schools, threaten the existence of synagogues' supplementary schools, whilst Tobias (2013) suggests that they may stimulate parents and children to attend synagogue services strategically, solely to gain admission. Research into England's faith schools in general – which in reality tends to focus on Christian schools of varying denominations – has similarly suggested (anecdotally) that affluent parents often attend church tactically in order to secure their children's places in well-regarded schools (Butler and Hamnett 2012; Francis and Hutchings 2013). Miller (2001) has even suggested that some families consider enrolment at Jewish schools an alternative to synagogue attendance, and with her colleagues argues that Jewish schools' growing significance as sites of meeting and cultural provision has caused them to assume 'functions historically performed by synagogues, not

coincidentally at a time when participation in synagogues is in decline' (Miller, Pomson, and Hacohen Wolf 2016, 554). Whilst the ways in which synagogues' roles as religious and communal spaces have been affected by Jewish schools remain unstudied, it is thus plausible that the relationship is not mutually beneficial. In response to this general analytic absence, this article draws upon the empirical findings of doctoral research regarding the role of Jewish schools in reshaping identity and community in Anglo-Jewry. The research methods will be described subsequently.

Method

Fieldwork was undertaken from September 2015 until March 2016 in Hertfordshire and North and Northwest London, an area that collectively comprises the principal centre of the British Jewish population and the majority of its day schools (Staetsky and Boyd 2016). It incorporated the perspectives of Jewish school students as well as various adult stakeholders in order to recognise the ways in which young people's negotiation of Jewish education and community is both constrained and enabled by adults (see Holloway 2014). Consequently, it was possible to attain a greater understanding of the ways in which different but interconnected spaces were implicated in young people's Jewish identity construction and education (Holloway et al. 2010).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 rabbis representing the range of mainstream Jewish movements in the UK: Orthodox (4), Masorti (3), Reform (4) and Liberal (4). Strictly Orthodox synagogues were considered too dissimilar to be included owing to their general insularity and children's near-universal enrolment at (generally private) Charedi Jewish schools (Staetsky and Boyd 2016). The interviews' first question was intentionally open, allowing rabbis to settle ('Would you describe the main aspects of […] Judaism, what makes it distinctive?') followed by a series of closed questions regarding their synagogue's community functions,

membership and attendance. This allowed me to gather important contextual information and helped guide future open questions regarding their relationships with Jewish schools.

A separate aspect of the methodology comprised focus groups with students and semi-structured interviews with parents at England's only pluralist Jewish secondary school, the Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS) in Barnet, North London. JCoSS (2017) represented an ideal case study site because it actively encourages different forms of Jewish expression, in contrast to England's other Jewish secondary schools, which are either affiliated with or default to a single (Orthodox) strand of Judaism. In total, 38 students (22 girls, 16 boys) across Years 7 (aged 11-12), 8 (aged 12-13), 10 (aged 14-15) and 12 (aged 16-17) participated, with proportions slightly skewed towards the older age groups (four, nine, twelve and thirteen respectively) owing to relative levels of opt-in (below). Given that focus groups can enable participants to construct ideas through conversation, they were deemed more accessible than formal one-to-one interviews, increasing students' willingness and ability to participate in the research process (Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller 2005). Structured by a few general questions, such as regarding the principal influences shaping their identities, the school's role in this process, and any involvement within synagogues, the focus groups afforded students substantial freedom to discuss the aspects of their Jewish lives that were most personally significant to them. The parental interviews (30 as individuals, two as couples) aimed to enable parents to describe their personal faith backgrounds and upbringing, their desired outcomes from Jewish schooling, and any involvement within synagogue communities (whether now or in the past). In order to avoid guiding parents into particular answers, most questions were open-ended, such as 'How would you describe your own faith identity?', 'What was the process for deciding whether to send your child to a Jewish school?' and 'What do you hope your child will get from their education?'

The school's distinctiveness rendered its anonymity implausible, but all students and parents were allocated a pseudonym as this was both possible and ethically desirable. In contrast, the large number of synagogues in the region rendered the anonymisation of rabbis feasible. I did not specify that I was using JCoSS as a case study with rabbis in order to encourage them to describe their broader inter-institutional relationships, and I elucidated that any mention of particular schools or synagogues would be anonymised to protect each institution's public reputation.

Having disseminated an information and consent guide explaining the research's purpose and the desired involvement of participants (Alderson 2004), students were asked to discuss the project with their parents. Students who were willing to participate signed their names on a register at school; given their age, students in Years 7, 8 and 10 additionally required parental consent. Parents consented to their own involvement in an interview and/or their child's participation in a focus group by completing some short questions attached to an email, distributed via the school. This email also included a copy of the information and consent guide.

