
Shema

Listening to Jewish Youth

Study Highlights

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Prepared for

THE COMMISSION
ON IDENTITY AND
CONTINUITY



MINNEAPOLIS JEWISH
FEDERATION

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The Voices of Jewish Youth

Ensuring that young people develop and maintain a Jewish identity and that they stay connected to the Jewish community into adulthood are major concerns of the Jewish community. Many Jewish adults are troubled that too many young people are involved in Jewish-sponsored activities and organizations only through Bar/Bat Mitzvah age and then begin to drift away from their synagogues and temples, youth groups, and formal Jewish education.

As in many faith traditions, the older generations struggle to understand what to do to keep young people interested and involved. On the one hand, young people today are often very busy with school, jobs, friends, extracurricular involvement, and other activities. They do not seem to have much "extra" time. On the other hand, if young people do not spend time in their synagogues and other Jewish-sponsored organizations, they are unlikely to be truly engaged in the beliefs, practices, and relationships that are so important to a lifelong commitment.

It is critical to the future of Judaism to offer young people opportunities that enhance their involvement in Jewish life as well as meet their social, intellectual, physical, and spiritual needs.

More than 400 Jewish youth in Minneapolis responded to a survey about what they want from and appreciate about Jewish-sponsored activities and education. This report is based on their responses. It provides parents, educators, rabbis, and other leaders insight into what may keep youth involved now and into the future. It highlights successes (what we already do well), areas for improvement, and practical steps to help ensure that Jewish young people learn to value and appreciate their identity and involvement.

This survey was unique, not only in Minneapolis, but also in the country. To date, no other Jewish community has undertaken such an intentional task of deepening its understanding of the thoughts, needs, and feelings of its adolescent population. We asked the young people to entrust us with their thoughts, concerns, and interests. Their answers provide a look into how they spend their time and why, their thoughts about both the content and process of their formal Jewish education, and a glimpse at how they see the future. Their responses were frequently enlightening and sometimes surprising.

The findings represent an important tool that Jewish youth-serving institutions and other organizations interested in creating a vibrant future can use both to maintain the high quality of activities already available to adolescents and to plan for the future. It also serves as an example of what a community can do to respond to the needs of its young people and to encourage affiliation and involvement in the future.

Methods

This study was conducted by the Adolescent Task Force of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation (MJF), the central fund-raising and planning body of the Jewish community. Specifically, the Adolescent Task Force of the Commission on Identity and Continuity* charged its Adolescent Survey Subcommittee with determining the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of Jewish youth in Minneapolis regarding their participation, or lack of participation, in Jewish-sponsored activities. This was done through a survey mailed to 1,116 young people. Focus groups were held early in the process to inform the development of an appropriate and effective survey instrument.

Names and addresses were drawn from MJF's teen database and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah lists from Minneapolis synagogues. Thirty-seven percent (414) of the surveys were returned. Somewhat more females than males responded (56% vs. 44%). The sample was heavily represented by 13- to 18-year-olds (79%), with only 13 percent between ages 11 and 12, and 8 percent age 19 or older.

More than 75 percent attend public schools, almost 20 percent attend private schools, and only 1 percent attend Jewish day school. More than half described themselves as Conservative, 37 percent as Reform, and 2 percent as Orthodox. Almost 10 percent said they are either "just Jewish" or "not sure." "Just Jewish" was not specifically defined. However, the majority of those who described themselves as "just Jewish" also described themselves as belonging to a synagogue in the Twin Cities.

**Jewish continuity was defined as a dynamic process that enables Jews to take personal responsibility for their Jewish life by helping them develop a connection to their spiritual and ethical tradition, their people, and their local and global Jewish community.*

Barriers to Participating Fully in Jewish Life

We asked young people about their participation in services, programs, and rituals and traditions, because they reflect their overall engagement in and commitment to life as a Jew. While many young people are involved in different aspects of Judaism, they report that there are some external factors that make it difficult for them to participate fully, including:

- Schools do not accommodate Jewish traditions: 22%;*
- They have experienced anti-Semitism: 36%;
- Full participation separates them from their Christian friends: 19%;
- Parents push youth to participate but do not participate themselves: 17%; and
- Youth do not feel knowledgeable or competent about Jewish things such as prayer skills or holidays: 11%.

*Percentages represent youth who say they agree or strongly agree that each factor is a barrier.

