

**Offering Boys Lives of Possibility:
An Evidence-based Framework for the Jewish Community**

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for

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	Page 3
A Challenging Initiative	Page 5
Research Model for Campaign for Jewish Boys	Page 7
Review of Research	Page 8
Conclusions: Important Possibilities	Page 11
Exploring Possibilities: The Denver Study	Page 12
The Curriculum Development Study	Page 15
Deducing a Curriculum	Page 15
Pilot Testing Curriculum	Page 17
Findings from the Pilot	Page 21
A Framework for Working with Jewish Boys	Page 25
Fitting the Group to its Participants	Page 25
Practical Commitments	Page 30
Leading, not Dominating	Page 37
Concluding Comments	Page 44
References	Page 45
Appendices	Page 48
Appendix A: Pre-Test Survey	Page 48
Appendix B: Post-Test Survey	Page 51
Appendix C: Observation Guide	Page 53
Appendix D: Interview Guide	Page 54
Author Biographies	Page 55

Executive Summary

Moving Traditions launched the *Campaign for Jewish Boys* in 2007, following the success of its *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program and in response to a clamor for similarly engaging programming for Jewish boys that would address their vulnerability to the pressures of normative masculinity. Concerned about boys' declining participation in Jewish activities and their consequent disconnection from community support, Moving Traditions set about to build a model program for Jewish boys based upon evidence. In close collaboration with a research team, Moving Traditions followed a program development model that proceeded through successive stages of qualitative observation and data collection, hypothesis generation, hypothesis testing and analysis of results – all directly including Jewish boys' perspectives.

Empirical data were collected in two sequential studies, one which took place in Denver in 2008 and a curricular pilot conducted in multiple locations in 2009. These studies helped the program establish the specific desires, concerns and needs of Jewish boys in relation to their Jewish social, civic and religious engagement and led to the conclusion that there is a critical role for programs offered by the Jewish community for adolescent boys.

Building upon the Denver study's insights about adolescent Jewish boys' lives and premised on Moving Traditions' core beliefs, the research and program teams met with curriculum development specialists with expertise developing curricula for Jewish youth. A draft curriculum was developed incorporating key themes from the Denver study, which was then pilot tested with four groups of boys in different geographic and organizational contexts from May-July, 2009: a group of 8th grade boys' group in Philadelphia, PA who had had a bar mitzvah but were mostly no longer participating in Jewish life; boys who had mostly dropped out of programming post-bar mitzvah from a synagogue in Boston, MA; boys from a BBYO group in Rockville, MD, and attendees at a youth camp, Camp Harlam, in the Poconos, PA.

The research team utilized a multi-pronged approach to data collection, conducting interviews, focus groups, surveys and observation. Researchers sought the complex perspectives, experiences and recommendations of the boys and other key stakeholders from the following data sources.

- Collaborative field observation with extensive field notes of all sessions for the Philadelphia pilot and from selected sessions in Rockville, MD, Boston, and Camp Harlam, PA, as well as review and analysis of recorded sessions from the Boston pilot.
- Pre- and post-program surveys for all participants in Philadelphia, Rockville, Boston and Camp Harlam.
- Focus group observations and field notes from the Philadelphia pilot group and parents.
- Guided reflections from the four facilitators on key themes identified by research team.

Throughout this project, the research team also collaborated closely with Moving Traditions staff, the boys (and in Philadelphia, the parents of boys) in the pilot groups, group facilitators and curriculum writers.

The research team employed an inductive approach to the data analysis process, undertaking a thematic approach to data analysis that coded data by recurring categories.

From their comments in the post-test survey, participating boys liked the program and felt that it met some of their needs and expectations, including that they could play sports, hang out with friends, and have a mix of Jewish content while playing around. Parents, for their part, were quite enthusiastic and hopeful about the group. They had wanted the group to be a positive, powerful space for their sons, one in which they could learn about being Jewish and male and they felt that the group accomplished that goal.

The insights and feedback generated by this process are summarized here in “A Framework for Working with Jewish Boys,” offered to guide others engaged with boys. The key argument of this Framework is that programs serving boys must begin by paying attention to them and fitting their efforts to boys’ actual circumstances.

The Framework operationalized broad gender, cultural and developmental findings in a set of practical recommendations for educators, a brief summary of which follows:

- **It’s About Relationships.** Boys negotiate the incredible pressures of boyhood in the context of their relationships; where they find acceptance, encouragement and understanding, they can assert themselves and set their own courses.
- **In Partnership with Parents.** While there is much variance by age, adolescent boys need the support of their parents to invest themselves in significant activities. As boys’ primary reference points, parents who cheer their sons on as they try experiences, have successes and suffer setbacks, buoy them through a challenging developmental period.
- **Building Upon Existing Relationships.** Considerable thought and energy needs to be given to how boys are selected for programs and groups. In general, adolescent boys will prefer to add new dimensions to existing relationships rather than to join a totally new group.
- **Reaching Out to Boys.** Reaching out to boys so that they can actually grasp what the program might offer will not be easily accomplished. “Too Jewish” and the group will seem like more religious education; too educational and it will sound like more school. How boys hear the invitation will be influenced by other contexts they are already familiar with, so many of which do not especially hit home.
- **Leading, not Dominating.** Taking the intersectional identities of the program’s participants – Jewish, adolescent, male - into account, certain interpersonal and group dynamics can be expected to arise in programs for boys. To lead a group for boys successfully, as a result, requires certain critical strengths, related to the challenging dynamics of these groups and the skill set necessary for group facilitation. A specific list of skills for group facilitators is presented.

A Challenging Initiative

Contemporary boys have become a subject of great concern. Whether it is outcomes in education, health or moral development, many boys are at risk for falling victim to cultural norms that compromise their character, connections and development. A recent book, *Guyland* by sociologist and Men's Studies pioneer Michael Kimmel, paints a troubling picture of the world that boys encounter and the worrisome outcomes for boys who do not find support or opportunities to rise above it. Whatever the relative contributions of nature and nurture to their developmental trajectories, all boys make some personal accommodation to the ubiquitous social pressures of boyhood. The world our society creates for boys – filled with powerful constraints on myriad aspects of their socio-emotional development – exercises powerful effects on their lives.

Within the Jewish community in the United States, concerns about boys are focused on lagging post-bar mitzvah affiliation. Boys lose touch with Judaism and the Jewish community with alarming predictability – and at a greater rate than girls. This means, among other things, that the Jewish future is threatened. But more importantly, it also means that boys themselves must navigate their passage to manhood without the guidance or support of the very sort of community critical to their healthy development. Commenting on the sad conclusion that boys' connections to Judaism are more attenuated than girls', one Jewish leader lamented: "The substance of Jewish traditions exists to add color to our lives, and without it too many young men will live in monochrome" (Holtzman, 2003).

Such concerns have motivated educators, youth organizations and families in many parts of the world, in secular as well as religious contexts, to launch programs for boys. Wishing to offer richer developmental support and stronger intervention, these efforts have been guided by different philosophies about gender and boys (Clatterbaugh, 1990). It is worth considering the different core beliefs that influence how the problems in boys' lives are framed in these efforts.

For more conservative thinkers, boys' troubles signal that feminist-inspired social changes have undermined families and other important institutions. These thinkers tend to see gender as immutable and even biologically-based; boys and girls have different brains and, perhaps, different spirits. Sommers (2000) and Gurian & Stevens (2005) suggest a return to an old paradigm in which boys are recognized to be aggressive, ill-suited to educational settings and the anti-thesis, by their very natures, of all things feminine. They argue that we must acknowledge boys' fundamental difference from girls and build programs to suit their natures.

For more reformist or liberal thinkers, gender differences themselves are uncomfortable. Throughout the Seventies, in fact, androgyny was the preferred ideal; educators and others hoped to strip boys of their penchant for playing soldier or their over-competitive zeal. Masculine opportunity structures were universally condemned for their unnatural effect on boys' human hearts, which were assumed to be no different than girls'. Any acknowledgement of differences between boys and girls was discounted as retrograde politics.

What we might characterize as a more progressive perspective on gender has emerged only recently, largely in response to accumulating evidence that, even as girls and women's opportunities have opened up, societal change overall lags because boy's and men's lives - their masculine identities – have shifted only slightly. Where some have attributed the slow pace of change to men's self-interested investment in the status quo, others have conceded that perhaps it is our social organization, as much as boys' and men's agency, which perpetuates traditional masculinities. From this perspective, societies slot children into gender positions and encourage favored identities for their own reasons, quite independently of children's well-being. In this sense, some (e.g., New, 2001) have suggested that boys constitute an 'oppressed' group, denied critical human capacities such as emotional expression and relational freedom even as they are also relatively privileged. This perspective builds upon boys' lived experiences – listening to their “voices” – in order to construct a more informed sense of their pressures, struggles and needs.

This progressive perspective fits well with the philosophy of Moving Traditions, which has discovered how useful it can be for adolescent girls to meet together in the *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing* program to explore the pleasures and pressures of teenage life. For this and other programs, Moving Traditions has been guided by a progressive perspective and set of core beliefs about gender and development:

- That gender can be a powerful source of resilience and meaning in people's lives;
- That gender differs from sex and represents a set of social relations built upon body characteristics and varying by culture, history and geography;
- That the gender landscape changes from one generation to the next in profound ways, thus making it important to embrace young people as collaborators in programming;
- That girls' and boys' interests and identities range widely and reflect as much within-group variability as can be found between boys and girls as a whole. Still, while it is often misleading to speak of boys as a generic group, it is important to consider the overall impact of gender on them as males;
- That the Jewish community must be fully open to women as well as to men and support each gender's ability to relate with justice and understanding to the other;
- That boys share with girls basic human needs – for example, for connection and meaningful engagement in the world – which can be well-served by the Jewish community;
- Boys and girls also share challenges, in the form of societal expectations and messages from the media and popular culture which shape and can limit the full realization of their human potential;
- And that it will be necessary to build an understanding of how boys' lives are affected by the force of gender phenomenologically, by listening to and looking carefully at, boys and their lives from within their insider perspectives and meaning-making processes.

Research Model for the Campaign for Jewish Boys

Moving Traditions launched the *Campaign for Jewish Boys* motivated by these core beliefs and in the spirit of their encouraging experience with girls. Concerned about boys' declining participation in Jewish activities and boys' vulnerability to the pressures of normative masculinity, Moving Traditions set about to build a model for working with boys following a rigorous empirical research approach. The program development process was deliberate and systematic, collaborative and empirical. In this report, we summarize the research model guiding the *Campaign for Jewish Boys*, detailing its questions, design, methods and findings, and showing how the final section of the report, the Framework for Working with Jewish Boys, emerged inductively from the discoveries of the research process. As we have said, the *Campaign* is committed to including youth perspectives on their lives as the only sure way to address their needs.

