

Identity, Migration and Belonging

Identity, Migration and Belonging

*The Jewish Community of Leeds
1890-1920*

By

Aaron M. Kent

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Identity, Migration and Belonging:
The Jewish Community of Leeds 1890-1920

By Aaron M. Kent

This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2015 by Aaron M. Kent

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-7465-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7465-6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction: The Problem with Identity	
Chapter Two.....	23
Problems Facing the Community	
Chapter Three	43
Evolving Communities: Immigrant Waves	
Chapter Four.....	81
Education in the Classroom and on the Streets	
Chapter Five	133
Uniformed Movements in Leeds	
Chapter Six.....	171
Community Issues	
Chapter Seven.....	219
The War and the Community	
Chapter Eight.....	259
Conclusions	
Bibliography.....	271
Appendix I.....	285
Sample Questionnaire	
Appendix II.....	287
Interviewees	

LIST OF FIGURES

Photographs

David and Miriam Fineberg
Rachel and Morris Pearlman
Belle Pearlman
Pearlman Children
Lovell Road School
Jack Berwin (bar mitzvah)
Fineberg Female
Mostol Girls
Jack and Jane Pearlman
Adult Pearlman Family
Boys' Brigade
Leeds Jewish Boy Scouts
Jack Berwin (scout)
Berwin family
Lipman Niman
Archie Niman

Tables and Maps

Leylands Population Growth
Lovell Road Attendance
Leeds Synagogues

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my wife Julie and our children Anthony, Alistair, Emily, Seamus, Gretchen and Ginger. Their selfless support of my research and writing has made this entire process all the more rewarding. Without their support this could not have happened. I would also like to acknowledge the tireless support of my father, Alan Kent (himself a migrant), who in so many ways contributed to my own identity and appropriately helped me explore the identities of others.

This research, however, could not have ever fully been realized without the consistent and patient guidance of Katrina Honeyman and William Gould. In helping me to discover the path I wanted, their comments and insight helped drive me to constant improvement in vision, method, hypothesis and writing.

I would also like to thank the many members of the Leeds Jewish community who opened up their homes and their histories to me. Invitations into their cherished family memories were generous and central to the foundation of my work.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM WITH IDENTITY

When cultures meet there is always potential for a degree of exchange. Some of this exchange is chosen, some forced and another portion is subconsciously taken on board. This subject is one that is lived and discussed daily throughout Europe as citizens and immigrants from South East Asia to the Middle East hesitantly view one another across chasms of religion and tradition. This current dilemma for many has been experienced previously in Eastern Europe, where migrating Jews evolved culturally as they responded to the attitudes and actions of the host majority. Both sides naturally assessed which aspects of identity and culture truly mattered. The majority attitudes, as noted by JD Klier, often shifted making concrete adjustments untenable.¹ For some, identity was about habits, customs and language; for others it was linked to ethnicity.² If the new minority chose not to assimilate, ramifications often included isolation, persecution, and violence.

This book explores the experiences of the Jewish immigrant population in Leeds, England from the later nineteenth century. It gauges the significance of influence it had on its new environment and assesses the degree to which this community embraced local culture and identity, a culture often called “Britishness”, which was very different from their own. The methods I will employ in assessing the adjustments made by members of the Jewish community will integrate local history and oral history in establishing a realistic image of how the two combined in creating both local and national identities.

Todd Endelman, who reignited and led new efforts to study Anglo Jewry in the later decades of the twentieth century, argued that “the experiences of an obscure street vendor are as critical to understanding

¹ Klier, John Doyle, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question 1855-1881* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 29.

² Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000* (Los Angeles, 2002), p. 158. He quotes, ‘the prejudiced Englishman is apt to call “dirty” whatever is foreign.’

this history as those of a well-known merchant banker.”³ In a different context, Murakami Nobuhiko wrote of Japanese women’s history that “because women’s history is a history of women from the outset it is not a history of special women. To select women on the basis of their being famous does not constitute history.”⁴ To make any determinations based solely on the experiences of unique individuals or specific regions is not wholly convincing in an effort to understand a community. Endelman knew he could not realistically define the experience of Jews in Georgian England simply through the lens of the elite. Nobuhiko found that to define women’s history through the eyes of famous or “special” women did a great disservice to the lives and experiences of the greater majority. With that in mind, it seems reasonable to assume that a study of the experiences of both individuals and groups within the immigrant Jewish community would make a useful contribution to the understanding of evolving identities.

The objective of this study is to trace the evolution of communal and individual identities within the Jewish community of Leeds from the waning years of the nineteenth century through the end of the First World War. In this city there were established identities and cultures that one might define as especially British, English or Yorkshire. There were also subsets of Protestants, Irish Catholics and immigrant Jews. There were class differences and political disagreements, all of which contributed to a “multicultural” Leeds.⁵ The confrontation of these cultures produced various outcomes. The argument will be made that the emerging generations of this community largely became a hybrid of the disparate worlds. Judaism was not entirely discounted, rather it evolved. This change will be explored throughout this book. As Judith Brown found in her study of Asian migration, “their senses of who they are in turn are formed by . . . distinctive experiences of living in Britain.”⁶

Cultural evolution combines a plurality of identities and traditions in forging a unique product. This can be seen in the work of Mario Garcia. In focusing on the border culture in El Paso, Texas, Garcia explored the conflicting traditions of both Mexican and Anglo residents. He found “a Mexican border culture, neither completely Mexican or American, but

³ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830* (Michigan, 1999), p. x.