The resulting analysis illustrates three particular issues for synagogues: the instigation of instrumental rather than meaningful attendance at synagogue; and the co-option of synagogues' functions as both educational and social centres. In the process, it highlights differing conceptualisations of Jewish identity between parents and rabbis – the former as 'consumables,' the latter as practice-based processes – which have led to discrepant attitudes towards day and supplementary school education. Appreciation of these distinctions will facilitate a stronger understanding of Jewish schools' role in reshaping young people's identities and engagement in Jewish community life, as well as their and synagogues' place within secularising society.

Strategic attendance at services

Parents in England enjoy significant freedom to apply for a particular school for their child.[5] In order to qualify under state-funded Jewish schools' oversubscription criteria, young people are strongly advised to attend synagogue services a prerequisite number of times. Although Coldron, Cripps, and Shipton (2010) are sceptical of the extent of parental 'fraudulence' (including sudden involvement in religious communities as well as the usage of false or temporary addresses) when applying to favoured schools, rabbis perceived the criteria as being so low that they are easily met even by unobservant families. As a result, parents' strategic attendance at synagogue services was widely considered an inevitable and unwelcome outcome:

> I think it's all a big game that people have to play, and they play it well, I don't know anybody who wouldn't be able to attend four services just before, and that's all they do. (Rabbi, Liberal synagogue 2).

Indeed, parents perceived such criteria as easily exploitable, rendering synagogue attendance a tokenistic form of Jewish engagement:

> I think it's tacitly recognised that a lot of kids never go to synagogue, they just go to synagogue to get in. (Yasmin).

Therefore, the admissions criteria neither specify Jewishness based on spiritual or religious attachment, nor do they encourage individuals to become more engaged in faith. Yet the system also defines Jewishness as necessarily religious, given that families are expected to attend synagogue services rather than other activities that may be more accurately conceived as cultural

or ethnic (for instance), in line with many British Jews' self-identifications (Graham, Staetsky, and Boyd 2014). Consequently, forms of Jewish identification that exist beyond synagogue communities are largely neglected, with families obligated to negotiate pre-defined Jewish criteria that are relatively easy to achieve but bear little personal relevance to their lived identities. As a result, as was the case before R (on the application of E) v Governing Body of JFS, self-identification as Jewish is subordinated by external ascription, even if the authority has shifted from halakhah to the state (Dwyer and Parutis 2013).

Rabbis suggested that this collapsing of Jewish identity with synagogue attendance would cause the latter to no longer be perceived as a meaningful activity of community engagement or worship. Rather, synagogue attendance has become treated as a checklist-style task:

> I don't like the fact that they're using services as an admissions criteria, because it's sending the wrong message about services, it's making services a checklist thing rather than actually about becoming part of a community. (Rabbi, Reform synagogue 2).

Indeed, in support of rabbis' perceptions that many Jewish families attend for pragmatic reasons, several parents were open in admitting to instrumental synagogue attendance at the time of application:

> Beth: I think we had to go to shul on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and, then another six times maybe.
>
> Interviewer: Is that something you were doing anyway?
>
> Beth: No, not really, no, no.

Beth's claim that her family does not normally attend shul 'through having to work and not being able to go' encapsulated the general challenge in balancing numerous parental responsibilities, with synagogue attendance often deemed less crucial than other activities.

A related impact has been the creation of a compulsory rabbi-as-gatekeeper role, undertaking undesirable administrative responsibilities with little benefit to their congregations:

> I spend my life signing school forms at this time of year, and it's a ridiculous process, I don't need to be the gatekeeper for Jewish day schools. (Rabbi, Reform synagogue 1).

Although rabbis claimed to be comfortable signing for parents they knew due to their regular attendance, they were often resentful that their time to interact with committed members had been jeopardised by 'insincere' families competing for their attention. Community bonds were described as strained:

> It does mean that twice a year we have what is called the 'school point crowd' that show up, and that annoys our regular congregation, so the parents are there with the kids in tow because they have to get their six or eight, whatever, visits in, and it does get irritating … crowd control can be an issue. (Rabbi, Reform synagogue 2).

Several parents were also quick to differentiate, sometimes crudely, between 'committed' and 'non-committed' families:

> I remember we had people coming just to get the points and it was so frustrating, we were trying to get members, they don't have to become a member of a synagogue, all they have to do is tick a box, so they come three times. (Sarah).

Thus, an idealised image of a community based on reciprocal, long-term relationships between members (see Putnam 2000) was said to have been compromised by the presence of these 'visitors.' As such, and demonstrating how communities are politicised and often highly contested constructs (Dwyer 1999), these individuals believed that their own perceptions of 'proper' Jewish practice, including meaningful collective engagement in synagogue services, had been undermined by 'uncommitted' parents. In these ways, rabbis as well as some parents were ambivalent about the impacts of the new Jewish school admissions processes on their synagogue communities, and were suspicious of certain families' motivations in attending services. Through analysing day schools' co-option of synagogues' traditional educational functions, the following section demonstrates further how many parents were perceived as prioritising individualistic values such as secular academic education rather than Jewish education and practice, with detrimental implications for synagogues.