How Jewish Youth Spend Their Time

The way young people spend their time may be the best indicator of what is important to them. One of the key sets of questions we asked was about young people's participation in various activities and programs—both Jewish and “secular.”¹

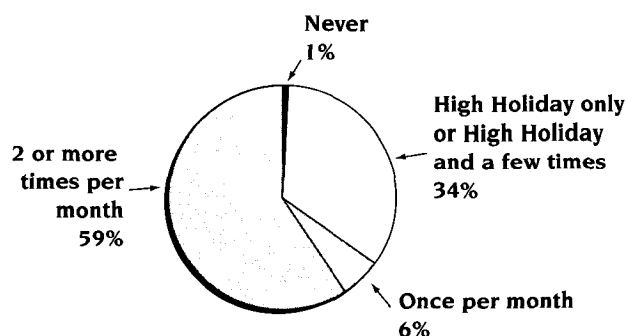
Most youth we surveyed report that they are at least somewhat involved with a synagogue or temple. In fact, 75 percent attend religious services and/or religious education classes sometime during the year. Although the majority attend infrequently, more than one-third say they attend services at least two or three times a month.

The majority of youth surveyed attend services at least occasionally, but Conservative youth are more likely than Reform youth to attend (87% vs. 76%, respectively). Most Reform youth say they attend services either on the High Holidays or a few times a year in addition to the High Holidays. Only 10 percent say they attend at least two or more times a month. In contrast, over half of Conservative youth (59%) say they attend two or more times a month (see Figure 1). The same difference in involvement is true for religious education classes (72% of Conservative youth vs. 54% of Reform youth).

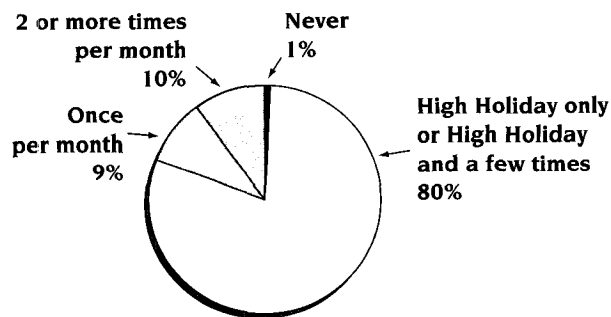
Among those who participate in their synagogues, there are some

¹ Jewish-sponsored activities were defined as being those activities in any way related to congregational life, Jewish youth groups, and family life pertaining to holiday celebrations or ritual observances. Secular activities are those connected to the wide community of the child's public or private, but not Jewish day (parochial), school; extracurricular school activities; and social activities not connected with the Jewish community.

Figure 1 PARTICIPATION RATES



Conservative Youth



Reform Youth

differences between males and females as well as between Conservative and Reform youth.² Females tend to be more active in service and volunteerism through their synagogues, while males report slightly higher rates of participation in youth groups.

There are differences between the two denominations in terms of practices as well. Table 1 shows what young people say about their involvement in 10 Jewish traditions or rituals. Conservative youth reported more participation in each of the 10 rituals.

In addition to young people's participation in services and other Jewish-sponsored activities, we also asked about their involvement in secular activities such as going to movies, shopping, and using a computer. Figure 2 shows young people's involvement in these activities.

² While there is a broad spectrum of Jewish practice, those Jewish youth who are religiously observant typically identify with one of four Jewish denominations: Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, or Reform.