⁴ Barbara Hamill Sato, *The new Japanese woman: modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan* (Duke, 2003), p. 5.

⁵ Interview with Murray Freedman, 29 May 2009.

⁶ Judith M. Brown, *Global South Asians Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 60.

one revealing contrasting attractions and pressures between both cultures.”⁷ Despite the best intentions of parents or communities, emerging generations do not always remain true to the identity thrust upon them in the home. But, rather, they select from a variety of sources in creating a personal identity that fits. For example, many young people in the Leeds and Harrogate Jewish communities made the English language central to their emerging identities rather than the Yiddish of their parents.⁸ Garcia’s Mexican-American children developed an identity that was unique to both their home country and their new homeland. It was an identity that brought comfort and made sense to them based on their experiences.

Paul Ward noted that “being British is no longer seen as innate, static and permanent.”⁹ The children of El Paso, similarly, found that what it meant to be American or Mexican was subjective. Closer to Leeds, a young Asian remarked,

“Well, I was born in Saudi Arabia, I’ve done some of my growing up in Pakistan, my parents are from Pakistan, and I’ve spent more time living in England than anywhere else. I feel very Pakistani and I feel very British. I would say I’m equally both, and I’m proud to be both!”¹⁰

Similarly, with the evolving Jewish community of Leeds from the late nineteenth century, its members found themselves in a position where they needed to interpret what was expected of a new British citizen (or at the very least, resident) and what level of Jewish identity was “allowed” or (more importantly) desired. Fredrik Barth wrote that “ethnic identity implies a series of constraints on the kinds of roles an individual is allowed to play, and the partners he may choose for different kinds of transactions.”¹¹ In Leeds, many found it helpful or even necessary to assimilate the type of identity that provided the greater opportunity.¹²

⁷ Mario T. Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso 1880-1920* (New Haven, 1981), p. 231.

⁸ Rosalyn Livshin, *The History of the Harrogate Jewish Community* (Leeds, 1995), p. 18.

⁹ Paul Ward, *Britishness Since 1870* (London, 2004), p. 1.

¹⁰ *Home from Home, British Pakistanis in Mirpur* (Oral history by Irna Qureshi, photographs by Tim Smith, Bradford Heritage Recording Unit, City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, Arts Museums and Libraries, 1997) <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/writingbritishasiancities/History.htm>, p. 31. Accessed May 2009.

¹¹ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries The Social Organizations of Culture Difference* (New York, 1969), pp. 16-17.

¹² Interview with Pamela Mason, 17 November 2006.

Discerning how people view themselves is relevant to determining how to address them, offer support to them and even challenge their beliefs. In the late 1990s, an opinion poll in Scotland showed that one quarter of all Scots saw themselves as Scottish and not British. But in that same study it was shown that one in three still considered themselves “equally British and Scottish.” Understanding how these citizens view themselves and their culture helps governments and private industries construct laws and services to satisfy and successfully cater to residents of Scotland.¹³ Another example is that of the Jews in Manchester. Rainer Liedtke posed the question, “how does one identify Jewish consciousness?”¹⁴ He was interested in the possibility that Jewish integration was not a rejection of Jewish culture, but rather an ability for the community to live successfully in both. Liedtke found that there “was an absence of an all-encompassing and universally accepted definition of ‘Jewish’ and ‘Jew’.”¹⁵ If one accepts that there was no clear Jewishness for the immigrant Jew of Britain to be a part of, then it is quite acceptable to see each individual carrying on as Garcia’s children in El Paso; selecting and discarding identity and cultural traits that fit personal preference. This can be difficult to come to terms with for the “outsider” who finds that placing these identifiable groups into Diaspora eases definitions and relationships. But in fact, Martin Sokefeld suggested that diasporas are “imagined communities” and warned against including all migrants as part of a Diaspora.¹⁶ In the case of the Jews, Geoffrey Alderman quite aptly used the term Jewries, as opposed to the singular Jewry.¹⁷

Rabbi Jason Kleiman noted, “if we leave it any longer [Jewish education], we condemn the community to a slow death by assimilation.”¹⁸ Culture, like identity, is not static and is open to a variety of interpretations and influencing factors. This change is usually gradual and very often can produce individuals who resemble neither the minority nor the majority identity either after or during the process. Renato Rosaldo wrote, “immigrants and socially mobile individuals [often appear] culturally invisible because they were no longer what they once were and not yet

¹³ Ward, *Britishness*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Rainer Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare in Hamburg and Manchester 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1998), p. 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁶ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction* (New York, 2008), p. 13.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford, 1992), p. 151.

¹⁸ David Saffer, ‘Rabbi Calls for Symposium on Jewish School’ *Jewish Telegraph*, 2 May 2008.

what they could become.”¹⁹ In commenting about the Jewish immigrants to New York at the end of the nineteenth century, Irving Howe said “it was a social world in which no one quite knew where he stood and which even raised the subversive possibility that where a man stood was open to his own definition.”²⁰ These Jews were becoming something different than residents of the *Shtetl* on their way to joining the successfully integrated (but Yiddish speaking) well-to-do residents of the city. This evolution of identity was a mixture of internal and external expectations and influences.

