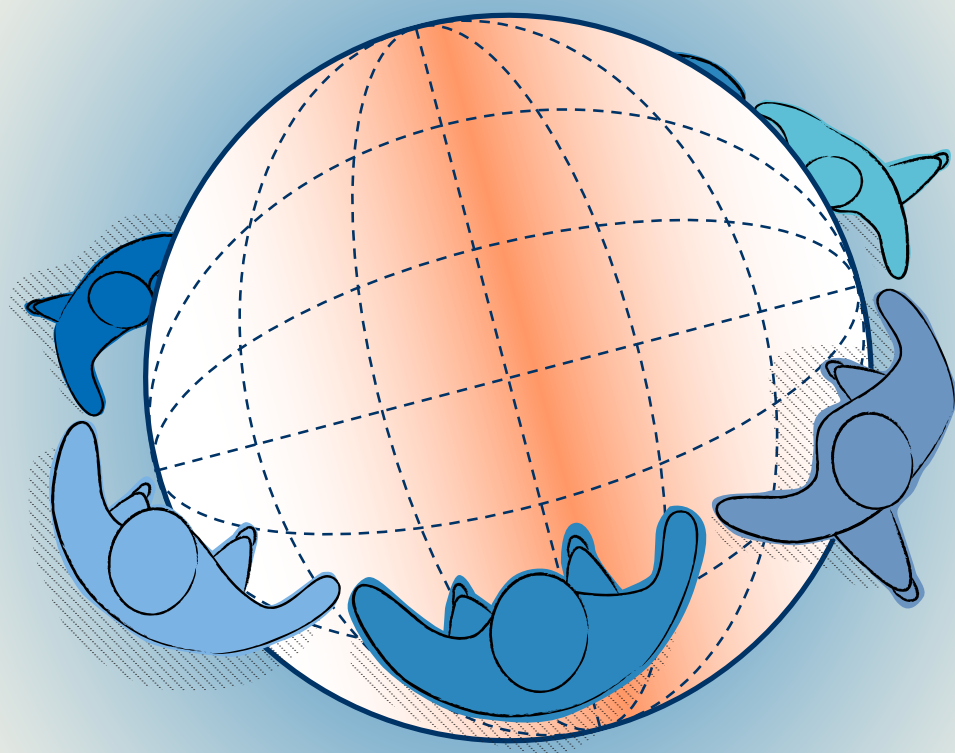


Brandeis University

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

The Second Year: Evaluation of the
Break New Ground Jewish Service
Learning Initiative

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Executive Summary

Jewish service learning is experiencing unprecedented expansion, and immersive, short-term service programs have grown exponentially in the past few years. In 2007, UJA-Federation of New York launched *Break New Ground* (BNG) a Jewish service learning initiative that enabled high school and college-age young adults to participate in immersive, short-term service learning experiences. Results of an evaluation study on the inaugural year of BNG documented short-term positive impacts of the program on participants' civic responsibility and Jewish perspective on service.

This report describes the findings of an evaluation of the second year of the BNG service learning initiative conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS). Building on findings from the program's inaugural year, researchers examined characteristics of participants, their reactions to fundamental components of the BNG program, and the impacts of BNG on participants' development of a Jewish perspective on service, commitment to volunteerism and social action, and connections to Jewish life. The research employed quantitative and qualitative methods including three online surveys of participants, ethnographic observation of a sample of trips, and individual interviews with a sample of participants and with key informants. Response rates for each survey are high, ranging from 71%-91%.

Recruitment: The Challenge of Increasing Diversity

The economic realities of 2008-09 presented particular challenges for both the recruitment and retention of participants. Providers almost universally recounted difficulty finding participants willing to commit financially to the program and numerous last minute participant withdrawals. Like their counterparts in the first year of BNG, Year Two participants came to the program with strong Jewish backgrounds and already immersed in Jewish life.

Experiencing Community and Jewish Pluralism

Feeling embraced by a community of Jewish peers was an important aspect of the BNG experience. Nonetheless, on some trips hurried, last minute recruiting resulted in divisions between participants who did and did not embrace the service goals of the program.

Informal interactions among BNG participants became the setting for memorable learning about Jewish pluralism and Jewish identity. The relaxed settings also gave participants opportunities to connect with peers from different Jewish backgrounds. However, pluralism and Jewish religious diversity were infrequent topics of formal group discussion and negotiation, and the failure to acknowledge or address issues of religious diversity led, in some instances, to group tensions and even conflict around Jewish observance.

Importance of Meaningful Service Work

BNG participants were motivated to take part in service learning by their strong desire to help those less fortunate than themselves. Although groups struggled with the enormity of the problems facing local communities, most felt that their presence and work were powerful ways to “bear witness” to economic and social injustice. However, this sense of making a meaningful contribution was markedly diminished when participants felt they did not have adequate instruction or materials to accomplish the work, felt isolated from local residents, and did not see the community’s voice represented in the choice or execution of projects.

Learning: Meeting the Needs of All Participants

Education on BNG trips, both formal and informal, received mixed reviews. For some, the opportunity to study Jewish text in the context of hands-on service was valuable and thought provoking. Unfortunately, for others the Jewish content and strategies of learning sessions missed the mark, either because they were too simplistic or assumed too high an entry level of knowledge. Perhaps even more disappointing were the numerous missed opportunities to turn predictable “teachable moments” into opportunities for rich and challenging learning.

Development of a Jewish Lens on Service

BNG made some inroads toward connecting participants’ desire to serve the larger common good to Jewish heritage and identity. Participants with weaker Jewish educational backgrounds found it instructive that Jewish thought was directly relevant to their efforts to address social problems. These individuals realized that there was Jewish support for their commitment to service regardless of whether they were religiously observant. However, comparison of responses to the pretrip and three-month posttrip surveys suggests that BNG did not substantially increase the influence of Judaism as a motivator for engaging in service.

Commitment to Service and Social Justice

BNG made an important contribution to the service and social justice commitments of participants. In the three months since their trip, many participants increased their levels of volunteer commitment, and a substantial portion reported greater interest in further exploration of social justice issues through coursework, graduate education, career path, and even long-term post-college Jewish or secular service.

Jewish Engagement

The experience of Jewish living and learning on BNG trips sparked participants’ interest in Jewish knowledge, local options for Jewish engagement, and communal careers. At the same time, there were many missed opportunities to use everyday Jewish experiences on the trip to enhance the Jewish knowledge of participants.

Conclusions

The emerging field of Jewish service learning has set an ambitious agenda for itself: to make volunteer work an integral part of Jewish life and a term of service a rite of passage for all Jewish young adults. Service learning has the potential to ignite and foster the incorporation of a Jewish imperative for service and social justice. However, results from research on the second cohort of BNG trips demonstrates that fulfillment of this potential rests on the outcome of various strategic development efforts intended to address issues that limit the reach and impact of these initiatives.

Expand the Reach of Jewish Service Learning

Data from the first two years of the BNG initiative indicate that the program primarily recruited women with strong histories of Jewish education and substantial involvement in Jewish life. If Jewish service learning is to become a central feature of the contemporary Jewish experience, recruitment plans must not be directed solely within the “typical” boundaries of Jewish life and must appeal to all Jews, involved and uninvolved, male and female. The experience of a campus case study suggests that the use of popular media to raise awareness of social inequalities and frame the need for social justice efforts can successfully attract participants from across the spectrum of Jewish engagement, including the most disconnected.

Address the Challenge and Opportunity of Diversity

One of the core guidelines for successful service group leadership is described as “meet them where they are.” This is a valuable perspective pertaining not just to a participant’s knowledge and understanding of poverty and privilege, but also to his/her familiarity and comfort with Jewish content and observance. As Jewish-sponsored service learning programs like BNG begin to draw young adults from the full range of Jewish life, participants will increasingly enter programs with substantial gaps in their Jewish knowledge. Jewish service learning programs need to meet the educational needs of participants from diverse backgrounds of Jewish education and living without creating segregated “tracks.”

Immersive Jewish service learning experiences also have the potential to successfully break down preconceived stereotypes and create a more inclusive sense of Jewish peoplehood. The full potential of Jewish service learning in this regard will only be realized if pluralism and Jewish diversity (including factors of denomination, observance, ethnicity, race, and class) become explicit and integrated components of learning, discussion, and living on service trips.

Develop Shared Knowledge on Jewish Service Learning.

As the field of Jewish service learning evolves into a unified ‘community of practice,’ it will need to develop a shared body of knowledge, skills, and strategies. Two years of research on BNG have taught us much about the program’s strengths and areas of challenge. However, there is still much to be learned about this particular cohort of Jewish service learning participants as well as the larger topic of Jewish young adult involvement in service and social justice. UJA-Federation should be commended for its important contribution to the empirical foundation of the larger field of Jewish service learning. As the Jewish community prepares to substantially increase its investment in Jewish service learning, the lessons of BNG will be a valuable resource for decision makers.

Introduction

For post-modern Jews, Jewish social justice is the bridge between universalism and particularism. If I am not for myself who is for me? If I am only for myself, what am I?
(Bronznick & Goldenhar, 2008)

Jewish service learning is experiencing unprecedented expansion, and immersive, short-term service programs are becoming a growth industry. Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life (2009) reports that in the academic year 2008-09 over 2,300 students from 120 North American campuses travelled on Hillel-sponsored alternative break service trips. Proponents of Jewish service learning seek to scale up the field's capacity so that volunteer work becomes an integral part of Jewish life and a term of service matures into a rite of passage for all Jewish young adults (Irie & Blair, 2008).

In 2007, UJA-Federation of New York launched *Break New Ground* (BNG) a Jewish service learning initiative that enabled high school and college-age young adults to participate in immersive, short-term service learning experiences. Results of an evaluation study on the inaugural year of BNG, conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), documented short-term positive influences of the program on participants' civic responsibility and Jewish perspectives on service (Chertok & Samuel, 2008). A one-year follow-up of college-aged alumni indicated that, although BNG strengthened participants' commitment to volunteer service and social action, the development of an enduring Jewish perspective on service was dependant on the fit between the level of Jewish learning in the

curriculum and participants' Jewish educational background (Chertok, Samuel, & Tobias, 2009).

This report summarizes the findings of research conducted by CMJS on the second year of the BNG initiative. The purpose of the current research was to build on findings from the evaluation of the program's inaugural year and further explore the experience and impact of short-term immersive service on Jewish young adults. More specifically, this research was designed to answer questions in the following areas:

- *Recruitment:* Information on participant characteristics gathered in the initiative's first year revealed that recruitment efforts primarily attracted students who were already significantly engaged in Jewish life. Evaluation of the program's second year continues to examine participant demographics and backgrounds, providing the opportunity to test whether recruitment efforts have been expanded to attract young adults from all levels of Jewish engagement, including those with only minimal ties to Jewish life.
- *Jewish Learning.* The Jewish learning curriculum and strategies employed during the first year of BNG trips received mixed reviews. A focus in the second year is the suitability of the curriculum for participants from diverse backgrounds of Jewish education and experience and the utilization of informal educational strategies to connect Jewish tradition and values to participants' experiences in the field.

- *Integration of Pluralism.* The potential to use aspects of Jewish living, such as the observance of dietary laws and Shabbat, to teach about the diversity of Jewish tradition was not fully realized during the first year of BNG. Special attention is given in this report to the ways in which Jewish pluralism is addressed with the second cohort of BNG trips.
- *Influence on Participants.* Continuing the work of Year One, this evaluation explores the ways participation in BNG fosters development of a Jewish perspective on service, commitment to social justice and service, and greater connection to Jewish identity and involvement.

