Jewish Youth Databook
Research on Adolescence & Its Implications for Jewish Teen Programs

Amy I. Sales, Ph.D.
Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies
Institute for Community and Religion
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

Co-Sponsored by
HADASSAH
The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.

JEWISH EDUCATION SERVICE OF NORTH AMERICA
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS ASSOCIATION/N.A.
COMBINED JEWISH PHILANTHROPIES, BOSTON
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Our young people represent one of the greatest challenges facing the American Jewish community today. How can we capture their imaginations, instill them with a love of Judaism and Zionism, and harness their energy for the good of klal Yisrael?

The research findings we read in this report are clear: Jewish education, participation in youth groups, and travel to Israel increase teenagers' commitment to Jewish life. This is why Hadassah is so deeply dedicated to and proud of Young Judaea, the youth movement which we sponsor completely.

For over 80 years, Young Judaea has involved American Jewish youth in creative peer-led programs. Our summer camps, Israel programs, discussion groups, and conventions are designed to develop positive Jewish identities and strong ties with the State of Israel. Young Judaea encourages respect for religious and political pluralism, dedication to the Jewish community, and a commitment to building a better Israel.

One of Hadassah's top priorities is to provide Jewish youth with opportunities to explore Judaism and to develop a lasting identification with Zionism. This report lays out the challenges facing all of us in the field of Jewish youth work. These challenges should motivate us to action. They tell us that it is time to revitalize our youth programs and to work with others in the community to bring Jewish opportunities to all of our youth.

We are pleased to sponsor this publication. We hope that the information presented here will increase our understanding and our readiness to build our youth programs for the future.

Marlene Edith Post
President
COMBINED JEWISH PHILANTHROPIES

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October 1996
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Combined Jewish Philanthropies is pleased to be a co-sponsor of this important publication. It represents yet another contribution to the national deliberation on Jewish youth, which began in Boston at the “Al Pi Darko” Conference on the Jewish Adolescent in North America in November 1995. The conference was a collaborative venture of our unique Commission on Jewish Continuity partnership and commemorated the 75th anniversary of our Bureau of Jewish Education.

The Commission on Jewish Continuity is a partnership between CJP and its agencies, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the Council of Orthodox Synagogues, and the Synagogue Council of Massachusetts. The Commission strives to ensure a vibrant future for this and future generations.

The Boston Community has a long history of outstanding teen programming. We continue to be a center of vibrant synagogue and Zionist youth movements and summer camps. Our Jewish high schools—including Maimonides, the Hebrew College Proedor, regional and congregational high school—have gained national reputations. We are convinced that every Jewish teen should have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful Israel Experience through our “Myra and Robert Kraft Passport to Israel Program.”

“Al Pi Darko” was a unique, multi-denominational and multi-agency effort that focused attention on the melding of current research with intensive study of Jewish sources, best program practices, and a model of communal planning. Above all, it was an opportunity to listen to the voices of today’s Jewish teens. Those voices are a clarion call for transforming the Jewish community and preparing the next generation of Jewish leaders.

In this document, Amy Sales has again demonstrated her extraordinary skill in pulling together various research results and creating a coherent picture. We hope that this will further the national discussion as well as the local planning processes beginning to emerge across the country.

Sincerely,

Barry Shrage
President

A United Way Agency

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To build a secure, vibrant Jewish future, the Jewish community must transform the way in which it serves and educates Jewish youth.

Slowly, but steadily, the truth of this proposition is being recognized by Jewish institutions and leaders across the continent.

Adolescence is a critical period for identity development. It is also a period when participation in quality Jewish educational programs—in high schools, youth groups, camps, or Israel—has a demonstrable, dramatic effect, promoting lifelong Jewish commitment. Yet, it is just during this period that the involvement of a majority of Jewish youth in Jewish education decreases precipitously. The best estimates are that three-quarters or more of Jewish thirteen year olds participate in a Jewish educational program of some type. But by age eighteen, fewer than one-quarter of these young people will be involved in any organized Jewish activity. If even half of the fifty percent who end their Jewish education during their adolescent years were to stay involved, the impact on their lives and on the future of the Jewish community would be enormous. This is the challenge that faces the Jewish community today: Can we keep these young people involved in programs that will make a difference for them and for us?

If we are to formulate effective strategies for engaging Jewish adolescents, we must do so on the basis of knowledge: knowledge about who our teens are, the concerns they have, how they feel about their Jewishness, what programs have worked for them. The Jewish Youth Databook: Research on Adolescence and Its Implications for Jewish Teen Programs, prepared by Dr. Amy Sales, shines the light of current research on to this important population and illuminates many of these issues for us. Drawing on an array of studies of adolescents in general and Jewish teens in particular, Dr. Sales lays out what we know—and don’t yet know—about the adolescents themselves, the ways in which the Jewish community currently seeks to serve them, and the challenges we face in redesigning and rebuilding our educational programs and services for Jewish youth.

This is vital information, not only for those who work directly with adolescents, but for organizational leaders and communal policy-makers—and for parents. Some of the data is sobering, even disturbing; some is hopeful and encouraging. Some of the information we would like to have, and will surely need, is simply unavailable—a clear indication that additional research is called for. But the bottom line is clear: effective Jewish programming for adolescents requires a sophistication and a seriousness we have not yet managed to muster consistently. If we are to succeed in engaging this generation of Jewish youth, we must look carefully at the data that Dr. Sales has amassed and translate it into concerted, sustained action.

If we fail to do so, we risk losing more than a generation; we risk losing our entire future. If we succeed, we can help enrich the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jewish youth now, and lay the groundwork for a vibrant, creative Jewish community for decades to come.

Dr. Jonathan Woocher, Executive Vice President
JESNA (Jewish Education Service of North America)
INTRODUCTION

"Adolescence is one of the most fascinating and complex transitions in the life span: a time of accelerated growth and change second only to infancy; a time of expanding horizons, self-discovery, and emerging independence; a time of metamorphosis from childhood to adulthood... The events of this crucially formative phase can shape an individual's entire life course and thus the future of the whole society." (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995, p. 19)

Recognizing that adolescence is a formative time in the development of Jewish individuals, the Boston Commission on Jewish Continuity and the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston co-sponsored "Al Pi Darko," a national conference on the Jewish adolescent in North America (Boston, November 1995). For three days conference experienced youth culture, heard about research on adolescent development, examined a variety of Jewish youth programs, and debated communal policy. The conference motivated us to seek out information on Jewish youth work and to examine the current state of knowledge in the field.

This report is a comprehensive compilation and analysis of current research and writing on adolescence and on Jewish youth services. It outlines the realities and challenges faced by all adolescents as well as those of particular concern to Jewish youth. It also explores the unique opportunities and sources of strength available to Jewish teens through their religion and their community.

Given rapid changes in teen trends and recent shifts in prevailing theories of adolescent development, the Jewish Youth Databook incorporates only materials produced from 1989 to the present. These materials come from diverse sources representing multiple disciplines and perspectives: psychological journals, marketing publications, popular magazines, government reports, Jewish publications, and research reports from Jewish organizations and research institutes.

This report is divided into three chapters.

1. Planning for the Future: This chapter lays out the challenges which face Jewish teen programs, and then offers a detailed prescription for the future development of Jewish youth services.