The *Campaign for Jewish Boys* itself, including the initial exploratory study conducted in Denver, represents phases of an action research model. As Baskerville and Myers (2004) explain, the essence of an action research model is a two-stage process. Stage One is viewed as a collaborative "diagnosis" of the target social situation and Stage Two is a more intervention-oriented response which is structured as a collaborative effort to facilitate positive, stakeholder-driven change in the situation. Following this evidence-based approach, the Campaign to develop better programming for Jewish boys first listened carefully – through a systematic, rigorous research process – to a strategically selected sample of boys and other key stakeholders. Following this first research stage, the team then drew upon the themes, insights and recommendations from the interviews and observations to draft a curricular guide for a pilot implementation phase. This guide and curriculum were then pilot tested with different groups of boys who were asked to help refine the tools. Less program evaluation than collaborative problem-solving, this action research process was "essentially a social experiment, introducing some new policy and then monitoring its effects" (Payne & Payne, 2004, p. 9), the results of which were a set of recommendations for Jewish educators and a sample program.

In this report, we first summarize the initial stages of the research process – a literature review that considered Jewish males, boys' development and boys' education, an exploratory study aimed at mapping the important themes in Jewish adolescent boys' experience – and then review how these themes were converted into a draft curriculum for a program designed to address boys' needs. In addition, a partnership with four different groups of boys was established to pilot test this curriculum, asking them to provide critical feedback to the program development team. This phase of the research process, including its results, is reported in detail as well. Finally, the overall conclusions from this research are offered in the form of a Framework for Working with Jewish Boys.

Review of Research

Moving Traditions undertook a careful, systematic search through a variety of related research literatures including gender, male development, Jewish boys' development and boys' education, to assess what is known about boys and their needs in order to refine the organization's questions. The following is a brief summary of the key insights from this search.

Jewish Boys: Impact of Gender

Jewish teenagers represent a distinct minority among American adolescents: in a national survey in which three quarters of 13-17 year olds claimed to be Christian, 1.5% identified as Jewish. Compared to other groups included in their large *National Study of Youth and Religion*, Smith and Denton (2005) found Jewish teenagers demonstrated a distinctive pattern in their religious behavior: they attended religious services less frequently and "pray" alone much less often, while fasting or practicing some other form of spiritual discipline twice as commonly (pp. 51-53). On measures of youth group participation or religious group involvement, Jewish youth were found to be somewhat less actively observant than other groups.

A study of Jewish teens in Massachusetts corroborated the conclusions of Herring and Leffert (1997): American Jewish teens, while they "cared deeply about being Jewish and about Jewish causes", exhibit different religious practices than earlier generations of immigrant Jews (Kadushin, et al., 2000, p. 16). The authors concluded that the American context, especially parents' relative affluence and educational achievement, has shaped a Jewish adolescence that is more personal and individualistic, and less communal and observant in general.

As for the impact of gender on Jewish adolescents' religious connections, in Smith and Denton (2005) we learn that the pattern for Jewish boys parallels what they found across all measures of religiosity: "teenage girls are a bit more religious than teenage boys" (p. 277). In an earlier, more local study, Ravitch (2002) reported that boys and girls preferred different aspects of their participation in Jewish youth programming and synagogue supplementary schooling, arguing that "one size does not fit all". Somewhat earlier still, Leffert and Herring (1998) found significant differences between boys and girls in terms of their involvement in Jewish activities, for example, and concluded, "adolescent males do not find the activities as meaningful as females do" (p. 59). A more recent study of Jewish Community Center participants reported a similar gender differential (Cohen, et al., 2007).

Overall, we can conclude from this research that boyhood shapes how Jewish boys perceive and connect with their religious and cultural community. And further, we can also observe that Jews in general hope for more for their sons. Understanding how male development and boys' education reflect underlying cultural assumptions and shape opportunities offered boys by their families, schools and communities is a critical step to further that ambition.

Male Development

Concern about boys is common, not particular to Jewish families, schools and religious institutions. Over the last decade there has been growing attention to boys' developmental outcomes: in many key areas, well beyond spirituality, boys present a troubling picture.

For example, in terms of basic health outcomes, Waldron (1976), the US Prevention Taskforce (1996) and Courtenay (2004) all found that boys' choices and lifestyle practices place them at far greater risk than females. Brooks and Silverstein (1995), Pleck et al. (1992) and Pleck (1995) determined that the greater the boy's conformity to narrow ideas about masculinity, the more likely he is to take risks related to alcohol use, drunk driving and drug abuse.

Similarly, in relation to mental health outcomes O'Neil, et al. (1995) have built a strong research record pointing to the detrimental effects – in terms of self-esteem, depression, anxiety, violence, relationship success, etc. – of restrictive masculinity, which creates personal conflict in males when “rigid, sexist or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation or violation of others or self” (O'Neil, et al., p. 167). These damaging effects are felt early in boys' lives, according to Chu (2000), who studied elementary-age boys and found them to be quite sensitive to the cultural demands of masculinity, making “compromises” in personal authenticity to avoid falling short of masculine expectations.

Finally, and perhaps most problematic for societies, a strong relationship exists between these same restrictive male norms and uncivil behavior. Boys far more commonly than girls engage in behaviors that increase the risk of disease, injury and death to themselves and others: they carry weapons more often, engage in physical fights more often, wear their seat belts less often, drive drunk more frequently, have more sexual partners as well as more unprotected sex, and use alcohol or drugs more often before sex (CDC, 2006).

This pronounced effect of cultural norms for masculinity on male development validate the hope of organizations and communities that a better understanding of boys' lives might guide a more effective deployment of support and educational resources on their behalf. Why, after all, is religious connection and identity less appealing to boys than girls?

Recent developments in gender theory support the importance of understanding the particularly male dimension of boys' lives. Early in the men's studies movement, Brod (1992) wrote, “There is a need for men's lives to be re-cognized in some fundamental way” (p. 1). Up until that time, being male was the normative standard to women's “Otherness”; the gendering of males into masculine subjects had been invisible. With gender realignment in areas like education, health, crime and even procreation creating “profound changes...in the economic and social structure of many modern societies” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 57), it became increasingly important to study males “*qua males*”: “... the study of masculinity as a *specific male* experience...” (Italics in original, Brod, 1992, p. 40). Essentially, the actual nature of boys' lives, the day-to-day experience of their opportunities and pressures, can only be discerned – “re-cognized” – if we grasp the masculine dimension of these experiences.

The Men's Studies movement, after 15 or so years of scholarship, has developed a set of insights that are especially helpful in understanding boyhood. From this scholarship, these features of the masculine landscape bear special mention for their effect on boys' development: that a number and variety of male identities arise locally, arranged hierarchically and with particular versions more authoritative and more central, more rewarded and legitimated, within a society's core institutions. In relation to the “hegemonic” sway enjoyed by the more endorsed version of masculinity, other versions are marginalized, subordinated and delegitimized. This dominant

masculine form need not, in fact usually will not, be the most common version found in the culture; its hegemony lies in its ability to influence and control a boy's sense of possibility as he "seeks to create and realize" his life. The extent of this influence and control in each boy's life, it should be emphasized, is particularly critical to understanding boys' world: "It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal and violent" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 646).

Boys' Education

Many commentators and researchers share a concern that education is largely failing boys. While there are always boys who succeed in school, such successes come in spite of a limited grasp of what boys need. Notwithstanding the fact that boys' education of any sort – academic, moral, religious – produces very high rates of failure, there is little change in how boys are educated. Generations of males have endured educational approaches at a significant disconnect from boys' hearts and minds. We might ask, "Why?"

In *Raising Cain*, Kindlon and Thompson (1999) wrote of "destructive boy archetypes", defined as "unconscious assumptions about the way all boys are" (p. 36), permeating the culture and influencing how we treat boys, including in education. When we consider two of the archetypes they describe, we can appreciate how hard it might be for educators to perceive boys as good learners or community members. The "wild animal" archetype depicts boys as barely civilized, driven more by basic instincts than moral values, while the "entitled prince" views boys as so elevated by cultural advantage that, again, moral considerations are compromised. In pointing out how completely such stereotypes ignore boys' human needs, the writers suggest that troubles with boys may begin with how we imagine their lives.

Recent educational research underscores this point. Miriam Raider-Roth, Director of the Jewish Education Center at the University of Cincinnati, has researched effective teaching practices. In one study of teachers' reactions to male students, she discovered barriers to teachers' abilities to be "present to the interior lives of boys as well as the exterior pressures on boys" (2006, p. 1). She concluded that conflicted ideas about boys make male students a "relational puzzle" for many teachers (Raider-Roth, et al., 2008).

Yet, from broader research on what works for students in their classrooms, Raider-Roth (2005) proposed the "relational learner" as the most apt model for how children acquire knowledge. She wrote that, "Just as the theory of the relational self postulates that the self is born and develops in the cradle and life of relationships, so the notion of the relational learner postulates that the learning self is constructed and developed within the relationships of school" (2005, p. 21). In recognition of the critical role of relationship in education, Rodgers and Miriam Raider-Roth (2006) considered which teacher qualities foster relationship and proposed that effective relationships begin with *presence*: "a state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional, and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step" (p. 266). In other words, teachers must muster attention and offer responsiveness to their students as a precondition for learning.

At a time of heightened concern about how well educational efforts reach boys, approaches that are sensitive to the relational dimension offer promise.

Conclusion from Literature Review: Important Opportunities

Engaging with these strands of research as a theoretical and psycho-social/socio-cultural backdrop, we can better appreciate the deep-rooted forces underlying the challenges boys face with connection, community and education. In this sense, the concern of the Jewish community – boys who are disconnected from major aspects of social, emotional, and civic life – can be seen to reflect much larger societal patterns. Yet, the good news for those hoping to promote healthier and happier boys is that, though encounters with its pressures are inescapable, the domination of the prevailing masculine identity is incomplete. There is sufficient room for boys to exercise agency and to invent creative ways to be themselves, to thwart routines and roles they find suffocating, and courageously risk pain and punishment rather than surrender their hearts altogether. As boys negotiate the masculine identity formation process – its peer pressures and incitements, institutional norms, rewards and recognition systems, family, community and school man-making curricula, the structured world of opportunity as it is typically offered to boys – they invariably discover free spaces, opportunities for their own “gender play” (Thorne, 1994). These free, or relatively freer, spaces can be engineered for boys by organizations wishing to help create healthy alternatives to mainstream norms.

As research has demonstrated, where there is sufficient community or cultural support, a boy’s resistance to dominant pressures can grow into full-blown identities (Reichert & Ravitch, 2009). Whether fanned by cultural support or simply by following their own personal developmental logic, boys’ “transgressive” impulses – “movement beyond accepted boundaries” (hooks, 1994, p. 7) – can be expected to arise continuously. Thus, especially where they are well-connected to sources of support and inspiration, boys may challenge the dominant ways of being male and carve out spaces in which to follow their own imaginations for their lives. In other words, more is possible for boys than simply fitting themselves into the dominant gender framework, but these possibilities depend greatly on how actively communities mobilize to offer them support.