Another problematic term when discussing identity is the word “Britishness.” It is a term that sounds resolute and well-defined but when placed before various audiences one might get a plurality of definitions. After getting mugged in 2007 while on a shopping trip in London, Dame Shirley Bassey complained, “This isn’t England any more -at least it is not the country I remember growing up in, you don’t hear English spoken here.”²¹ Her lament suggests a continuity of language as a requirement for Englishness or Britishness. Andrew Thompson suggested that “Britannic culture” might consist of respect for law, a preference for self-government and liberal political ideals.²² Yet his discussion clearly gives pause for thought in regard to the impact English culture has on the British identity. Is what we consider British, merely English? The population, money and representation in government surely have provided England with a greater share of opportunity to influence the wider imperial culture. A clear definition of what it means to be British can be vague unless backed up with some context and specific ideas of what it means. There are other factors that have been considered necessary in determining a united identity of Britishness. Linda Colley argued that “Protestantism lay at the core of British national identity.”²³ This argument predates this period of study and so opens up the term for greater interpretation on the eve of the twentieth century. However, if linking British identity with Christianity is true, then the Jews of Leeds, or any other non-Christian immigrant group, could never have any hope of fully integrating. In exploring this problem

¹⁹ Quoted in Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, p. 11.

²⁰ Irving Howe, *The Immigrant Jews of New York* (New York, 1976), p. 117.

²¹ *The Daily Mail*, 24 December 2007.

²² Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain The Empire in British Politics 1880-1932* (London, 2000), p. 31.

²³ Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (London, 2003), p. 369.

during an earlier era, Colin Richmond wrote, “if by 1290 being Christian meant being anti-Jewish, did being anti-Jewish mean being English?”²⁴

Being British also means different things in different areas. It is important to ascertain what it meant to the immigrant Jewish peoples at the turn of the nineteenth century as it will then become a measuring stick for their integration and assimilation. What they saw as British, in West Yorkshire, was different than their coreligionist in London’s East End. The local identity of Yorkshire was described by Dave Russell as follows,

“Yorkshire people were supposedly rough-mannered, brusque and blunt, if ultimately homely and hospitable, and with a strong sense of community obligation, naturally egalitarian to a considerable degree, canny and thrifty but generous in a crisis; hard-working, practical, temperate and phlegmatic; blessed with a dry wit, suspicious of strangers, competitive, with a hatred of losing, although never actually unsporting; and perhaps above all else, fiercely independent.”²⁵

In defining Britishness alongside the regional identities held by Yorkshire residents, the culture found by immigrants to Leeds becomes complex. Faced with local customs and attitudes the Jew was (by social custom or merely a desire to survive) expected to integrate many aspects of the local identity. And of course even the words “integrate” and “assimilate” have had varied meanings throughout history. The intent of the “integrator” and the “integrated” rarely coincided and so has led to misconception, abuse and fear. It is true that during the era of this study, many of those who sought integration of the immigrants were working for peaceful coexistence and eradication of differences. The terms can be read negatively so often in terms of intent and consequences, that one must use them carefully. But these goals lay at the core of the Jewish experience in Leeds and so must be addressed.

Labelling

Much of what one projects onto another is built upon assumptions, stereotypes and hearsay. The study of identity or the quest to fully understand what one community truly represents, poses a number of problems. First, is the definition of identity based on how the group sees itself, how it is viewed, or a combination of the two? The nineteenth

²⁴ Colin Richmond, ‘Englishness and Medieval Anglo-Jewry’ in Tony Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage in British History* (London, 1992).

²⁵ Quoted in Ward, *Britishness*, p. 81.

century Mormons of the American Midwest saw themselves as besieged victims of uncontrolled “mobocracy” while their neighbours viewed them as polygamous heathens.²⁶ The American Indians saw themselves at one with the land, nurturing a relationship between man and nature, while the European settler saw him as an uneducated savage. In both cases there is room for a middle ground. There were and are differing viewpoints on the same issues of history. For example, some in the Jewish community of Leeds felt that the truly religious continued the trek to the United States.²⁷ In their minds it was the less committed who remained in England or Leeds specifically, thus labelling others in the community as less religious by inference. However, in his study of the Jews of New York, Irving Howe found quite the opposite:

“The east European Jews who came to the United States in the [eighteen] eighties and nineties left behind them, perhaps inevitably, a good portion of their culture and religion. The rabbis, the learned institutions, the political leaders, the burial societies, the intellectuals, the wealthy: almost all the figures of moral authority remained in the old country.”²⁸

While there are a variety of factors that contributed to these conflicting memories a possible shared result is the assumption that there were no real religious leaders among them. These perceptions could certainly have altered attitudes towards integration and assimilation. Thus the act of attaching labels played a role in determining the evolution of a community.

Second, is it really possible to develop a sense of identity in relation to a group? While shared culture, background, race and religion offer many bonding ties, there still remains what might be considered the agency of man. Individuals, families and groups within a larger sub-group may readily choose in a generation or through time to alter actions, attitudes and commitment to the past. What holds a political party or labour union together at its emergence gives way to further fracturing sometime later when goals begin to change.²⁹ Often, the evolution of society and the

²⁶ Terry Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scriptures that Launched a New World Religion* (Virginia, 2003), Introduction.

²⁷ Interviews with Pamela Mason, 17 November 2006 and Leonard Fineberg, 25 October 2007.

²⁸ Howe, *Immigrant Jews*, pp. 117-118.

²⁹ Anne Kershen, *Uniting the Tailors: Trade Unionism Amongst the Tailors of London and Leeds, 1870-1939* (Ilford, 1995), p. 78.

passage of time create situations wherein a recognizable group begins to drift from core unifying traits.