Co-option of synagogues' educational functions

Parents are generally considered the principal influences on young people's identities (Hyde 1990), and 'practising what you preach,' including the performance of religious rituals in the home as well as at a place of worship, is often deemed essential in transmitting religious values (Lees and Horwath 2009). In addition, learning occupies a central position within Judaism, with education viewed as a moral and religious duty to ensuring the faith's survival (Aberbach 2009). Importantly, even though Orthodox Judaism is stricter in its adherence to halakhah than other movements, and

thus sees Jewish identity as rooted in descent rather than necessarily religious belief or practice, many Jews of different denominational affiliations also conceptualise their identities as contingent on birth and ancestry (Cohen and Eisen 2000; Pew Research Center 2013). Accordingly, numerous rabbis suggested that parents send their children to Jewish day schools in order to discourage intermarriage and hence fulfil an ambiguous familial obligation to continue their Jewish 'line' (Schoem 1989), enabling a Jewish identity to emerge regardless of home- or synagogue-based practice:

> One of the problems and ironies of the Jewish schools is that they've exonerated parents from having to take any responsibility for their children's Jewish upbringing […] Jewish identity and responsibility is something that is devolved to the school; the parents wash their hands of it. (Rabbi, Liberal synagogue 1).

> Many parents, they don't do anything Jewish at home but they deliver their kids to the school or to the shul and they expect us to make him a proud Jew, and it's difficult when they don't have an example at home … I suppose the question that comes up is "Why do they bother?" I think that they feel the moral obligation of continuity, they want their children to find a Jewish partner and they want their children to feel connected to Judaism, and I think that it's a little bit of a chain because they weren't motivated when they were children, so they lack also the ability or the motivation to pass on to their own kids, so they have a very low standard of what they want, and mostly they expect others to care for it. (Rabbi, Masorti synagogue 3).

Many parents also claimed to be incapable of providing a Jewish upbringing for their children, especially given that relatively few had personally attended a Jewish day school, owing to a failure to meet past halakhic expectations of Jewishness, differing generational attitudes towards assimilation and multiculturalism, and the relative shortage of Jewish school places (Hart, Schmool, and Cohen 2007). Their perceived inadequacies were thus considered 'justification' for sending their children to Jewish day schools (Pomson and Schnoor 2008):

> I started her because I know nothing and I do nothing, so if she doesn't get it from somewhere she'll grow up without having that religious-into-a-kind-of-cultural history of it. (Cecilia).

Apparent is a rather essentialist and ambiguous view of inherited Jewish group identity based upon a fear that without providing a Jewish education through Jewish schools, they will risk breaking the familial Jewish chain. This reflects a broader proclivity amongst Jews to schematise identities as 'consumables' (Kudenko and Phillips 2010), whilst considerable research into Jewish identity has similarly reified it as an apparently marketable 'product' (see Zelkowicz 2013). By portraying Jewish schools as particularly effective 'providers' of a static – rather than practice-based – Jewishness, parents were therefore said to delegate their own responsibility for Jewish learning to these institutions (Pomson 2009).

The appeal of Jewish day schools as identity-providers is in large part owing to the superior time they offer compared with synagogues' supplementary schools such as chederim (Miller 2001; Dashefsky and Lebson 2002). Indeed, most parents believed that Jewish schools (particularly at primary level) had replicated and surpassed the Jewish education and social provision of chederim, rendering them unnecessary for Jewish day school students:

> My kids didn't go to the cheder because they're at Jewish school. (James).

> They get everything … within the week, and then they even get a better education. (Sarah).

Sarah intimated the second major factor explaining day schools' privileged status: parents desired their children's involvement in non-Jewish leisure activities during their free time, and consequently viewed chederim as detrimental to such interests (Chiswick and Chiswick 2000). Accordingly, most rabbis were sceptical that Jewish day schools encourage greater interest in synagogue-based study. Rather, weekends were rendered holidays from Jewish learning and practice:

> When we tried to do the cheder parents would tell us 'My child needs one day of resting from Judaism, Monday to Friday they're in school, then Shabbat, then on Sunday you want them to come to cheder, it's too much.' (Rabbi, Masorti synagogue 3).

However, broader leisure activities were not only favoured to synagogue involvement (including supplementary schooling) for reasons of entertainment, but also owing to parents' concerns that their children were already excessively segregated from other groups through their day schooling. Rather than attending synagogue, weekends were thus widely viewed as a time for Jewish school students to engage with non-Jews:

> My kids do [local drama organisation], which is non-Jewish, to try and do different activities […] the rabbi will say to you 'There's always more learning,' but actually most parents would want to have something other in their life. (Jacqui).