Programs determined to serve boys’ needs better can incorporate such insights into their design and train their staff in these sensitivities. These findings represent the beginnings of a more thoughtful, evidence-based approach to boys’ education, one that builds upon recognition that gender affects all aspects of boys development and lives. Myths about boys have clouded our recognition of their needs and shaped relationships, programs and opportunities. The way forward – connecting with boys, combating limiting stereotypes, opening up possibilities – is emerging from more inductive, theory-building efforts, including the research presented in this report.

Exploring Possibilities for Jewish Boys: The Denver Study

Struck by the importance of the effort, and encouraged by its possibilities, Moving Traditions proceeded to an initial, exploratory research stage. The organization first commissioned an empirical study to describe the realities of life for adolescent Jewish boys, seeking to describe how their lives are influenced by their social contexts, including their Jewish connections (Moving Traditions, 2008; Reichert & Ravitch, 2009). A qualitative methodology, using focus groups and interviews, was deemed the best approach for capturing boys' views of their lives and to build a deeper understanding of their needs. Especially in light of the difficulty of creating contexts in which boys reveal themselves - telling their stories and relating the actual nature of their experiences - a phenomenological research approach was selected. This approach focuses on understanding the individual and collective experiences and interpretations of a group that shares particular phenomena and lived experience within a social/cultural milieu, building theory about boys' lives inductively from boys themselves.

Taking place in the metropolitan Denver area in 2008, the research team conducted focus group interviews with boys ranging in age from 11-19, from a variety of affiliations and school contexts, as well as with parents and religious educators. A fuller discussion of this research study can be found in the report entitled, "*Wishing for More*" (Moving Traditions, 2008).

But from the focus group interviews and observations, the research team discovered a striking phenomenon: teenage boys whose connections to Judaism and Jewish life offered resiliency, constructive identities and relational opportunities for development. The Jewishly-affirming young men in the study – and the adults around them – described adaptations that were more independent of adolescent peer group norms and freer, especially in terms of masculine identities, with more expressive communication styles and close male friendships, than less Jewishly-connected boys. For the most part, these boys were able to find their way to the Jewish community, fashioning a home for themselves by cobbling together their own particular mix of relationship, education, symbol and religious practice.

Yet, as the researchers noted in their report, Jewish boys wished there were more opportunities they could actually connect to. Despite the best of intentions and many committed individuals, their Jewish community/ies did not make it easy for these boys to stay connected; on the contrary, most of the boys and their parents complained about the limited and often unappealing offerings available to them within the organized Jewish institutions. From stale and dogmatic supplemental education, "preachy" youth outreach, anxious parents or overly secular youth groups, even the boys who were most Jewishly-affirming explained that they had had to construct their Jewish identities amidst significant barriers.

Overall, the following points summarize the key findings of the study:

- "*It was a home to me*". Throughout meetings with boys, a sense of home, or "home base", "community" or "connection," was a resounding theme. The sample contained boys who attended Jewish day school and those who often found themselves one of very few Jews in large public middle and high schools. What the researchers could track across these and other social locations were the different degrees to which boys registered

their need for a home and discovered strategies for fashioning and finding one, usually in some relation to their Jewish community.

- *Self-development.* Overall, participants described an active, self-directed identity development. Most of the boys were making active, intentional choices about how and when to identify, connect and engage with their Judaism and/or Jewish identity. For the Jewishly-affirming boys, while it might have initially been their families who facilitated their connections, at later points in their development they came to engage on their own terms, following a self-directed developmental logic. For some, they differentiated themselves from their more secular families and elected a different way of being in the world, one informed by their ties to other, usually Jewish, boys. They made it clear that they were making these identity moves on their own, that no adult could do it for them (though at times they cited adults who exposed them to new possibilities for Jewish identity). And many complained about youth group contexts that were too dominated by adults.
- *Counter-cultural masculinity.* Many of the boys revealed unique perspectives on their masculine identities. Their masculinities stood in contrast to those in more mainstream cultures/social milieu (i.e., not trying to be cool, embracing academic achievement, the ability and desire to be affectionate, a value on being nice in general, including to younger boys, and how this all connects to emotional expressiveness and connections to their hearts). Across the more and less-affiliated groups, this contrast with mainstream masculinity was sharper and more visible the stronger the boy's affiliation with his Jewish culture. There was something that the more affiliated boys had – a nuanced self-understanding, a particular kind of maturity, an expressivity – that freed them up in a variety of ways and allowed them to explore and to experience who they are.

Through conducting and analyzing data from individual interviews and focus group interviews, the study also elicited recommendations for educators and parents, asking the boys who participated to offer guidance for those interested in creating a program for boys. The following represent some of the key insights from these suggestions.

- *Affiliation:* Boys asked that Jewish organizations reconceptualize their notions of affiliation, saying that they want to go in and out rather than commit to consistent and on-going programming. Communities and families must allow for more fluidity and self-determination in how boys connect with Judaism. Keeping these realities in mind can influence how Jewish organizations interpret boys' shifting embrace of their Jewish identities.
- *Confidence and Pride:* Given the important role Jewish experience plays in many adolescent boys' lives, the Jewish community should feel more secure and confident about the value of this experience. The worries and urgencies of educators and parents actually impel them to misread opportunities with boys, causing them to push when yielding works better and to rush forward when waiting would communicate more

invitation. For boys, these urgencies create barriers in the way of close and open relationships and signal that they must keep their very people they should be able to rely upon at arms' length. Ultimately, boys lose connections with adults who can listen to their experience and help them make sense of the world.

- *A Remarkable Opportunity*: Many boys evinced a longing for deeper Jewish connections. They wanted a place where they could talk about their lives, with others who could guide and understand them. More than any other motivation, the need to explore their world and share their experience with others as a way to understand it made them eager for contexts that might be constructed for them. In other words, there seemed to be a remarkable opportunity for the Jewish community to develop programs that can satisfy such boys' needs.
- *Boys' Agency*: Both because they can ultimately be trusted and because they will, in reality, have it no other way, Jewish boys must be permitted to make choices and access opportunities for religious education and cultural activities on their own terms.
- *Partnerships with Boys*: Programs for adolescent boys will best be established in ways that invite boys' hand in design and their full capacities in leadership. Because they share a common experience, boys can listen to and respect each other most readily. It is hard for them to believe that others understand the experience of boyhood with quite the same appreciation for its realities. They are more likely, as a result, to trust and commit to programs in which they can exercise their own agency.
- *A Role for Mentors*: The boys were equally clear that they wanted, indeed needed, mentoring. They were hungry for men, in particular, who could relate to their experience. In addition, they responded well to younger adult males who can talk credibly about their own passage through to Jewish manhood.
- *Recognizing Boys' Actual Lives*: The need for Jewish youth-serving institutions to fathom the realities of boys' lives is heightened by the status accorded to Jewish masculinity as a subordinated and marginalized identity within the larger culture. Young Jewish males certainly perceive what the cost will be if they adopt the identities of their fathers and grandfathers. The developmental ramifications of this perception seem important to understand better.
- *Boys' Human Needs*: Adults who hope to help Jewish boys must also evaluate their own ability to perceive males' human needs, even as these are camouflaged, hidden or misplaced. Too many adult caregivers react to boys with feelings of rejection or blame, unable to penetrate boys' survival patterns to see the child or adolescent needing connection, understanding and safety.

- *Boys' Need for Emotional Expression*: What this means, in particular, is staying close enough, in good enough communication, that boys can express their hearts, especially when they cannot find sufficient safety to do so with their mainstream peers.

The Curriculum Development Study

Confident from the literature review and this initial, exploratory study that Jewish boys would like the Jewish community to develop programs better tailored to their needs, Moving Traditions proceeded to the next stage of its *Campaign for Jewish Boys*. For this stage, aimed at testing emerging hypotheses about Jewish boys' needs, the research team specifically drew upon a participatory action research approach to insure that boys themselves informed curriculum writers and program developers with the realities of their lives, their perception of their needs and their concerns. A primary goal of this stage of the action research process was to gain focused, data-based insights from observing a pilot testing of curricular efforts and by engaging with all pilot participants – the boys themselves, the curriculum developers and the group facilitators – in an iterative, evidence-based program development initiative that would lead to a refined program and more specific recommendations for Jewish educators, ones deeply informed by stakeholder perspectives and experiences. This pilot process included parents of the boys in the Philadelphia pilot as well, who shared their insights and concerns about their sons, their engagement (or lack thereof) in Jewish civic life, and their participation in the life of the group in focus groups at three selected points during the duration of the pilot group.

Deducing a Curriculum

Drawing from the Denver study and building upon Moving Traditions' core beliefs and the organization's experience developing programs for teenagers, the research and program teams began to meet with curriculum development specialists. The following themes represent the team's consensus of key curricular themes that could resonate with boys.

- *Being Yourself (Authenticity)*. A child in general and an adolescent in particular actively strives to develop a sense of self. The adolescent boy (or girl) must do so in the context of his communities (families, neighborhoods, schools, etc.), where certain identities are encouraged, others discouraged. This developmental task is felt by teenagers as a driving force, motivating them in relationships, activities and aspirations. Finding opportunities for validation, even appreciation, for the self one has chosen to be is especially reinforcing.
- *Brotherhood (Affiliation)*
Because the experience of being male is both so determining and so off-limits in adolescent boys' relationships with both peers and adults, finding a group of other boys to share the experience with offers a rare security and sense of connection. And as boyhood is so inflected by culture and social position, finding a group of boys who are "like me" is especially prized.

- *Making a Contribution (Tikkun Olam)*
Discovering meaning, seeing one's life in a broader context, is another developmental need. Typically teenagers draw upon those opportunities afforded by their social contexts for their particular investments. In the world of Jewish American boys, there is vivid inspiration for making one's life matter to others and many examples offered in both history and present time of boys' actively making meaning and use of the concept of Tikkun Olam, healing the world.
- *Self-Expression (Emotional Awareness)*
For boys, the realm of emotional sharing is one of the most strictly policed aspects of social experience. Most boys learn to keep their feelings and their words for what they feel, closely guarded, even from parents and other close relationships. Because this aspect of self is so integral to performative masculinity; it is safest to transgress the social taboos with other males. Boys find being able to express their hearts, especially with other males, freeing and highly relieving.
- *Self-Determination (Freedom)*. Being a child is a highly vulnerable condition, where basic needs and fundamental circumstances (e.g., safety, belonging, respect) are contingent on others' power. At adolescence, just as there is a growing sense of self-awareness and self-respect there are great forces, both oppressive (e.g., mandatory schooling, parental control, peer policing) and reward-based (meritocratic sorting), dominating a teenagers' field of choice. In this context, experiencing support for self-determination is highly prized.
- *Manhood (Moral Aspiration)*. Gendered identity is the earliest social characteristic recognized by children. Values and ideals about being male and female are communicated to children from earliest awareness by everyone in a child's life, deliberately as well as unconsciously. There are societal ideals, as well as norms that are based in particular cultural groups, and these often conflict. How a boy comes to understand the masculine "offers" being made to him and what choices he makes in relation to these are defining dimensions of adolescence, yet there is typically little opportunity for boys to acknowledge this process or sort through their way it with any real perspective or support, especially from adults.