Table 1 RITUAL PRACTICE

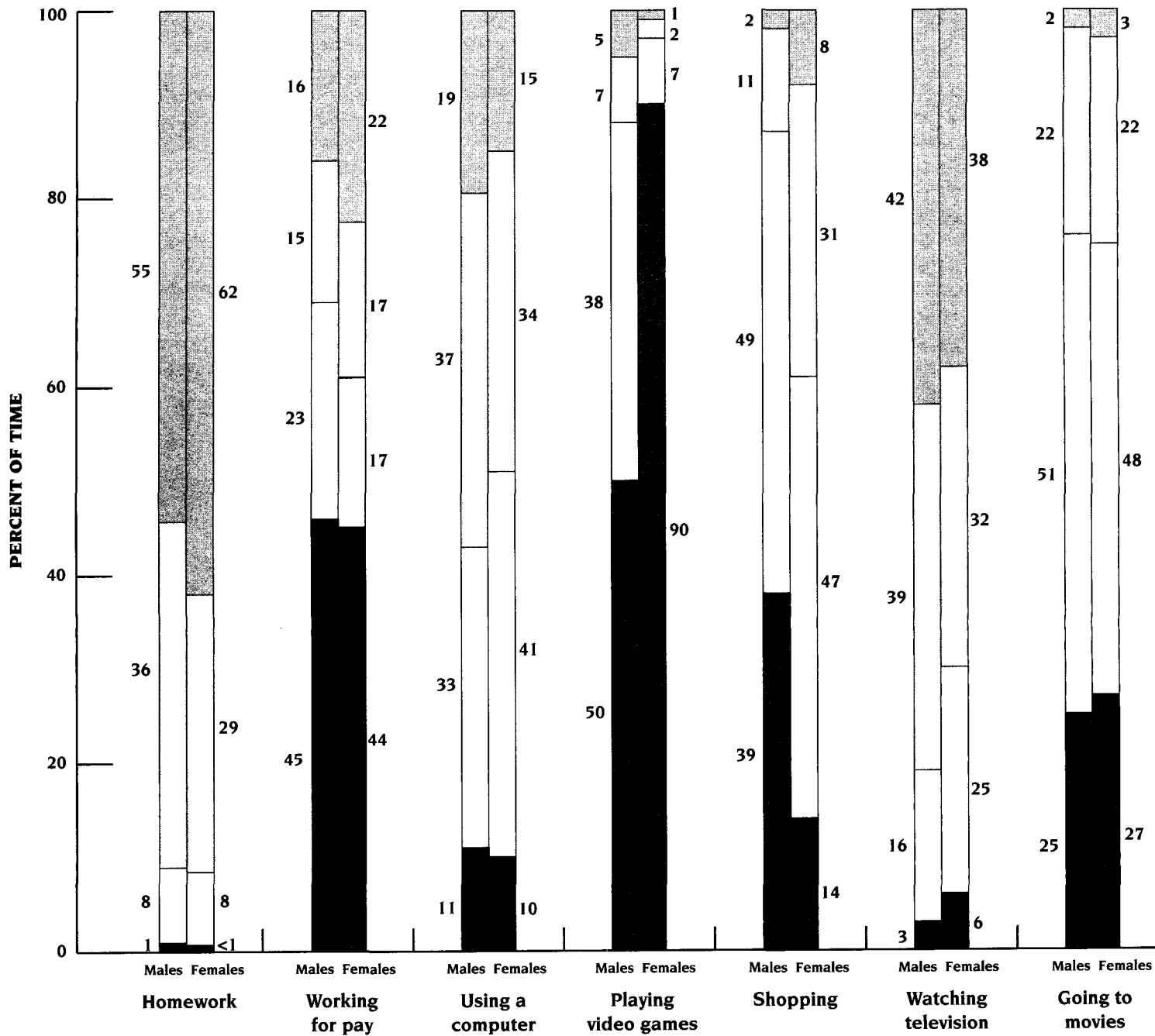
Percentage of Jewish youth surveyed who say they practice this ritual on a regular basis:

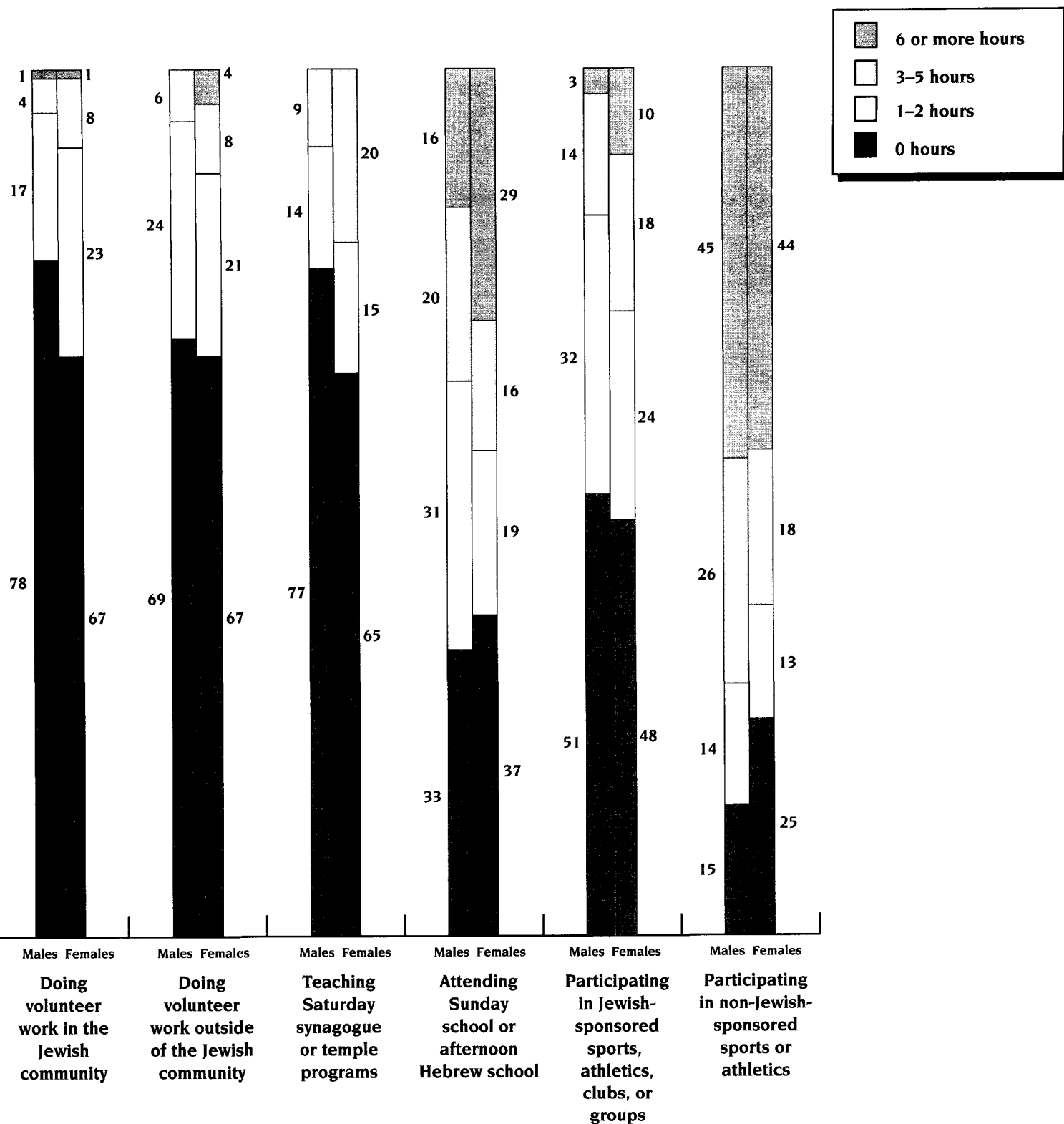
	Total	Conservative	Reform
Lighting Hanukkah candles	99	99	98
Attending a Seder	97	99	96
Fasting on Yom Kippur	81	86	77
Praying	68	70	66
Shabbat dinner	58	68	48
Lighting Shabbat candles	57	63	53
Saying kiddush on Shabbat	51	60	41
Eating in or visiting Sukkah	47	57	32
Havdalah	11	10	8
Saying Birkat Hamazon	9	8	6