2. Research on Teens Today: This chapter summarizes current research on adolescent psychology and teen culture, and it explains the implications of research findings for Jewish youth services.

3. Jewish Youth Services Today: This chapter presents recent research on the efficacy of Jewish youth programs. It also enumerates the criteria for successful programs.

We hope that this knowledge base will inform public debate on Jewish youth services and advance planning and organization development within and among Jewish youth-serving organizations.
CHAPTER 1: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

CHALLENGES TO JEWISH YOUTH PROGRAMMING

From the Perspective of the Youth Professional

In developing training programs for youth professionals, we asked 120 JCC youth professionals to name the two most important issues—personal, professional, or institutional—that they face in developing programs or services for youth. A content analysis of their responses produced the following list (in descending order, from most frequently to least frequently mentioned):

1. Attracting and retaining youth
2. Obtaining funding for youth services
3. Developing effective programming
4. Making youth services a priority in the organization
5. Providing adequate space and facilities
6. Having sufficient staff (both in terms of numbers and talent)
7. Competing for teens’ time
8. Providing Jewish content and promoting Jewish identity
9. Collaborating with other Jewish youth-serving organizations
10. Dealing with their own workload and burnout

From a Developmental Perspective

Programming for Jewish teens involves a number of challenges.

1. Teens want independence. The main task of adolescence is individuation from parents, discovering a sense of self and self-efficacy. AND teens want connection. They want adults and peers they can talk to as they explore the myriad issues that arise for teens in today’s world.

2. Teens want to practice adult behaviors. This is one reason why coffee houses are an appealing hangout: here they can act grownup but in a relatively safe environment. AND teens need time just to be teens and not to be molded into an adult framework.

3. The teenage years are marked by experimentation. Teens are often universalistic. In focus groups, for example, we often hear disdain for the adult tendency to categorize and pigeonhole people. “After all, aren’t we all just people” is a common view of teens. AND a commitment to Judaism calls for a commitment to tradition and particularism over universalism. Teens may have to move away from Judaism before they can move closer to it as adults.

4. Jewishly identified teens cannot be role models and leaders for the unaffiliated. The Jewishly identified are seen as different, sometimes not cool. AND the unaffiliated cannot serve as role models and leaders to the unaffiliated—where will they lead them to?

5. Jewish teens are concerned about building their resumes. Research shows that their #1 concern has to do with college and career. Many of them are interested in and ready to take on leadership positions. AND leadership positions in local Jewish youth organizations are not considered impressive additions to one’s resume.
6. The research is quite clear: Jewish social networks are implicated in strengthening Jewish identity and values. AND Jewish teens do not necessarily want to hang out with other Jews. Indeed, teens often pride themselves on the diversity among their friends.

7. Teens want unstructured, unsupervised time just to hang out. Research suggests that many Jewish teens experience stress from school pressures and from a sense that they never have enough time for everything. AND the community wants to improve services to teens with more, larger, and better programs. Jewish communal organizations spend a great deal of time trying to figure out how to reach out to teens, how to get them involved, how to get them to commit to a Jewish youth group or another Jewish organization.

8. Jewish organizations say that youth services are a priority, that youth are the future of the Jewish people. AND Jewish organizations do not always want teens around. They find them noisy, disruptive, and disrespectful of people and property.

9. The community is moving toward inter-generational and family programming. Continuity Commissions are concluding that a strong Jewish family is the antidote to assimilation. AND teens want to be with their friends. They sometimes ask their parents to drop them off for an activity at least one block away so that no one will see them.

10. The community sees teens as a target population for services. In this view, teens are recipients of the community's assistance, and they are handled like preschoolers, the disabled, and seniors. AND teens could be active contributors to the Jewish community. They could sit on boards, contribute time, expertise, insight, energy, connection to the youth population, and so on. Teens could be treated like young adults and others who give and do not just take.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES

This section summarizes the mandate to Jewish youth-serving organizations. The ideas presented here derive from several sources (Boeck, 1993; Long Range Planning Committee, 1989; Sales & Tobin, 1995; Schaefer, 1994). During the next few years the call to reinvigorate Jewish youth services is likely to become louder, clearer, more urgent, and more insistently.

Making Youth Services a Priority

The organized Jewish community needs to make teen services a priority, locally and nationally. The rest is commentary.

- Make teen services a priority within community organizations. This means providing teen services with an adequate budget, treating youth workers as professionals, and giving teens a voice on agency boards.
- Make youth services a national priority. National leadership can and should play a key role in setting policy, collecting and disseminating information, and directing training, research, and program development. When prominent national leaders make issues concerning youth a top priority, these issues will quickly ascend to the top of the national Jewish communal agenda.

Funding

Teen services cost money. Teen programs, by and large, are not self-supporting.

- Allocate larger sums to increasing and enhancing programs dedicated to youth.
- Engage in aggressive revenue enhancement and fundraising for Jewish youth services. For example: establish a national development position, a full-time professional responsible for fundraising; call upon pro

and the unusual hours demanded by their jobs. Work with leadership to design a job that allows youth professionals to devote themselves exclusively to the service of youth rather than being pulled in several directions at once.

- Mobilize efforts to substantially increase salary levels of youth directors and other youth professionals.
- Provide rewards and recognition to youth professionals commensurate with the importance of their job. Youth professionals deserve a platform for displaying their achievements and successes and for receiving recognition and appreciation at the local and the national level.

Participants

Jewish teens need opportunities to involve themselves in Jewishly significant groups of peers.

- Remember that the other participants and the group's process are often more important to a teenager than the content or design of a program.

Programming

Teens' preferred activities are (1) hanging out, (2) playing or watching sports, and (3) traveling. Programmers need to fortify youth programs with content that imbues activity with purpose.

- Provide opportunities for diverse teens. Create groups and develop programming for all different types of youth, those interested in athletics, community service, music, art, media, and so on. Design age-appropriate programs that are diverse enough to satisfy the personal, social, intellectual, and recreational needs of younger, middle, and older adolescents.
Be flexible in programming. Remember that teens are predisposed to the rapid adoption and abandonment of trends and ideas, and to experimentation. Groups of teens can differ widely from one another in their programming interests. As a result, a program which fails one season may succeed quite well the next. Likewise a success with one year's group does not guarantee success with the next year's group.

Link Jewish youth to Jewish sources. Let them explore the universal, existential questions, which loom large in the minds of adolescents, through the study of pertinent Jewish sources. Apply the teachings of Judaism to contemporary issues of concern to adolescents.

Israel

Unlike their parents' generation, today's teens never knew a world without Israel.

Special efforts need to be made to connect today's young generation with Israel. Create programs to establish meaningful connections and joint activities between Israeli and American Jewish teens.

Inter-Organization Collaboration

Teens need to develop their sense of being a part of the Jewish community and a member of the Jewish people.

Within communities, develop combined programs with other Jewish organizations so that teens develop an understanding and appreciation for the concept of "Jewish community."

Establish partnerships among agencies and organizations that serve youth. The division of teens along congregational, ideological, and organizational lines threatens teens' images of a global Jewish community. One model proposed is of a Community Youth Department comprised of the federation, the Jewish Community Center, synagogues and synagogue youth groups, non-denomina- tional Jewish youth groups, Hebrew schools, day schools and yeshivot, all of which would gain from the development of such a department. (Schauder, 1995)

Sponsor national programs to bring together youth from various local communities.