Using these themes as a starting point, the team developed a set of curricular sessions that combined pedagogical content with innovative exercises and group experiences. For example, to help boys consider the theme of Brotherhood, the draft curriculum framed a series of questions about boys' experiences of trusted friends, stories about the significance of such relationships in real world contexts like the Israeli army, and experiential exercises that would probe the limits of their present levels of mutual trust. The thrust of this unit was to help participants to name the importance of this dimension in their relationships with each other, assess the state of their brotherhood and facilitate their efforts to develop even more trust and interdependence.

Pilot Testing Curriculum

This draft curriculum was then pilot tested with four groups of boys in different geographic and organizational contexts from May-July, 2009: a group of 8th grade boys' group in Philadelphia, PA who had had a bar mitzvah but were mostly no longer participating in Jewish life; boys who had mostly dropped out of programming post-bar mitzvah from a synagogue in Boston, MA; boys from a BBYO group in Rockville, MD, and attendees at a youth camp, Camp Harlam, in the Poconos, PA. For each group, facilitators were given some instruction in the projects goals and the content of the different lessons and the sessions were observed by researchers (or, in the case of the Boston pilot, sessions were recorded and later audited by research team members). Facilitators were also asked to journal about their experience conducting the lessons.

The key goals of this pilot were to determine: (1) Recommendations that could be deduced from the overall process for Jewish educators. (2) Boys' engagement with the curriculum; (3) The fit of the curriculum, both developmentally and Jewishly; (4) The generativity of the curriculum, in the sense that meaningful learning and development occurred.

Research Design

This research design combined multiple approaches to qualitative research including: (1) an action research approach that produced an emergent curriculum and stakeholder-driven development process, (2) a phenomenological approach to data collection and analysis to engage boys and other key stakeholders in a careful dialogic, listening process, and (3) a traditional qualitative approach to data collection that necessitated multiple, overlapping forms of data collection to achieve validity of findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Maxwell, 2005).

The participatory action research model was a good fit for a pilot project of this kind. In general, action research is a form of reflective, systematic inquiry the goals of which are the improvement of practice, a better understanding of that practice, and improvements to the context in which the practice is carried out (Stringer, 1999; Johnson, 2002). Action research entails a systematic and collaborative exploration into the realities of people's lives within their institutional contexts, with a clear-cut goal of generating improvements to those contexts (Sagor, 2000). Action research is a practice of *situated, interpretive, reflexive, collaborative, ethical, democratic, and practical* research. The research process provides a structure that helps researchers and stakeholders move recursively between theory, research and practice (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Stringer, 1999).

Typically, the problems and issues that most clearly warrant an action research approach derive from the lived experiences of everyday life. The research model specifically provides gives program developers with opportunities to reflect on and assess their assumptions; to explore and test new ideas, methods, and materials; to determine how effective new approaches are; to share feedback with a wide variety of stakeholders; and to make decisions about programming and practice using an evidence-based approach (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Stringer, 1999). The particular action research approach embraced by this *Campaign for Jewish Boys*, participatory action research, requires that participants engage in formative ways in the

development of guiding questions as well as in the tasks of the research process itself: working collaboratively with the researchers to continually question and explore the research process. Our use of this research approach emphasized two strategies in particular:

Triangulation

The strategy of triangulation seeks a combination of multiple points of data collection in order to gain access to the most accurate picture of participants' perspectives and experiences, relying on cross-verification to establish greater credibility and validity (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Maxwell, 2005). By taking a multi-pronged approach to data collection through the use of interviews, focus groups, surveys and observation, the researchers were better able to grasp the complex perspectives, experiences and recommendations of the boys and other key stakeholders throughout the process.

Iterative, Data-Based Model Development

Using the action research cycle to inform the process of this data-based, constructivist program development model the research team collaborated closely with Moving Traditions, the boys (and in Philadelphia, the parents of boys) in the pilot groups, the group facilitators, the curriculum writer and curriculum development team. This reflexive data collection and analysis process allows for the continued development of core program conceptions and how those are executed upon through curriculum development and facilitation (Stringer, 1999).

Data Sources

The research methodology employed multiple, intersecting data collection techniques, including:

- Collaborative field observation with extensive field notes of all sessions for the Philadelphia pilot and from selected sessions in Rockville, MD, Boston, and Camp Harlam, PA, as well as review and analysis of recorded sessions from the Boston pilot. These observations were conducted by an expert research team, which was comprised of a psychologist whose work centers on boys' identity development and an academically trained qualitative research expert with special expertise in action research and ethnographic research. The research team members are key leaders in a nationally recognized center that studies gender and education. This team draws on individual and collective strengths to bring different perspectives and lenses to the process.
- Pre- and post-program surveys for all participants in Philadelphia, Rockville, Boston and Camp Harlam. The surveys were used to corroborate field research observations. These surveys combined both semi-structured and open-ended questions in order to elicit boys' general experiences, desires and goals as well as to elicit their focused feedback on the pilot sessions as they experienced and reflected on them. See Appendices for sample survey instrument.
- Focus group observations and field notes from the Philadelphia pilot group and parents. These focus group questions were semi-structured, asking specific questions about the families' Jewish practices, engagements and experiences, as well as open-ended to

explore hopes, concerns, goals and recommendations. The focus groups with the boys took place amidst their experience of the curriculum itself, in a stop-action format and lasted from 25-45 minutes. There were 3 focus groups with parents lasting between 60-90 minutes, conducted on-site during boys' pilot sessions. All parents of the 12 participating boys were invited to attend the focus groups and, over the course of the 3 meetings, all families were represented by at least one parent. See Appendices for interview protocol.

- Guided reflection for the four facilitators on key themes identified by research team. Facilitators across the four pilot cities were provided Guided Reflection tools to help them reflect on each session and across sessions on boys' (and their own) experiences of engaging in the groups. These notes, which were quite detailed, allowed for insight into quite specific aspects of the curriculum, group process and facilitation styles of the facilitators and its relationship to the overall group process and functioning. Reviewing facilitators' notes allowed the researchers to see the range and variation in facilitation styles and to begin to evaluate the curriculum in an iterative way.

Data Analysis

The researchers engaged in formative data analysis throughout the project in order to refine protocols for observation and to make early and mid-course adjustments to the overall data collection strategy. Specifically, field notes as well as recordings from sessions and focus groups were rigorously analyzed throughout the research process in order to inform subsequent data collection including the refinement of observations and focus group findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some key characteristics of the data analysis process include:

- Coherence and consistency (internal validity) across raters (inter-rater reliability) which yielded confident, data-based assertions.
- Analysts with different conceptual frameworks (i.e., ethnographic, broadly qualitative, emerging narratives in institutional contexts, organizational development, developmental psychology) which provided a rigorous, interdisciplinary process of identifying and analyzing core themes.
- Triangulated data collection and analysis – multiple, juxtaposed data sources – which allowed for a complex analysis of data from each boy as well as across groups of boys (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The research team utilized an inductive approach to the data analysis process, employing a thematic approach to data analysis that necessitated that the data are organized, through a process of coding, into thematic categories. The researchers coded data following first a separate and then a convergent coding process in order to ensure coherence and consistency (internal validity) across raters (inter-rater reliability) (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process yielded confident, data-based assertions about the key themes and findings from across the full data set.

Research Sample

In the action research model, participants are selected to sample particular points of view deemed significant theoretically. In this case, with the *Campaign* focused on reaching out to early

adolescent boys who tend to drift away from their Jewish connections, it was important to include participants who represent middle school-aged boys less religiously involved. Guided by this goal, participants were selected opportunistically, sometimes collected specifically for the pilot (in the case of Philadelphia) and sometimes chosen from existing groups, depending upon the particular site. Overall, 33 boys were included in the pilot phase across the 4 sites.

- In the developmental pilot held for 6 sessions in Philadelphia, boys were selected to represent a population of boys who are not especially religiously-involved. They were offered \$50 as compensation for their time and it was explained that they would assist the program development team refining a program for boys. The 12 participants all attended 8th grade at a number of neighboring public schools; some of the boys knew each other, some did not. Though all were members of synagogues, across a range of denominations, only 1 was a member of a Jewish youth group, 1 other attended Jewish summer camp and only 4 attended religious services at least once a month.
- In the Boston group, all 7 of the boys were selected from a particular synagogue connected to one of the program development staff. This group met twice at the synagogue with a facilitator familiar to them to provide feedback on 2 of the curricular modules. This group ranged from 7th-9th grades attending public school (3), private school (1) or Jewish day school (3). The boys were similar to the Philadelphia group in terms of religious connection, with 4 involved in Jewish youth groups, only 2 attending Jewish summer camp and 1 attending religious services at least 1 time per month.
- For the group who met in Rockville, MD all 7 of the participants were part of an ongoing youth organization, B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO), who agreed to pilot test 2 curricular modules. They all attended public schools and were obviously members of a Jewish youth organization; many also attended Jewish camps. None, however, attended religious services regularly.
- In the Camp Harlam pilot, all 7 boys were in attendance at this Jewish summer camp and were selected to help pilot 2 curricular modules because they were not otherwise very connected to Jewish life.

Limitations of the Study

There were of course several important limitations to the design of this project that the research team attempted to mitigate as best they could. But as a developmental project, in which it was critical to capture participants' experience and subjective meanings, the design erred on the side of being transparent about our process and making the most of the time available with boys in vivo situations. While these strategic choices enabled the project to elicit the comments and insights of a good overall group of boys fitting the target profile, the process allows a generative set of hypotheses rather than absolute conclusions.

Samples were drawn, for example, from available boys; there was little about the process that was random or even deliberately stratified. Still, as we reviewed the demographic details of the overall sample, it did represent a good selection of boys on the margins of Jewish life.

In terms of data collection, limitations included time and participation constraints on the part of some of the boys (which manifested as inconsistent attendance in some cases) as well as more superficial responses from some of the boys in focus groups and on surveys. With respect to the surveys themselves, we felt that with small numbers and short time frames, the value of participants' responses to the pre- and post-tests was more qualitative than quantitative.