Most students expressed similar sentiments:

> I have outside-of-school friends who aren't Jewish, which is good because then I can learn about other religions […] I do sports on Saturdays which means I can't really go to shul that much. (Lily, Year 8).

Therefore, reflecting a scepticism of particularistic forms of Jewishness (Kaplan 2009), parents and pupils generally (but, it must be stated, not universally) considered day schooling the maximum acceptable amount of 'Jewish' provision.

Numerous (although again not all) students also intimated that their Jewish schooling removed any perceived importance of participating in a synagogue community. For some, the Jewish theoretical knowledge they had garnered at day school represented an alternative to religious practice or experience in other Jewish spaces:

> Because we learn about Judaism here we don't really need to experience it as much, because we're here. (Joel, Year 10).

> I don't feel any need to go [to synagogue] even though I go to a Jewish school, we learn all about Judaism here. (Sophie, Year 10).

This can be related to Gans' (1979) argument that socio-cultural identifications are merely 'symbolic,' offering a straightforward, nostalgic feeling of belonging devoid of impactful ethnic or religious participation. Other students argued more directly that their enrolment at a Jewish day school had diminished their interest in attending the additional Jewish space of the synagogue:

> I'd probably say it became a bit tedious to me … when I wasn't going to a Jewish school it made going to shul a bit more special … [but] now that I'm grounded quite a lot, I don't feel like I need to be held as closely to it. (Nicola, Year 12).

In contrast then, synagogue attendance may seem comparatively meaningful for students in non-Jewish schools as it can be connected to a sense of familial culture and 'background,' whereas students possessing a stronger (or perceiving themselves to possess a stronger) understanding of their faith due to their involvement at a Jewish school do not necessarily seek this additional instruction or participation. Indeed, even though students often recognised their parents' role in shaping their likelihood of attending synagogue, rather than this being determined entirely by their schooling (Josie, Year 10: 'I've gone from when I was very young and I don't think Jewish school can make you want to go to synagogue, it's more something that you're raised in'), their involvement in both Jewish day school and synagogue was generally perceived as excessive. Consequently, even parents who modelled proud involvement in ritual practice and synagogue community life could struggle to motivate their children:

> Because he's got Jewish education all week, we struggle to get him into synagogue. (Natasha).

As a result of these dynamics, the majority of rabbis claimed that their chederim's existence had been threatened, identifying the growth of Jewish schools as the crucial factor:

> There was a cheder but with very small numbers and it's becoming increasingly difficult to sustain financially. This is because of course people went to Jewish schools and therefore the cheder was decimated. (Rabbi, Orthodox synagogue 4).

> I noticed that there was a drift out, you know, people who went to Jewish schools, either primary or secondary schools, had stopped from attending cheder, and their parents would say "They don't need to attend cheder, because they're going to a Jewish school." (Rabbi, Liberal synagogue 2).

Through becoming the principal centres of young people's Jewish education, whilst contributing to reduced interest in synagogues including their chederim, Jewish day schools have thus co-opted these institutions' educational roles.

In contrast to parents' (and to some extent students') favourable attitudes towards Jewish day schools, rooted in their treatment of Jewish identity as 'consumables,' rabbis' own perspectives were commensurate with social constructionism's conceptualisation of identity as a continuous process of becoming (Hall 1996), deeming long-term and regular practice (preferably as a community and thus within the synagogue) critical. This discrepancy reflects previous research indicating a conflict between rabbis' and school leaders' demands for a theoretical, religious and knowledge-based Judaism, and parents' and students' interest in personal meaning, non-practice and often vague ethnic attachment (Schoem 1984; Valins 2003; Gross and Rutland 2014).

Consequently, the majority of rabbis preferred non-Jewish schools, coupled with ritual or cultural practice in chederim and the home, as means of enabling young people to develop their Jewishness through actively negotiating their sense of difference from 'others' (Hall 1996):

> Kids who are Jewish, who identify as Jewish, can group together in a non-Jewish school, create their Jewish societies, and we often hear people who go to non-Jewish schools, "You know what, I was even more positive about my Jewish identity," because you felt the need to express that identity, otherwise you felt assimilated. (Rabbi, Orthodox synagogue 4).

> I have a sense that those [non-Jewish school] kids will have much more of a practice ethos of their Judaism that they will pass onto their children down the line, rather than the Jewish day school kids, who will be very knowledgeable but take it for granted and perhaps not do it in adult life […] I think they [Jewish schools] create a sense that Judaism no longer makes you unique, so it's no longer something that you're proud of. (Rabbi, Reform synagogue 1).

Accordingly, pupils who had either previously attended non-Jewish schools or who were involved in non-Jewish activities in their spare time described their perceived distinctiveness in these spaces:

> I went to a non-Jewish primary school, and I felt I was different to most others there, and that made me proud to be Jewish. (Ben, Year 10).