The report begins with a description of the evaluation design and methodology and an overview of the scope of the second year of the program. The next section discusses recruitment efforts and the characteristics of Year Two participants. Descriptions are provided of participants' reactions to fundamental components of the BNG program: working as a group, engaging in meaningful service work, and Jewish learning and living. The findings detail the impact of the program in several broad areas, including development of a Jewish perspective on service, commitment to volunteerism and social action, and connection to Jewish life. The report concludes with the implications of these findings for the development of Jewish short-term immersive service programs for young adults.

Methodology

Evaluation methodology included collection of both qualitative and quantitative data through three online surveys of participants, ethnographic observation of a sample of trips, individual interviews with a sample of participants while on their trip, and key informant interviews with provider and partner organization staff.

Participant Surveys

Using internet-based technology, participants completed a series of three surveys: before leaving for their BNG experience, immediately following the trip, and three months after returning home. The pretrip survey collected demographic information on Jewish background and education; prior experience with, and attitudes toward service and social justice work; motivations for participation; view of the relationship between Jewish identity and service; and involvement in Jewish life. Within two weeks of returning from their trip, participants received the

second survey which asked about elements of the trip experience including group cohesion, the group's service work, learning sessions, and Jewish living. This survey also inquired about participants' initial understandings of the trip's influence on their Jewish and social justice commitments. Three months after the completion of each trip, participants completed a follow-up survey which included questions about the impact of the trip on their development of a Jewish lens for service, connections to Jewish identity and involvement, and commitment to service work and social advocacy. Participant surveys are presented in Appendix A.

Extensive efforts including multiple reminder e-mails and phone calls were employed to achieve optimal response to each of the surveys. Surveys submitted prior to October 15, 2009 were included in analyses. There is only minor variation in the level of response rate for each survey by trip provider (Table 1), yielding very high overall response rates of

Table 1: Survey Response Rates

Provider	Pretrip Survey	Posttrip Survey	Three-Month Survey
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee ¹	92%	72%	65%
American Jewish World Service	92%	82%	67%
Hillel at Binghamton	100%	100%	86%
Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life	100%	95%	88%
Jewish Funds for Justice	89%	77%	61%
Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst	70%	65%	70%
Livnot U'Lehibanot	95%	90%	85%
Overall	91%	81%	71%

91% on the pretrip survey, 81% on the posttrip survey, and 71% on the three-month survey.

Ethnographic Field Observation

Ethnographic observers accompanied seven trips, one for each BNG provider. The same observers also attended one pretrip meeting with the group they would accompany on the BNG experience. Observers compiled daily field notes and conducted interviews with staff and participants during the trip. (See Appendix B for interview and observation guidelines and protocols).

Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by phone and in person with key informants including trip provider staff and group leaders as well as staff from campus partner organizations. Interview protocols are presented in Appendix B.

Scope of the Year Two BNG Program

Two new trip organizers, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life and Livnot U'Lehibanot were added in the second year of BNG, for a total of seven providers of trips for college and post-college age participants. PANIM continued to provide trips for high school-age participants but was

not included in the evaluation research. Not including PANIM, BNG supported fifteen alternative break trips to both domestic and international destinations and enabled 240² young adults to participate in short-term immersive service (Table 2).

Table 2: Overview of Year Two BNG Trips

Provider	Total Participants	Recruitment Partner	Destination
American Jewish World Service	51	Bronfman Center for Jewish Student Life at NYU Columbia/Barnard Hillel Hillel at Queens College Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future	El Salvador Guatemala Nicaragua Nicaragua
Hillel at Binghamton	7	Self-recruitment	West Virginia
Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Life	40	Self-recruitment	Israel
Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst	23	Self-recruitment	Ukraine
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee	39	Bronfman Center for Jewish Student Life at NYU Hillels of Westchester Hofstra Hillel: The Center for Jewish Campus Life	Kazakhstan Israel Israel
Jewish Funds for Justice	62	American Jewish Committee Hillel at Binghamton Hillels of Westchester Hillel at Hunter College Self-recruitment	New Orleans New Orleans New Orleans New Orleans New York City
Livnot U'Lehibanot	20	Self-recruitment	Israel
Total	242		

Findings

Recruitment: The Challenge of Increasing Diversity

BNG is intended for two groups of young adults: those with minimal participation in Jewish life but actively engaged in social justice or volunteerism and those with strong attachments to the Jewish community but limited experience with service work. Recruitment efforts in the first year of the initiative reached young adults who were already substantially involved in both Jewish life and community service. The Year One evaluation recommended that trip providers and campus partner organizations expand their recruitment efforts to reach a more diverse group of participants, especially with regard to Jewish background and involvement. This section of the report describes the demographic characteristics and Jewish background of Year Two participants. A case study on recruitment highlights the challenges and potential for success of attracting diverse groups to participate in Jewish service learning.

Discussion of recruitment in Year Two, however, needs to be prefaced with acknowledgment of the impact of the economic realities in 2008-09. BNG providers experienced challenges to recruiting and retaining participants as a result of the recession. Despite offering highly subsidized trips, participants expressed concern with spending funds that could be used for tuition or living expenses. In addition, as worries grew over the availability of employment during school breaks, so did the perceived “opportunity cost” associated with leaving the job market for a week or more. As a result, providers almost universally experienced difficulty finding participants willing to

commit financially to the program, as well as numerous last minute application withdrawals. Recruitment challenges affected both the financial viability of trips as well as the development of cohesive and motivated groups. Recruitment to fill spots left empty by last minute withdrawals was hurried; pitches often focused on the financial subsidies, organizers did not have time to fully vet potential participants, and last minute additions often missed pretrip orientation sessions. The net result was that late recruits were often unclear about the purpose or activities planned for the trip and quite frequently were motivated by the prospect of low cost travel rather than by the opportunity to engage in service.

I didn't apply. [Hillel staff] came up to me after meeting me and said 'Would you like to come on a trip to Israel?' and I asked if it was free. And he said it was free. And I said 'let's do it!' and I'm here...He hadn't told me anything about the trip.

I think that our community of twenty people would have grown into a real community instead of little cliques if they were all here with the accurate expectation of 'this is what we're doing—we're here to work.' The people promoting the trip were so eager to get others to sign up that they just highlighted how inexpensive it was to come.

Key informant interviews indicate that BNG trip providers and campus partner organizations attempted to expand their recruitment strategies in Year Two. On campus, Hillel staff set up information tables during “club days” and sought to publicize the trips to a wider audience through listservs, academic departments, and social networking sites such as Facebook. Community-based organizations recruited participants through

partner agencies, including a local day camp which publicized the trip to summer employees. Despite the recession, the opportunity to engage in immersive service and the subsidized nature of BNG trips was still very attractive to many participants.

I've wanted to do community service [trips], but they're always super expensive, and I don't have the money to do that. When I found out that this was just the cost of your flight, and everything else was covered, it really made me want to do it.

BNG groups largely consisted of college students (Figure 1). Some providers, such as AJWS and Livnot U'Lehibanot, specifically targeted and successfully attracted participants in the post-college demographic, including graduate students and young professionals. As in the first year of the initiative, women far outnumbered men on BNG trips and comprised 72% of all survey respondents.

Jewish Diversity of Year Two Participants³

Like their counterparts in the first year of BNG, Year Two participants came to the program with strong Jewish backgrounds and already immersed in Jewish life. For example, one-third of participants reported that they were raised in homes described as Orthodox or Traditional, and many attended Jewish day school at some point (Figure 2).

Year Two participants are also highly involved in Jewish activities, either on their college campuses or in their local communities. In the pretrip survey, almost two-thirds (63%) said they are very involved or have a leadership role in at least one organized Jewish activity. When compared with the prior year's cohort, Year Two participants appear to have even stronger connections to their Jewish identity, the Jewish people, and Israel (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Participants' Educational Status by Provider

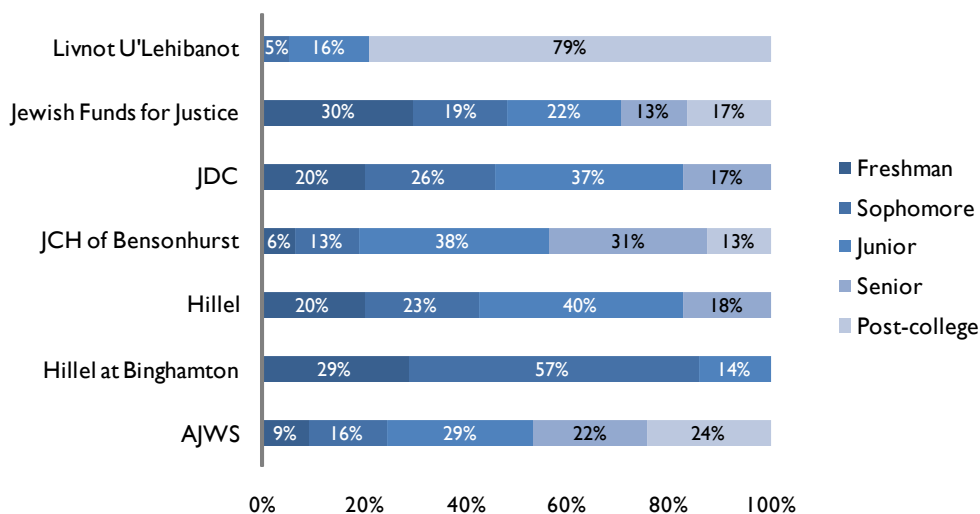


Figure 2: Jewish Background Year One and Year Two Participants

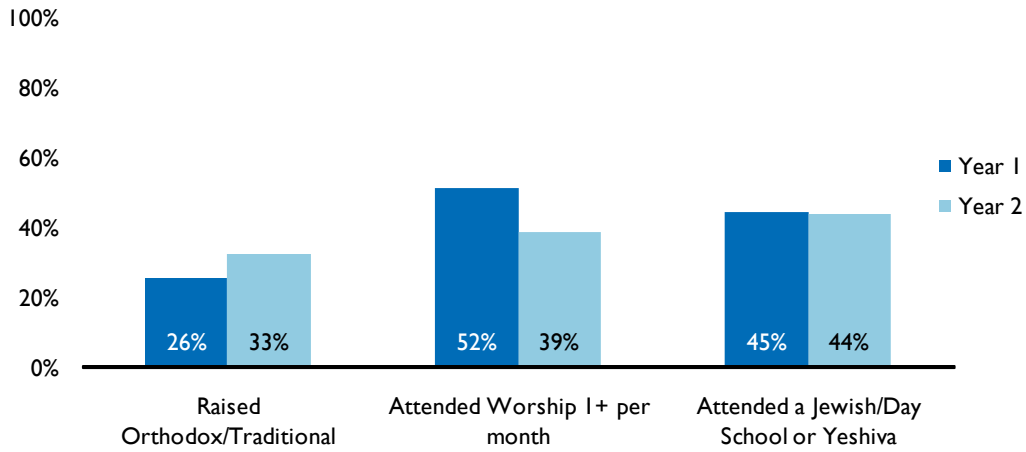
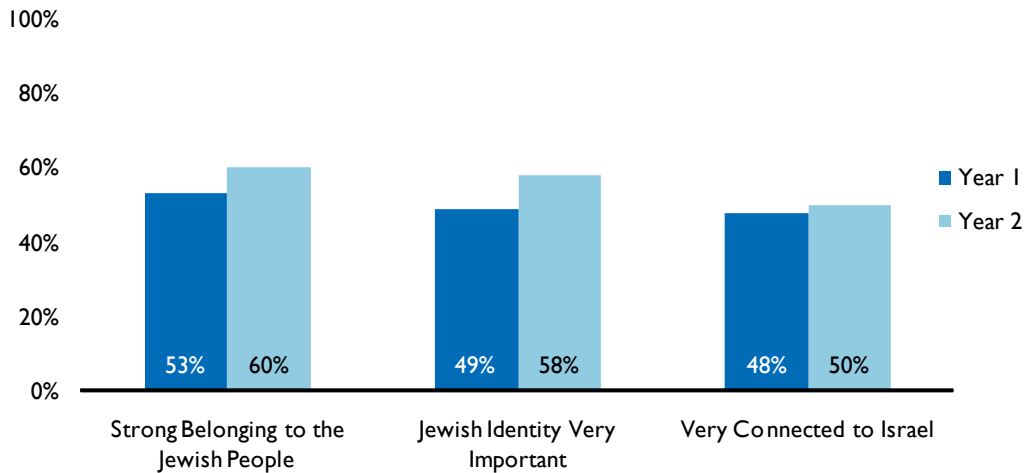


Figure 3: Pretrip Jewish Identity Year One and Year Two Participants



Despite efforts to expand their reach, most trip providers and campus partner organizations fell short of their goal to recruit young adults who were less engaged in Jewish life and activities. The following case study demonstrates that targeted recruitment of specific populations can help increase the diversity on BNG trips.

