

## Introduction

This study focuses on a new theoretical concept: outlook. It is based on a single question in JPR's 2002 survey of the Jewish community of London and the South-east,<sup>1</sup> in which nearly 3,000 respondents were asked to choose between four options: Religious, Somewhat Religious, Somewhat Secular and Secular. It presupposes that there are differences along a continuum between people who consider themselves to be religious Jews and those who see themselves as secular Jews who are all, nonetheless, united in their claim to be members of a Jewish collective. The working hypothesis here is that outlook will affect an individual's propensity to believe in particular ideas, belong to particular institutions and behave in particular ways.

The concept of a secular-religious scale was first used in the United States in the 2001 American Jewish Identity Survey.<sup>2</sup> In the present study, the method has been refined by the creation of models based on outlook. Being replicable, changes in outlook can now be measured in future surveys, and the outlook of other communities can be assessed and compared with this data. For example, the tools developed here could be used to compare British with American or Israeli Jewish populations and also for comparisons with other, non-Jewish communities.<sup>3</sup>

Previous labelling typologies, such as the one used by JPR in its earlier 1995 survey,<sup>4</sup> represented *nominal* scales, that is to say, they consisted of descriptive, categorical items only (akin to different makes of cars). The items in such scales are imprecise, have

no meaningful magnitude and cannot be compared with each other on that basis. Such categories only have an associative correspondence. Also, being affiliation-driven, this approach becomes rapidly dominated by the all-encompassing 'Traditionals' and tends to miss the unaffiliated.

One of the main problems that sociological research into Jewish populations has suffered from in the past is that such scales have not been treated as nominal. Rather, practitioners and the public have tended to regard them as *ordinal*, that is to say, making use of the items as if they could be ordered by rank (akin to a military hierarchy), as if they had some comparable, intrinsic magnitude. Unsurprisingly, little progress has been made towards developing a deeper scientific understanding of what motivates different sections of the community to act as they do.

The problem is simple to demonstrate. What is the difference between the categories 'non-practising Jew' and 'just Jewish', if any at all? Is 'Traditional' more religious than 'Progressive'? What indeed do we even mean by 'religious' in this instance: more observant, more involved, more affiliated or what? This is not to say that such a nominal scale has no value. When 60 per cent of the British Jewish community said they were 'Traditional' they were acting in a homogeneous way by clearly identifying with an undefined concept, and this in itself is interesting. But it tells us nothing about what 'Traditional' means or how 'Traditionals' differ from 'non-Traditionals'. And what it certainly does not allow for is measurement.

The outlook scale, however, *is* ordinal. Its components are directly comparable because they evidence the quality of magnitude. In this report this ordinal outlook scale is analysed and developed to create an Index of Social Distance, an *interval* scale (akin to exam scores). Such a scale has the same properties as an ordinal scale but with the added advantage of the items becoming measurable with respect to each other. With this new, interval outlook scale researchers have a tool for carrying out sophisticated, analytical research to explain and describe the complex sociological idiosyncrasies of Jewish communities. In using outlook we have simply stepped away from chaos and towards order.

- 1 H. Becher, S. Waterman, B. Kosmin and K. Thomson, *A Portrait of Jews in London and the South-east: A Community Study* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research 2002).
- 2 E. Mayer, B. Kosmin and A. Keysar, *American Jewish Identity Survey 2001. An Exploration in the Demography and Outlook of a People* (New York: The Graduate Centre of the City University of New York 2002).
- 3 B. Kosmin, 'As secular as they come', *Moment*, June 2002, 44-9.
- 4 In the 1995 JPR survey of the social and political attitudes of British Jews the following question was asked: 'In terms of Jewish religious practice, which of the following best describes your position? Non-Practising (i.e. secular) Jew; Just Jewish; Progressive Jew (e.g. Liberal, Reform); "Traditional" (not strictly Orthodox); Strictly Orthodox (e.g. would *not* turn on a light on Shabbat)'; for key findings of the 1995 survey, see S. Miller, M. Schmool and A. Lerman, *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews: Some Key Findings of the JPR Survey* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research 1996).

## 2 Planning for Jewish communities

Given the fact that the particular outlook to which a person subscribes may not be the same outlook that others would ascribe to them, there is no definitive definition of 'outlook'. There are only indicators. Consequently, it might be thought that defining one's own outlook regarding Jewishness would not be an easy task. The 2002 survey of the Jews in London and the South-east found otherwise, since 2,867 people or 96.7 per cent of respondents answered the relevant question. This does not mean, however, that the concept of outlook is simple; but it does appear that in practice few survey respondents found it difficult to place themselves on the four-point scale offered.

### A scientific approach

The results presented here represent democratic, scientific and innovative opinion research. This means that respondents placed themselves into categories rather than having (arbitrary) categories imposed upon them. The data are also empirical and the tests replicable. The results have produced indicators that allow, for the first time, direct measurement of the *Jewishness* of the Jews of London and the South-east on a number of trajectories.

Within the Jewish community the different denominations among affiliated, and generally religious, Jews is diverse (Satmar, Mitnagim, Federation, Modern Orthodox, Progressive, Reform and so on). This variation, however, also occurs at the more secular end of the community although it is rather less institutionalized and therefore less simple to delimit. Some secular Jews are secular because of their high level of *disinterest* in all things

Jewish while others are secular because of a conscious effort to *secularize their Jewishness*, to engage in non-theistic Jewish behaviour, which contributes tangibly to their choice of identifications. This is nothing new. There have always been Judaisms and not one Judaism, and only a tool such as outlook will illuminate this scientifically.

The survey data are presented in Part 1 of this report. These form a descriptive, bivariate analysis based on cross tabulations of the results of the outlook question and other pertinent variables. The analysis highlights the variables that differentiate and unite Jews. It demonstrates that the cause-and-effect relationship between religiosity and Jewish practice is unclear, and that no single variable, or set of variables, can adequately describe the multifaceted nature of being a Jew in Greater London. Being thus self-defined, the concept of outlook takes on a complexity all of its own. If two Jews choose independently to define themselves as 'secular', they may in reality exhibit very different Jewish characteristics. The old adage about two Jews producing three opinions is particularly apt.

In Part 2 standard sociological, analytic typologies are applied to the results using a multivariate approach, and some theoretical models of outlook, models that previous typologies have failed to produce, are developed. The aim of Part 2 is to show how this subtle and useful tool can be employed so as to improve our understanding of Jewish populations, and provide us with the power to predict their behaviours.