> I feel less Jewish being at JCoSS because it's so mainstream that it's not talked about, whereas … I usually feel more Jewish when I'm away from Jewish people because I know for a lot of people that's going to be my defining factor. (Lizzie, Year 12).

Certainly, the few rabbis favourable towards Jewish schools tended to qualify that they are only valuable to parents who desire their children's socialisation in a religious environment that reflects their broader upbringing. A paradoxical situation thus exists in which Jewish schools often appeal to parents who seek their child's basic Jewish identity construction without significant personal input, yet such socialisation is deemed more effective in practising families. In these ways, the contrasting appeal of Jewish day schools and synagogues to parents and rabbis was rooted in their differing attitudes towards Jewish identity. Day school students' non-involvement in chederim was also perceived to reduce families' wider involvement in synagogue life, as the final section highlights.

Co-option of synagogues' social functions

Chederim do not only provide Jewish education, but also assist young people's entry into the larger synagogue community. Indeed, chederim were often credited by rabbis for facilitating children's friendships and therefore, it was hoped, long-term involvement in synagogue life. Children's participation may instigate other family members' community involvement, too:

> What would happen is, you start by sending your children to a religion school, and then you get called into all sorts of committees and the parents' association, and so on and so on and then from there you start looking at adult education and maybe ritual and basically that would have been people's entry into community life, people would

> start being involved by their children being involved at religion school. (Rabbi, Liberal synagogue 2).

The previous section illustrated how Jews often schematise identities as 'consumables' that can be attained through Jewish institutions. However, beyond spiritual engagement including prayer, synagogues are easily usurped by organisations such as Jewish day schools that, given their superior funding, critical mass and resourcing of materials and personnel, can 'provide' Jewish education and socialisation more 'efficiently.' Rabbis feared that a resulting decline in chederim would denigrate the appeal to parents of synagogue more broadly:

> Jewish children at Jewish day schools aren't brought to the synagogue for cheder, so in that way it has starved us of some potential membership. (Rabbi, Reform synagogue 3).

As a result, rabbis were concerned by the additional co-opting of synagogues' social functions by Jewish schools:

> With many of our parents having youngsters at Jewish day school, they feel "Well look, my child's got a whole network of Jewish friends, and doesn't need to make more, so," and many Jewish kids are comfortable and I guess complacent with their own Jewish network, and they're not necessarily looking to expand it. (Rabbi, Reform synagogue 3).

Accordingly, numerous students viewed synagogues as social spaces for older generations (in particular), whereas their school had greater personal significance:

> All my mum's friends go, like, to that synagogue … it's like all my mum's friends and stuff […but for me] I guess the school is more, like, social, like, all your friends and stuff. (Claudia, Year 12).

> I identify with the school and my friends … but like in the synagogue, there's not many people my age. (Ryan, Year 12).

Indeed, most rabbis did not believe that Jewish schools provided 'continuity' with students' observant home environments as identified by Valins (2003). Rather, they were commonly perceived as contributors to a secularised identity that includes broader cultural components of Jewishness, comprising the development of Jewish friendships and learning about one's cultural identity, without being extended to spaces such as the synagogue. Parents' and children's synagogue involvement thus becomes not only pragmatic, but fundamentally individualistic and therefore contrary to traditional understandings of the synagogue as a community or meeting place. Consequently, rather than merely affecting parents' likelihood of sending their children to chederim, a perception existed that Jewish day schools had rendered synagogues in general alternative rather than complementary Jewish environments. No rabbi claimed to be aware of any attempt to tackle these challenges, with some desiring communal intervention:

> I think we're in a stage that many synagogues … are angry at Jewish schools because they are taking our kids away … we should be working together and stuff instead of

competing or in the worst case working separately and just being polite to each other. (Rabbi, Masorti synagogue 3).

Ideas were provided for facilitating greater interaction between schools and synagogues, including a 'forum' in which school leaders could 'gain advice from local rabbis into what the schools should do' (Rabbi, Orthodox synagogue 3), or an incentive scheme in which students' involvement in synagogue becomes part of a youth award. Nevertheless, for the meantime, these two institutions, whilst theoretically central to mainstream Anglo-Jewry, exist largely separately, and not evenly.

Conclusion

This article has illustrated three significant issues for England's synagogue communities raised by the recent growth in Jewish day schools and changes in admissions requirements necessitated by R (on the application of E) v Governing Body of JFS. First, rabbis (as well as some parents) perceived that their communities have been 'undermined' by those who attend synagogue services strategically to improve their children's prospects of being admitted to a Jewish school. Second and third, synagogues' traditional functions of education and socialisation have been largely co-opted by Jewish schools. In part, this reflects parents' common proclivity to treat Jewish identity as a 'product' that can be 'attained' through schooling, in the process freeing themselves of responsibility for their children's Jewish education, whereas rabbis conceptualised Jewish identity as a constructionist process that relies upon regular practice, necessitating synagogue involvement. Such a disjuncture has shaped Jewish young people's own engagement (or lack of) in these spaces.