Case Study: Leveraging Social Concern

Trip “Provider A” recruited on a campus with a substantial Jewish population and with a relatively large Orthodox presence. From its experience in Year One this provider knew that the trip location was not very attractive to students, making the trip a “tough sell.”

In an effort to move beyond students already engaged in Hillel or Chabad, the campus Jewish professional shared information about the trip with professors teaching classes on subjects related to the content of the trip: poverty, education, economics, social work, and sustainable development. Alumni from the previous year’s BNG trip also assisted with recruitment by sharing their BNG experience with friends and encouraging them to apply for the opportunity. Additionally, some Year One alumni who had formed a poverty awareness group following their own trip publicized the Year Two opportunity to their members.

The most successful aspect of recruitment in Year Two, however, came from the fortuitous release of a documentary that focused on poverty in the trip’s destination. The trip provider seized the opportunity to use the documentary as a recruitment tool and targeted undergraduates who might be inspired by the film. Indeed, interviews

conducted during the subsequent trip indicate that at least two participants specifically remembered watching the documentary and wanting to do more to help this impoverished community. When these individuals saw information about an upcoming service trip on a campus listserv announcement, they jumped at the opportunity to translate their newly raised consciousness into action.

The provider’s recruitment strategy paid off. Pretrip survey data shows participants who traveled with “Provider A” in Year Two were significantly less involved in campus Jewish life and had weaker connections to the Jewish community than their counterparts from the same provider recruiting on the same campus in the previous year. For example, a substantial portion (77%) of Year One participants was highly involved in Jewish activities prior to their participation in BNG. None of the students on the second trip described themselves as “very involved” or “a leader” in Jewish campus life. Year Two participants were more likely to identify with non-Orthodox denominations (Figure 4). In addition, the second cohort of participants was less likely to have a history of day school attendance. As compared with its first BNG cohort, this provider’s participants in Year Two indicated weaker pretrip connections to Jewish peoplehood and placed their Jewish identity in a less central position relative to their overall self definition (Figure 5).

These dramatic changes indicate that “Provider A” was successful in attracting a very different group of participants for Year Two. This cohort had a greater diversity of Jewish backgrounds and substantially weaker ties to Jewish life on campus than participants in the previous year’s trip. These were not

Figure 4: “Provider A” and Denominational Background of Participants

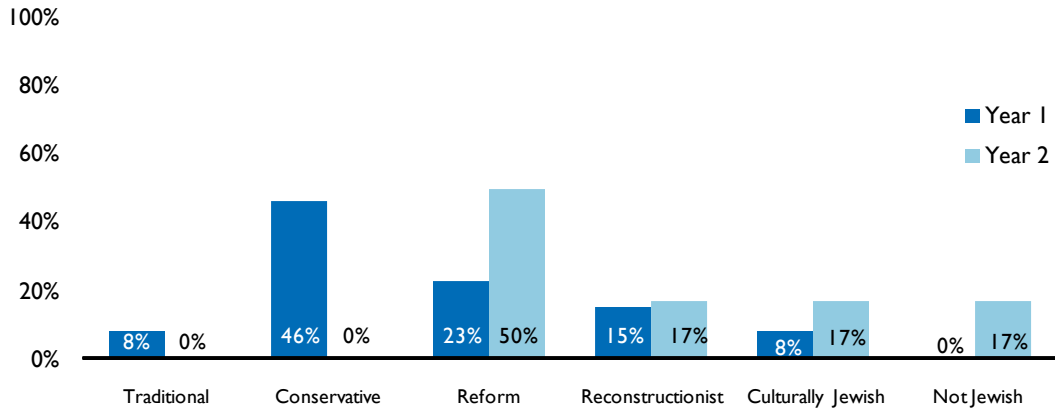
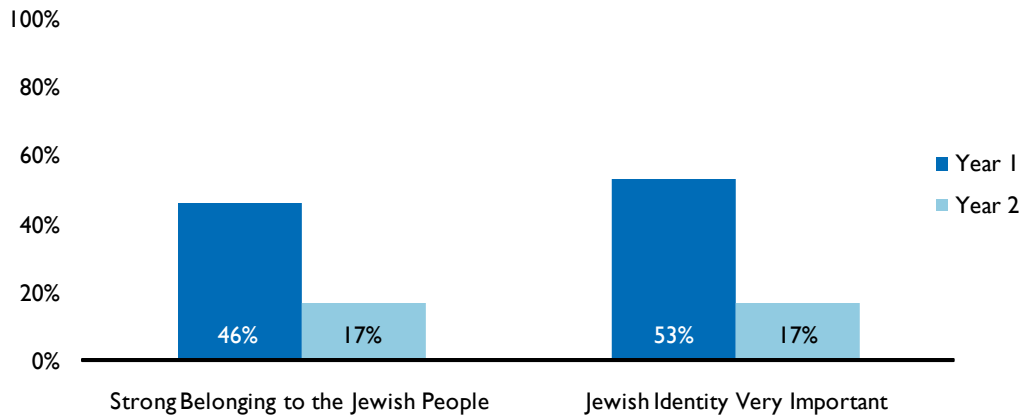


Figure 5: “Provider A” and Jewish Identity of Participants



“the usual suspects” already likely to attend Hillel on Shabbat or participate in other Jewish service learning trips.

Although Year Two BNG participants as a whole were very likely to have high levels of Jewish education and strong involvement in Jewish life, the example of “Provider A” demonstrates that young adults’ commitment to social and economic justice can be successfully leveraged to attract participants from the entire spectrum of Jewish life.

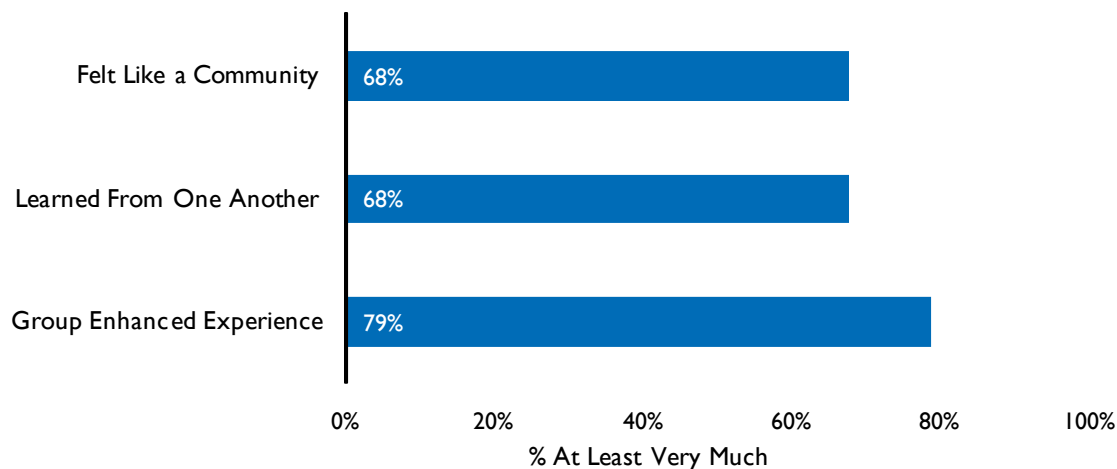
Experiencing Community on BNG Trips

Effective Jewish education programs, whether formal or informal, intentionally strive to create an “inviting communal atmosphere” and engender a strong sense of group membership among participants (Wertheimer,

2009). On immersive programs, including service trips, the group is the context for learning and the conduit through which participants develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and memories that they will take away from their experience (Reimer, 2008; Saxe & Chazan, 2008). This section of the report describes participants’ perceptions of their BNG group and the role played by group factors in their Jewish service learning experience.

Most BNG participants report that their group experience was a very positive aspect of the trip. They felt a sense of community with their peers and found the group to be a source of emotional support. In addition, living and working with peers was a gateway to additional learning (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Group Experience on Trip



Pluralism within the Group Experience

The group dynamic can be enhanced by positive encounters with Jewish pluralism. Observers accompanying the Year One cohort noted that although some participants experienced a unique opportunity to work and learn side-by-side with Jews from across the denominational spectrum, only a small set of groups engaged in explicit dialogue on the implications of pluralism for observance of Jewish ritual and practice during the trip. Year Two providers were encouraged to make pluralism an explicit component of teaching, discussion, and group living on all trips.

In Year Two, some of the most memorable learning about the diversity of Jewish life took place during informal discussions between participants while they worked, travelled on the bus, or sat around the dinner table. Many BNG participants felt part of a unique group experience that expanded their ideals of Jewish identity and community. In posttrip surveys, a majority of respondents (79%) felt strongly that BNG gave them the opportunity to connect with peers from different Jewish backgrounds, and 43% felt strongly that they became more comfortable with Jewish practices different from their own.

On other trips, I was with religious and nonreligious people. But we never stayed together in the same room long enough to get to know each other. I think it was just really good for all of us, because I personally know nonreligious Jews, but I'm not that close with them. I've never really experienced Shabbos with them.

There's a whole lot more Judaism than I could have anticipated or imagined. I've learned from this [trip] that Judaism is not just one thing, its many things.

However, as in the first year of BNG, pluralism and Jewish religious diversity were infrequent topics of formal group discussion and negotiation on most Year Two trips. Only 29% of respondents felt that these issues were substantially addressed in learning and reflection sessions, while less than half (49%) felt that they had significant input into plans for the celebration of Shabbat, a natural context for discussing Jewish diversity.

Observers witnessed several instances when there was a failure to acknowledge or address issues of religious diversity, leading to group tensions, and even conflict, around Jewish observance. In one case, the non-Orthodox participants on a trip felt that the pre-determined plan to observe Shabbat in a very traditional setting was “religiously coercive.” They felt particularly aggrieved that there was no opportunity to discuss or negotiate these plans for Shabbat. Observant participants on other trips reported dissatisfaction when they felt that plans for Shabbat violated their religious practices, such as when a trip itinerary called for working on Shabbat. In one case, a participant explained her personal conflict to the trip leader, but no accommodation was made. The participant remained in the group’s lodging while other members of the group travelled to the work site.

I think that there have been a lot of issues (with) people of different backgrounds really displeased. The trip hasn't really been accommodating to everybody, and that has been frustrating to a lot of people.

I think the staff needed to recognize that there are people on this trip who are very observant. Their needs were not really met. They should have (been) given accommodation (to spend) Shabbos the way that they are comfortable spending it.