Providing a measuring stick or guide to the personal sense of self can be dangerous in that it publicly identifies those who do not fit in. Factions within communities and fractures in the continuity of a culture can contribute to varying degrees of commitment to a cause or a shared vision of the future. This was highlighted by Bronwen Walter in regards to the Irish communities in Great Britain.³⁰ As later generations took on English education and accents, a barrier developed between those who were considered truly Irish and the others defined as “plastic Paddies.” Being aware of the wealth of options available to a group or individual is important in understanding what the choices made will mean to the group. Barker noted,

“The meaning of identity categories-Britishness, Blackness, masculinity—are held to be subject to continual deferral through the never-ending processes of supplementarity or difference. Since meaning is never finished or completed, identity represents a cut or a snap shot of unfolding meanings, a strategic positioning which makes meaning possible.”³¹

The Jewish community of Leeds, England offers itself as a valuable tool in assessing identity change, both real and perceived. Often fraught with abuse, prejudice and poverty, the Diaspora has successfully maintained many common cultural aspects. For example, the unity of Yiddish has forged a link across vast spaces of time and place. This common language softened the difficult experiences of abuse and emigration. In 1908 there was a conference held in Romania for Jews from Europe and America. It was established for those who sought for greater unity in the Jewish world through the maintenance of Yiddish. They felt it was “not merely a language meriting its quotient of respect and pedagogic rights but as the agent of a national-cultural idea.”³² This attitude was not lost on those who sought to eliminate the language as a means of assimilating.³³ Language was a binding feature for the Jewish religion and culture. Attacks on Yiddish played a significant role in the integrating process of Jews in Yorkshire.

³⁰ Bronwen Walter, ‘Shamrocks Growing out of their Mouths: Language and the Racialisation of the Irish in Britain.’ In Kershen, *Language, Labour and Migration* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 68.

³¹ Barker and Galasinski, *Cultural Studies*, p. 30.

³² Howe, *Immigrant Jews*, p. 19.

³³ Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, p. 174.

The opening of the West introduced new ideas and opportunities. There was no singular reaction. As Liedtke suggested, there was and is an absence of a definable Jewry. Klier also discussed the level of Judaism required to ensure maintenance of a Jewish identity or culture.³⁴ He also noted the problem of education and found some in Russia who looked to it as a means of avoiding “degradation” of identity.³⁵ This suggested fluidity and an awareness of this tenuous nature.

To label the residents of the Leylands of Leeds as simply Anglo-Jewish or members of British Jewry is to ignore the unique experiences shared. The “snapshot” of Leeds Judaism is very different than the rest of Anglo-Jewry. Bill Williams made a similar point about the Manchester Jewish community when he stated that the community “evolved a distinctive personality of its own.”³⁶ The Jewish community of Leeds largely developed over a forty year period at the end of the nineteenth century. It did not slowly evolve as Manchester or Liverpool had. And the local citizens that greeted this growing community viewed them differently than their counterparts in Liverpool and Manchester. In facing new ideas and possibilities the Jews realized that keeping true to their own culture was a requirement, but was rather a choice. Endelman noted that the Jews of England, “Faced challenges to their inherited identities, [and] *made decisions* to embrace, transform, or reject non-Jewish values.”³⁷ This suggests proactive efforts to change, and this was certainly the case in Leeds.

Defining Culture

Wrapped up in the idea of identity is culture, a sense of shared history that binds one to others. This shared bond brings continuity from the past through the present and onwards towards the future. Joseph Carens wrote,

Cultures evolve and change over time; cultures are influenced, directly and indirectly, by other cultures; cultures contain conflicting elements; cultures are subject to many different, often conflicting interpretations, *by both members and outsiders*; the extent to which a particular culture provides value and meaning to the lives of the people who participate in it may vary among the members of the culture and may itself be a topic of

³⁴ Klier, *Imperial Russia*, p. 83.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

³⁶ Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875* (Manchester, 1976), p. viii.

³⁷ Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, p. 10. (italics added)

interpretive dispute; and that members of one culture may be exposed to, have access to, and even participate as members in one or more other cultures.³⁸

Such a broad definition is clear enough in its generalities to give pause for thought before embarking on definitions at random. And Carens in fact admits this when he wrote that cultural “definitions are rarely helpful, in part because they sometimes exclude things that are morally and theoretically relevant.”³⁹ If one takes a position based on Carens’ comments, it becomes important that the idea of culture be treated very delicately. For if there are a variety of influences upon the individual who is in turn acting upon others, the state of any one culture can hardly be fixed at all. Anne Kershen reasoned that “there can be no doubt that every individual has his or her own collection of identities stored . . . to be made available at will.”⁴⁰ Fluidity seems to be an important aspect of identity.

However, as Tony Kushner noted, “Heritage tells us who we are and who we are not.”⁴¹ There seems to be informal restraints on what we can do and expectations of what must happen; established by our forbearers. Of the Eastern European Jewish community, Howe wrote that “for several hundred years [it] had flourished . . . bound together by firm spiritual ties, by a common language, and by a sense of destiny.”⁴² Their central unifying trait was to “otherworldly goals” and this kept the culture alive across great distances and through much hardship.

The flexibility of a shared past is important in its resilience and for other actors to coexist with, or effect change upon it. Paul Ward noted,

“Far from being constants . . . national identities have been recognized as constructed and reconstructed. This is not to say that national identities are false or artificial, but this idea of the making of national identities has opened them up to academic study, not least by historians, who are keen to locate continuities and changes in their historical context.”⁴³

Understanding one’s cultural identity is often best achieved through contrast and comparison with the “other.” Similarly, in seeking to preserves

³⁸ Joseph H. Carens, *Culture, Citizenship, and Community - A Contextual Exploration of Justice as Evenhandedness* (Oxford, 2000), p. 15. Italics added.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁰ Anne J. Kershen, Introduction: A Question of Identity in *A Question of Identity*, Anne J. Kershen ed., (Aldershot, 1998), p. 19.