Note: Throughout this report, "Total" refers to all youth surveyed, including Orthodox youth and youth who describe themselves as "just Jewish." There were only six respondents who identified themselves as Orthodox. All six of these youth report that they practiced all of the Jewish rituals listed.

Figure 2 HOW JEWISH YOUTH SPEND THEIR TIME

Number of hours youth surveyed report spending on each activity in a typical week during the school year:





In the realm of Jewish education (e.g., Hebrew, Jewish history, etc.) it is extremely important that parents have respect for the institution and that its teachers and curriculum are sound and are able to provide students with an interesting and valuable education, not just a forum to hang out with their Jewish friends.

17-year-old boy

Experiences in Religious Education

In Minneapolis, both Conservative and Reform children may begin their formal Jewish education in a synagogue or community preschool. Some of these children may opt to go to a Jewish day school through high school. Conservative youth who do not attend a Jewish day school attend a community supplemental school, the Minneapolis Talmud Torah. Reform youth receive their formal Jewish education in their synagogues. Orthodox families tend to send their children to Jewish day school.

Regardless of where they receive their supplemental education, most of the young people we surveyed report at least some dissatisfaction with it. There is universal recognition that providing quality supplemental education is a challenge given the constraints of any

Table 2 JEWISH SUBJECTS LEARNED

Percentage of Jewish youth surveyed who say they have learned the following subjects very or somewhat well in their Jewish education:

	Total	Conservative	Reform
Holocaust	93	93	93
Jewish holidays	90	90	91
Jewish practices	81	78	86
Israel	75	71	79
Jewish history	71	64	75
Prayer skills	70	73	65
Jewish identity	69	63	73
Jewish life-cycle events	61	53	66
Ethics	58	52	56
Hebrew language	57	49	59
Bible	57	61	48
Jewish and Christian relations	53	43	65
Contemporary events	43	38	49
Mishnah	18	15	12

type of after-school program. Complaints range from curriculum that is boring or not useful to instructors who do not have good teaching skills and have difficulty maintaining control of the classroom.

It would appear that while Conservative youth spend more time in formal Jewish education, Reform youth are more satisfied with what they are learning. Fifty-six percent of youth who attend Reform synagogue programs report that they have "learned a lot" about Judaism, compared with 37 percent of Conservative youth. Table 2 shows what both groups say about how much they have learned about specific topics and issues. Reform adolescents are also happier with their teachers and administrators. Conservative youth, in general, report more negative experiences such as classes that are not well run and other students who are disruptive. Table 3 shows other opinions young people have about their formal Jewish education.

I don't know any Hebrew. I've taken Spanish for one year and know a lot more. They teach us how to read Hebrew but not to understand it.

14-year-old girl

Table 3 EXPERIENCES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Percentage of Jewish youth surveyed who agree or strongly agree with the following statements about their Jewish education:

	Total	Conservative	Reform
POSITIVE EXPERIENCES			
The teachers and administrators care about kids	54	49	63
I care about attending regularly	53	55	51
I've learned a lot	44	37	56
The quality of teaching is high	27	21	34
The teachers know how to teach effectively	26	21	31
Students have a lot of respect for teachers	12	8	11
NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES			
The kids are rowdy and the rules are not enforced	51	60	38
Classes are not well run nor organized	49	62	36
My parents have forced me to attend	41	37	36
The teachers and administrators do not listen to kids	37	38	32
It's not at all worthwhile and it's boring	29	34	18
I haven't attended classes regularly	19	26	10
My parents haven't cared if I've attended regularly	9	12	4
I do not care about what I've learned	9	10	5

Young people's concerns about their Jewish educational experiences are made especially clear through their responses to an open-ended question on the survey. A number of youth mention a lack of enforcement of rules, disruptive behavior of other students, and teachers who are unable to handle this kind of behavior in supplemental education.