Marketing

Jewish teens live in a society dominated by sophisticated marketing, advertising, and public relations. Jewish organizations can use the techniques invented by these fields to reach their teen audience.

Vigorously market Jewish youth programs, using modern technologies and up-to-date techniques. This includes maintaining an excellent database on the Jewish teens in our communities, members of our organizations, and alumni of our programs. It means gathering information from the target group, teens themselves: Why don't more members of the target group 'buy our products'? Is there a need for a new and different product? What do they know and think about our programs?

Carve out a distinct identity for each teen program.

Program Evaluation

Programs need evaluation information for determining which programs to maintain, which to modify, and which to eliminate. They also need solid information for seeking outside funding for their youth programs.

Establish criteria for evaluating the effect of youth programs: What content, behaviors, and skills do we want participants to learn? What experiences do we want them to have? What impact do we want to have on their lives?

Encourage continuing evaluation of teen programs and activities. Evaluation data provide information on which aspects of a program worked and which did not. Soliciting feedback from leaders and participants is an important communication tool. It sends the message that we care about them and their reactions to the organization's programs and services.

Engage in a professional, systematic study of the impact of youth programs on long-term observance patterns, leadership, connection to Israel, choice of professions, and continued involvement in the Jewish community.
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ON TEENS TODAY

THE TEEN POPULATION EXPLOSION

The United States is witnessing a teen population explosion of unprecedented magnitude, one which dwarfs in both size and duration the teen boom of the 1960s and 1970s.

- The teen population began to mushroom in 1992 and is expected to peak in the year 2006 when there will be nearly 31 million teens in the United States, the greatest number ever. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990)

- Teens are moving to the forefront of the national social agenda. They are the object of considerable public concern and policy-making as parents, professionals, and public officials debate which policies and programs will best promote the health and well-being of America's young people. (Dryfoos, 1990; Hamburg, 1990)

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT JEWISH TEENS

Jewish teens are a large, diverse, and growing segment of the Jewish population.

- According to the National Jewish Population Survey, there are over 800,000 Jewish children under 18 in the core Jewish population. There are about a quarter of a million Jewish high school students, and this number is likely to grow.

- Included in this population are New Americans with their own constellation of needs and concerns. Since 1988, 5,000 refugee teens have been resettled in the greater New York City area. It is estimated that fewer than 15% of these adolescents participate in any form of Jewish communal life. (Subcommittee on Adolescents, 1991)

IMPLICATIONS FOR JEWISH YOUTH SERVICES

- On the basis of numbers alone, teens comprise a significant segment of the American Jewish population. Their needs cannot be denied nor their potential ignored.

- Motivated in part by the Continuity Commission of the Council of Jewish Federations, youth services are becoming a top priority for the Jewish community. Several national Jewish organizations are working toward new initiatives in youth programming and greater support for youth services. Jewish youth-serving organizations can take advantage of this growing momentum in the field.

- As Jewish youth services develop, they need to take into account the wide diversity among Jewish teens. Each community needs a sufficiently rich menu of programs to ensure that Jewish teens of all backgrounds and interests can find a place for themselves within the Jewish community.

HOW DOES THIS GENERATION DIFFER FROM ALL OTHER GENERATIONS?

Adolescence is the bridge between childhood and adulthood which all of us must traverse. From generation to generation, it remains essentially unchanged as a developmental stage. Nonetheless, major shifts in the social environment over the past two decades have significantly altered the experience of adolescence.

GLOBAL TEEN CULTURE

Around the globe, teens show remarkable similarities in taste, language, and attitude.
Cynicism

Over the past 25 years, teens (along with the rest of the American public) have grown increasingly cynical.

- Teens exhibit fading faith in an array of society's institutions including the President, Congress, the Supreme Court, local police, and the media. Teens' confidence in these have dropped to very low levels. (Who's Who Among American High School Students, 1995)

Climate of Violence

Teens are increasingly victims of or witnesses to violence. Consequently, they are more fearful of their physical safety then teens a generation ago.

- Over the past 25 years there has been an increase in danger at school, a formerly safe haven. (Who's Who Among American High School Students, 1995)

- One-half of children surveyed in a Newsweek/Children's Defense Fund poll are afraid of violent crime against them or their family. (Adler, 1994)

- Statistical data legitimate these fears:
  - The number of arrests of juveniles for violent crimes will double by 2010.
  - One in six youths between 10 and 17 has seen or knows someone who has been shot.
  - In 1992, an average of seven children were murdered each day.
  - Abuse and neglect reports almost tripled between 1980 and 1992 from 1 million to 2.9 million annually.
  - In 1992, 12 to 17 year olds were the victims of assault more than any other age group. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994; Kim, 1994)
• Psychologists are in the midst of determining a variety of profiles of healthy development during adolescence. At the present time there is no precise definition of "normal" or "healthy" adolescence. 

• There are vast individual differences among teens. Adolescents at the same age can be at strikingly different developmental levels physically, socially, and psychologically. (Powers, Hauser, & Kilner, 1989)

Cognitive Development

Adolescence is the stage in life when young people become able to engage in abstract reasoning. Their new cognitive abilities are an integral part of the following key developments during adolescence:

• the development of a self-concept and an identity;
• marked increase in egocentrism, self-consciousness, and introspection;
• the development of moral reasoning;
• sharp declines in self-esteem, especially among girls. (Bower, 1991; Rice, 1990)

Relationships

In early adolescence, friendships become more intimate and cliques more noticeable. (Brown, 1990)

Family Relations

Parents are one institution in which teens have maintained great confidence, and the family is the place to which they turn for security and guidance. (Who's Who Among American High School Students, 1995)

Family conflicts can occur during the various phases of adolescence. They arise over mundane issues such as family chores, curfew, eating practices, use of the car, choice of friends, dating, and personal appearance. However, the current evidence provides no support for a picture of dramatic increase in family conflict from childhood to adolescence.

Beneath these mundane issues may be deeper issues: increasing discrepancies between the adolescent's and the parent's conceptions of roles, authority, expectations, and responsibilities. These issues are exacerbated as children come to view themselves as increasingly emancipated from their parents' conventional perspectives. (Powers, Hauser, & Kilner, 1989)

Effectively supportive families promote the teen's developing individuality at the same time they maintain family ties. Research shows that in these families, parents combine warmth with authoritarianism and they develop constructive ways of handling conflict. (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Powers, Hauser, & Kilner, 1989)

Risky Behaviors

• Adolescence is characterized by exploratory behavior, much of which is developmentally appropriate and socially adaptive for most young people. Young adolescents are "full of curiosity, energy, imagination, and emerging idealism." (Hambug, 1990)

• Health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of illness, death, and social problems are generally interrelated (i.e., teens that engage in one of these risk behaviors are likely to engage in others as well). These behaviors are established during youth and they extend into adulthood. They include:

• behaviors that contribute to injuries;
• tobacco use;
• alcohol and other drug use;
• sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases;
• dietary behaviors;
• physical activity. (Dryfoos, 1990).

The leading causes of death among 15 to 24 year olds are (1) automobile and other accidents, (2) homicide, and (3) suicide.