⁴¹ Tony Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage in British History* (London, 1992), p.4.

⁴² Howe, *Immigrant Jews*, pp. 7-8.

⁴³ Ward, *Britishness*, p. 1.

ones tradition or viewpoint, it is much easier to emphasize the differences and establish sets of rules or regulations that delineate, define, and separate one from another. In her book *Britons*, Colley considered the creation of Britain and the national identity associated with its citizens. She attributed much of it to the long periods of war with France. There was a need to unite against the “other”.⁴⁴ The British defined themselves as Protestants against a Catholic other. And later the citizens of Britain contrasted themselves to the colonial people they conquered. One can also take from Colley’s argument the idea that relative peace in Britain allowed the people to develop the perception that France, the “other”, was a dangerous and perilous place.⁴⁵ This tendency to focus on differences is evident in the Jewish community in Leeds and its interactions with native Britons. What feelings the locals came to have about the immigrant community were shaped by the casual interaction with a peddler, or an occasional article in a local paper. Without much exposure, the citizens of Leeds developed a different sense of “other” to place on the Jews than did Manchester or London; cities that had accommodated Jewish residents in large numbers for much longer. If the Britons of Colley’s history defined the other in an effort to unite for self defence, then it is wholly probable that the Jewish community of Leeds, or individuals therein, sought to define the other and delineate or preserve aspects of their own identity against what they perceived as threats in their new homeland.

For example, the discourse on the defining of “Oriental” culture is fuelled by the perception that its definition was seen as a way to subject others and their identity for the benefit of the Western cultures. Definition was about power. Edward Said described Orientalism as a means of dealing with the Orient. The West dealt with it by “making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”⁴⁶ His hypothesis suggests that the Oriental is merely a work of fiction, created by the West in response to the growing need to define itself. Such an attitude to identity and culture allows one to respond cynically to the efforts to develop an understanding of other peoples. It also carries the inherent problem of opening almost every interpretation to questions of intent and bias on the part of the historian.

Among Said’s critics, David Cannadine’s work showed that Western societies sought for and found similarities in foreign peoples, rather than

⁴⁴ Colley, *Britons*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979), p. 3.

highlighting differences. These similarities were woven into the established systems then existing in Europe. For example, many “equate[d] the workers in [British] factories with coloured peoples abroad.” He explained the attitudes towards foreign cultures by suggesting “one additional reason why natives in the empire were regarded as collectively inferior was that they were seen as the overseas equivalent of the undeserving poor in Britain.”⁴⁷ This does not suggest premeditated efforts to dominate but rather an effort to find common ground. The reader of history is provided with multiple options in this debate which include looking at the other as different or embracing complementary traits. The problem of course is that in practice making a choice or finding balance between the two is not always easy. Coexisting cultures with rich histories can find difficulty in navigating a peaceful path together.

There are two major cultures that form the foundation of this study. First, there is the Jewish community that came to Leeds in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Their culture was largely a shared one based on religion, tradition and experiences in Tsarist Russia. The second culture is that which they found in Leeds, and by extension the United Kingdom. Like all other cultures and shared identities, both comprised a variety of peoples with a variety of goals. As is often the case, both sides formed particular views about the other and this in time became the established identity for the other group. Colley wrote that “once confronted by an obvious alien “Them”, an otherwise diverse community can become a reassuring or merely a desperate ‘Us’.”⁴⁸

Accordingly, one would expect to find in the Jewish community of Leeds a cohesive effort to unite collectively in a defensive response to the “other” who were the citizens of Yorkshire. Rather, the response was to accept and accommodate a variety of identities ranging from resolute maintenance of Jewish culture to the casual dismissal of tradition and a full embrace of Anglicization. Despite pressures (from both within the community and without) the Jews of Leeds were not forced *en masse* to accept tradition or full integration.

While change is not required of coexisting cultures, some degree of amalgamation (if not total assimilation) often occurs. In commenting on the cultural evolution of Native American women and the importance of documenting such change, Theda Perdue lamented that “people of literate cultures tend to assume that anything not written down is insignificant.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism* (New York, 2002), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁸ Colley, *Britons*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee women: gender and culture change, 1700-1835* (Nebraska, 1998), 6.

It is not enough to identify culture (to the degree possible) but a record must be kept to protect its unique status. It is the religious unity of the Jewish culture that linked millions across great swathes of land over centuries. The written text of religious origin was an anchor to their souls.

Whether that survival is physical, emotional or spiritual, nature and time have a way of “encouraging” adjustments. Stuart Hall wrote of identity,

“Identity is actually something formed through unconscious processes over time, rather than being innate in conciseness at birth. There is always something “imaginary” or fanaticized about its unity. It always remains incomplete, is always “in process,” always “being formed”.”⁵⁰

Tracing the evolution of identity is one most usually done from the perspective of the other person. In her study of the interwar Japanese woman, Barbara Hamill Sato argued that the new, feminized woman “challenged” the long held traditions regarding women and their place in Japanese society.⁵¹ Additionally, changes in how they were viewed corresponded with how they viewed themselves and the way in which they viewed their own potential.⁵² Again, linking this argument with the experiences of Jews in Leeds at the end of the nineteenth century we see the opportunity of the West weaken the connection to the traditions of the East. New possibilities appear and old constraints slip away.