However, while young people have complaints about the way many of their classes are run, they are also interested in much of the content and want to learn about Jewish issues and subjects. Their interests vary somewhat by age. Younger adolescents (ages 11 to 13) are almost all (95%) interested in studying ethics, while older youth (ages 14 and up) report more interest in studying Hebrew, Israel, and Jewish-Christian relations. Youth of all ages would like to learn more about the Holocaust, but they have little interest in studying prayer skills or Mishnah and only moderate interest in studying the Bible or Jewish holidays, practices, and life-cycle events. Table 4 shows what the young people surveyed say about their interest in these and other topics.

Table 4 **INTEREST IN JEWISH TOPICS**

Percentage of Jewish youth surveyed who say that they would be very or somewhat interested taking a class in the following subjects:

	Total	Ages 11-13	Ages 14-16	Ages 17+
Holocaust	85	86	86	78
Israel	75	69	69	96
Jewish and Christian relations	66	53	67	81
Hebrew language	65	59	62	82
Jewish history	63	50	64	78
Ethics	58	95	59	74
Jewish holidays, practices, or life-cycle events	55	45	56	66
Contemporary events	52	37	50	78
Bible	49	41	47	62
Prayer skills	46	44	47	45
Mishnah	31	23	29	48

What Jewish Youth Care About

Knowing what young people value can help in designing programs and activities that will be meaningful to them. We therefore asked about the importance of certain values, skills, abilities, and rituals related to Judaism. Interestingly, there are some striking differences in what males and females say they value. Overall, females place more importance than males on each value we asked about. Table 5 shows what values Jewish youth say are important to them and the differences in how males and females responded.

The social aspect is most important. Make sure that the programs you organize allow time for kids to socialize and get to know one another. Otherwise it's pointless.

17-year-old girl

Table 5 JEWISH VALUES

Percentage of Jewish youth surveyed who say the following values are very or somewhat important in their lives:

	Total	Males	Females
Being Jewish	92	91	93
Raising my children Jewish	90	88	91
Observing the Jewish holidays	86	80	91
Having knowledge of Jewish life and Jewish history	82	81	88
Keeping informed about current events that affect Israel and world Jewry	80	77	82
Having a connection to Israel	79	71	84
Donating money to Jewish causes	77	72	81
Participating in the Jewish community	74	64	81
Marrying someone who is Jewish	70	66	74
Attending synagogue/temple services	68	62	73
Volunteering in the Jewish community	61	53	66
Wearing a Star of David, mezuzah, or other Jewish symbol	60	49	69
Dating only a Jewish person	43	37	47
Keeping kosher	29	19	36

[P]rograms should make the kids feel wanted and needed and make sure they are having fun.

15-year-old girl

There is also widespread agreement among young people on some key values. Nearly all Jewish adolescents say that being Jewish is important to them. Most also say that it is important to raise their children Jewish, to have a knowledge of Jewish life and history, and to observe the Jewish holidays.

Similarly, there is agreement about some things that Jewish youth feel are not so important, such as dating only a Jewish person (only 37% of males and 47% of females say this is important) and keeping kosher (19% of males and 36% of females name this as a value).

The "secular" values and skills that are most important to youth are spending time with friends, health, and developing skills and abilities (see Table 6).

Table 6 SECULAR VALUES

Percentage of Jewish youth surveyed who say the following values are very or somewhat important in their lives:

	Total	Males	Females
Spending time with friends	99	98	>99
Improving health or staying healthy	94	93	95
Developing skills and abilities	92	91	92
Having children	84	82	86
Being physically attractive	83	82	84
Helping others or making the community a better place	82	75	87
Being a leader	81	78	83
Making lots of money	79	87	73

Have the activities planned by Jewish teens instead of adults.

17-year-old girl

We also asked young people about things they might be concerned about, both specifically Jewish issues as well as more global topics. Males and females again tend to differ in their responses. Females are consistently more concerned about Jewish issues and somewhat more concerned about issues in general. Table 7 shows the differences in how males and females responded.

There are also differences here between Conservative and Reform youth. Conservative youth describe being more concerned about Jewish issues. The largest differences have to do with intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews (56% of Conservative youth and 36% of Reform youth say marrying someone who is Jewish is very or somewhat important to them) and making Judaism meaningful to young people (75% of Conservative youth and 64% of Reform youth).