At age 16, 50% of teens are virgins. At age 19, 20% are virgins.

One in four sexually active teens gets a sexually transmitted disease. One in five sexually active girls gets pregnant (a substantial decline from 20 years ago).

Two out of three teens use birth control, usually condoms, the first time they have sex. (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994)

School

As young adolescents move from elementary school into the middle grades, they report less satisfaction with their teachers and are more negative feeling toward specific academic subjects. (Hambug, 1990)

• Absenteeism, dropping out, and other symptoms of alienation from education all begin to increase during middle school. (Hambug, 1990)

• Compared with boys, girls report much less enthusiasm for math and science, less confidence in their academic abilities, and fewer aspirations to professional careers. (Bower, 1991)
What We Know About Jewish Teens

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations asked 474 affiliated high school students about health risk behaviors. They found that 81% consume alcohol although the vast majority say they do so only occasionally. About half smoke, although again the vast majority say they do so only rarely. Almost all are aware of sexually transmitted diseases. Sixty-eight percent are somewhat or very worried about AIDS. (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, unpublished data)

No other study has looked specifically at developmental issues among Jewish teens. The national data sets which provide much of the information listed above do not include sufficient numbers of Jewish youth for valid and reliable analyses. There is a great need for research that will inform the Jewish community about our teens' mental health, risky behaviors, and other issues of adolescence.

Implications For Jewish Youth Services

- Jewish youth professionals need to be well-informed about adolescent psychology so that they can develop programming that is responsive to the developmental tasks required by this stage of life.
- Theorists and practitioners agree that teens need the following opportunities in order to grow up to be healthy, constructive adults. (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Conrad & Hedin, 1993; Hamburg, 1990)

Teens need opportunities to:
- find a valued place in a constructive group
- learn how to form close, durable relationships with others
- feel a sense of self worth
- achieve a reliable basis for making informed choices
- learn how to use the support systems available to them
- express constructive curiosity and exploratory behavior
- discover personal strengths, competencies, and skills
- find ways of being useful to others
- believe in a promising future with real opportunities
- master social skills, including the ability to manage conflict peacefully
- cultivate an inquiring mind for lifelong learning
- acquire technical and analytic capabilities for participation in a world-class economy
- become ethical persons
- learn the requirements of responsible citizenship
- respect diversity in our pluralistic society

Jewish adolescents have additional needs especially given that the teenage years are a critical time for identity formation. (Klarfield & Sales, 1996)

TEEN PASSTIMES

The average 10th grade student spends little time on homework and a great deal of time with friends.

TENTH GRADE STUDENTS

- On average spend 30 minutes per day on homework.
- On average watch television 2.5 hours per day.
- 60% talk with friends on the telephone on a daily basis.
- 64% hang out with friends in malls and other neighborhood hangouts at least once or twice a week.
- Fewer than 20% read for pleasure almost every day.

Findings based on a re-analysis of existing large-scale, longitudinal national databases—Monitoring the Future, the National Education Longitudinal Study, and High School and Beyond (Zill, Nord, & Loomis, 1995).

Students who spend more time in extracurricular activities are comparatively less likely to engage in risky behaviors (dropping out of school, having children, being delinquent, smoking, and using marijuana or cocaine). (Zill, Nord, & Loomis, 1995)

Social/Recreational

Surveys consistently find that the favorite pastimes of teens are hanging out, playing sports, or attending sporting events. Hanging out means socializing in an unstructured setting, preferably without obvious adult supervision. (Cardin, 1994)

Volunteerism

Although some studies have reported low levels of volunteering among high school students, a recent national study, conducted by Gallup Organization for the Independent Sector, found that many teens are involved in volunteer activities. (Knauf, nd)

- About 60% of teens aged 12 through 17 are engaged in formal and informal volunteering for an average of 3.2 hours per week.
- Teens most often become involved in volunteering because someone asked them, because they are a member of an organization, or because a friend or family member was involved in the activity or benefited from it.
- The most active teen volunteers have these characteristics:
  - They had positive early childhood experiences relating to volunteering and were involved before age 11.
  - They are likely to be active members of a church or synagogue and to volunteer there as well as in other settings.
  - They have a value system that emphasizes helping others and feeling compassion toward people in need, and...
they have a desire to do something for a cause that is important to them.

- They have a high activity level. They are more likely than non-volunteers to have part-time jobs and to be involved in student government. They report having very little spare time.

- Formal and informal volunteer experiences during the teen years tend to lead to a consistent pattern of volunteering in adulthood.

**Employment**

Employment is up among high school students, many of whom work for pay during the school year.

- 27% of 10th graders and 60% of 12th graders do seven or more hours of paid work per week during the school year. (Zill, Nord, & Loomis, 1995)

**What We Know About Jewish Teens**

In some regards, Jewish teens match the national profile; in other regards they do not.

**JEISH TEEIS EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

- Participate in a youth group or club on a weekly basis 53%
- Do volunteer or community service work 46%
- Work for pay during the school year 47%

Data from the JCC Maccabi Teen Survey of 1,113 American Jewish teens (Sales, 1994a).

- “Hanging out” is a preferred leisure time activity for Jewish teens, as it is for teens in general. 85% of Jewish teens say spending time with friends is very important to them. Hanging out with friends ranks second only to academic achievement in importance to Jewish teens. (Sales, 1954a)

- Unlike the national profile of teens, Jewish teens are very busy. 51% of the teens taking part in the JCC Maccabi teen Survey said they were very concerned about not having enough time for the things they want to do. This concern increases steadily across the high school years. (Sales, 1994a)

- A survey of Jewish teens in Montreal found that over 60% participate in at least one extracurricular activity and/or take classes outside of school. 40% of teens surveyed said that they would participate in more activities that interest them if they had more time. (Leinwand, 1996)

**WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO JEWISH TEENS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing skills and abilities</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending time with friends</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Jewish</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a leader</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being physically attractive</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making lots of money</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others or your community</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from the JCC Maccabi Teen Survey of 1,113 American Jewish teens (Sales, 1994a).

**Implications For Jewish Youth Services**

- The perception of the Jewish teens' busy schedules is corroborated by focus group findings and the experience of Jewish youth professionals who find themselves "competing" for the teens' time. The challenge for Jewish youth programs is to make Jewish activities a priority for teens. Clearly when there is something teenagers wish to do (like go to a basketball game or the mall), they are able to find time for it.

- Rather than creating new structures for teens, Jewish youth organizations can take advantage of existing needs and structures. For example, many teens work for pay during the school year. The Jewish community can employ these teens in Jewish settings. Jewish youth services can help them find summer work and help them develop work-related skills.

- Jewish youth groups face a fundamental diculty in programming for teens: The youth professional's job is to program. The teens' desire is to hang out. Programs need to build in some measure of hang-out time, time that is unstructured and unobtrusively supervised.

**TEEN VIEWS AND VALUES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Roles</th>
<th>Girls are substantially less traditional than boys in their expectations about the family life they will have as adults.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls are more likely than boys to say that they could have a happy life even if they did not marry and that they would consider becoming a single parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>These survey findings are corroborated by interviews. Most of the girls interviewed were adamant about their plans to have a career and an egalitarian marriage. And many of the boys, even many whose mothers work outside the home, expressed firm convictions that a woman's place was in the home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VIEWS OF GENDER ROLES AND WORK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls who expect to work outside the home</th>
<th>Boys who expect their wives to work outside the home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from a national NY Times/CBS News poll of 1,055 teenagers (Lewin, 1994).