For other groups, anxiety over differences in Jewish observance was more subtle and arose when participants were unsure about what behavior was acceptable on their trip. For example, on one trip, participants decided to watch television in a common meeting room during their break on Saturday afternoon. When the Jewish educator arrived for dinner, participants were anxious and unsure if they had violated the “rules” for Shabbat observance. The situation was not addressed by the educator or the group leaders, thus marking a missed opportunity for the group to discuss how to accommodate differing personal practices. During a different trip, the group was asked to maintain *kashrut* during the program by keeping to a vegetarian menu. When the group went off-site to a local fast food venue for ice cream, several of the participants ordered hamburgers or cheeseburgers. Participants perceived that they were disappointing the trip leader, but were unclear why their actions were a violation of the group’s observance of dietary laws. They assumed that the same rules did not apply outside of trip housing and were surprised to find that the trip leader thought otherwise. Both of these experiences had the potential to be excellent teachable moments opening the way for fruitful discussion of Jewish diversity. Instead, they became emotionally uncomfortable situations without resolution.

The experience of being embraced by a community of Jewish peers was an important aspect of BNG. Most participants felt supported by their peers and at least informally, BNG trips became the setting for memorable learning about the diversity of

Jewish identity and life. The BNG experience brought participants together with other Jews that they may have previously thought of as unfamiliar, “other,” and outside of their own community. Nonetheless, on many trips the challenge of pluralism was not adequately explored in group discussion, and many issues related to Jewish observance were left unresolved.

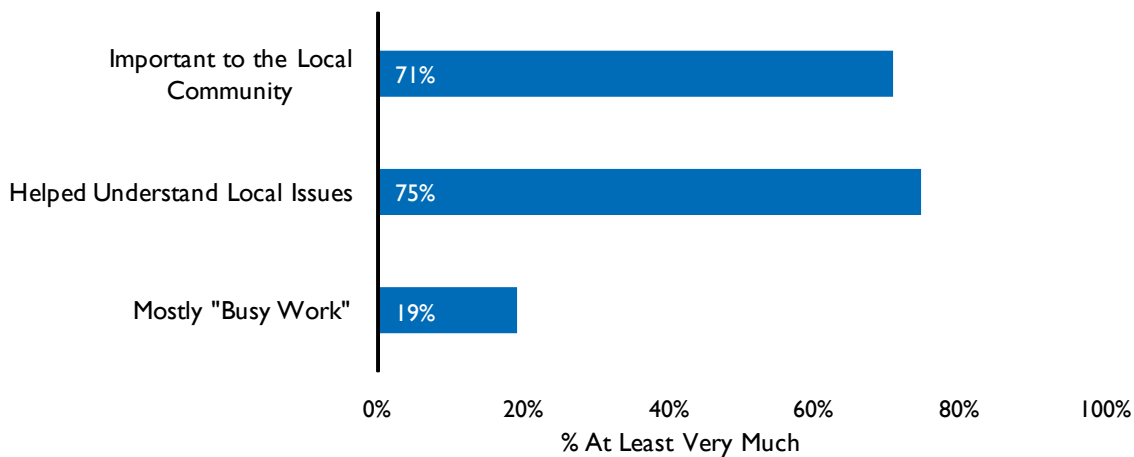
Importance of Meaningful Service Work

BNG participants were motivated to take part in service learning by their strong desire to help those less fortunate than themselves. Engaging in hands-on work to further the common good was both their primary motivation for participating in an alternative break program and the context within which much of their experience took place. This section considers participant reactions to their service work on BNG trips.

Service work was often strenuous and physically challenging, but participants noted that it was also very rewarding. Most respondents felt strongly that the work they did was important (71%) and helped them to more fully grasp the challenges faced by the local community (75%) (Figure 7).

Although groups understandably struggled with the enormity of the problems facing local communities, most felt that their very presence was a powerful way to “bear witness” to economic and social injustice. Many of those interviewed during the trip said that they believed they were making a difference in the lives of individuals, families, or an entire community.

Figure 7: Reactions to Service Work



I feel it's rewarding work. We are not building something from scratch and seeing it to fruition, but we're playing a pivotal part. I think the work we're doing is tough and laborious, but it's definitely rewarding.

I don't think that we are fixing the larger problem, but I definitely think we are helping one case at a time. Some family is going to move in there and hopefully that will help them out. So I don't know about a large impact but definitely an individual impact.

The survey data also suggest that some trip providers struggled to offer meaningful service experiences in Year Two. Almost one-third (30%) of participants felt that their group did not spend enough time doing service, and 19% characterized their assignments as “busy work.” The most frequent answer to an open-ended survey question about the greatest disappointment with their BNG experience was the service

work itself, cited by 24% of respondents. As one participant explained, “the community service work we did wasn’t real work and wasn’t really beneficial to the community.” In these situations, participants were left concerned that resources (human and financial) could and should have been better allocated to benefit the community in a more substantial way.

Participants were often dissatisfied with their service work because they believed it was not well organized and/or poorly executed. The Yiddish proverb, ‘man plans and God laughs’ certainly applies to service learning trips, as a provider’s careful arrangements might be completely undone by unexpected logistical challenges or by changing dynamics within the local community. However, many participants indicated that it was not this type of unforeseen circumstance that was at the heart of their concern and that they were most dismayed when they felt they did not have

adequate instruction or the resources needed to complete the job properly. For example, a BNG group arrived at their work site prepared to paint, only to find that the proper supplies were missing. After several hours of waiting for the correct materials to arrive, participants realized, when pieces started falling off with each pass of the roller, that the walls had not been properly prepared for painting. This group left their day of work frustrated, demoralized, and questioning their ability to make a difference in this or any community.

I felt that it was pretty disorganized, and we often were unsure as to what we were supposed to be doing.

I wish someone told us—the contractor or the person working with us—to lay down the entire floor with plastic and keep it down so that the floor underneath wouldn't get destroyed, and so we didn't have to spend hours cleaning up.

Observers repeatedly noted that trip providers and their local contacts set the tone for serious service work by investing the time to train participants and by setting standards for how the work should be carried out. When group leaders or community organizations provide training, especially for manual labor tasks with which volunteers may be unfamiliar, the work is perceived more seriously. Observers during Year Two witnessed several poorly implemented service projects, where participants were not trained and received only infrequent supervision. As a result, students put forth minimal effort and the quality of work was substandard, much to the detriment of the local community.

Participants were also concerned when they felt that they were not working in partnership

with the local community and that the community's self-defined needs were not being addressed. This sense of disconnection from the local population only increased when groups worked at different service sites each day or even within the same day.

There was no collaboration with the local community on the service project. The local residents asked us who we were, what we were doing, and why—they were not expecting us and did not have the opportunity to voice their needs and concerns.

Whether performing manual labor such as clearing brush, engaging in art projects with young children, or serving food to the elderly, most BNG participants felt that their presence and the work they did supported the local community. However, the sense of making a meaningful contribution was markedly diminished when participants felt they lacked adequate instruction or materials or when they felt isolated from local residents and did not see the community's 'voice' represented in the selection and implementation of projects.

Learning: Meeting the Needs of All Participants

In writing about the process of experiential Jewish learning, one expert (Reimer, 2008) noted that “the experiential action does not by itself determine the learning.” A reflective learning process that is active, engaging, and challenging is an essential ingredient of experiential learning programs, including short-term service trips. This section of the report reviews findings on learning components of BNG trips, both as part of formal education and reflection sessions as well as through informal learning opportunities.

At their best, learning sessions on BNG trips helped participants frame their service experience, examine their values, and see the relevance of Jewish tradition and thought for their contemporary lives.

We got into a huge conversation about Jews helping their own community or someone else's community and feelings of victimization and vulnerability within the Jewish community. That's something I've always struggled with, and I was really surprised to see other people were really passionately involved in that issue too.

I'd never seen [Jewish] texts before. But I thought that they were really interesting, they really related to what we were doing. I found myself going through the next day's work thinking 'oh, that kind of fits into what we were doing.' Having it relate allowed you to reflect on it even after the little discussion sessions were done.

Participants with extensive Jewish educational backgrounds told us during onsite interviews that learning sessions allowed them to rethink how Judaism relates to their obligations beyond the Jewish community. At the other end of the spectrum, participants with less experience in Jewish educational settings told us that studying Jewish text was a completely new and unexpectedly relevant experience.

However, providers also faced challenges in their efforts to provide learning that was engaging and appropriate for all participants. In posttrip surveys, respondents were asked about their reactions to learning and reflection sessions. With only minor variation, questions about different aspects of learning sessions elicited the same pattern of responses; just over half of participants responded very positively (Figure 8). In other words, a substantial group of participants was

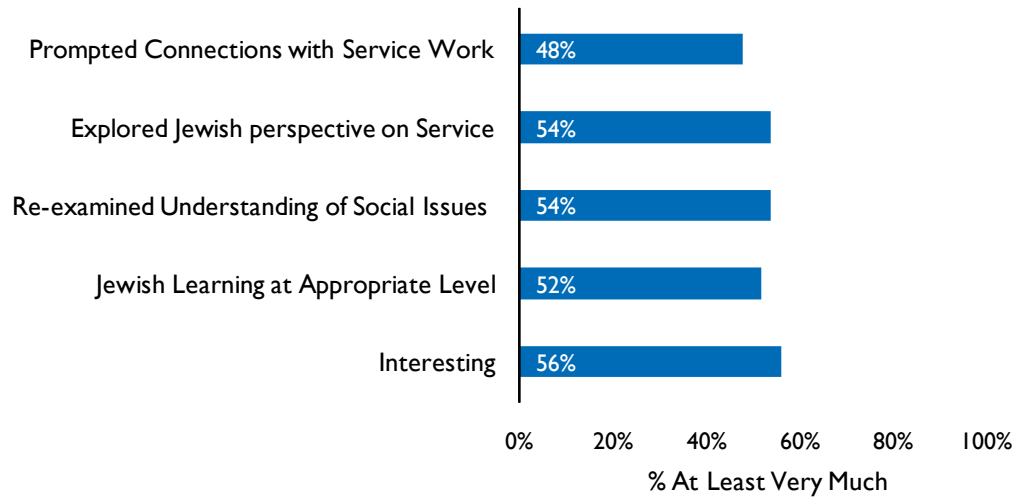
lukewarm at best in their ratings of learning sessions and did not find them to be very interesting, to provide opportunities to explore the intersection between Judaism and service, or to engage them at an appropriate level.

It is interesting to note that almost identical proportions (about half) of participants from both ends of the spectrum of Jewish educational background felt that the level of the curriculum was not optimal for them. Participants with less Jewish education, knowledge of Hebrew vocabulary, and familiarity with traditional text study told us that they found the content and process of the learning sessions to be foreign, even overwhelming. Participants with day school backgrounds commented that they were already familiar with the texts used and did not feel adequately challenged by them.

The text part itself has been minimal. It's not eye-opening in that sense because I have studied so much Jewish text in my life.

Formal sessions are an important opportunity for learning during service trips but represent only one avenue to educate participants and certainly are not the only way to link Judaism to social justice. Day-to-day “teachable moments” are often predictable and provide excellent opportunities to tie experience to learning. Unfortunately, observers noted many missed opportunities to capitalize on the group’s experiences in the field. Participants on one trip were working in a low income minority neighborhood and were taunted by a small group of residents sporadically throughout the week. The participants were upset and frustrated by these negative perceptions of them as privileged and perhaps

Figure 8: Reactions to Learning/Reflection Sessions



unwelcome outsiders. Unfortunately, instead of addressing these incidents immediately, program staff waited until the trip's final learning session. Even then, the discussion was about racial relations in the abstract and did not directly address the group's experience in the neighborhood.