Table 7 ISSUES THAT CONCERN JEWISH YOUTH

Percentage of Jewish youth surveyed who say they are very or somewhat concerned about the following issues:

	Total	Males	Female	Conservative	Reform
Jewish Issues					
Safety for Israel	85	82	87	89	85
Peace in the Middle East	79	78	80	83	79
Making Judaism meaningful to young people	70	62	75	75	64
Anti-Semitism	67	59	72	70	64
Jewish refugees	60	57	62	65	57
Intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews	47	38	54	56	36
Secular Issues					
Education	84	79	88	85	82
Crime and violence	83	77	89	83	87
Pollution	73	68	76	74	74
Drug abuse	72	65	77	73	75
Race relations	72	69	73	72	73
Homelessness	71	63	77	67	76
AIDS/HIV	70	66	72	67	76
Poverty	70	63	75	67	77
Human rights violations	70	68	72	71	69
Sexism and sexual harassment	67	53	77	68	70
War	67	63	70	69	66
Destruction of natural resources	65	64	66	64	68
Health care	65	57	70	66	64
Illiteracy and poor education	63	57	67	63	64
Unemployment	45	44	46	47	44
Population growth	44	45	43	46	45
Threat of nuclear destruction	39	38	40	38	41

Gender Differences

Through this study we found some striking differences between adolescent Jewish males and adolescent Jewish females. Some of these differences may have important programmatic implications.

For example, fully 10 percent more females than males think it is important to date only a Jewish person. Males also do not value keeping kosher as much as females do. Furthermore, females are consistently more concerned about social issues than males, and they are also more concerned about issues that are specifically Jewish, such as intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews.

Although males and females report spending similar amounts of time in Jewish-sponsored activities, females are more likely to spend time teaching Saturday synagogue programs, attending Sunday school or afternoon Hebrew school, and doing volunteer work in the Jewish community, but this difference is small. Interestingly, more males describe attending or participating in synagogue youth groups, but more females participate in youth service projects or volunteer in their synagogues.

Although males and females report similar amounts of time in Jewish-sponsored activities, females feel that these activities are significantly more meaningful to them than do males. Both males and females report that family celebrations and social activities are very meaningful. Females are more likely to say they find Jewish-sponsored activities meaningful because they're fun, they like talking to other young people, and these activities contribute in some way to either the growth of their faith or their Jewish identity.

Reform youth tend to be more concerned about a number of secular issues such as AIDS/HIV, crime and violence, poverty, and homelessness. More than three-quarters of all the youth we surveyed, regardless of affiliation, are concerned about safety for Israel and peace in the Middle East.

Finally, we asked youth to describe the reasons they find meaning in Jewish activities. At the top of the list are the importance of spending time with friends and meeting new people. In addition to social factors, however, there are many other reasons that young people find meaning in Jewish-sponsored activities. Table 8 shows how they responded.

Table 8 **WHAT MAKES ACTIVITIES MEANINGFUL**

Percentage of Jewish youth surveyed who say the following factors make Jewish activities meaningful to them:

	Total	Conservative	Reform
Doing things with my friends is important to me	93	95	90
I like to meet new people	92	95	90
They are fun	83	91	73
They help me to feel good about my Jewish identity	82	90	72
I feel welcome	81	84	76
I like making a difference	79	80	80
I like talking to other kids and sharing what we think and feel	78	85	72
These activities really help me to grow as a Jew	71	80	62
There are caring, enthusiastic adults and teachers	66	70	59
They are a part of passing down Jewish traditions	66	72	61
They involve teaching others	64	68	58
I learn more about myself	63	69	57
They help me to become competent in my Jewish skills	63	67	60
They focus on helping me to be a good person	60	64	55
Activities are based on my interests	60	65	48
I have input into planning and decision making	58	63	49

It shouldn't matter what temple you go to—just that everyone be together.

11-year-old boy

We can't segregate ourselves from each other and expect to have real community.

17-year-old boy

Predicting Future Identity and Continuity

The high value young people place on maintaining their Jewish identity is encouraging and provides the opportunity for parents, educators, rabbis, and others to nurture that identity in hopes that it will carry on into their adult lives. However, young people's frustration with Jewish education and the perceived barriers to full participation in Jewish life are reasons to be concerned.

To better understand what might lead young people to be involved in Jewish life as adults, we examined 10 factors thought to be associated with Jewish identity and future continuity:

1. Being involved in Jewish-sponsored community activities and/or organizations;
2. Feeling that the social aspect of Jewish-sponsored activities is personally meaningful;
3. Having positive feelings and/or perceptions about formal Jewish education;
4. Feeling that Jewish educational activities are personally meaningful;
5. Believing that it is important to engage in Jewish rituals, continuity, and learning;
6. Believing in the importance of Jewish continuity;
7. Believing in the importance of Jewish learning;
8. Being concerned for secular as well as Jewish social issues;
9. Having specific concerns about Jewish social issues; and
10. Engaging in volunteer activities both within and outside of the Jewish community.