- About one-third of the boys and girls agreed that in today's society there are more advantages in being a man. Fewer than 10% felt there were more advantages to being a woman. (Lewin, 1994)

**Politics**

A study of 3,119 Ivy League undergraduates (of whom 27% are Jewish) revealed low levels of knowledge of current and historical events.

- A significant number of students could not name both of their U.S. Senators, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, or when Congress last declared war. Many of the nation's best-educated students are ill-informed about American history and current events. Of the 17 possible right answers, only 6% of the students got 12 or more correct. (Hughes, 1993)

**Intergroup Relations**

A study by the American Jewish Committee found that a majority of high school students are committed to intergroup harmony and equal rights; they have broad tolerance for various racial, ethnic, and religious groups. At the same time, a majority of young people report significant intergroup tensions in their own communities and schools.
RACIAL, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important do you think it is to promote racial, ethnic and religious understanding and tolerance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you think relations between the different racial and ethnic groups in your community today are excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

| Excellent | 6% |
| Good | 37% |
| Only fair | 41% |
| Poor | 15% |

Intergroup Relations

There is little data on Jewish teens' views of other racial, ethnic, and religious groups. One study of Jewish 5th, 6th, and 7th graders in Middlesex County, NJ found the following:

- Conservative youth have the most tolerant attitudes toward members of other groups (i.e., the lowest rating on items such as "People on welfare are members of minority groups who don't want to work anyway").
- Orthodox students are significantly less open to association with members of other groups than are Conservative and Reform students (i.e., less likely to agree "I would feel comfortable joining a club that has students from a social/ethnic group different from mine"). (Kess, Elias, Novick, Schoenfeld, & Zibbell, 1995)

Antisemitism

Antisemitism is both a personal and a social concern for Jewish teens.

- Studies find that about 40% of identified Jewish teens are greatly concerned about being a target of antisemitism. (Haas & Newton, 1990; Sales, 1994a)
- A survey of 528 participants in the NFTY Mentor Program found that 90% believe that antisemitism is a serious problem for American Jews. Belief is often substantiated by experience: 64% have encountered "a little" antisemitism in their own high schools; 8% have encountered "a lot." (Seltzer, 1991)

- Nearly one in five (19%) said that in the last year someone of a different race, ethnic group, or religion had called them by an insulting racial, ethnic, or religious term to their face. (Cohen & Golub, 1993)

What We Know About Jewish Teens

 research consistently shows that teens' views of inter-dating are more liberal than their views of intermarriage.

- Jewish teens generally distinguish between dating and marrying a non-Jewish person. They feel that they should be able to date whenever they please as long as it is a nice person and they wonder why their parents "mistakenly" assume that if they date non-Jews they will marry one. (Sales, 1994a)

- Of the March of the Living alumni who are willing to date non-Jews, over 90% maintain that it would, nevertheless, be important to them that their marriage partner be Jewish. (Helreich, 1994)

Social Activism and Volunteerism

Similar to Jewish adults, Jewish youth are more likely to devote their volunteer time to nonsecular causes than to Jewish causes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March of the Living Alumni</th>
<th>% Opposed to Dating Non-Jews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative/Reform</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day school graduates</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-day school graduates</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants from New York</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants from the West</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from a survey of 300 prior participants on the March of the Living (Helreich, 1994).

Parents play a role in teens' inter-dating.

- Among participants in the NFTY Mentoring Program, only 3% said their parents had forbidden them to inter-date; 39% said their parents did not care. The others said their parents had either discouraged them from inter-dating or expressed a preference that they not inter-date. (Seltzer, 1991)

GENERAL SOCIAL CAUSES IN WHICH TEENS ARE INVOLVED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>% Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless and poor</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health issues</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's issues</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior citizens</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial &amp; ethnic relations</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from a survey of 300 prior participants on the March of the Living (Helreich, 1994).
Implications For Jewish Youth Services

- It has been argued that the future of the Jewish community cannot be built on reactions to antisemitism, the Holocaust, and threats to Israel. Yet the research is quite clear: Jewish teens are aware of and concerned about antisemitism. There is a place in Jewish youth programming for training in intergroup relations, prejudice reduction, and responses to antisemitism and hate crimes.

- Inter-dating and intermarriage are persistent issues. Programmers must see these as outcomes of the kinds of Jewish lives teens lead rather than as the cause. The community's focus should be on creating a more vibrant, exciting, and involving Jewish life for teens rather than on informational campaigns to dissuade them from dating non-Jews.

TEENS AND RELIGION

Religiousness is widespread among adolescents in the United States.

- 58% of high school seniors say that religion is "pretty" or "very" important to them. (Monitoring the Future, 1994, Reported in Donahue & Benson, 1995)

  - 76% of adolescents ages 13 to 17 believe in a personal God;
  - 29% believe they have experienced the presence of God;
  - 74% pray at least occasionally. (Gallup & Beziza, 1992)

Within mainline groups, there is a persistent overall decline in religiousness during adolescence. The decline is seen in a variety of measures: frequency of prayer; feelings of closeness to God; orthodoxy; intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness; and finding support, comfort, and solace from religion. (Donahue & Benson, 1995)

RELIGIOUSNESS AMONG TEENS

- Religiousness may decrease the probability of sexual intercourse among adolescents by as much as 50%. (Spilka, Hood, & Gorsuch, 1985)
- After gender (girls are more likely to attempt suicide than boys), religiousness is the second strongest inhibitor of both suicide ideation and suicide attempts. After age, it is a strong negative predictor of alcohol use and sexual involvement, and to some degree, interpersonal violence.

What We Know About Jewish Teens

- Religious observance
  - A survey of 528 NFTY teens found:
    - 92% celebrate only Chanukah; 8% celebrate both Chanukah and Christmas or only Christmas.
    - Almost everyone has a Passover seder at home. 85% fast on Yom Kippur. Fewer than 40% light Shabbat candles on a regular basis; 22% say that candles are never lit.
  - Jewish teens attend religious services less often than teens in the general society. (The same pattern holds for adults.) (Sales, 1994a)

CORRELATED ITEMS ON SURVEY RELATED TO RELIGIOUSNESS AND ALTRUISM

- Importance of helping other people
- Importance of helping to reduce hunger and poverty in the world
- Importance of making the world a better place to live
- Involvement in service projects
- Donating money or time to a charity
- Spending time helping less fortunate people

Analysis based on a nationally representative sample of 34,129 American youth (Donahue & Benson, 1995).
Jewish Identity

Judaism has varying degrees of importance to Jewish teens. It can be irrelevant, marginal, or central to their identities.