On a positive note, various incentives were offered to participants to ensure their full commitment and, in general, the research was thus able to follow most of those who originally began through to the end of their group's pilot.

Findings from the Pilot

While experienced youth group facilitators ran their groups, the research team observed boys' experiences, often stopping the sessions to ask boys to explain their reactions and to brainstorm additional ideas. Using a triangulated data collection model – the use of multiple data points to ascertain participants' points of view and achieve greater validity – the team kept careful observation and field notes during group sessions, conducted focus groups with parents and interviews with group facilitators, and administered pre- and post-group questionnaires to pilot group participants. The goal of this phase was to understand from a variety of vantage points how these groups were developing in terms of meeting the needs and interests of the boys.

Pre- and Post-Test Surveys

We conducted surveys with the boys at both the outset and conclusion of the first round of the program's pilot testing. The pre-test survey helped the researchers understand where the boys were coming from: the role of region in their lives; their level of affiliation with Jewish community life; and their level of satisfaction with Jewish education and programming.

Data on these three distinct-yet-interconnected aspects of Jewish engagement provided essential guidance on reaching out to the participants, and formed a useful baseline to compare with our post-test survey of their feelings about the Moving Traditions program.

The Role of Religion. The boys were asked to rank the importance of religion in their lives on a 1-5 Likert scale, where a rating of 1 indicated they strongly disagreed with the statement that religion is important in their lives, and a rating of 5 indicated they strongly agreed. The boys all chose ratings of 2, 3, or 4 – a notable spread, significant for its clustering around the middle, indicating that the boys did not feel particularly strongly about the role of religion in their lives.

The boys' qualitative statements on this topic shed further light on their numerical responses. They all saw religion as an important source of *identity* and *community*, and less directly as a

source of religious affiliation or spiritual practice. A summary of the responses from the Philadelphia group illustrates this notion of religion as identity and community:

- *“I like religion but it’s not a huge part of my life.”*
- *“It is there and I know I’m Jewish, but I am pretty inactive.”*
- *“[Being Jewish] is important because it makes us who we are and different from everyone else.”*

The first statement typifies many of the boys’ feeling of disconnection from religious practice. The second statement begins to reveal the distinction many of the boys made between their level of religious practice and Jewish identity. The final two statements cast this distinction in a more affirmative light, revealing how the boys see Judaism primarily as a positive means of connection to identity and community.

Religious Affiliation. As with their Likert scale ratings on religion, the boys' responses on Jewish affiliation showed that they all had a modicum of affiliation, but that few were intensely involved, or actively engaged in institutions or long-term activities specifically crafted for teens or teenage boys. All were members of synagogues, had bar mitzvahs, and observed major Jewish holidays. All but one had two Jewish parents, and half of them observe Sabbath (but were not strictly observant) at least occasionally. Only two of the boys, however, reported attending Jewish summer camp, and none belonged to a Jewish youth group.

Satisfaction with Jewish Institutions and Experiences. The boys had diverse responses (ranging from 1 to 5 on three items and 2 to 4 on a fourth), but on average they expressed a low degree of satisfaction, rating Jewish education 2.75 out of 5; Jewish services 2.6; and Jewish youth groups 2.25. Only summer camp ranked favorably overall, at 3.6 (see figure 1).¹

Post-test Survey. The post-test survey results (see Appendix B) indicated a high level of satisfaction: every boy rated the program experience either a 4 or a 5, considerably higher than the Jewish experiences they had rated in the pre-test survey, with the exception of camp:

¹ While the boys reported very little ongoing involvement with summer camp and youth groups, many of them had experienced them at one time or another in the past, and made their ratings on that basis.

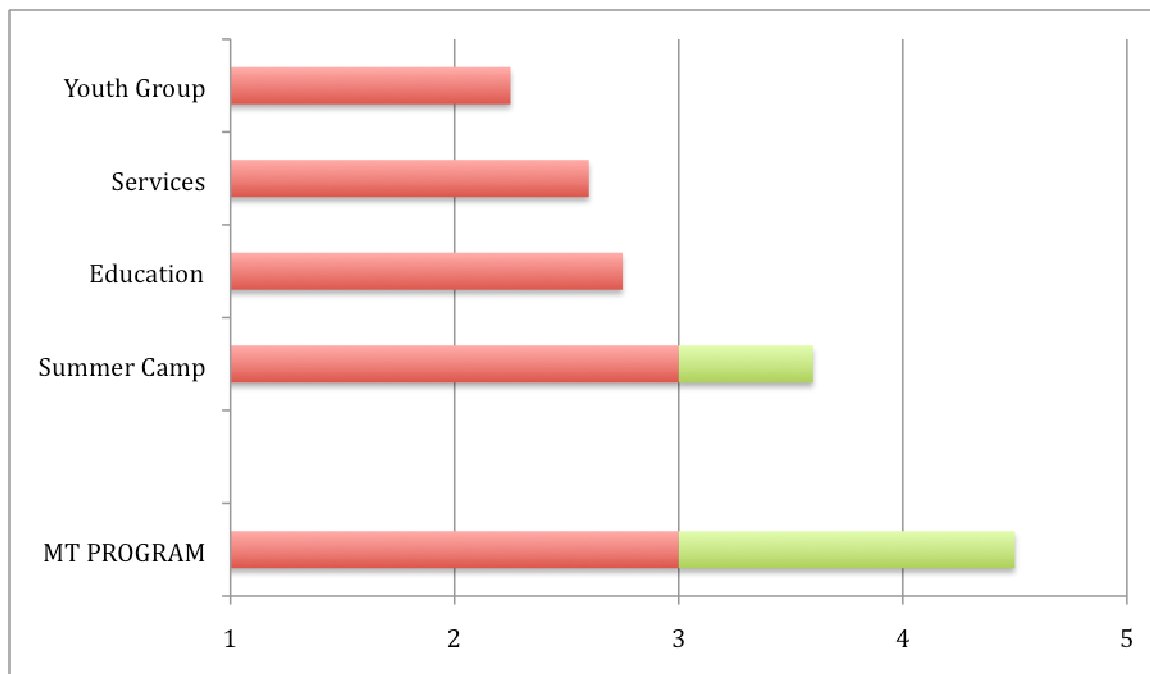


Figure 1. Boys' satisfaction with Jewish offerings. Green represents the degree above midline (3 out of 5).

The boys noted that the Moving Traditions program met both their expectations and their needs. They could play sports and hang out with friends, while encountering a mix of Jewish content. They found it “fun and thought-provoking.” “It is fun,” noted one, “you don’t feel like you learn anything, but you do.” They praised “fantastic” facilitators for making the experience “fun” and for letting them learn through building relationships with their friends. More detailed comments included:

- *“I learned some aspects of teamwork while playing sports, leadership when doing the trust fall, and friendship by meeting new people.”*
- *“I learned some Jewish values, life lessons and important Jewish guys like Hillel.”*
- *“I learned who my best friends are and that relationships should be taken seriously because you don’t know where they can lead you.”*
- *“I learned that you have to talk/say what you feel to become closer with others.”*

Participants also were asked to note highlights and lowlights of the program. To a remarkable degree, both of these categories of feedback were consistent with the boys’ overall experiences. Highlights consistently included the integration of sports and other physical activities into the program; the emphasis on fostering relationships among the boys; and the connecting of Jewish, male, and social-justice themes in the curriculum. Conversely, lowlights included, in some participants’ view, not having enough physical activities; the posing of questions or topics that did not sufficiently engage the boys’ interests; and a degree of repetition or stagnation in some groups from session to session.

In sum, the boys liked the structure and basis of the curriculum, and criticized it in those moments when the pilot curriculum failed to fully realize its own goals. This finding provided confirmation of the pilot's basic design and helped us better understand how to more fully and effectively translate that design into concrete educational material and facilitation techniques.

Parents' Focus Groups

While the boys in the Philadelphia group met, three focus groups were also conducted with their parents. Because of teen boys' youth – and perhaps despite boys' natural desire to develop individual, differentiated identities – parents can be a vital relational link to this kind of programming. In fact, it often was parents who encouraged the boys' participation at the start.

Our parent focus groups bore this out, and provided useful data on their and their sons' level of satisfaction with the program. Their satisfaction was closely tied to the hopes they had for their sons. Parents had wanted the group to be a positive, powerful space, one in which the boys could learn about being Jewish and male. Like the boys themselves, parents expressed their hopes in terms of Jewish connection, building relationships, and the promotion of healthy masculinity. A representative sampling:

- *“We’re hoping he’ll maintain healthy relationships with other Jews and not be inhibited about being Jewish.”*
- *“He is one of few Jews in his school. There’s something missing... there’s something here that he needs.”*
- *“His father wants him to have the opportunity to talk.”*
- *“It’s a treacherous time in boys’ lives, so it would be good if he can have something to do like this.”*

Across the board, the parents felt their hopes had been fulfilled, and their sons' needs met. They were unanimously happy that their sons had been included, and expressed satisfaction with the experience:

- *“There’s a male leader, and he’s kind of cool and he’s not nerdy which makes a difference to them. He’s a young guy, kind of with it. I’m eager for them to access the cool part of Judaism.”*
- *“Hebrew School is always about the facts. This is asking questions that are relevant, they are actually thinking about stuff, not just being fed stuff, and then they can explore that.”*
- *“I’m happy that they can feel positive about being Jewish. There’s so much self-loathing, boys at this age reject being Jewish, and this is important in that way.”*
- *“He likes these kids and that they’re cool and they play ball, they hang out together. I see it as an increase in his confidence. I’m just seeing him being more confident about being Jewish: he’s Jewish and Jewish guys are cool as anyone else. He seems to be more confident with who he is.”*

Just as important, the parents reported that their sons were similarly happy with the program, and many were surprised at how much their sons valued the group:

- *“He wants to come back, so that’s a huge sign.”*
- *“My son is always worried to get here on time, and usually he doesn’t care, so that says a lot to me.”*
- *“My son feels his opinion is being respected.”*
- *“He’s been excited about this all week before each session, that’s BIG.”*

Given that many parents expressed confusion about how best to engage with their sons in relation to the issues addressed in the program, it seems that there is also a wonderful opportunity to use this program as a way to strengthen ties between the boys and their families, precisely at the transitional time in teens’ lives that often brings new strains and challenges to the parent-child relationship.

Summary

Overall, these results from participants and parents added dimension to the other data collected – observations, facilitator notes, feedback from participants elicited during the pilot sessions – ultimately permitting the research team to deduce a broader set of conclusions and recommendations for boys’ programs.