Specifically, we were interested in whether it was possible to predict an adolescent's future involvement in Jewish activities, concern for Jewish social issues, and continuity. Ultimately, the question is whether it is possible through programming to increase the likelihood that young people will remain involved.

We also asked young people whether or not they were involved in specific behaviors or activities that may have an influence on the 10 factors listed above. These behaviors and activities pertain to the observance of Jewish rituals and traditions (such as going to services, fasting on Yom Kippur, and attending a Seder), volunteering, taking educational trips to Israel, and attending a Jewish camp. We then used indicators of those behaviors as a means of predicting adolescents' involvement in the factors that may influence future identity and continuity. Table 9 shows how each of the activities may impact identity and continuity.

Table 9

IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES ON IDENTITY AND CONTINUITY

Activity	Young people involved in this activity are more likely to:
Observance of Jewish rituals and traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be involved in Jewish-sponsor activities and/or organizations • Be concerned about secular social issues • Be concerned about Jewish social issues • Believe in the importance of Jewish rituals, continuity, and learning • Find meaning in Jewish educational activities • Find meaning in the social aspect of Jewish-sponsored activities • Demonstrate other behaviors related to continuity
Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be involved in Jewish-sponsored activities and/or organizations • Be concerned about secular social issues • Be concerned about Jewish social issues • Believe in the importance of Jewish rituals, continuity, and learning
Experiences in Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be involved in Jewish-sponsored activities and/or organizations • Be concerned about Jewish social issues • Find meaning in Jewish educational activities • Demonstrate other behaviors related to continuity
Jewish camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be involved in Jewish-sponsored activities and/or organizations • Find meaning in Jewish educational activities

Impact of Observance of Jewish Rituals and Traditions

The more adolescents are involved with Jewish practices and activities, the more likely they are to continue the behaviors thought to be related to being Jewish. Although this may seem to be circular reasoning, it is important from a programmatic standpoint. If adolescent involvement can be increased through programmatic changes, the likelihood is increased that this involvement will be self-sustaining.

We found that young people who practice Jewish rituals and traditions (e.g., going to services, fasting on Yom Kippur) are more likely to report many of the 10 aspects of identity and continuity. For example, young people who said they regularly observe Jewish rituals and traditions are more likely to be concerned about Jewish social issues than young people who do not regularly observe these rituals and practices.

Impact of Volunteer Experiences

If young people are engaged in volunteer activities, they are more likely to feel that Jewish learning is an important part of their life and identity as they reach late adolescence and early adulthood. We found that youth who volunteer are more likely than others to report that Jewish learning is important. And, while young people express great concern about many social causes, most of them do little or no volunteer work in or outside of the Jewish community. A particular challenge as we seek to build Jewish identity and continuity may be to find ways to engage our young people in meaningful service activities.

Differences in volunteering and its impact are evident by both gender and age. Older youth are more likely than younger youth to report that Jewish learning is important. However, our findings indicate that older adolescent males who do little or no volunteering are the least likely of any age or gender group to think that Jewish learning is important. Young adolescent females who do little or no volunteer work also say that Jewish learning is not important.

Impact of Educational Experiences in Israel

The vast majority of young people surveyed have never visited Israel, either with their families (75%) or through an organized program (79%). However, those who have been to Israel describe these experiences as personally significant. Furthermore, those who have been to Israel are more likely to report many indicators of identity and continuity.

Those who seem most influenced by these experiences are females and older adolescents. One college student specifically links his experiences in Israel to the importance of Judaism in his life now and in the future. A young woman describes her trip to Israel as "the best experience I ever had." She goes on to write, "I learned a lot about Judaism, the Jewish history—Judaism should be kept alive

through Israel." Others indicate that scholarship money should be available to help subsidize trips for those who may not otherwise be able to afford the expense of this trip.

Impact of Jewish Camp Experiences

Jewish camps provide informal educational experiences as well as social and recreational opportunities. Most Jewish youth in our survey have attended camp at least once (80%), a significant percentage of them having attended three or more summers (71%). This is fortunate because camping experiences are shown in our study to have a positive influence on identity and continuity. Adolescents who have had a Jewish camp experience are more likely than those who have not been to Jewish camp to be involved in Jewish-sponsored activities and to report that religious experiences are meaningful to them.

There is also an interesting relationship between age, Jewish camp experience, and desire for continuity. Older adolescents, in general, are more interested in continuity, with the exception of males who have not had a camp experience. In fact, older adolescent males who have not been to a Jewish camp describe the *least* interest in continuity.

Recommendations

The findings from this study suggest that young people who are highly connected to Jewish life and activities (beyond just thinking or believing things are important) are doing the very things thought to be connected with future continuity and a strong Jewish identity.