- Being Jewish was "very" or "extremely" important to just under two-thirds of the participants in the ICC Maccabi Teen Survey (62%). Only a small percentage (5%) said that being Jewish was not at all important to them.
- The survey showed no difference by grade in school suggesting that the fundamental importance of Judaism to teenagers is set early on in life and does not change significantly over the middle and high school years.
- Children with two Jewish parents are significantly more likely than children from interfaith families to say that being Jewish is important to them. (Sales, 1994a)
- The importance of being Jewish also varies by teens' identification with a denomination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of Being Jewish by Denomination</th>
<th>% Answering Very/Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Jewish</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- All measures of Jewish identity (see graph) differ significantly for teens with two Jewish parents and those from interfaith families. All of these measures also vary significantly by denomination. The pattern consistently shows decreasing levels of importance from Orthodox to Conservative to Reform and Just Jewish teens. In all instances the lowest ratings are given by those who are unsure of their denominational identity. (Sales, 1994a)

**JEWSH IDENTITY WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO TEENS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observing Jewish holidays</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrying someone Jewish</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing about Jewish life &amp; traditions</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donating money to Jewish</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed about current events</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating Jewish partner</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having connection to Israel</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing Star of David, etc.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending synagogue</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping kosher</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications for Jewish Youth Services

- Inreach versus outreach: Jewish youth-serving organizations need to determine what percentage of their human and financial resources they will put into inreach efforts, reinvigorating those who are currently members of the organization, and what percentage will go into outreach, reaching out to the unaffiliated and connecting them with Judaism and the Jewish community. Given limited resources and the tremendous amount of energy required to grow a youth organization, this is a critical decision which needs to be made early in the planning process.
- Inter-denominational programming: Several arguments can be made for the inclusion of inter-denominational programming in a community's catalog of youth activities: the important role denomination plays in teens' Jewish identity; the need to impart a sense of klad Yisrael to young Jews; and the need to promote understanding, respect, and open-mindedness among Jewish youth. There is much to be gained by programming that brings together youth from across the Jewish community.
- Jewish content: In order to foster and sustain the religious impulse among teens, the Jewish content of Jewish youth programs needs to be packaged in a way which is relevant, creative, and exciting.
CHAPTER 3: JEWISH YOUTH SERVICES TODAY

JEWISH EDUCATION

Participants

- Only 400,000 children, 48% of the core Jewish population under 18, receive any type of formal Jewish education. (Kosmin et al., 1991)

- Over 90% of Orthodox children receiving formal Jewish education are enrolled in full-time programs, as are 19% of Conservative Jewish children, and 8% of Reform children. Overall, about 15% of Jewish children attend Jewish day schools. (Jewish Education Service of North America, 1992)

- Parents' level of Jewish education is key. When both parents have received six or more years of Jewish education, their children almost always receive Jewish education. When neither parent has received formal Jewish education, only 16% of their children receive formal Jewish education. (Fishman, 1995)

Institutional Structures

- American Jews have developed a multi-faceted educational system embracing both schools and programs of non-formal education.

- In their entirety, these institutions employ tens of thousands of educators and support staff, at an annual cost estimated at between one and two billion dollars. (Commission on Jewish Education in North America, 1991) About one-fourth of federation allocations are devoted to Jewish education.

SERVING JEWISH YOUTH IN NORTH AMERICA

| Day schools | 800 schools; 120,000 participants |
| Supplementary schools | 1,700 schools; 280,000 participants |
| Camping | 120,000 children in day camps; 85,000 children in residential camps |
| Youth movements | 75,000 members; another 25,000 occasional participants |

Commission on Jewish Education in North America, 1991

Outcomes

Analyses of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey conclude that more extensive forms of Jewish education are associated with greater Jewish identification. (Fishman & Goldstein, 1993; Rimor & Katz, 1993)

- Day schools, compared with private tutors, part-time schooling, and Sunday schools, have a greater bearing on friendship patterns, prevention of intermarriage, visits to Israel, Shabbat and kashrut observance, and synagogue attendance. (Rimor & Katz, 1993)

- The effect of extensive Jewish education can be seen in every area of an individual's public and private Jewish life. The more intense their Jewish education, the more likely people are: to fast on Yom Kippur, date mostly or only Jews, say being Jewish is very important to them, have mostly Jewish close friends, feel highly attached to Israel, and attend religious services several times a month or more. (Cohen, S., 1993b)
A recent study of over 3,500 young adults compared Jewish day school graduates with those receiving elementary only, high school, or post high school Jewish education. The study found the following:

- With few exceptions, the number of religiously observant graduates increases with the amount of Jewish education. This finding holds regardless of type of school.

- Graduation from high school and beyond greatly increases kashrut and Sabbath observance, and Jewish communal activity.

- Regional differences are striking: A Jewish elementary day school education outside New York has a greater impact on adult Jewish behavior and attitudes than comparable education within the Greater New York area. (Schiff & Schneider, 1994)

- Although Schiff & Schneider (1994) find that Jewish education is the greatest predictor of Jewish observance, most other studies agree that the Jewish involvement of the parents is a more influential factor. (Cohen, S., 1995b, based on a review of studies from 1974 to 1994)

**JEWISH YOUTH GROUPS**

- Well over half of American Jewish teenagers never join a Jewish youth group or attend a Jewish camp. (Fishman, 1995)

- Active Jewish life comes in clusters: By and large, only those teenagers who have received formal Jewish education and are Jewishly involved also take part in informal activities such as Jewish youth groups, camps, and Israel trips. (Cohen, S., 1995b; Fishman, 1995)

- Teens are more likely to participate in a Jewish youth group and to visit Israel if their parents are Jewishly involved. (Cohen, S., 1995b)

**PARENTS’ JEWISH INVOLVEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teen participates in youth group</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen has visited Israel</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from a national study of over 1,400 Jewish parents and teens (Cohen, S., 1995b)

- Participation in youth groups and travel to Israel make a difference in teenagers’ commitment to Jewish life. Both experiences are associated with increments in Jewish involvement, even after controlling for parents’ Jewish involvement, Jewish schooling, and other factors. (Cohen, S., 1995b)

**PROGRAM EVALUATIONS**

Few if any quantitative studies have examined how youth participation in Jewish summer camps, youth groups, and travel to Israel affects their adult Jewish identity.

This section presents summary findings from evaluation reports of the following Jewish youth experiences:

- Young Judaea
- Israel Trips
- March of the Living
- Panim el Panim
- Jewish Community Center Youth Programs
- Hillel

**Implications For Jewish Youth Services**

"The fact that 100 percent of the graduates do not exhibit Jewish behavior, despite long years of schooling, demonstrates that even a Jewish day school education is not a full-proof guarantee of Jewish continuity... school alone, however powerful a weapon, nor any of the other factors (such as family background, camp attendance, Israel visits, religious affiliation in later adulthood, and Jewish organizational involvement) in isolation can counteract the influences of an open society on young people." (Schiff & Schneider, 1994, July, p. 8)

- Jewish communities need a wide variety of programs, structures, and institutions, in the realms of formal and non-formal Jewish education, to provide multiple Jewish experiences for teens. The data support the dictum that "the more, the more." The more Jewish experiences teens have, the more Jewishly involved they become, and the more they integrate Judaism into their lives.

**Israel Trips**

- Over 3,000 Jewish teens from the United States participated in a short-term Israel experience in 1993-94. They accounted for just over 40% of the young people from the Diaspora participating in such programs.

- Of the teens who go on an Israel trip:
  - 64% are first-time travelers to Israel
  - 70% are 15 to 17 years old
  - close to 100% have had a Jewish education and are affiliated with the Jewish community.