When we would walk places, a group of white people passing by, I can imagine what they were thinking. Like 'what are they doing?' That stuck with me the sense of being a voyeur, actually being looked upon as a voyeur.

Service learning provides unique opportunities for integrated action, discussion, and reflection (Myers-Lipton, 1998). Education on BNG trips, both formal and informal, received mixed reviews. For some participants, the opportunity to study Jewish texts in the context of hands-on service was

valuable and thought provoking.

Unfortunately for others, the content and strategies of learning sessions missed the mark, either because the approach was too simplistic or because it assumed too much knowledge. Perhaps even more disappointing were the numerous missed opportunities to capitalize on “teachable moments” and encourage participants to grapple with the issues that arose in their work from a Jewish perspective. In his work on informal Jewish education, Chazan (2003) makes clear that the confluence of staff preparation and thorough understanding of the informal education process allows for the use of predictable opportunities—when participants' experience opens the way for new learning.

Program Outcomes

Despite rapid growth and interest in the field, the success for Jewish service learning efforts will, in large part, rest on their ability to demonstrate impact on the life trajectories of participants. This section reviews the impact of BNG on the social justice commitments and Jewish connections of participants.

Development of a Jewish Lens for Service

A national study of the spiritual lives of teens found that most adolescents were at a loss to define the ethical implications of their religious identities, regardless of the tradition in which they were raised (Smith & Denton, 2005). The BNG initiative was intended to help young adults see service and social justice as integral, and even essential, expressions of Jewish heritage and identity. Results of the second year of the program are mixed on this dimension. A comparison between responses to pretrip and three-month posttrip surveys suggests that BNG did not substantially increase the influence of Judaism as a motivator for engaging in service. In a similar vein, responses to a survey completed immediately following participants' return indicated that only 25% agreed strongly that they were able to make connections between their Jewish identity and their group's service work.

However, interviews and survey comments suggest that BNG did begin to shift participant attitudes and open the way for a Jewish perspective on service. For example, participants with weaker Jewish educational backgrounds told us that it was eye-opening to learn that Jewish thought could be applied

to their efforts to address social problems through advocacy and service.

I didn't realize how attached service was to Judaism because it's just been a natural part of my upbringing. So wanting to help people I didn't realize that there's actually a religious basis for it too.

I'm learning a lot about the Jewish component of helping others, tikkun olam, repair the world. I think that's the most important aspect of this trip.

In interviews, many participants told us that the trip helped them embrace a Jewish imperative for their commitment to service and social justice—regardless of their Jewish practice or background. This shift was especially cogent for those who came into the program with a strong focus on service but with a sense that they did not have the Jewish “credentials” to claim a Jewish foundation for their service work.

I think, in terms of the large Jewish community, that we all have a role to play and that even if you don't observe every single Jewish law that doesn't make your service any less important.

It has been really nice to bridge the social activist and political activist side of my life and connect it back into Judaism which is also a big part of my life which had remained somewhat separate.

Some participants from more observant backgrounds reported that BNG dramatically expanded their “sphere of obligation” beyond the Jewish community and Israel. These young adults came into the program with experience volunteering in the Jewish community but little familiarity working with other populations. A very similar result was

obtained in the one-year follow-up study of BNG Year One alumni (Chertok et al., 2009).

I realized on this trip that a part of being Jewish is taking care of your neighbors just as well as you take care of yourself, whether they are Jewish or not Jewish. Looking outside the Jewish community to the larger community is just as important and valuable in this world.

We got into the huge conversation about Jews helping their own community or someone else's community. That's something I've always struggled with, and I was really surprised to see other people were really passionately involved in that issue too.

Contemporary young adults have developed a perspective that is universal rather than particularistic and a concern for victims of poverty or injustice that is both local and international (Arnett, 2002). In the second year, BNG-sponsored programs made some contribution to connecting this desire to serve the larger common good to participants' Jewish heritage and identity. The lack of demonstrable impact on participant responses to survey questions however, remains a concern and may relate to the educational shortcomings previously noted in this report.

Commitment to Service and Social Justice

The immediacy of witnessing the impact of social and economic problems in local communities engendered a sense of personal responsibility among participants, as they were able to put a human face to previously abstract concepts of poverty and inequality. In the few months since their return, BNG participants report increased levels of involvement in service as well as a growing

interest in making social justice more central in their lives.

I think the trip has articulated some issues that I have always cared about, but much more clearly. When I go back to the United States, I am going to have to make it a bigger priority than it already is. I just feel that it has restored a sense of urgency within me.

Participants were asked in the three-month posttrip survey how their level of interest in service or social justice work had changed since their return from BNG. Half of respondents reported increases in their intention to take courses related to social issues, and 70% experienced an increased desire to engage in service work (Figure 9). Participants also indicated that BNG increased their interest in long-term service programs sponsored by either Jewish or secular organizations (49% and 44% respectively), and in future careers related to social policy and social justice (40%). Understandably, BNG had a greater effect on immediate intentions, such as course enrollment or volunteer work than on plans for future career and graduate education. Over the next few years, long-term plans may show increasing impact, especially as younger participants approach graduation.

Many respondents also report behaviors that reflect a growing concern for social justice (Figure 10). Well over three-quarters (85%) of Year Two participants have used their own firsthand experience as a means to educate others about the human face of social problems, and 64% have actively sought out information on issues related to their trip. Strikingly, in particular because most trips returned near or after the end of the academic year, 33% have already participated in a

Figure 9: Increased Interest in Social Justice and Service

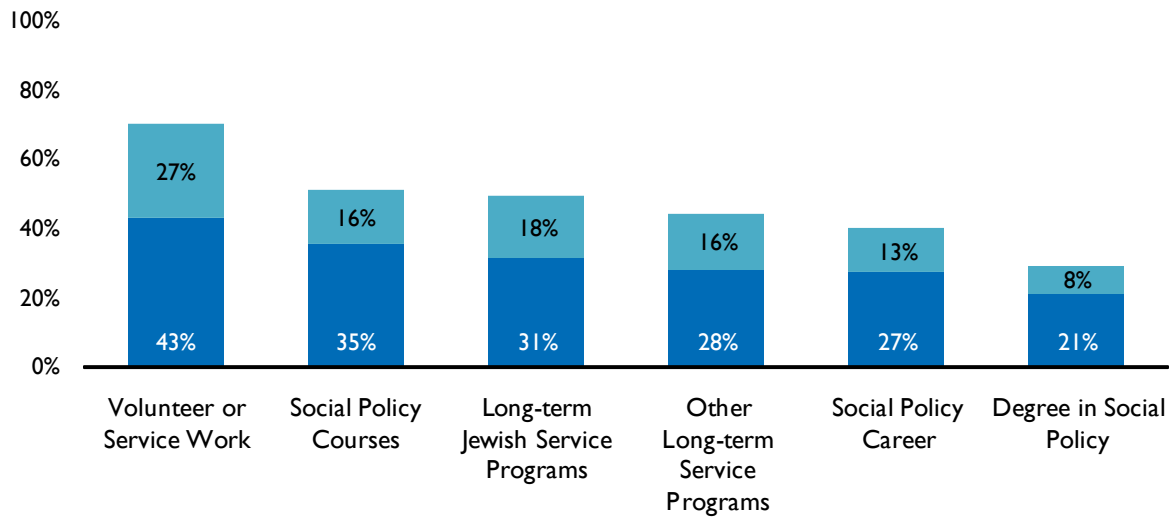
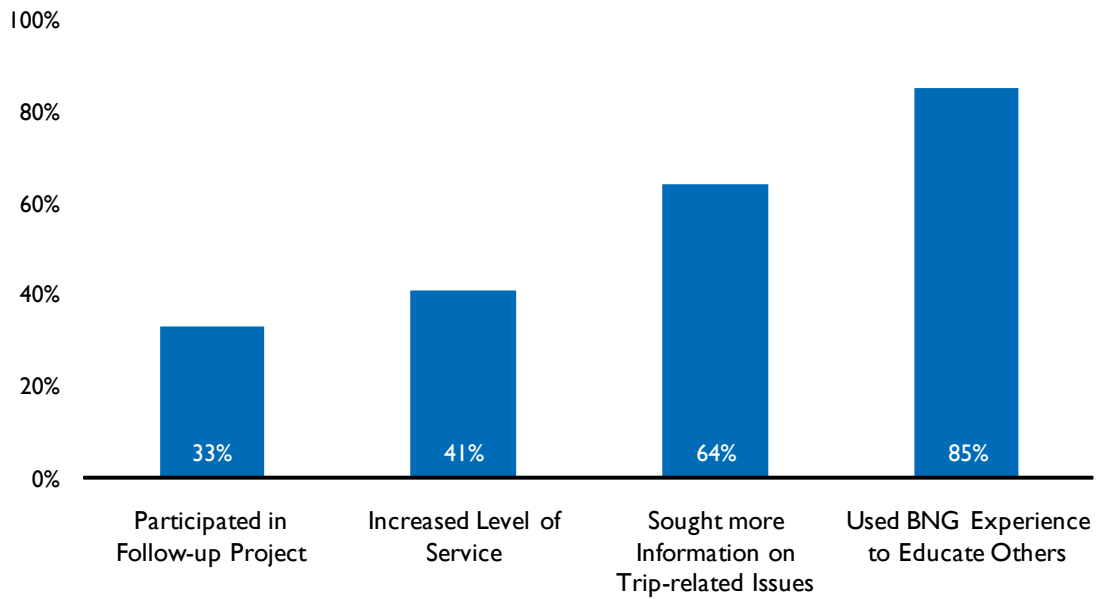


Figure 10: Posttrip Involvement in Social Justice Activities



follow-up project, and 41% report increases in their level of volunteer activity.

The data demonstrate that BNG is an important influence on participants' commitments to service and social justice, reflecting the goals of the larger field of Jewish service learning. In even the short three-month time period following their BNG trips, many participants increased their level of volunteer commitment, and a substantial portion report greater interest in further exploration of social justice issues through coursework, graduate education, and even long-term post-college Jewish or secular service.

Jewish Engagement

BNG trip participants shared Jewish living and celebrated Shabbat together in diverse destinations, baking challah in a Central American jungle, singing psalms at twilight in the hills of West Virginia, and recounting the Passover story at seder tables in the Ukraine. All BNG groups spent at least one Shabbat together, and most participants (64%) strongly agreed that it was a meaningful experience for them. In interviews, participants from less observant backgrounds told us that BNG marked their first celebration of Shabbat as adults, and they left their trips interested in finding ways to incorporate some form of Jewish observance into their life at home.

By the time Shabbat left, I looked at the group of people with me, and I said, 'this is a really special thing that we're doing.' It's a very unique experience, and it's my own. Wouldn't it be incredible if every Saturday when the sun went down I felt this good?