The data also show that some adolescents are mostly or completely uninvolved in Jewish-sponsored activities. Efforts to strengthen Jewish identity and continuity must not ignore those youth and focus only on young people who are already involved. In order to engage those youth who are not yet involved, Jewish observance must be made more appealing to them. One way to do that is to use data from this study about adolescents' interests and what they find meaningful and important. Below are recommendations for rabbis, educators, youth workers, the community, families, and youth for how they can more fully engage young people in Jewish life.

Rabbis

Note: While these recommendations are specifically for rabbis, many rabbis serve as educators and youth workers as well as leaders of their synagogues. Thus, rabbis may want to read and consider the recommendations for those two groups as well.

- Find opportunities for youth workers and educators in your synagogue to be trained in child and youth development.
- Support and encourage innovation and creative programming by educators and youth workers in your synagogue.
- Develop relationships with the young people in your life. Talk to them about Jewish issues, your personal commitments, and questions they have about a Jewish lifestyle.
- Encourage young people to take leadership roles within the synagogue.
- Build connections between the synagogue and organizations in the community that need ongoing volunteer support. Encourage all members to get involved in serving others.
- Include young people in all aspects of worship services.
- Speak to your congregation about the importance of being involved in Jewish rituals, activities, and traditions.

Educators

- Develop innovative approaches to education that may work better in the busy lives of today's children and adolescents.
- Engage young people in planning and leadership of their educational experiences.
- Offer a variety of learning environments (such as classroom learning as well as service-learning), especially when addressing current social issues of importance to either the Jewish or the secular community.
- Ask young people what they want and need from their Jewish education.

- Adolescents report that family celebrations are important. Consider incorporating a family education component for this age group.
- Work with young people, their parents, and others to address issues of time management for young people.
- Provide training for teachers in techniques specific to a supplemental education structure including effective teaching skills and how to deal with competing demands on adolescents' time.
- Use modern language-teaching methods to effectively teach spoken Hebrew.
- Ensure that teachers have a practical understanding of child and adolescent development.

Youth Workers

- Keep in mind the developmental differences of adolescents of different age groups when planning activities.
- Find or create service opportunities that connect youth in the Jewish community and beyond.
- Involve adolescents in both planning and decision making regarding activities.
- Take advantage of the reasons that adolescents say they find Jewish-sponsored activities fun and meaningful, such as hanging out with their friends, meeting new people, having fun, and helping them feel good about their Jewish identity.
- Keep some activities open to all Jewish youth and plan some that welcome participants to bring their non-Jewish friends. Examples might include retreats, plays, social events, or service projects.
- Plan short retreats, minicamps, or other residential programs throughout the year. These kinds of experiences may have some of the same qualities of longer camp stays.

Community

- Reach out to adolescents who are either peripherally involved or unaffiliated, but continue to offer programming that is meaningful to those youth who are highly involved.
- Find new ways of encouraging involvement in ritual behaviors in ways that would be meaningful to those youth who are peripherally involved or unaffiliated.
- Develop youth programming and education that includes meaningful service opportunities, time with friends, having fun, and meeting new people.
- Create opportunities for young people to explore the topics they say they are interested in learning more about, such as those listed in Table 4.
- Seek new scholarship funding that would make Israel experiences and Jewish camp experiences available to less involved or even unaffiliated youth.

Families

- Demonstrate your own commitment to Jewish continuity by participating in rituals, services, learning opportunities, volunteering, and social activities.
- Ask your children about what they are learning in their synagogues or schools. Talk with them about ethics, the Holocaust, current social issues, and other topics of interest. Practice spoken Hebrew with them.
- Help your children find opportunities to participate in Jewish-sponsored activities such as camps, volunteer programs, or social events.
- Encourage your children to visit Israel. If money is an issue, find out if there are scholarships or fund-raising programs available in your synagogue, school, or other Jewish organization.

Youth

- Encourage youth workers in your synagogue or other organization to plan activities that include Conservative, Reform, and Orthodox youth, as well as some that are open to non-Jewish youth.
- Tell your teachers and youth workers about the topics that interest you. Ask if you can help plan learning sessions focused on those topics.
- Encourage your Jewish friends who aren't involved in a synagogue, school, or youth program to come with you to some events or activities.
- Take a leadership role in your temple or synagogue. If leadership roles aren't obviously available for youth, talk to your rabbi, youth worker, or teacher.
- Participate regularly in a variety of activities, such as going to services, volunteering, and social events, through your temple, synagogue, or other Jewish organization.
- Try to take advantage of summer camp activities and opportunities. If you think you can't afford these activities, talk to your youth worker, your teacher, or another adult about possible scholarships.

About Search Institute

Search Institute is an independent, non-profit, nonsectarian organization whose mission is to advance the well-being of adolescents and children by generating knowledge and promoting its application.

Search Institute conducts research and evaluation, develops publications and practical tools, and provides training and technical assistance. The institute collaborates with others to promote long-term organizational, and cultural change that supports the healthy development of all children and adolescents.