In looking at issues of language, religious worship, duty to country, education, participation in uniformed movements, and economic success (among others) a distinct pattern of change in Leeds is revealed. Not only change, but it is quite clear that during this period, the Leeds Jewish community found itself behaving both in harmony and at odds with the wider national Jewish community. Experiences in Leeds provided opportunities for members to self-assess and decide if such traits were part of their Jewish identity, or if there were room for other, more British traditions, in their own sense of Jewishness.

Understanding Britishness

It is impossible to determine a complete definition of Jewishness in Leeds. Similarly, when you say something is very British, is it? Or is it

⁵⁰ Stuart Hall, ‘The Meaning of New Times’ in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, David Morley, ed. (London, 1996), p. 226.

⁵¹ Barbara Hamill Sato, *The new Japanese woman: modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan* (Duke, 2003), p. 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

English-maybe Scottish, or even Welsh? In noting the increased interest in Englishness, Kevin Myers wrote, “the outcome of all this discussion and debate is not an emerging consensus on the identity and characteristics of the English but rather more studies, more confusion and, occasionally, rancorous argument. Just what is Englishness?”⁵³ Kershen noted that at the end of the nineteenth century (and well into the twentieth) the English man was seen as courageous, brave, Christian, hard-working and as a drinker of warm beer, to list just a few of his attributes.⁵⁴ Just as with any stereotype, it is tough to get to a basic understanding as long as facts are not allowed entry into the conversation. And we must remember that many of these labels are based on “snapshots” in time.

Another issue to face when addressing Britishness are the regional dimensions that play a role in larger identities. The cultures and habits of local citizens vary from city to city, even from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. As Stuart Rawnsley noted, “it was increasingly apparent [during the nineteenth century] that the North [of England] was being constructed as “other” to the emerging sense of Englishness constructed around the capital and the south of England.”⁵⁵ This observation is important for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the varied nature of Britishness or national identity. There is much more to an individual’s sense of self than can be found at the national level. Secondly, and perhaps even more crucial to this work, is the notion that the southern and northern regions of the country were not always united when it came to established norms for identity. This difference dictates that what was integrated contributed to a sense of British Jewishness that was regionally unique.

It is not the goal, nor does it need to be, of this book to establish firm definitions of Britishness or Englishness. What is crucial to the arguments proposed is a basic understanding of what the Jews of Leeds assumed Britishness meant. And by Britishness what is meant for purposes of this discussion is what the Jews interpreted as local customs and expectations. Once the Jews identified such social requirements (on their own or through Anglicizing instruction), these new rules of engagement became the outline for what was considered acceptable. The Jewish immigrants of Leeds developed behaviours and habits from schools, work environments,

⁵³ Myers, ‘English Character’, p. 129.

⁵⁴ Kershen, *Question of Identity*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Stuart Rawnsley, ‘Constructing “the North”: Space and sense of place’ in *Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of ‘The North’ and ‘Northernness’*, N. Kirk ed. (Aldershot, 2000).

religious instruction, the press and personal interaction with the gentiles of Leeds. Whether the culture they identified was real or only perceived matters little, what is important is that this assumed culture or local identity was what the growing community looked to for guidance in patterning their lives.

Identity is about perception. “Britishness” as an identity meant many things to many people, even within the growing Jewish community of Leeds. And if the definitions of Britishness were as vague at the turn of the nineteenth century as they are now, then who could blame the Jews for being sometimes confused at what was required by the majority to acceptably “fit in”? In a recent poll on Englishness, the general consensus was that the citizens had no need to define what it meant to be English as they were so confident everyone knew what it meant.⁵⁶ The fact is, without the benefit of an organized public relations campaign typical of the modern era, the arriving Jewish population would most certainly have held differing interpretation of Britishness upon arrival.

Leeds Historiography

Here, then, is where this study develops and extends existing histories of the Leeds Jewish community. As the nation’s third largest Jewish community, Leeds stands out in many ways, not least being the paucity of published research on the community. If one follows the reasoning of Perdue (wherein what is not written is perhaps less valuable), then one may be inclined to conclude that Leeds Jewry were not significant, or at the least-identical to the rest of Anglo-Jewry⁵⁷ What exists amongst scholarly publications on the community are but a few books, chapters and pamphlets. In 1964, Ernest Krausz produced a major study of local Jewish history entitled, *Leeds Jewry Its History and Social Structure*. A brief yet thorough discussion of the evolution of the community, its make-up and problems, none the less it has fallen into disrepute among some scholars in recent years.⁵⁸ Political interpretations of his intentions have divided local historians, while academics at the national level have often relied on his work. One is left to balance Krausz’s interpretations of the facts with modern interpretations of his work. Leeds historian Murray

⁵⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 22 April 2000.

⁵⁷ Perdue, *Cherokee women*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Interviews with Malcolm Sender, 3 March 2008 and Rabbi Douglas Charing, 13 June 2007.

Freedman recalled attending the launch of Krausz's book to the Leeds Jewish community in 1964. He wrote,

"I remember going to a packed meeting where the book was promoted by the author and there were lots of questions and comments-most of them hostile. Essentially he was accused by Louis Saipe, who was at the van of the protests, that he had denigrated the Leeds community. I think the main reason for this were the snatches of interviews he included verbatim in the book which was felt to reveal the Jews of Leeds in a bad light - particularly in their attitudes. I even heard (surely undeserved) allegations that he had done it deliberately to spite the Leeds community for the supposed ill treatment that his father (who had served as head of the Leeds Beth Din for a few years previously) had received in the community."⁵⁹

This event revealed mixed feelings and suspicion in the community. It goes hand-in-hand with the above discussion of culture and identity. Mixed interpretations of the facts and divergent perceptions of aims and goals (in this case Krausz's) shed light on a community not wholly united but who were viewed as one by the outside. Regardless of attitudes, however, Krausz's research is still consulted and cited today. His interviews and research are helpful in assessing early and mid twentieth century attitudes and experiences within the Leeds Jewish community. However, given that the 1980s and 90s saw an increase of interest in local history and an increase in available sources, his work stops far short of revealing many modern day ramifications of choices made by turn-of-the-century Jews in Leeds.