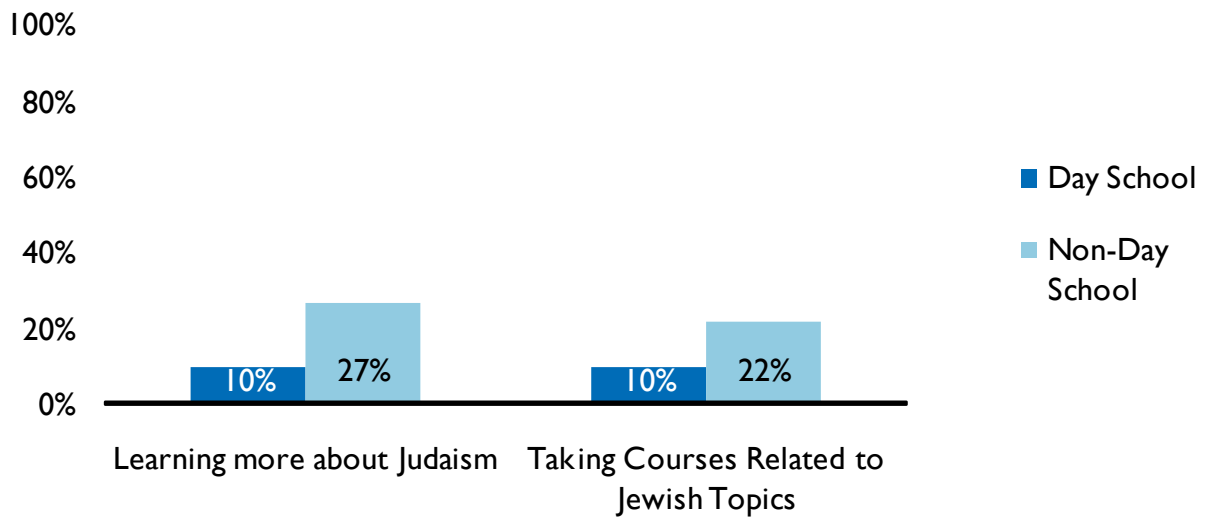
That was the first Shabbat dinner that I've ever been a part of. I really enjoyed it. I also enjoyed the closing ceremony, the Havdalah. I could see myself going to a Hillel Shabbat dinner on Friday night on campus. So I think it was great, it was a new experience.

Shabbat celebrations elicited warm feelings, but Jewish living on BNG trips were also characterized by missed opportunities to engage in informal learning about Jewish tradition and ritual. One group shopped for food at a local market in preparation for their meals, and the leader reminded participants that everything they purchased should be kosher. The leader distributed sheets with symbols that indicated a product was kosher, but there was no explanation of the purpose, history or modern relevance of the laws of *kasbrut* and no opportunity to practice planning an appropriate menu.

The experience of Jewish living and learning on BNG trips sparked participants' interest in expanding their Jewish knowledge. This impact is stronger for participants with more limited Jewish educational backgrounds than for those with a history of day school attendance (Figure 11). Almost one quarter of participants without a day school background report dramatic increases in their desire to learn more about Judaism (27%) or to take college courses related to Jewish history, religion, and culture, or the Hebrew language (22%).

In a broader sense, the BNG experience led participants, especially those without strong connections to Jewish campus life to reconsider involvement in Jewish activities. For these participants, positive experiences of working and living with Jewish peers and in Jewish time created a doorway into Jewish life.

Figure 11: Greatly Increased Interest in Jewish Activities by Day School Background



They returned from BNG with a new outlook, having experienced comfortable and personally meaningful ways to connect to Jewish life.

I'd be more open to attending a Jewish learning session. If there is a Jewish event on campus, I wouldn't be so hesitant to attend. [BNG] definitely opened my eyes...Judaism is not one thing. A lot of different people, a lot of different backgrounds make up Judaism.

Data on the second cohort of BNG suggests that Jewish service learning programs may also represent an important source of future communal leadership. One third (31%) of respondents indicated that interest in pursuing a career in the Jewish community increased as a result of their BNG experience. As Jewish-sponsored alternative breaks become a rite of passage for young adults, the movement may effectively expand the pool of Jewish

professionals to include those who might not otherwise have considered this career option.

Many BNG participants enrolled in the program because they wanted to try something new, but few would have predicted that Jewish living would be the source of some of their most novel and transformative experiences. Participants, especially those previously loosely or not at all connected to Jewish life, returned to their campuses and communities with new interest in learning about their Jewish heritage and motivation for trying out local Jewish activities. At the same time, there were many missed opportunities to use Jewish living on the trip to enhance Jewish knowledge.

Summary and Recommendations

*What we want to change we curse
And then pick up a tool.*
Marge Piercy

The emerging field of Jewish service learning has set an ambitious agenda for itself, to create a cadre of Jewish young adults passionately committed to “repairing the world.” Results from the second cohort of BNG trips demonstrate that these goals are attainable but that there is still much to accomplish before service learning becomes a universal experience for Jewish young adults. In the months after BNG, Year Two participants increased their involvement in service and social justice, began to link Judaism with their commitment to serving the common good, and experienced a growing desire to know more about their Jewish heritage. However, as in Year One, recruitment strategies often did not reach students with limited or no involvement in Jewish life, pluralism remained an implicit undercurrent rather than an explicit focus of learning and discussion, and Jewish learning continued to receive mixed reviews, often because it failed to meet the needs of participants at widely different points on the spectrum of Jewish educational background. Service learning has the potential to ignite and foster the incorporation of a Jewish imperative for service and social justice. However, fulfillment of this potential rests on strategic development efforts to address the reach and impact of these initiatives.

Expand the Reach of Jewish Service Learning

Data from the first two years of the BNG initiative indicate that the program primarily recruited women with strong histories of

Jewish education and substantial involvement in Jewish life. These recruitment trends are echoed by other research on short-term immersive Jewish service learning programs (Rehnborg, Lee, Veron, & Zaligson, 2008). Service programs sponsored by Jewish organizations are attracting a population that is already engaged in Jewish life. While these individuals certainly benefit from participation, organizations should expand the scope of Jewish service learning to include young adults who are not already involved in the Jewish community.

The case study of “Provider A” demonstrates that this generation’s commitment to issues of social and economic justice can be successfully leveraged to attract participants who are only tangentially connected to Jewish life. There were many factors that allowed “Provider A” to reach unengaged young adults, but strategies such as using documentaries or other forms of media to raise awareness and frame the need for social justice efforts can be replicated on other campuses. Previous research also demonstrates that social network factors play a prominent role in young adult decision-making about involvement in Jewish life. This finding suggests that service learning recruitment may be best targeted to pre-existing groups such as fraternities, sororities, clubs, and circles of friends (Chertok, Sasson, & Saxe, 2009).

The gender imbalance in service learning is a serious issue and reflects a larger reality of the Jewish communal landscape. Writing about the gendered nature of modern Jewish life, Fishman and Parmer (2008) point out that “the alienation of boys and men from Jews and Judaism is a critical and systemic problem

in American Jewish societies, beginning early and persisting through many areas of life” (p.73). With its focus on hands-on service and the goal of addressing broad social justice issues, Jewish service learning trips have the potential to attract male participants in a way that programs focused on religious ritual and learning do not. If Jewish service learning is to become a central feature of the contemporary Jewish experience, recruitment plans must not be directed solely within the “typical” boundaries of Jewish life and must equally appeal to all Jews, involved and uninvolved, male and female.

Address the Challenge and Opportunity of Diversity

Research on young adults raised in non-Orthodox homes indicates that most have “limited Jewish education past their early teens and few experiences of the weekly rhythms and rituals of Jewish home life” (Chertok, Phillips, & Saxe, 2008, p. 22). This suggests that as Jewish-sponsored service learning programs, like BNG, begin to draw young adults from the full range of Jewish life, participants will increasingly enter programs with substantial gaps in their Jewish knowledge and limited Jewish “capital.” Jewish service learning programs need to meet the educational needs of participants from diverse backgrounds of Jewish education and living without creating segregated “tracks.” As noted in our one-year follow-up of BNG alumni:

Trip providers need to develop curricula with multiple options or jigsaw lessons so that some aspects of Jewish learning are done in groupings that respond to different needs and backgrounds while others provide the

opportunity for all participants to learn together on an equal footing. (Chertok et al., 2009, p.27)

A diverse participant base challenges the field but also represents a unique opportunity to give young adults a positive experience of Jewish pluralism. The divide between religiously observant and non-observant young adults is repeatedly noted throughout the young adult years (Chertok et al., 2009; Sales & Saxe, 2006). On the typical college campus, students from different religious backgrounds have little reason or opportunity to interact, and whether or not their perceptions are correct, non-Orthodox students often avoid Jewish campus organizations that they assume to be the province of the more observant (Chertok, Sales, Klein, & Saxe, 2006). Short-term immersive service learning programs provide a unique opportunity to live and work side-by-side with peers from very different Jewish backgrounds. The findings of two years of research on BNG indicate that this experience can successfully break down preconceived stereotypes and begin to create a more inclusive sense of Jewish peoplehood for all. The full potential of Jewish service learning in this regard will only be realized if pluralism and Jewish diversity (including factors such as denomination, observance, ethnicity, race, and class) become explicit and integrated components of learning, discussion, and living on service trips.

At a recent training for Jewish service group leaders, one of the core guidelines for successful leadership was described as “meet them where they are.” This is a valuable perspective pertaining not just to participants’ knowledge and understanding of poverty and privilege, but also to their familiarity and

comfort with Jewish content and observance. The challenge of designing curriculum and Jewish living opportunities that meet the needs of diverse groups of participants, well documented in this report, must be accomplished if Jewish service learning is to become an equally powerful opportunity for all young adult Jews.

Develop Shared Knowledge on Jewish Service Learning.

As the field of Jewish service learning evolves from a loosely bound group of organizations and initiatives into a unified “community of practice,” it will need to develop a shared body of knowledge, skills, and strategies (Wenger, 1999). Unfortunately, as a recent “whitepaper” indicates, “throughout the Jewish social justice field, research and evaluation have been given ‘low priority’ with the result that ‘knowledge management’ falls to the sidelines” (Bronznick & Goldenhar, 2008, p. 13).

Evaluating the two years of the *Break New Ground* initiative allowed us to see the immediate and mid-term impact of participation in an immersive service learning

experience and understand the program’s strengths and areas of challenge. However, there is still much to be learned about this cohort of Jewish service learning participants as well as about the larger topic of Jewish young adult involvement in service and social justice. For example, what impact does the BNG experience have on this group of participants as they move through their young adult years? What leads young adults into service and, more specifically, into Jewish service? How does Jewish service build or enhance Jewish identity? What sequence or pathway of Jewish service learning experiences most effectively leverages the posttrip experiences of young adults toward trajectories of committed involvement in Jewish communal service efforts?

UJA-Federation, through the BNG program, has made an important contribution to our understanding of the potential of short-term immersive Jewish service and more broadly to the empirical foundation of the larger field of Jewish service learning. As the Jewish community prepares to substantially increase its investment in Jewish service learning, the lessons of BNG will be a valuable resource for decision makers.

Notes

¹The three-month survey for one of this provider's trips was distributed just as this report was being prepared and is not included in their response rate.

²Two participants each went on two BNG trips with different providers. The total number of "trips" was therefore 242 while the total number of participants is 240.

³Yeshiva University's dual secular and religious curriculum overwhelmingly attracts Orthodox and religiously observant students. In order to most accurately describe the Jewish backgrounds of typical BNG participants, responses from Yeshiva University students were not included in any analyses related to Jewish background, identity, or involvement. Also, non-Jewish participants were not included in any analyses related to Jewish background, identity, or involvement. Thirteen BNG participants identified themselves as non-Jewish. Although most trips had at most one or two non-Jewish participants, on one particular trip non-Jews constituted 75% of the group.

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Appendix A: Year Two Participant Surveys

Pretrip Survey

Welcome to your *Break New Ground* survey!

The survey you are being asked to complete is an important part of research about participant experiences on the ***Break New Ground*** alternative break trips. The information you provide is highly valued by UJA-Federation of New York, the sponsor and funder of *Break New Ground*; it helps the organization to learn more about those interested in the program and to more effectively implement future trips. This research is conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University.

This survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete. All of your responses will remain strictly confidential. Only the research team will see your answers. No one from the organization providing your alternative break trip, your university, or UJA-Federation will see your responses. Findings of this research will be reported only in ways that do not identify individuals.

If you have any questions or difficulties, please contact Josh Tobias at breaknewground@cmjs.org or 781-736-3946.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Click on the button below to begin the survey.

Fern Chertok and Nicole Samuel
Break New Ground Research Team

1. Do you identify as...

- Male
- Female
- Other _____

2. Are you currently...

- A freshman (1st year)
- A sophomore (2nd year)
- A junior (3rd year)
- A senior (4th + year)
- In a master's degree program (e.g. MA, MBA, MSW, MS)
- In a doctoral degree program (e.g. PhD, EdD)
- In a professional degree program (e.g. MD, JD)
- Not a student
- Other. Please explain: _____

3. If you are currently in school, what is the name of the school you attend?

Name: _____

4. Have you ever participated in an alternative break/vacation service trip?

- No
- Yes

5. If yes, was the trip sponsored or run by a Jewish organization (Hillel, American Jewish World Service, Joint Distribution Committee, Jewish Funds for Justice, etc.)?

- No
- Yes
- Not applicable

6. If yes, was the trip a *Break New Ground* sponsored trip?

- No
- Yes
- Not applicable

Service and Volunteer Efforts

7. Over the last year, how often did you engage in any of the following volunteer or social action efforts . . . ?

4. Thinking about all your volunteer or service work since your trip, what portion was sponsored or organized by Jewish organizations?

- None
- Very little
- About half

- a. Serve as a mentor, tutor, coach, counselor or some other activity that benefited youth or schools
- b. Help people through human service organizations such as hospitals, nursing homes, crisis centers, shelters, or food banks
- c. Volunteer for a performing or arts organization such as a museum or theater
- d. Engage in activities to protect the environment, wildlife or animals
- e. Volunteer to help raise money for a charitable cause
- f. Volunteer for a synagogue, Hillel, Federation, or other Jewish organization

- Not at all
- A few times
- Regularly

8. Over the past year, have you volunteered or taken part in social action efforts in any other way?

If YES, please describe briefly: _____

9. Thinking about all your volunteer work over the last year, what portion was sponsored or organized by Jewish organizations?

- None
- Very little
- About half
- Most
- Almost all or all
- Did no volunteer work

10. Thinking about all your volunteer work over the last year, to what extent were each of the following true?

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Your Jewish values motivated you to volunteer | <input type="radio"/> Completely |
| b. You made connections between your volunteer work and your Jewish identity | <input type="radio"/> Very Much |
| c. Your volunteer work was informed or influenced by your understanding of Judaism | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat |
| | <input type="radio"/> Very little |
| | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| | <input type="radio"/> N\A--did not volunteer |

The 2008 Election

11. For the November 2008 election, were you....?

- Registered to vote
- Not registered to vote
- Not eligible to vote

12. Did you vote in the 2008 U.S presidential election?

- No
- Yes
- Not applicable

13. Did you attend a campaign event during the election season?

- No
- Yes

14. Did you volunteer with a political campaign or voter registration effort during the most recent election season?

- Not at all
- A little
- A lot

Your Thoughts and Ideas

15. To what extent do you believe....?

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| a. You have the power to make a difference in the community. | <input type="radio"/> Completely |
| b. You can successfully encourage others to participate in the community. | <input type="radio"/> Very Much |
| c. You have enough influence to impact community decisions. | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat |
| d. You have the skills to organize other students to take action on a problem in the community. | <input type="radio"/> Very little |
| e. You can develop ideas about how to take action on a problem in the community. | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| f. You have the skills to persuade other people that a problem in the community needs to be solved. | |
| g. You can effectively work with others to make a change in the community. | |

16. How important is it you...?

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Help others in difficulty | <input type="radio"/> Extremely Important |
| b. Be aware of important needs in the community | <input type="radio"/> Very Important |
| c. Participate in community action programs | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Important |
| d. Become a community leader | <input type="radio"/> Slightly Important |
| e. Help improve the community | <input type="radio"/> Not at all Important |
| f. Focus on root causes of social problems | |
| g. Influence social values | |
| h. Work for social justice and human rights | |
| i. Find a career through which you can be helpful to others or useful to society | |
| j. Volunteer your time helping people | |
| k. Work for positive social change | |

17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. I don't understand why some people are poor when there are many opportunities available to them | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| b. We need to look no further than the individual in understanding his/her problems | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Agree |
| c. In order for problems to be solved, we need to change public policy | <input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree |
| d. We need to change people's attitudes in order to solve social problems | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Disagree |
| e. It is hard for a group to function effectively when the people involved come from very diverse backgrounds | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree |
| f. I find it difficult to relate to people from a different race or culture | |
| g. I enjoy meeting people who come from backgrounds very different from my own | |
| h. Cultural diversity within a group makes the group more interesting and effective | |

Participating in the “Break New Ground” Program**18. How important to you is each of the following reasons to participate in this *Break New Ground* trip?**

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. To “give back” to the community | <input type="radio"/> Extremely Important |
| b. To help people | <input type="radio"/> Very Important |
| c. To address a social problem | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Important |
| d. To meet new people | <input type="radio"/> Slightly Important |
| e. To travel to a new place | <input type="radio"/> Not at all Important |
| f. To enhance your resume | |
| g. To develop new skills | |
| h. To have fun | |
| i. To try something new | |
| j. To express your personal values | |
| k. To explore career options | |
| l. To connect with other Jewish students | |
| m. To improve society as a whole | |
| n. To express your Jewish values | |
| o. To get field experience related to your major or future career | |

19. Have you taken any college courses specifically focusing on Jewish subjects, such as Jewish history, Hebrew, or the Holocaust?

- Yes
- No

20. Thinking about this academic year (since September), how involved have you been in each of the following?

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| a. Israel-related programs or events | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| b. Jewish cultural events or exhibits | <input type="radio"/> A little |
| c. Jewish learning/text study | <input type="radio"/> A lot |
| d. Holiday celebrations organized by Hillel or another Jewish group | <input type="radio"/> Leader |
| e. Jewish social events | |

21. Thinking about the last year, how often have you attended Jewish worship services at a synagogue, Hillel, Chabad, minyan, havurah, or other group?

- Never
- Only on High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur)
- A few times a year (not including High Holidays)
- About once a month
- Several times a month
- Weekly
- Daily

22. What religion or denomination, if any, did your family most identify with while you were growing up?

- Orthodox
- Traditional
- Conservative
- Reform
- Reconstructionist
- Secular/cultural Jew
- Just Jewish/no denomination
- Post-denominational
- Protestant
- Catholic
- Buddhist
- Hindu

- Muslim
- None
- Don't know
- Other. Please specify: _____

23. What religion or denomination, if any, do you most identify with currently?

- Orthodox
- Traditional
- Conservative
- Reform
- Reconstructionist
- Secular/cultural Jew
- Just Jewish/no denomination
- Post-denominational
- Protestant
- Catholic
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Muslim
- None
- Don't know
- Other. Please specify: _____

24. Did you....?

- a. Have a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony Yes
- b. Attend a full-time Jewish day school or yeshiva No
- c. Attend a part-time Hebrew school that met once or several times a week
- d. Participate in a Jewish youth group (e.g., USY, NFTY, NCSY, Young Judaea, BBYO)
- e. Attend a summer camp or program with Jewish content
- f. Work at a summer camp or program with Jewish content

25. Have you been to Israel?

- a. On an organized travel or study program before college? Yes
- b. On *Birthright Israel*? No
- c. On some other trip with (family or friends)

Posttrip Survey

1. How much do you **AGREE** or **DISAGREE** with the following statements?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| a. Felt like a group of friends | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| b. Felt like a community | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Agree |
| c. Learned from one another | <input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree |
| d. Formed separate cliques | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Disagree |
| e. Were disruptive or distracting | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree |

The people on my program...

2. TO WHAT EXTENT did you...

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. Form new friendships with others on your program? | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| b. Felt comfortable with group members' level of religious observance? | <input type="radio"/> A little |
| c. Felt like an outsider in the group? | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat |
| d. Feel the group atmosphere enhanced your experience? | <input type="radio"/> Very much |
| e. Feel the group atmosphere detracted from your experience? | <input type="radio"/> Great extent |

3. Overall, did you find the trip...

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| a. Fun? | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| b. Exhausting? | <input type="radio"/> Slightly Agree |
| c. Personally meaningful? | <input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree |
| d. Educational? | <input type="radio"/> Slightly Disagree |
| e. Well-organized? | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree |
| f. Physically demanding? | |
| g. Emotionally challenging? | |

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. Meet new people? | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| b. Connect with peers from Jewish backgrounds different from your own? | <input type="radio"/> A little |
| c. Have new experiences? | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat |
| d. Address a social or political problem? | <input type="radio"/> Very much |
| e. Develop new skills? | <input type="radio"/> Great extent |
| f. Gain a Jewish perspective on service? | |
| g. Help people? | |

5. Thinking about the service work on this trip, TO WHAT EXTENT was it...

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. Important to the local community? | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| b. Interesting? | <input type="radio"/> A little |
| c. Mostly “busy work”? | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat |
| d. Too demanding? | <input type="radio"/> Very much |
| e. A good way to understand the challenges facing the community? | <input type="radio"/> Great extent |

6. Do you think your trip spent...

- Too much time on service work?
- The right amount of time on service work?
- Not enough time on service work?

7. Thinking about the Reflection/Learning sessions on your trip, TO WHAT EXTENT did you...

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. Find the learning sessions interesting? | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| b. Engage in Jewish learning at an appropriate level for you personally? | <input type="radio"/> A little |
| c. Reflect on your own reactions to the experience? | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat |
| d. Learn about the reactions of other participants? | <input type="radio"/> Very much |
| e. Re-examine your assumptions or attitudes regarding social problems? | <input type="radio"/> Great extent |
| f. Explore Jewish perspectives on service? | |
| g. Find yourself making connections between the Jewish learning and the work you were doing? | |
| h. Discuss pluralism/Jewish religious diversity | |

8. On your trip, TO WHAT EXTENT, did you have opportunities to...

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. Get to know members of the local community? | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| b. Learn about the local community? | <input type="radio"/> A little |
| c. See the impact of your work? | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat |
| | <input type="radio"/> Very much |
| | <input type="radio"/> Great extent |

9. How much do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements about your experiences on this trip?

I experienced...

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| a. A personal connection to members of the local community | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |
| b. Connections between the service work and my Jewish identity | <input type="radio"/> | Slightly Agree |
| c. Pride in the efforts of Jewish groups to help those in need | <input type="radio"/> | Neither Agree nor Disagree |
| d. A sense of being part of a larger Jewish community | <input type="radio"/> | Slightly Disagree |
| e. A desire to become more involved in service efforts | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Disagree |
| f. A desire to become more involved in Jewish-sponsored service efforts | <input type="radio"/> | |

10. Thinking about the celebration of Shabbat or other Jewish rituals during your trip, TO WHAT EXTENT did you...

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| a. Find it meaningful? | <input type="radio"/> | Not at all |
| b. Have input into your group's celebration/observance? | <input type="radio"/> | A little |
| c. Learn about Jewish traditions and rituals? | <input type="radio"/> | Somewhat |
| d. Become more comfortable with practices different from your own? | <input type="radio"/> | Very much |
| | <input type="radio"/> | Great extent |

11. What was your favorite part of the trip?

12. What was your greatest disappointment with the trip?

Three-Month Survey

1. Since your trip have you...

- a. Attended a follow-up meeting for your trip? Yes
- b. Attended a social get-together with peers from the trip? No
- c. Worked on a follow-up project related to your trip?
- d. Donated money to a cause related to your trip?
- e. Created a presentation, report, or article related to your trip?
- f. Used your experiences to educate others about social issues related to the trip?
- g. Sought out more information about the social issues on which you worked?