This is not to suggest that Jewish schools' growth has axiomatically triggered synagogues' declining community role, but rather that they represent part of a wider process of secularisation that prioritises individualistic values to communal religiosity and association, and also magnify

suspicions that most Jewish parents rarely participate in Jewish ethnoreligious ritual. Indeed, whereas broader issues were also cited as 'threats' to synagogues, including assimilation, anti-Semitism and out-migration due to high housing costs, Jewish day schools have come to represent the threat par excellence given that they represent a unique means for parents to outsource responsibility for providing a Jewish upbringing – and attain a high-quality secular education – for five days per week, whilst possessing the critical mass to actively replace synagogues' traditional functions of education and socialisation. At the same time, the main function to have remained largely in synagogues' control – worship – is seemingly of little general interest in secularising society.

It is of course possible that rabbis romanticised the historic 'commitment' of individuals to their synagogues; moreover, key components of secularisation, including institutional differentiation and the privatisation of religion, represent broader societal trends (Brown 2001; Bruce 2002). However, Jewish day schools' current mainstream popularity has rendered the accompanying issues particularly acute, and so few rabbis were supportive of their continued growth. Consequently, this article problematises the notion of a united 'Jewish community' by illustrating significant competition between Jewish schools and synagogues to attract families and become the centre of their Jewish communal life. Such issues reveal a seemingly paradoxical situation, in which rabbis would denigrate Jewish schools due to their perceived impacts on Jewish identity and community, even whilst faith schools in general are propounded by Theresa May's Conservative government on the basis of their supposed secular academic standards (DfE 2016). Thus, Jewish day schools' place in Anglo-Jewish society is complex and marked by divergent conceptualisations of these institutions' purpose and efficacy, necessitating further research into their interrelationships over time, with potential for parallel dynamics in other faiths to be identified too.

Through recognising the competition for attention that can occur between religious educational institutions, and the distinctive ways in which they are implicated in notions of identity, this investigation has made an important contribution to growing bodies of interest in 'alternative' sites of education (Kraftl 2013) and religious identity construction (Kong 2010). Moreover, through relating these trends to larger questions of secularisation and community, it has heeded Hanson Thiem's (2009) call for geographies of education work to look 'outwards' and help retheorise the wider contexts of educational systems. By incorporating the perspectives of parents and rabbis, it has also demonstrated the importance of considering how adult stakeholders attempt to shape young people's lives (Holloway 2014), whilst the inclusion of students' voices has facilitated a greater understanding of the ways in which young people conceptualise their own ethnoreligious lives (Ridgely 2011). There is significant purview for future research to build upon the findings of this research, such as by exploring how other spaces (for instance youth movements and cultural centres) are implicated by faith schools. Consideration of these interrelationships could open up exciting new avenues for academic debate, and perhaps instigate community dialogue and intervention to ensure that such spaces cooperate rather than compete.

References

Aberbach, Moshe. 2009. Jewish Education and History: Continuity, Crisis and Change. Translated by David Aberbach. Abingdon: Routledge.

Alderson, Priscilla. 2004. "Ethics." In Doing Research with Children and Young People, edited by Sandy Fraser, Vicky Lewis, Sharon Ding, Mary Kellett, and Chris Robinson, 97-112. London: SAGE Publications.

Brown, Callum G. 2001. The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bruce, Steve. 2002. God is Dead: Secularization in the West. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Butler, Tim, and Hamnett, Chris. 2012. "Praying for Success? Faith Schools and School Choice in East London." Geoforum 43 (6): 1242-1253. doi: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.03.010

Casale Mashiah, Donatella, and Boyd, Jonathan. 2017. Synagogue Membership in the United Kingdom in 2016. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) and the Board of Deputies for British Jews.

Chiswick, Carmel U., and Chiswick, Barry R. 2000. "The Cost of Living Jewishly and Jewish Continuity." Contemporary Jewry 21 (1): 78-90. doi: 10.1007/BF02962403

Cohen, Steven M., and Eisen, Arnold. 2000. The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Coldron, John, Caroline Cripps, and Lucy Shipton. 2010. Why are English Secondary Schools Socially Segregated? Journal of Education Policy 25 (1): 19-35. doi: 10.1080/02680930903314285

Darbyshire, Philip, Colin MacDougall, and Wendy Schiller. 2005. "Multiple Methods in Qualitative Research with Children: More Insight or Just More?" Qualitative Research 5 (4): 417-436. doi: 10.1177/1468794105056921

Dashefsky, Arnold, and Lebson, Cory. 2002. "Does Jewish Schooling Matter? A Review of the Empirical Literature on the Relationship between Jewish Education and Dimensions of Jewish Identity." Contemporary Jewry 23 (1): 96–131. doi: 10.1007/BF02967931

Department for Education. 2016. Schools that Work for Everyone: Government Consultation. London: DfE.