The existing literature reflects divisions. The rejection of Krausz's theories by some and the embracing of others was an indicator of diversity. In 1983, Joseph Buckman published a study of the immigrant Jews of Leeds.⁶⁰ While not necessarily providing a full chronicle of the

⁵⁹ Personal correspondence with Murray Freedman, June 2008. There were other problems, Freedman explained, 'Another, (lesser?) reason may have been his statistics which showed only 18,000 Jews in Leeds whereas the perceived notion was as many as 25,000. This latter figure had for long been promoted by Louis Saipe, but interestingly the book prompted him to do a survey later on that year (quite a good one) which was published in 1966. Guess what - he only found (slightly less than) 18,000! In its issue of 7 February 1964, the *Jewish Gazette* has a report headed "Survey Angers Leeds Jews". There were dissenting voices, however, and in the issue of 14 February, Mr. Joseph Wolfe wrote 'Mr. Krausz understated his case' and Ernest Krausz himself accused his detractors of adopting an 'ostrich like policy'.'

⁶⁰ Joseph Buckman, *Immigrants and the Class Struggle The Jewish Immigrants in Leeds 1880-1914* (New Hampshire, 1983).

community and its history, Buckman sought to understand and explain various factors impacting Jewish tailors and the inherent class struggle in Leeds. Impressed by Krausz's "objectivity", Buckman sought to map the worker/master relationship within the Jewish community.⁶¹ His research revealed disunity and suspicion and places the varying groups within the Leylands inside the British class struggle.

Anne Kershen deals with the tailoring unions of the city and problems associated with language and immigrant groups.⁶² The tailoring industry was central to much of what drew Jews to Leeds and was a vital element of the community's existence. Kershen highlights this participation and establishes the central role Jews played in unionising the workplaces of the city. As in Buckman's work, class struggle emerges as the paramount factor shaping social transformation, transcending elements of culture and religion. While factions of religious and non-religious workers slowed (and even stopped) business in Leeds, it was unity amongst the tailors that eventually brought positive improvements to the workplace and the paypacket. Kershen concludes by noting "subordinating ethnic, gender and skill differences" was necessary in obtaining common improvement in the wholesale clothing industry of Leeds.⁶³ In regard to language, Kershen clearly demonstrated the importance of Yiddish as a means of unity and its destruction as a means of control.⁶⁴ Yet there are other factors to consider in recognizing the level of cultural evolution or change in Leeds. And Kershen in fact notes that leadership (not just language differences) was critical to the success (or failure) of the various unions.⁶⁵

Here are two important elements that will run throughout this book. Lack of communal leadership and successful efforts to teach English to the emerging generation both influenced the development of Jewish communal identity in Leeds. This book acknowledges these elements while introducing other themes and individuals that contribute meaningfully to a fuller story of the Leeds Jewish experience.

While Krausz, Buckman, and Kershen have written the only major books focussing entirely on the subject, Leeds Jewry has been the focus of the Jewish Historical Society of England, which has produced many

⁶¹ Ibid., p. viii.

⁶² Anne J. Kershen, *Uniting the Tailors: trade unionism amongst the tailoring workers of London and Leeds, 1870-1939* (Ilford, 1995) and *Language, Labour and Migration* (Aldershot, 2000).

⁶³ Kershen, *Uniting*, p. 92.

⁶⁴ Kershen, 'Mother Tongue as a Bridge to Assimilation?: Yiddish and Sylheti in East London' in *Language, Labour and Migration* (Aldershot, 2000).

⁶⁵ Kershen, *Uniting*, p. 189.

pamphlets on the community. Foremost amongst its authors is Murray Freedman who has chronicled the development of local synagogues, schools and businesses. Freedman has also done extensive work with the census, which has enhanced the understanding of community development and contributed to the work of other historians.⁶⁶ Ernest Sterne, and Bernard Silver have explored the community after the First World War and the contributions of some of its most notable members.⁶⁷ In 1975, Rosalind O'Brien wrote a thesis for submission in a PhD programme at the University of Bristol.⁶⁸ While primarily a sociologist, O'Brien detailed much of the history of the descendants of the first generation of Jews in Leeds. Like Krausz, however, not all were fully supportive of her research and she wrote of the difficulty of persuading some in the community to share their past. Laura Vaughan, most recently, contrasted settlement patterns of the community with those of Manchester's Jewish community.⁶⁹ Her 1999 exploration of the community's movement in the latter decades of the nineteenth century show a group generally grouped tightly near family, work and synagogue.

While all of these works look at important aspects of the community in Leeds, this book brings them together along with other issues not fully addressed hitherto. This work explores the experiences of those who came to Leeds in the 1890s and early 1900s. Vaughan and O'Brien take their original focus on a generation prior to this period, in the 1870s and 1880s (Vaughan specifically from 1851-1881).⁷⁰ This book focuses on the overall experience of the community through a variety of elements, such as education, religious life and military service. Buckman and Krausz produced informative books which are helpful but are somewhat narrowly focused. The various pamphlets published by the Jewish Historical Society along with Freedman's writing provide interesting and generally well-founded research about the community but do not bring all the

⁶⁶ See for example, Murray Freedman, *Chapeltown and its Jews* (Leeds, 2003), *Leeds Jewry a History of its Synagogues* (Leeds, 1995), *Further Essays on Leeds & Anglo-Jewish History and Demography* (Leeds, 2005).