A Framework for Working with Jewish Boys

In addition to a sample curriculum for new programs, this research process provided a wealth of feedback and critique from boys, parents and program team members, as well as observations about what worked and what did not in the real trenches of program delivery itself. This body of experience is discussed and summarized in the following Framework for Working with Jewish Boys. In offering this Framework derived from a close partnership with boys in our multidimensional action research process, Moving Traditions hopes to strengthen existing groups currently serving boys in educational and religious contexts, youth and community groups, as well as at summer camps. Through consultation and partnership with these programs, we have been impressed by how dedicated these organizations are to getting things right for the boys they serve.

The following represents recommendations for working with boys in a way that is respectful, informed about the impact of boys’ worlds and hopeful about the possibilities for deeper and more meaningful connections with other Jewish boys and the Jewish community as a whole. The suggestions contained in this Framework represent our experience and our reflections on what it means for those who wish to make boys’ lives better. Considered as a whole, the recommendations of this framework offer a new perspective on boys and constitute a new paradigm for our efforts to make a home for them.

Fitting the Group to its Participants

As the literature review concluded, a central tenet underlying effective approaches to boys' programming is the importance of the teacher or leaders' *presence*, referring to their willingness and ability to notice boys, read their needs and respond appropriately. Too often boys are asked, implicitly and explicitly, to fit themselves to contexts and curricula that do not serve their interests at all and may, in fact, run counter to their basic needs. They are expected to be silent about this mismatch and to submit themselves to it. But boys, essentially, vote with their feet – or at least with their attention and their allegiance. They engage when they can tell that they are being attended to with care, thought and understanding. They can tell, in other words, when the teacher or leader is able to be *present* to their needs. The experience of successful programs, in fact, is striking on this score: boys come readily, engage whole-heartedly, when they can tell they are being well thought-about and that their interests are considered.

For programs to attract and retain boys, the following insights ensure that adults who have made a commitment to serving boys begin by paying attention to them and fitting their efforts to boys' actual circumstances.

Developmental Fit

- Play and light-hearted fun must be a primary dimension of any informal educational program's meetings; most boys will not seek or stay committed to school-like activities. Because a program will depend on boys' voluntary commitment, it will need to suit boys' developmental interests. For many, these include opportunities for fun, physical play, good-natured competition and playful rough-housing. That is not to suggest that programs cannot include "serious" content; on the contrary, boys will want to grow and to learn, especially when they are comfortable that the overall tone suits them.

We must appreciate how much of an adolescent's day is dominated by involuntary commitments. This seems more and more true over time, beyond what previous generations can even fathom. One practical consequence of this cultural development is that adolescents in general and boys in particular will only participate voluntarily when they can tell the activity adds value or pleasure to their lives. Because play and so forth constitute the language of boyhood, programs must work within this vernacular to accomplish their goals.

In the pilot groups, researchers noted over and over how boys would balk at activities that seemed too didactic, religious or leader-centered; at the same time, they would thrill when encouraged to play, goof around and be silly. Overall, we felt that boys can engage in substantive content, but in a context that carefully balances the serious with the light-hearted.

- To invest boys in a program, whenever possible educators should offer them the opportunity to exercise ownership of the program as their "club", with a say in naming it, establishing its parameters and even having some say on content. An agenda review at

the start of each meeting, allowing boys a preview of plans and input into choices among activities, is recommended. So is an explicit endorsement of boys' rights to ownership.

Especially when the purpose of a program is to solicit boys' engagement, boys claim the right, overtly or implicitly, to be respected as co-inventors. They recognize that a generational separation makes it near impossible for adults to fully grasp their world and appreciate when their expertise is validated.

In the pilot groups, once boys were told that the group was intended for them, they quickly took charge and proceeded to develop rules, guidelines, even names.

- That said, boys also need a group to be provided for them by families/organizations and to be led by an adult male, preferably someone with whom they can identify. Subject to the overwhelming domination of their lives and relationships by adults and restrictive definitions of masculinity, adolescent boys typically resign themselves, unconsciously, to "the way things are" and find little initiative to create alternatives on their own. Yet, because human needs persist even when denied, it is always possible for groups of boys, facilitated and encouraged by adult allies, to create new options.

In the pilot groups, in fact, success depended as much on the rapport leaders established with participants as with any particular components of the curriculum. When the leader was uncomfortable, the boys were more reticent and less active and spontaneous.

- Though group facilitation is discussed more fully in subsequent sections of the Framework, from the perspective of the adolescent dimension of the program's intended beneficiary group it is important to emphasize that how the educator exercises authority is key to boys' sense of fairness and their willingness to participate. Educators will be permitted to lead, even expected to handle things boys themselves cannot, but must always solicit boys' own leadership and respectfully validate their points of view. The more transparent the leadership, the more trust and endorsement the facilitator will achieve.

In the pilot groups, there were many moments when positive norms were threatened by acting out or misbehaving members. How educators respond to these challenges – with warmth or harshness, understanding or blame, firmness or waffling – determine how well the group can go forward.

In many group situations with adolescents, it becomes clear that teens themselves nominate their own leaders. Educators who try simply to override this organic group leadership process can find themselves torpedoed and the group's purpose sabotaged. Boys can be especially oppositional and disruptive when they wish to rival an adult agenda. Reducing such moments to mere power struggles can lead to a loss of legitimacy in boys' eyes, as their loyalties to each other are often stronger than to the adult educator. On the other hand, when educators see in such moments the opportunity

to deepen participants' sense of being cared for and respected, the group can achieve significantly deeper traction.

The Boyhood Dimension

- Boys' learning styles can be thought generally to differ from girls, regardless of what brain science eventually concludes about hormonal or genetic contributions. Simply growing up male means certain activities and ways of being are valued and encouraged, others forewarn. Physical activity and movement, games, competition and fast-pace have a special place in boys' accustomed learning styles. Programs that acknowledge this reality, without pandering to it, will have the most success in engaging a broad range of boys.

Group meetings should shuttle between activities and sharing. Boys can “process” the group's activities and hold discussions best when these exercises are time-limited and interspersed between more concrete and active times. Educators will find, in fact, that even when the group seems stuck or to have run out of steam, new energy and possibilities can be created simply by setting the boys to a game or a challenge.

An emphasis on physicality should not be automatically prescribed regardless of the qualities of the actual participants. Some boys, for example, will be uncomfortable with sports or rough-housing and groups need to make sure such boys are comfortable and respectfully included.

- To avoid recreating traditional masculine experiences and values, educators must help the group establish itself as a social group with norms that prize fairness, inclusiveness and safety. It is important to appreciate how unsafe many boys' contexts typically can be and thus how important it is to distinguish this group from such contexts. Boys will be on careful lookout to size up the situation for its actual possibilities, wondering in particular whether they will be physically, emotionally and morally safe.

Boys left to their own tend to reproduce what they know from their experience. Thus, as in Goldings' *Lord of the Flies*, boys will tend to sort themselves by skill or confidence and to marginalize certain types of identities. The educator should gently “work” this dynamic at both ends: encourage the marginalized boys to become more central and invite the group to take responsibility not to exclude. And when they do marginalize, it will be critical to boys' sense of safety that the group discuss how that happened and how it affected everyone.

- Trust and emotional safety will be a basic, though often unspoken, explanation for a group's success or failure, particularly given the nature of the “work” the group aspires to help boys with. Boys must discover that they can be themselves with each other and that showing their vulnerabilities will not lead to humiliation or hurt. They must come to such discoveries “organically”, as they work their way through a curriculum and its various exercises and opportunities. They cannot be programmed to feel safe.

Basically, the group has to be experienced as safe, not just said to be so. Most boys have heard lots of high-flown rhetoric about values, while under the noses of teachers and other educators' significant injustices, hurts and humiliations are routine. Boys sense hypocrisy with highly-developed antennae. It is important that educators take a stand for boys' safety as a fundamental norm, so that participants will be more willing to put their hearts in play. There will be many moments in the course of each group meeting in which one boy or another will experience some threat or insult, however seemingly small; how the educator seizes in such moments to underscore the group's values will set the emotional frame for participants.

- Likewise, boys cannot be programmed to express themselves. This aspect of boys' human functioning is perhaps the one that has been most heavily impacted by the domination of conventional masculinity. The fact, however, that boys hide their hearts and perhaps even lack basic language for feelings, should not be confused for inability or unwillingness. Instead, educators need to expect boys to express themselves and create supportive, patient contexts in which they can express their emotions spontaneously. It is important at these times that the educator validate, even actively encourage, such sharing without embarrassing the individual boy.

There will be a tendency for the educator to feel somewhat uncomfortable at these moments and to protect boys by directing the groups' attention away from emotion. Underlying this common tendency is the fact that all adults, male and female, have internalized beliefs and attitudes toward male emotional expressiveness. A better idea, for educators who can be self-aware, is simply to normalize and model patient acceptance, as if to say that emotions (frustration, tears, embarrassment) are a natural part of life. Their being able to model such relaxed acceptance will depend on the extent to which educators have themselves had sufficient opportunity to think through these reactions.

Jewish Resonance

- From these pilots, we can safely say that boys will bring Jewish content to the group spontaneously, as a function of their establishing the group's identity. In most instances, educators need not introduce or press the topic themselves. Instead, they should be prepared for these "teachable moments" and should mark them as a way to reinforce their significance ("I see that everyone notices that we're all Jewish and that you feel safe to comment about that"). Depending on the group's tone, they may also choose to mine the moments ("let's talk more about that").

As we have said, making sense of who they are is the expected work of boys in the group and fostering their Jewish connections the underlying hope of the group's sponsors. These hopes are not idle, as boys in different groups have shown (the Philadelphia pilot group spontaneously named themselves the "JJJ" for "Jewishly Jewish Jews" and the D.C. group named itself the "Jew Crew"). Freed of doctrinaire Judaism or parental pressure, Jewish boys will most often reference their common experience as Jews in ways

that will make their connections to this heritage and community more conscious and accessible.

- It will be critical for boys to perceive the group's purpose as different from prayer services or formal religious education. For the purpose to be seen by boys as community-building rather than schooling, an emphasis on the shared nature of experience and values instead of on religious practice should be apparent. Boys will want to see Jewish material – when it is innovative, sophisticated and resonant – included in the content of the program, will expect it and can be expected to be relatively comfortable engaging with it regardless of the extent of their own affiliation.

Most boys' experience with Judaism has been of heavy-handed doctrinal teachings and requirements. In their pre-tests, boys rated the degree to which their religious experiences had satisfied them relatively low: 2-3 on a 5-point scale. Yet, even boys who did not reach bar mitzvah have found that they appreciate these opportunities to connect with the Jewish content on their own terms, through relationships with peers and in a context that is fun, playful and responsive to their interests and needs.

- A good balance between Jewish content knowledge and an appreciation for boys' journeys of self-definition and discovery permit a group leader to interact effectively with boys. Even though the aspiration of the sort of program we recommend is to facilitate closer connections to Judaism for boys, how boys' group can contribute to this goal is key. Pressuring or prescriptive Judaism will not work for boys in the context of social programming.