Dwyer, Claire. 1999. Contradictions of Community: Questions of Identity for Young British Muslim Women. Environment and Planning A 31 (1): 53-68. doi: 10.1068/a310053

Dwyer, Claire, and Parutis, Violetta. 2013. "'Faith in the System?' State-funded Faith Schools in England and the Contested Parameters of Community Cohesion." Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 38 (2): 267-284. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2012.00518.x

Francis, Becky, and Hutchings, Merryn. 2013. Parent Power? Using Money and Information to Boost C*hildren's* Chances of Educational Success. London: The Sutton Trust.

Francis, Leslie J., and Lankshear, David W. 2001. "The Relationship between Church Schools and Local Church Life: Distinguishing between Aided and Controlled Status." Educational Studies 27 (4): 425-438. doi: 10.1080/03055690120071885

Gans, Herbert J. 1979. "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America." Ethnic and Racial Studies 2 (1): 1-20. doi: 10.1080/01419870.1979.9993248

Graham, David, L.D. Staetsky, and Jonathan Boyd. 2014. Jews in the United Kingdom in 2013: Preliminary Findings from the National Jewish Community Survey. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR).

Gross, Zehavit, and Rutland, Suzanne D. 2014. "Intergenerational Challenges in Australian Jewish School Education." Religious Education 109 (2): 143-161. doi: 10.1080/00344087.2014.887924

Hall, Stuart. 1996. "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" In Questions of Cultural Identity, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 1-17. London: SAGE Publications.

Hanson Thiem, Claudia. 2009. "Thinking through Education: The Geographies of Contemporary Educational Restructuring." Progress in Human Geography 33 (2): 154-173. doi: 10.1177/0309132508093475

Hart, Rona, Marlena Schmool, and Frances Cohen. 2007. "Jewish Day Schools in Britain 1992/3 to 2003/4." Contemporary Jewry 27 (1): 137-156.

Holloway, Sarah .L. 2014. "Children's Geographies Annual Lecture 2013: Changing Children's Geographies." *Children's Geographies* 12 (4): 377-392. doi: 10.1080/14733285.2014.930414

Holloway, Sarah L., Phil Hubbard, Heike Jöns, and Helena Pimlott-Wilson. 2010. "Geographies of Education and the Significance of Children, Youth and Families." Progress in Human Geography 34 (5): 583-600. doi: 10.1177/0309132510362601

Holt, Louise. 2007. "Children's Sociospatial (re)Production of Disability within Primary School Playgrounds." Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 25 (5): 783-802. doi: 10.1068/d73j

Hopkins, Peter, Elizabeth Olson, Rachel Pain, and Giselle Vincett. 2011. "Mapping Intergenerationalities: The Formation of Youthful Religiosities." Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 36 (2): 314-327. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2010.00419.x

Hyams, Melissa S. 2000. ""Pay Attention in Class … [and] Don't Get Pregnant": A Discourse of Academic Success among Adolescent Latinas." Environment and Planning A 32 (4): 635-654. doi: 10.1068/a3239

Hyde, Kenneth E. 1990. Religion in Childhood and Adolescence: A Comprehensive Review of the Research. Birmingham: Religious Education Press.

Jewish Community Secondary School. 2017. "Our ethos." http://jcoss.org/about-us/our-ethos#jewish-pluralist-ethos

Kaplan, Dana E. 2009. Contemporary American Judaism: Transformation and Renewal. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kaplowitz, Tracy. 2015. "School-Church/Synagogue Partnerships: A Comparative Case Study of Religious Capital Enrichment." Journal of Jewish Education 81 (3): 241-259. doi: 10.1080/15244113.2015.1063035

Kong, Lily. 2010. "Global Shifts, Theoretical shifts: Changing Geographies of Religion." Progress in Human Geography 34 (6): 755-776. doi: 10.1177/0309132510362602

Kong, Lily. 2013. "Balancing Spirituality and Secularism, Globalism and Nationalism: The Geographies of Identity, Integration and Citizenship in Schools." Journal of Cultural Geography 30 (3): 276-307. doi: 10.1080/08873631.2013.834120

Kovács, András, and Forrás-Biró, Aletta. 2011. Jewish Life in Hungary: Achievements, Challenges and Priorities since the Collapse of Communism. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR).

Kraftl, Peter. 2013. Geographies of Alternative Education: Diverse Learning Spaces for Children and Young People. Bristol: Policy Press.