⁶⁷ See, Ernest C. Sterne, *Leeds Jewry 1919-1929* (Leeds, 1989). And Bernard Silver, *Three Jewish Giants of Leeds* (Leeds, 2000).

⁶⁸ Rosalind O'Brien, 'Establishment of the Jewish Minority in Leeds' unpublished thesis (University of Bristol, 1975).

⁶⁹ Laura Vaughan, 'Jewish Immigrant Settlement Patterns in Manchester and Leeds 1881' *Urban Studies* vol. 43, no. 3, 653-671 2006.

⁷⁰ Laura Vaughan, 'Clustering, Segregation and the 'Ghetto': the spatialisation of Jewish settlement in Manchester and Leeds in the 19th century', unpublished PhD thesis (Bartlett School of Graduate Studies, University College of London, 1999), Chapter Four, p. 13.

aspects of culture and identity together in one place as a means of mapping the evolving nature of the Jewish community. These works also focus on Leeds with little comparison to the communities of Manchester and London. Placing Leeds Jewry in context with other Jewish communities and the sense of Britishness present at the beginning of the twentieth century is both novel and needed for a clearer understanding of immigrant interpretations of Britishness and their impact on integration.

Before embarking upon the story of Leeds Jewry, it is perhaps appropriate to discuss the sources chosen to chronicle the evolution of identity in the city. The printed materials cited offer much in the way of helpful information on the development of the community. In consulting the manuscript sources found in Southampton, Manchester and Leeds, it is clear that established Anglo-Jewry was very concerned for the well-being of the immigrant coreligionists. Also clear was its eagerness to shape the new arrivals into a socially adept community. The evidence of these documents, minutes of committees and reports can be combined to reveal a side of Anglo-Jewry that was organized and efficient. For example, for my work on the Jewish Lads' Brigade (hereafter JLB) there was great opportunity for further exploration of the settlement of thousands of migrant Jews and their impact on Yorkshire society. Much of what has been written on the JLB in Britain has been brief or organizational. Sharman Kadish wrote the national history of the JLB in the mid 1990s and was quick to note that there was still much research to do on the provincial companies.⁷¹ Documents from Manchester and others became available as she was finishing her book, suggesting an unused cache of information. The Hartley Library at the University of Southampton contains the archives of the JLB. Little information is held on the Brigade in the Leeds area, although much is known about other provincial towns. As discussed above, Krausz's work was one of the earlier benchmarks for localized studies of the Diaspora in Britain. Published over forty years ago, it still stands as an example (for those not within the Leeds Jewish community) for the study of Jewish communities, yet it makes no mention of the JLB.⁷² The lack of information on Leeds helps further contrast the differences between Leeds and its major northern rival, Manchester. The evidence suggests a surprisingly weak interest in the Brigade in the Leeds Jewish community. Most of the provincial companies were quick to form after 1895 and were

⁷¹ Kadish, *A Good Jew*, p. 189.

⁷² Ernest Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure* (London, 1964).

able to maintain regular drills, even during the Great War.⁷³ The vacuum-like situation regarding nationally run youth movements in the city is telling in the understanding of its unique nature. What was an element of Jewishness in almost all other Jewish communities was not in Leeds. Information used to explore the experiences in uniform of Leeds boys was gathered through personal interviews, letters and documents that had not been consulted previously.

While unique documents discussing the JLB have been helpful, what was lacking was a variety of responses from those who were the intended recipients of the methods employed by uniformed movements, teachers and employers. Much of what was found archived in libraries can be attributed to sources described as the established Anglo-Jewry. Therefore, many traditional documents provide a one-sided account of the path; revealing aims and perceived results from the viewpoint of the established Jewish population. In selecting a measure of oral history through the medium of journals, interviews and correspondence I was better able to reveal attitudes towards national Jewish efforts. And personal discussions not only revealed facts and opinions of the past, they also provided great insight into where the Jews of Leeds are today. I have found that many of the goals established at the time were fully realized in successive generations. Printed literature of the time and even communal research prior to the 1970s do not fully reflect the ongoing evolution of Leeds Jewry. Communication with the inheritors of this legacy reveal how the goals of Anglo Jewry were realized and to what extent this harmed or helped the Leeds community.

In regard to the individuals selected for personal interviews, they came from a variety of backgrounds and can be found in numerous places. It was important to me, in exploring shared experiences of Leeds, to find individuals and families whose common bond was Judaism and period of arrival. However, from that point on, there was no requirement as to social or political class.⁷⁴ Nor was the commitment to faith necessarily important as ebbs and flows of that characteristic are helpful in determining cultural evolution in the city and the community. There was no singular Leeds Jewry then and there is none now.

I found the respondents in a number of ways. During the course of my research I placed a number of advertisements in the *Jewish Telegraph* and the *Jewish Chronicle*. In all cases I explained my efforts to explore migrating, education and work experiences in Leeds around the turn of

⁷³ Jewish Lads' Brigade Annual Report. 1917. AR-V. Hartley Library: University of Southampton (hereafter HL: UoS).

⁷⁴ Brief biographical sketches of interviewees can be found in Appendix II.