2. Since your trip has your trip organizer or trip provider...

- a. Been in contact with you? Yes
- b. Informed you of other volunteer or advocacy opportunities? No
- c. Sent you information on social issues related to your trip?
- d. Sent you follow-up information on the projects on which you worked?

3. How do you feel about the availability of follow-up opportunities related to your trip?

- Would have preferred less
- Just about right
- Would have preferred more

4. Since your trip how, if at all, has your interest in each of the following changed?

- a. Attended a follow-up meeting for your trip? Decreased a lot
- b. Attended a social get-together with peers from the trip? Decreased a little
- c. Worked on a follow-up project related to your trip? Stayed the same
- d. Donated money to a cause related to your trip? Increased a little
- e. Created a presentation, report, or article related to your trip? Increased a lot
- f. Used your experiences to educate others about social issues related to the trip?
- g. Sought out more information about the social issues on which you worked?

5. Since your trip how, if at all, has your interest in each of the following changed?

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Jewish-sponsored volunteer or service work | <input type="radio"/> Decreased a lot |
| b. Taking courses related to Jewish topics | <input type="radio"/> Decreased a little |
| c. Learning more about Judaism | <input type="radio"/> Stayed the same |
| d. Pursuing a career in the Jewish community | <input type="radio"/> Increased a little |
| | <input type="radio"/> Increased a lot |

6. Since your trip, how, if at all, has your level of involvement in volunteer or service work changed?

- Decreased a lot
- Decreased a little
- Stayed the same
- Increased a little
- Increased a lot

7. Thinking about all your volunteer or service work since your trip, what portion was sponsored or organized by Jewish organizations?

- None
- Very little
- About half
- Most
- Almost All or All
- Did no volunteer or service work since trip

8. Thinking about any volunteer or service work since your trip (whether or not it was under Jewish sponsorship) to what extent...

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Were you motivated by Jewish values? | <input type="radio"/> Not at all |
| b. Was your work informed or influenced by your understanding of Judaism? | <input type="radio"/> A little |
| | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat |
| | <input type="radio"/> Very much |
| | <input type="radio"/> Great extent |
| | <input type="radio"/> Not applicable: have not done service work since trip |

9. Please describe any other ways (either positive or negative) in which your experience on this trip has had an impact on you.

10. To what extent do you believe...

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| a. You have the power to make a difference in the community? | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |
| b. You can successfully encourage others to participate in the community? | <input type="radio"/> | Slightly Agree |
| c. You have enough influence to impact community decisions? | <input type="radio"/> | Neither Agree nor Disagree |
| d. You have the skills to organize other students to take action on a problem in the community? | <input type="radio"/> | Slightly Disagree |
| e. You can develop ideas about how to take action on a problem in the community? | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Disagree |
| f. You have the skills to persuade other people that a problem in the community needs to be solved? | | |

11. How important is it to you to...

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| a. Be aware of important needs in the community? | <input type="radio"/> | Not at all Important |
| b. Help improve the community? | <input type="radio"/> | Slightly Important |
| c. Focus on root causes of social problems? | <input type="radio"/> | Somewhat Important |
| d. Influence social values? | <input type="radio"/> | Very Important |
| e. Participate in community action programs? | <input type="radio"/> | Extremely Important |
| f. Volunteer your time helping people? | | |

Appendix B: Ethnographic Observation Guidelines and Protocols

Orientation Meeting Observation Guidelines

1. Who is at the meeting? How many participants (number of men and women)? How many staff or trip leaders? Who are these people?
2. Describe the activities in detail. What are participants being asked to do? Who leads each portion of the experience? What activities are done to help participants get to know each other?
3. How do participants seem to react to each other at the beginning? Do they already know each other or are they strangers? How does this change during the meeting? Are there key points at which they begin to be more comfortable with each other?
4. What information is conveyed to participants? What are they told about the trip, the destination, and the activities they will be doing there? What are the messages regarding the recipients of their help? What are the messages about the connection between Judaism and social action?
5. How do participants respond (verbally and non-verbally) to this information about this trip and the connections to Judaism? What questions do they ask and how engaged do they seem in the meeting? Are they intrigued, bored, excited, or worried?
6. Is there anything “Jewish” about the meeting? In other words, could you tell from the activities or information that this is a Jewish service trip? How do participants seem to respond to the Jewish elements?

Provider/Organizer Staff Pretrip Interview

1. Tell me about your target population for this trip—who are they? (Probe for uninvolved Jewish students, social activists, juniors/seniors, bri alumni, etc?). Why were you interested in this particular population (untapped resource at the school, etc.?)
2. How did you advertise/publicize the “Break New Ground” trip? (Probe for student newspaper, Hillel listserv, other listservs, flyers, etc.) Was the advertising successful in reaching your target population? Who else did it draw in?
3. Tell me about your applicant pool. Is your target population reflected in the applicant pool? What was surprising about the trip applicants? (Too many, too few, no Hillel kids, too many Hillel kids, etc.)
4. Let’s talk about the selection process. Who is your ideal participant? What qualities/ characteristics made them right for this trip? What were some of the other reasons you didn’t select others (Probe for level of involvement in Jewish life, previous social action/service experience, social dynamics of the trip, etc.)
5. Tell me about you plans for the pretrip meetings. What do you want/need to accomplish in these meetings? (Probe for student interaction/icebreakers; background on destination; service-related training; Jewish related prep—kashrut, Shabbat, etc.).
6. How do you plan to prepare students for their visit to [destination?]. What do you think is key for them to know/understand before they arrive?
7. Tell me about your preparation for Jewish life during the trip. Will there be opportunities for Jewish learning? How will you integrate Shabbat and/or other Jewish rituals into your trip?
8. Is there anything else that I didn’t ask but you think we should know to understand [organization’s] role in UJA-Federation’s “Break New Ground?”

Daily Observation Guidelines

Please provide a brief summary of each day's activities including the following:

- What type of service work are participants engaged in?
- Who are they working with? (i.e., members of the local community, peers, etc.)
- Are students empowered to take on leadership roles? How?
- What are the interactions between participants and local community members like?

In addition to a brief overview of what happens each day, we are looking for information on the following components of the BNG experience. Be sure to include specific interactions, conversations, and anecdotes that will help us understand how participants experienced their BNG trip.

Jewish Life

- Other than formal Jewish learning, did anything else happen during the day that would indicate this is a “Jewish” service trip?
- Explicit: ritual observance, blessings, spiritual reflection, etc.
- Implicit: Language used, values conveyed, or discussed
- How is Jewish pluralism approached, if at all?
- Formal or informal discussions about diversity of observance among participants?
- How is the celebration/practice of Jewish rituals and observances (e.g., kashrut) introduced or explained to the group?
- How does the group observe Shabbat?
- Who is involved in the planning of Shabbat?
- How is the group's Shabbat practice introduced and/or explained?
- How do participants react to the group's communal Shabbat observance?

Reflection/Learning Sessions

- What topics/texts did the group cover?
- How were Jewish sources introduced and explained?
- Were connections made between the session topic and the service experiences of the day?
- What were the “hot button” issues for this group?
- How do participants respond to the sessions, the texts, the facilitator, and to each other during the sessions?
- Are the lessons of the reflection sessions/Jewish learning echoed by staff or others outside of the formal learning sessions?

Overall Experience

- Describe the group dynamic.
- How do the participants respond to the work and work environment
- Were there particularly special events/moments during the day?

Participant Onsite Interview

Introduction

Remember to...

- Obtain verbal informed consent.
- Ask as many of the following questions as you have time for.

Background

1. Tell me a bit about yourself. (Looking for brief info.)
 - What year are you? Are you a sophomore, junior, etc.? What is your major?
 - What do you do when you are not in class? (Work, campus activism, etc.)
2. How did you find out about this trip? Why did you decide to apply?
3. What were you hoping to experience on this trip?

Experiences on the Trip

4. What has the trip been like for you so far?
 - Any memorable moments?
 - Most rewarding aspect?
 - Most frustrating aspect?
5. What has it been like to be part of this group?
6. What have the discussion/reflection sessions been like for you? What about the Jewish learning pieces?
 - How, if at all, have the reflection sessions/Jewish learning changed your thinking?
 - What's valuable about them? What would you like to see done differently?
7. What do you think about Jewish observance during the trip (kashrut, Shabbat, festivals)? Is it a good fit for your personal practice? What have you learned from experiencing Shabbat/other ritual, etc. with your peers during this trip?

Impacts

8. Thinking about yourself at this point in the trip and how you were at the start, what changes have you seen in yourself that you think were influenced by your involvement on this trip?
9. In what ways, if at all, have you gained or expanded your Jewish perspective on service? Which aspects of the trip contributed to that learning?
10. How, if at all, has the trip changed your attitudes or thinking about Jewish learning, Jewish life, or your place in the larger Jewish community? How about your attitudes toward Jewish peers from different backgrounds?
11. Is there anything different now about how you understand the local community, issues affecting the community, etc.?

Staff Onsite Interview

Remember to...

- Obtain informed consent.

- Ask as many of the following questions as you have time for.

Background

Tell me about yourself. How long have you worked with [Hillel/other sponsoring organization]? (Probe for involvement in Jewish life.)

What is your experience with service learning, social justice work, etc.? Have you staffed other alternative breaks?

Pretrip Training/Planning

How were you involved in the pretrip planning, if at all? (Recruitment, logistics, orientation, etc.)

How did you prepare for the trip? What formal staff training did you receive? Did you have a mentor?

Before the trip, what concerns, if any, did you have?

Experiences on the Trip

Tell me about the group dynamic. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this particular group? How are they similar to or different from other groups you have worked with?

What do you think of the Jewish learning elements of the program? How well prepared/ comfortable were you to implement the learning curriculum? What has worked? What would you change?

What do you think about Jewish life/ritual observance during the trip? How prepared/ comfortable were you with this aspect of the trip? How have students reacted? How have you dealt with the issues of Jewish diversity?

How have you been able to integrate Jewish learning and observance into the daily trip experience outside of formal learning sessions?

Is there anything else you think we should know about the trip? Are there are things that we should know about to understand this trip from your perspective?

Informed Consent Briefing Sheet

The UJA Federation of New York is developing the *Break New Ground*-Jewish Community Service Initiative to involve young adults in intensive ten-day community service experiences. UJA-Federation of New York has awarded a research grant to the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies of Brandeis University in an effort to learn more about student experiences on the “Break New Ground” alternative break service trips. The purpose of this research is to understand the impact of BNG on participants and to provide UJA-Federation and trip providers with feedback that can help in the continuing development of the initiative.

The individual interview, in which you have been asked to participate, is an important part of this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and choosing to do so or not will have no personal repercussions. We hope that you will participate fully and honestly, but you are also free to skip any questions that you choose not to answer.

The fact of your participation in this interview and the information obtained through it will be kept confidential by CMJS. No one other than the research team will see your individual responses. All information from this study will be reported in ways that do not identify individuals.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time, you are welcome to contact Fern Chertok or Nicole Samuel, the co-principal investigators on this project, or the Brandeis Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (9781-736-7596). This committee works to safeguard the interests of individuals who participate in Brandeis-sponsored research.

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The Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University is a multi-disciplinary research institute dedicated to the study of American Jewry and the development of religious and cultural identity.

Brandeis University



Maurice *and* Marilyn Cohen
Center *for* Modern Jewish Studies