The skill of *presence* we refer to in this particular sense requires educators who are sufficiently comfortable and informed about Judaism and Jewish culture that their attention can be less absorbed in imparting the Jewish content and more focused on boys' reactions to it. A flexible and welcoming attitude toward how boys respond to the material provides boys a free space for noticing – and evaluating – their own reactions. Such self-awareness is a critical first step in making their Jewishness their own.

- Opportunities to share experiences of anti-Semitism and of life as an ethno-religious minority also seem critical, as many Jewish boys may feel quite isolated from other boys their age and might not have much chance, outside educational contexts, to tell these stories and to have their feelings validated. Encouraging this sharing relieves feelings of isolation for the boys and contributes to their sense of bonding.

There seems a tendency to minimize the extent to which many Jewish boys are targets of teasing or more overt anti-Semitic remarks, especially those in minority positions in schools in which they are an extreme minority. Finding sanctuary with other Jewish boys with whom they can identify and who have experienced similar treatment reinforces boys' connections to their community and helps them to draw other conclusions about their experience rather than to more deeply assimilate.

- Along the same lines, creating a space where boys can affirm the Jewish dimension of their personal identities and acknowledge ways they have internalized derogatory images, thoughts and feelings seems especially important for Jewish boys' groups. Isolated and unable to talk expressively with other Jewish boys their age, it is unavoidable that most will internalize the images and attitudes of anti-Semitism.

Again, we can expect such material to emerge spontaneously as boys react to being with each other and to the Jewish content in the curriculum. Sometimes, they may “act out” their internalized anti-Semitic attitudes in coarse comments toward each other; or they may dramatize the attitudes in reaction to specific exercises presented in the curriculum. However it comes to the fore, educators should be prepared to acknowledge the painful feelings, invite each boy to discuss and even humanize the moment with his own personal sharing.

Practical Commitments

Operationalizing these gender, cultural and developmental considerations leads naturally to a set of practical commitments programs must make to accommodate boys. In the following section, we report key insights for boys' programming. These insights have been generated through the experience of creating groups for Jewish boys that succeed in holding their interest and engaging their hearts, even while challenging them to operate in principled and relationally sensitive ways.

It's about Relationships

Prevailing stereotypes and gender scripts, carried consciously and unconsciously by teachers, parents, educators and youth workers, incline us to discount boys' need for connection and relationship. Yet, research with boys has made it clear that good relationships – with other young people, with parents, teachers or other significant adults – mediate boys' ability to invest themselves in the activities of their lives, and learn and grow. Boys negotiate the incredible pressures of boyhood in the context of their relationships; where they find acceptance, encouragement and understanding, they can assert themselves and set their own courses. For boys relationships can actually save lives.

Below are some key operating assumptions based upon this perspective.

- Boys usually cannot create their own peer contexts; they live within the groups and contexts that exist in their settings. Too often, these represent “default” groups, fostered by dominant influences that do not necessarily serve boys' needs. It is within these groups, in fact, that conventional norms and peer policing are promoted.

In meetings with boys in Denver, in Philadelphia and at their summer camp, even when boys described each other as friends they still eagerly responded to the opportunities created for them by Moving Traditions. They made clear that they were not generally

able to talk about or even to acknowledge certain aspects of their emotions or identities in their other peer contexts, and longed for all-Jewish contexts. In a sense, if we build it, they will often want to come. But what we build must be intentional, resonant and inviting.

- Boys in general cannot opt out of their mainstream contexts without personal cost, both because of their need for affiliation and inclusion in mainstream social groups around them and because boys' peer groups can be quite punishing toward those on their margins. For Jewish boys, whose difference is based more on affiliation than racial or ethnic ascription, it is always tempting to assimilate into the mainstream by denying or minimizing cultural connections.

Some boys we met with preferred, for example, not to be part of peer groups that revere risk-taking, substance abuse or derogation of girls. Yet how they relate to the majority of other boys who embrace these norms has a great impact on their social opportunities so that, despite their distaste for the norms of these groups, boys may continue to go along in order to be included. It is a rare boy, inevitably one who has found strong support to be himself, who does not compromise in order to fit in.

Jewish boys we met with are hungry to connect with other Jewish boys precisely to enjoy the sort of understanding and support possible outside of their more mainstream contexts. They were, in general, hungry to find contexts in which they could connect with each other.

- The significance of adolescent boys' peer groups as reference points must be regarded as a primary need. No matter what curriculum or leader programs employ, what boys will want most is to be with, have fun with and discover common ground with other boys their age.

Often programs created for boys miss this basic understanding, believing that the adults or the adult agenda can supplant boys' relationships with each other as a primary focus. A sounder approach is for programs to work with boys' need for each other and to build this developmental need into the program's goals. Doing so sets the stage for the program to influence these relationships in healthy directions.

An example can be seen in how programs for Jewish boys introduce their Jewish content: it is not the content, ultimately, but the boys' engagement with each other as they digest the content that can facilitate a richer engagement with their Jewishness. The real curriculum, the one that boys are most attentive to and motivated by, has to do with their connections to each other. The deeper their connections to other Jewish boys, the more robust and resilient they will find their Jewish identity.

- Sharing common values, ethno-cultural community and ways of being offer boys a "looking glass" for their critical work of self-concept and identity development. A group in which this work can be undertaken in concert with other Jewish boys is especially

important for boys given their encounters with anti-Semitism and experiences of minority group membership. The severity of these encounters should not be underestimated: boy culture in mainstream U.S. schools and communities is typically quite punishing of difference. Often finding themselves in minority positions, Jewish boys are frequently subjected to ethno-racial slurs and other kinds of insulting attributions. Without some peer counter-point to these negative reflections about their identity, Jewish boys are at risk for internalizing the content of these images in the development of their self-concepts.

Regardless of the extent of their more formal affiliations, Jewish boys thus generally recognize themselves as members of an ethno-cultural minority, one with a profound history and vivid, alternative norms that encourage a different sort of masculine aspiration. In our conversations with them, for example, they were adamant about not treating each other badly or engaging in the typical one-upsmanship characteristic of their worlds. As they are engaged in particular with their development as adolescent males, being with others facing the same pressures and possibilities is wonderfully validating for Jewish boys. Being with others “who understand”, as many boys affirmed, relieves individuals of the sense of being alone.

- Being with other Jewish boys outside of didactic religious context enables connection; making the context a time to enjoy relationship and even to explore their sense of self within the dominant culture is perhaps the best way to facilitate Jewish boys’ sense of identity. Boys, like all children and young people, like to play and need to have fun; life cannot be only for instrumental purpose. For boys, contexts that facilitate relationship and a collective sense of enjoying life are a matter of prime importance.

For a number of cultural and gendered reasons, school and educational contexts are particularly aversive to many boys. Perhaps it is true for some girls, but boys generally experience more gendered permission to oppose schooling and educational authority. They are less inclined, as a result, to please teachers, parents or religious leaders. Consequently, cultural or religious educational programs must, above all, be seen by boys as fun – not at the expense of more serious work, but as a basis for relating and building a context for the work.

- An adult educator, while central to the success of a group, will serve boys’ needs best as he organizes and leads them to relate well with each other. In doing so, he will come himself to be important in their lives: a provider of safe harbor.

Boys will forge deep and vital connections to educators quickly, especially if he is kind, fun-loving and fair. While their connections to the educator can be determining for boys, especially in places where they might struggle with the group’s requirements or in their relationships with other boys, the educator should not confuse his facilitation of the group with the central focus of boys’ concern, which is likely to center on their relationships with each other. This is the balancing act of good facilitation: providing strong presence and safety, while allowing boys to prioritize their relationships with each other. Because

it is so important, we have more to say about the educator in subsequent sections of our report.

In Partnership with Parents

While there is much variance by age, adolescent boys in general need the support of their parents to invest themselves in significant activities. The model of “sideline parents” in youth sports, despite its excesses, offers a picture of how involved, and yet in the background, parents can helpfully be. As boys’ primary reference points, parents who cheer their sons on as they try experiences, have successes and suffer setbacks, buoy their adolescents.

But because families struggle so commonly to understand and to negotiate their sons’ separation/individuation, the involvement of parents can often confound program’s efforts with youth. Getting the balance right, often by in explicit negotiations with participants, can make or break programs. For programs hoping to foster boys’ connections to their parents’ cultural and religious heritage, getting this aspect of the program on solid footing is critical.

- The importance of parental involvement must be thought through at each level of curriculum, outreach and communication.

Practically, parents probably make many initial decisions for early adolescent boys. Certainly they manage transportation, scheduling and other day-to-day aspects of boys’ lives. For these reasons alone, programs need parents to be as motivated and faithful as they hope boys will be. Parents must be sold, just as boys themselves must be, and hopefully will make the program a family priority. This requirement could suggest a parallel opportunity for parents, in which information is both shared and respectfully sought.

- Because parents are often the ones harboring powerful hopes for their sons’ affiliation, it is important to conduct the program in a way that is open to parents’ insights and feedback.

Inviting parents not just to preview the program’s curriculum but also to weigh in on what they hope to see the program accomplish is a respectful method to include them. Many boys will find it reassuring that their families are in sync with their program. Focus groups can help parents form their own sense of community in tandem with their sons.

In addition to needing information on the program’s goals and curriculum, parents will need guidance from programs about specifically how they can support what the program’s goals. For example, Philadelphia parents did not understand what confidentiality meant or how to approach their sons in the context of their group and therefore took an extreme hands-off approach, believing they should not ask their sons about the group at all.

- The model of holding a parent focus group while boys themselves meet seems a particularly good one, at least in early stages of the group's development. Parents' particular insights into their sons' needs and social dynamics can inform educators as they negotiate their own relationships. In the pilot program in Philadelphia, such a group reinforced the program's goals and guided parents to be more meaningfully involved in support of boys' participation.

Such groups also provide educators with an important, independent read of how boys are experiencing the group. Often, boys can reveal reactions to parents privately that they might not share more publicly even with the educator.

Building Upon Boys' Existing Relationships

- With identity development so determinant of boys' choices and interests, boys pay attention to the finest distinctions and contrasts between themselves and other boys. In essence, boys are looking for reference groups, social validation and belonging, as they build their sense of who they are.

For Jewish boys, a reference group of other Jewish boys can be a monumentally important resource, offering the hope of being understood, accepted and appreciated in ways that can be otherwise rare. Even though simply placing boys together will not, itself, make a group successful, Jewish boys who share other qualities – school, region, age, athletics – are likely to prize the opportunity to form their own group context.

- Considerable thought and energy needs to be given to how boys are selected for groups. In general, adolescent boys will want to travel in packs and will prefer to add new dimensions to existing relationships rather than to join a totally new group.