Kudenko, Irina, and Phillips, Deborah. 2010. "Multicultural Narratives and the Construction of Identity: The British Jewish Experience." Space and Polity 14 (1): 65-80. doi: 10.1080/13562571003737775

Lees, Janet, and Horwath, Jan. 2009. "'Religious Parents… Just Want the Best for their Kids': Young People's Perspectives on the Influence of Religious Beliefs on Parenting." Children & Society 23 (3): 162-175. doi: 10.1111/j.1099-0860.2008.00164.x

Miller, Helena. 2001. "Meeting the Challenge: The Jewish Schooling Phenomenon in the UK." Oxford Review of Education 27 (4): 501-513. doi: 10.1080/03054980120086202

Miller, Helena, Alex Pomson, and Hagit Hacohen Wolf. 2016. "Secondary School Choice as a Window on Jewish Faith Schools in Contemporary British Society." Journal of School Choice 10 (4): 537-559. doi: 10.1080/15582159.2016.1175903

Mills, Sarah. 2016. "Jives, Jeans and Jewishness? Moral Geographies, Atmospheres and the Politics of Mixing at the Jewish Lads' Brigade & Club 1954–1969." Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 34 (6): 1098-1112. doi: 10.1177/0263775816644257

Mills, Sarah, and Kraftl, Peter. 2016. "Cultural Geographies of Education." Cultural Geographies 23 (1): 19-27. doi: 10.1177/1474474015612717

Morris, Nathan. 1959. Jewish Education and Social Change. Noah Barou Memorial Lecture, 1959. Delivered at the Gustave Tuck Theatre, University College, London, November 2, 1959. London: The World Jewish Congress, British Section.

Pew Research Center. 2013. A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

Pomson, Alex. 2009. "Jewish schools, Jewish Communities: A Reconsideration." In Jewish Day Schools, Jewish Communities: A Reconsideration, edited by Alex Pomson and Howard Deitcher, 1-28. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Pomson, Alex, and Schnoor, Randal F. 2008. Back to School: Jewish Day Schools in the Lives of Adult Jews. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. Bowling Alone. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Ridgely, Susan B. 2011. "Introduction." In The Study of Children in Religions: A Methods Handbook, edited by Susan B. Ridgely, 1-15. New York: New York University Press.

Romain, Jonathan 2007. "Rabbi: No to Jewish Schools." Totally Jewish, January 30.

Romain, Jonathan. 2008. "I'm for Faith, Not Faith Schools." The Guardian, September 2.

Rymarz, Richard, and Graham, John. 2006. "Australian Core Catholic Youth, Catholic Schools and Religious Education." British Journal of Religious Education 28 (1): 79-89. doi: 10.1080/01416200500273745

Sacks, Jonathan. 1994. Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren? Jewish Continuity and How to Achieve it. UK: Vallentine Mitchell & Co.

Schick, Marvin. 2009. A Census of Jewish Day Schools in the United States 2008-2009. New York: The AVI CHAI Foundation.

Schoem, David. 1984. Jewish Schooling and Jewish Survival in the Suburban American Community. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.

Schoem, David. 1989. Ethnic Survival in America: An Ethnography of a Jewish Afternoon School. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Staetsky, L. Daniel, and Boyd, Jonathan. 2016. The Rise and Rise of Jewish Schools in the United Kingdom: Numbers, Trends and Policy Issues. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR).

Tobias, Pete. 2013. "Do Jewish Schools Create Empty Shuls?" The Jewish Chronicle, May 26.

Valins, Oliver. 2003. "Defending Identities or Segregating Communities? Faith-based Schooling and the UK Jewish Community." Geoforum 34 (2): 235-247. doi: 10.1016/S0016-7185(02)00076-3

Wainwright, Emma, and Marandet, Elodie. 2011. "Geographies of Family Learning and Aspirations of Belonging." *Children's Geographies* 9 (1): 95-109. doi: 10.1080/14733285.2011.540442

Zelkowicz, Tali E. 2013. "Beyond a Humpty-Dumpty Narrative: In Search of New Rhymes and Reasons in the Research of Contemporary American Jewish Identity Formation." International Journal of Jewish Education Research 2013 (5-6): 21-46.

[1] Staetsky and Boyd (2016, 5) define this as Jewish schools and students 'who are denominationally centrist Orthodox, pluralist or progressive.'

[2] Historically, Jewish schools' popularity has also partially depended upon the availability of state funding and communal attitudes towards assimilation and integration (see Miller 2001).

[3] R (on the application of E) v Governing Body of JFS and the Admissions Appeal Panel of JFS and others [2009] UKSC 15

[4] The Sabbath.

[5] In the case of state-funded schools, parents submit an application form to their local authority, which subsequently assigns students based on each school's admissions code, where they are oversubscribed.