- Those most likely to participate in an Israel experience:
  - are day school students or alumni
  - are members of synagogues and Zionist youth movements
  - are Jewish summer campers
  - are ritually active
  - are relatively wealthy (families with incomes above $50,000 are far more likely to send their youngsters on these programs than those earning less than $50,000)
  - are the children of parents who have been to Israel. (Cohen, E., 1994; Cohen, S., 1995a; Helmreich, 1994)

- Jewish teenagers living in places like Westchester or Baltimore are four times more likely to go on an Israel experience program than their counterparts living in the four outer boroughs of New York City (not Manhattan), Los Angeles, or the Boston area.

- The variables which apparently account for community differences are (1) population size, (2) income levels, and (3) synagogue affiliation rates. Teens are more likely to go on a teen trip to Israel if they come from...
communities with relatively smaller Jewish populations, higher incomes, and higher rates of synagogue affiliation. (Cohen, S., 1995a)

Choice of program is also strongly influenced by geography. Here are a few examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISRAEL PROGRAMS AND THEIR KEY REGIONAL MARKETS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Judaea</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NFTY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masada</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BBYO</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Cohen, S., 1995a)

**Decision to Participate**

Friends play a large role in teens' decisions to go on an Israel trip.

- Most participants (72%) first heard about the program from friends. Their subsequent decisions to attend were most influenced by friends (34%), family members (25%), and former participants (23%). (Cohen, E., 1995)

**Cost**

A large proportion of Jewish households cannot afford to send their children to Israel, even though they highly value such a trip. A study of 300 Jewish households found the following:

- 73% of the Jewish parents surveyed say a $5,000 price tag on a six-week trip is a serious or very serious barrier to their children's participation. If the price were lower, 15% say they would be “much more likely” to consider sending their child to Israel; 44% say they would be “somewhat more likely.”

- Some parents are not deeply committed to providing their children with an Israel experience. In these instances, price is a “tipping factor” against a trip. Having to pay for what parents believe is an expensive trip keeps them from more serious consideration of the trip's value in building Jewish identity. (Tobin, 1995)

A study of 31 participants of the Koret Israel Teen Trip found that cost was a crucial factor for most.

- The Koret Israel Teen Trip cost $2,975 with a $1,000 subsidy. Eighty-nine (89%) of the parents reported that this price was an important or very important factor in the decision to send their children on the trip. Several of the teens would not have been able to go if the trip had cost more. (Tobin, Streicker, Tobin, Wolf & Glazer, 1996)

**Length**

- The majority (79%) of the families involved in Koret Israel Teen Trip also stated that the trip's length was an important or very important factor in deciding to go to Israel. Teens thought a four week trip was optimal because it allowed enough time during the summer to work, attend summer school, or participate in sports leagues. For example, some teens stated that they could not afford to miss a summer of work. They believed a longer trip would have prohibited them from having a summer job. (Tobin, Streicker, Tobin, Wolf & Glazer, 1996)

**Parents' Knowledge and Concerns**

- Most parents are aware that there are teen trips to Israel, but most of these parents are not familiar with the specifics of these programs. (Tobin, 1995)

**Program Components**

The Youth and Hechalutz Department of the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education has been conducting an ongoing survey and evaluation of the participants of the Israel Experience Short-Term Programs. The 1995 survey was based on 5,295 participants from the United States and other countries of the Diaspora (Cohen, E., 1994). Results produced the following information:

- There appears to be no optimal size for a group. No matter how large or small the group, the participants on a teen Israel trip usually rate the size as "excellent."
- 82% said that their group was friendly and supportive; 83% said that their group added to the experience.
- 68% said there was a good or excellent balance of fun, touring, and seminars. Only 52% said the amount of free time was good or excellent.
- The overall highest rating went to leisure activities (77% rated these good/excellent). The lowest rating went to the seminars (59% rated these as good/excellent).

**Outcomes**

The Israel Experience Short-Term Programs Survey and Evaluation also measured outcomes—satisfaction with the experience and the impact of the experience on participants' Jewish identity.

- 42% of the participants were "satisfied" with their Israel experience; and another 50% were "very satisfied."
- Trips appear to affect teens' feelings about Israel more than they affect the teens' Jewish identities. From pre- to post-trip there was no change in the extent to which participants regarded themselves as Zionists or the extent to which they regarded themselves as religious people. There was some increase in feeling close to the State of Israel, and most said that the experience enhanced their relation to Israel.

Other research suggests that trip participants do not necessarily arrive at deep understanding of the Israeli people and their lives.

- "While the youngsters I joined were on a program nurtured by Zionist dreams and organized around a desire to make Israel real in their lives, they were at the outset and remained at the end very much anchored in their American identity. For these campers, Israel became a tableau, 'a Jewish theme park,' as some observers cynically put it, that came most to life when it was filled with sounds and sights associated with their own special group experiences." (Heilmann, 1995, p. 9)

- The Israelis the teens encounter are usually there to serve them (counselors, bus drivers, guides, shopkeepers, waiters, etc.). It is likely that American teens need more direct and intimate contact with Israelis in order to reach a greater understanding of the Israelis' lives and their political and social struggles. (Heilmann, 1995)

**March of the Living**

The evaluation study of the March of the Living (Helmreich, 1994) consisted of telephone interviews with 300 randomly selected past participants from various regions of North America.

**Decision to Participate**

- Almost all of the participants who have gone on the March of the Living were motivated by a desire to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust. About one-third also said that they went because their parents wanted them to go.
Program Components

- The components with the strongest impact on teens were: visits to the camps themselves (93%), march from Auschwitz to Birkenau (68%), Israel (54%), and visits to museums, synagogues, and other sites (20%).

Outcomes

The March of the Living appears to have a strong and measurable impact on many aspects of a Jewish teen's life: membership in Jewish organizations, subsequent travel to Israel, views of aliya, interfaction marriage, sense of social consciousness, Jewish identity, religious observance, pursuit of Jewish studies courses, and career choices.

- Over half of former participants (54%) have joined Jewish student groups and many have become leaders in these organizations. About one-third have become more active in their congregations. Many explicitly credit the March of the Living for these changes in their lives.

- The greatest change occurred among participants who came with the lowest levels of Jewish involvement.

- Almost two-thirds of those who took part in the March have visited Israel again since then. Some have returned multiple times.

- Two-thirds of those interviewed would consider aliya. Many emphasized that the March of the Living had affected their thinking on this question.

Panim el Panim

The success of Panim el Panim was confirmed by a JESNA study that compared alumni with a control group of students.

- There are strong and consistent differences in attitude, affiliation, and social and political activism between Panim el Panim participants and non-participants. Over two-thirds of the alumni credit Panim el Panim for their growing activism, including joining local chapters of AIPAC, voting and voter registration, becoming involved with the homeless and hungry, and increasing their Jewish identity-building experiences. (reported in Musleh, 1995)

Jewish Community Center Youth Programs

The Center for Modern Jewish Studies conducted a study of ICC youth programs across the United States (sales, 1994b). The study, which focused on institutional structures and resources, found the following:

- Within the ICC system, about 17% of revenues from outside sources are designated specifically for programs and services for youth.

- During the 1992 fiscal year, two-thirds of the Centers submitted one or more grand proposals for funding for youth programming. Of these proposals, 62% received funding.

- The most prevalent barriers to effectiveness in ICC youth programs are insufficient funding (which, in many instances, has led to inadequate staffing), problems with space, and difficulties in reaching the youth population.

Hillel

- Of the more than 400,000 Jewish students on American campuses, it is estimated that only 15% are Jewishly affiliated; 25% are alienated and, for all practical purposes, unreachable; 60% are relatively inactive as Jews but are potentially reachable with the right approach. (1990 study by Sternberg, cited in Abramowitz, 1995)

- Outreach programming — motivating Jewish students to choose Jewish activities from the wide array of options available to them — has become increasingly important, especially as the issues that once attracted marginal Jewish students to Hillel (e.g., Israel, the Holocaust, Soviet Jewry) have faded.

- National Hillel is undergoing major changes. These include: reconstituting the governing system; developing an annual Hillel Leaders Assembly that trains and inspires some 200 elite student leaders; setting goals to double federations' annual contributions to Hillel; and planning for major fundraising from foundations, alumni, endowments, fees, and other sources (Abramowitz, 1995).

SUCCESSFUL JEWISH YOUTH PROGRAMS

Alexander and Russ (1993) conducted a study of 15 non-formal educational programs, for 8 to 22 year olds, that had acknowledged histories of accomplishment. Interviews with the leaders of these programs sought to identify the ingredients that contribute to program success. Results are presented in this section.

Ingredients of Success of Jewish Youth Programs

The study of successful Jewish youth programs revealed the following seven ingredients of success.

1. Leadership: 92% of those interviewed identified staff as a key to success. This included both senior staff (e.g., camp directors) and primary providers (e.g., counselors).

Program directors said they look for the following attributes in staff:

- Personality: stable, appealing to youth, charismatic, open, enthusiastic, creative, able to think on their own feet

- Interpersonal skills: caring, able to develop close relationships with youth, able to empathize with the feelings of others, able to focus on the needs of individuals

- Morality: mature, responsible, fair, willing to act on principle

- Age: close in age to those in their charge or able to remember what it was like

- Education: both formal training and experience in working with young people, preferably in Jewish settings

- Judaism: at least minimal commitment to living a Jewish life and a willingness to learn more about it

- Role modeling: able to reflect the values of the program

2. Groupe: 74% of those interviewed identified the importance of group process to the success of their programs. Group process entails:

- creating a collective identity;

- encouraging active participation and teamwork;

- involving participants in decision making;

- fostering a sense of group ownership;

- creating a caring, open, and communal climate.
3. Peers: 58% spoke of the influence of peers on the success of their programs. Peers recruit participants and they determine the quality of the experience.

4. Substance: 66% spoke of the importance of Judaic substance to their success; 70% saw ideology as key to their success. The study found that pluralistic programs are particularly successful. “Not only does pluralism dominate good Jewish youth programming, but more of those who participate in pluralistic programs experience them as substantive, religiously motivating, and well executed. They also experience them as having profound impact on their lives more often than do those involved with other programs.”

5. Place: 66% of the interviewees mentioned the importance of the look and feel of the place where their program is held.

6. Time: 70% said the amount of time that participants spend together contributes to the success of their programs. City-based programs (versus rural camps, for example) tend to meet regularly and often (usually weekly or bi-weekly) with the result that participants spend extensive amounts of time together.

7. Support: 40% said that lay support contributed to the success of their programs. Only five programs, however, reported satisfactory professional and lay support, suggesting that some of the best programs operate successfully without this support.

SUCCESSFUL TEEN ISRAEL EXPERIENCES

Research on successful teen Israel experiences produces findings similar to those reported above regarding group dynamics, staff, and ideology. Other findings from studies of Israel trips undoubtedly have relevance for youth groups, as well. This section presents the conclusion of the evaluation and analysis of Israel trips conducted by the CRB Foundation in conjunction with JESNA (Chazan, 1994; Cohen & Wall, 1994).

Participants
- Participants are recruited for and matched with the program that is right for them.
- The program understands who the participants are and plans the trip accordingly.
- The program provides the participants with accurate information before the trip so that the young people know what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Programs get so-called “better kids” through selective recruitment or excellent preparation.
- The participants undergo pre-trip preparation that enhances their cognitive, emotional, and social readiness for the trip.
- The trip recruits young people with common backgrounds, interests, or salient characteristics.

Staff
- The director projects a clearly articulated vision and translates that vision into reality.
- The counselors exhibit excellence as informal Jewish educators of Jewish adolescents. They interact well with teenagers. They personally reflect the program's Judaic philosophy; they serve as positive and accessible role models. They know how to make use of Israel as a learning experience.
- The program managers retain veteran staff from one year to the next.
- There are enough counselors to attend to the needs of the participants.

An experienced educator is a continual and ongoing presence with the group.

The guides see themselves as informal Jewish educators.

Philosophy
- The program has a clearly articulated Judaic and educational philosophy that the staff has “bought into” and that pervades the trip experience.

Curriculum
- The curriculum reflects an underlying philosophy or ideology.
- The Jewish and educational philosophies strongly influence the choice of the sites to be visited and the way in which they are utilized.
- The trip is built around educational sub-themes; days are planned as educationally thematic units.
- The program units are individually successful. Each unit stands on its own as an “island of excellence.”
- The itinerary is planned with awareness of the sequence, flow, rhythm, and balance of experiences.
- The trip incorporates the formal and informal “curriculum.” It utilizes both routinized and structured teaching contexts as well as numerous unplanned and spontaneous learning moments that occur in the course of the trip.

Fundamentals of the Trip Experience
- Participants enjoy the trip and have fun.
- The trip provides active contact with young Israelis.
- The logistics of the trip run smoothly and they facilitate a flexible itinerary that can change during the trip in accord with the changing needs of the group.
- The trip has clear safety guidelines that are well-understood and observed.
- The staff articulates and enforces consistently clear disciplinary guidelines regarding acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

The Trip Experience: Elements of Distinction
- The program manages to engage the participants in conventional educational activities.
- The trip experience establishes group cohesiveness early on.
- The participants develop pride in themselves and in their program.
- The program encourages active learning, rather than passive participation.
- The program capitalizes on the adolescent life stage. It is sensitive to developmental levels and stages of life, particularly to adolescence as an age of transition and at a time when young people are searching for their identity and autonomy.
- As the trip proceeds, staff regularly monitor and evaluate the experience of individual participants and of the group, and they respond accordingly.

Follow-Up
- The program or sponsoring agency at home provides follow-up for participants, a way of internalizing what they have experienced.
- The broader community (parents, synagogues, communities, etc.) is involved in some way with the experience of the participants.
Although the research on adolescence and on Jewish youth services presents many challenges, it also suggests vast opportunity for the development of future programs and services for Jewish teens. Judaism commands us to teach our children. Marketing experts advise us to think as large as possible and to aim high. Our own experience tells us that much remains to be done to bring Judaism into the lives of thousands of Jewish teens. In order to respond, however, we first need to understand the reality of teens’ today. Once we understand, we can act. Our action should be based on fact and driven by a grand vision of a Jewish “teen scene” so vibrant and appealing that our children cannot resist it.

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