Some issues for programs with respect to group selection include: whether some or all of the boys know each other (and what that means for ones who don't know the majority), how boys know each other (through what kinds of groups and across what social networks) and the implications of this, and some effort to match, or at least ensure some balance among members' interests, particularly sports.

- It seems that same-age groups make the most sense since clearly the boys' age-related developmental stage has a great deal to do with their ability to engage around topics like sexuality and friendship.

Hierarchy and age stratification are significant factors in boys' lives, with many boys organizing friendships exclusively along horizontal lines. Though many older boys can embrace a role as mentors to younger boys, these older boys should themselves have opportunities to be with their age peers. Older boys can explore pressing questions of identity and life choice with each other that they simply cannot with younger boys.

- The degree of Jewish affiliation may also affect boys' experiences of groups, especially influencing how comfortable individual boys might be with Jewish content. Though the tendency to judge other youth on the basis of their affiliation seems moderate among adolescent boys, it nonetheless seems important to more affiliated boys to have opportunities to reveal their hearts and commitments to other boys who can sympathize and support them. Likewise, boys who have kept Judaism at a more distant level will need to be free of peer pressure as they explore their own hearts for Jewish resonance.

For example, a group of boys in Philadelphia were fairly assimilated, generally lacking Jewish knowledge and deep Jewish connections and experiences. This affected how they understood (or did not understand) the Jewish content in the pilot curriculum. Boys in a second pilot group, outside of Washington, D.C., on the other hand, shared connections and positive Jewish experiences within BBYO that positively affected their ability to engage with the curriculum. For this second group, it was clear that boys could assume safety with each other that they had built already within their Jewish youth group context.

- Group size matters for boys' groups. It seems that ideal number of boys is approximately 8-10. Too many boys can be difficult to manage and seem to affect the group's intimacy. Having too few boys in a group seems to put an inordinate pressure on boys to be intimate and to minimize play opportunities.

The "spotlight" of peer group attention can be intimidating for vulnerable boys, especially in the context of a program curriculum that asks boys to share on sensitive topics. Many boys dread "awkward" moments in which they are expected to speak before they have felt free to do so. In this sense, there is safety in numbers and a greater likelihood that someone will break the ice.

Reaching Out to Boys

- Reaching out to boys so that they can actually grasp what the program might offer them will not be easily accomplished. "Too Jewish" and the group will seem like more religious education which was largely aversive to most of the boys in the pilots; too educational and it will sound like more school. Too little structure and it will seem more like a playgroup or a club, without any particular challenge. Too much emphasis on maleness and it might trigger homophobic reactions. In other words, how boys hear the invitation will be influenced by other contexts they are already familiar with, so many of which do not especially hit home.

Malcolm Gladwell's (2002) insights in his popular book, *The Tipping Point*, offer some guidance. In particular, building a group through key communicators – "connectors" – in boys' existing social lives stands the best chance of getting accurate messages to them. Programs seeking to establish new groups can begin by recruiting peer marketers from among those boys or young adults already perceived as "cool", with extensive and diverse networks. Programs wishing some diversity or representativeness in the group can build it by recruiting two or more connectors, with different networks.

- As a part of the recruitment process, some input over how the group gets framed can be offered to these peer recruiters, to enhance their own investment from the start. It will be important throughout the group's life that adolescent boys feel ownership of the group as their own space. Otherwise, they are likely to lose interest and to perceive the group as yet another occasion in which controlling adult interests trump their own.

The pilot group in Philadelphia group came to think of the group as a “sports group”, due in part to the fact that most of them were quite athletic and loved structured times to play with each other and due in part to how the group was framed early on. Probably this result occurred because the more prominent boys in the group were so identified as athletes. Another pilot group, outside of D.C., was built from the leadership cadre of a youth group; these boys saw the group as an extrapolation of their leadership training and even though they did not all know each other, easily came to assume commonality.

- Holding meetings at group members' homes both facilitates boys' sense of personal ownership and distinguishes it from school and *shul*. Such finer distinctions should not be discounted; boys interpret meaning from available cues and, at the stage of establishing a group, it is best to convey appropriate cues.

Like other features of their identities, boys' homes – play rooms, basketball courts, neighborhoods – represent to boys who they are. Holding meetings in their homes brings the program “home” in symbolic as well as practical ways.

- For boys still quite dependent on parents, it seems that parent support of the program will affect boys' self-selection. Parents can both help reinforce the importance of the group to their sons and can also ensure that they process the outreach messages accurately.

These are just some of the more obvious, practical reasons programs need to partner with parents. Less consciously, boys and parents are often attuned to each other's emotional and value reactions. How parents feel about something affects how their children will interpret it as well.

Leading not Dominating

Taking the intersectional identities – Jewish, adolescent, male – of the program's participants into account, certain interpersonal and group dynamics can be expected to arise in programs for boys, both among participants and in relation to educators. Boys tend, generally, to show scant willingness to please authority figures and are prone to acting out their difficult feelings, especially when they feel anxious. To lead a group for boys successfully, as a consequence, requires certain critical strengths.

For starters, those educators involved in the group must be able to enjoy and appreciate boys, even while not endorsing conventions of masculinity they are likely to carry into the group.

Research with teachers of boys has revealed that when boys' resistance is directed at them, many teachers lose their ability to stay connected to boys, reacting personally. The boys who experience such reactions only know that the teachers have lost sight of their goodness and see them as somehow "bad". Teachers' or educators' *presence* has been mitigated by their upset and disconnection in such instances and it is unlikely that many boys can find safety, openness or cooperation with them.

Helping educators to develop, deploy and maintain a capacity both to connect and to lead represents an organization's first stage of due diligence as they consider implementing a program for boys. Beyond recruiting such individuals, it is also imperative that organizations be prepared to train both male and female educators to understand boys and become more aware of their own guiding images of who boys are and can be (see the following section on Selecting a Boys' Group Educator for a list of qualities to guide training).

Challenging Dynamics

- Boys are likely, as we have suggested, to act out masculine peer norms – teasing, put-downs, posturing – in relation to each other. As malicious or hurtful as these occasions can seem, the important assumption must be that such behavior is distinct from the boy himself. That is, if the group is truly committed to a growth perspective, helping boys unpack and critique their own and each other's behavior is a necessary part of that process. Boys are not bad, no matter how egregious their behavior may be; their potential for redemption, helped by honest feedback, felt connections to others and strong, compassionate leadership, is an article of the group's faith.

The educator should be prepared to mark and mine these teachable moments ("I notice that X called Y a name; what's that feel like?"). Inviting other group members to weigh in, not to blame the perpetrator but to identify with him even as they deplore the behavior, will provide the most powerful corrective feedback. Such moments will also affect the group's norms and will influence future behavior, setting the stage for the group's becoming a hothouse for developing alternative masculine norms.

- Competition is an important dimension of boys' groups, with boys inevitably importing games/activities in which they will compete. The way boys play by pushing off and trying to best each other can enliven the groups' activities, but it may also trump all else if it becomes too much of a focus. At its worst, competition can divide groups, recreate traditional male hierarchies and leave some boys with no space in the group to feel good about themselves.

It is important if competition is woven into the group's curriculum that the activity itself varies so that different boys come out on top. For example, in one of the pilot groups when the educator realized that basketball played to certain boys' strengths but left other boys always at a disadvantage, other physical activities – cooperative games, a wide range of other sports – were given more prominence. It is also important that boys debrief these moments of intense competition, especially from the perspective of how

they affect their relationships with each other. Given responsibility for their group, boys can show remarkable sensitivity and heart-warming generosity.

- Sports activities not only invite boys to rehearse familiar cultural scripts, they establish a “tone” in boys’ relationships with themselves and each other that can lead to hyper-masculine posturing and an inability to reflect and share. In many ways, this is the “pay dirt” of boys’ groups, as this material gets at the heart of what we hope boys can evaluate and gain more conscious control over. Everywhere else, such relations are taken for granted; if their group can become a space in which they are critiqued, boys have a chance to make more aware choices in alignment with their values.

Too many efforts aimed at socializing boys have mistaken this opportunity to address sports’ effect on boys’ development. Typically, they have either endorsed sports and its excesses as givens or they have barred them as if they themselves are the problem. Welcoming sports as fun and healthy while critiquing relations that develop within them allows boys to focus their attention on the underlying issue: masculine conditioning.

- Boys, in the grip of these same cultural norms, may sometimes cross the line and become harassing or may make sexist, homophobic, racist or other sorts of offensive comments. It is important that the educator respond to these moments, not to chide the boy or condemn the remark but to assist boys themselves to comment and to establish their own group norms. Educators are likely to find many boys silent in the face of such dynamics, as they have witnessed what can happen to a boy who stands against such cultural currents in their schools – how, in particular, he becomes a target for peer policing. Expecting boys to act, especially for the group to engage, fortifies boys’ courage and resolve.

For a group that aspires to teach alternatives to conventional masculinity by helping boys align themselves with the Judaism’s ethical core, the issue is how best to teach. We assert that boys – all young people – learn morality best from their experience, not from didactic instruction. Thus, intervening in moments of immorality constitutes the heart of the peer group’s moral instruction. Boys will want to see such moments addressed, but always in a manner that is compassionate and that brings them into deeper connection to each other and to their common goodness, rather than one that fosters disconnection.

- Boys are also likely to challenge the authority of the educator and may even act in oppositional or defiant ways. Generally, boys are more likely than girls to oppose authority and even to act out upsets and conflicts. Many boys will have developed quite nuanced power repertoire. Typically, in fact, the group will “test” its educator, perhaps unconsciously wishing to see whether he is strong enough for their worst behavior and can be trusted to care for them in spite of the behavior.

The educator should be sure to support the boy who is acting out without yielding the group’s direction to him. That may mean taking a gentle stand (“I don’t think that’s best for the group”) or singling an individual out for special connection and limit-setting.

It is critical for educators to remember that no matter the ferocity of the challenge, boys do not wish their leader to “go away” or to give up. They long for adults who can stay with them, remember who they really are and help them gain better control over their emotions and behavior.

Group Facilitation

- Clearly, the choice of educator is crucial to the success of this kind of program. There are numerous levels at which this is important. In an overall sense, however, the educator needs to be critical and intentional in his stewardship of the group: a key quality in the job description we have termed “presence”. He can neither blindly implement a set curriculum nor simply take boys moment to moment; instead, he needs to be able to take boys in the moment through the curricular objectives toward a set of curricular goals.

One problem we have seen in some boys’ groups is when educators are insufficiently critical and intentional, or reflexive, about the process. Under such circumstances, educators fail to provide boys with the sort of analytic frame or process allowing them to reflect on their responses, behaviors, their feelings and the curricular materials with any depth. Typically, this failure to intervene with boys happens as educators over-identify with the boys and neglect their role as “outsiders” to their experience.

- The educator’s competence with boys’ internal worlds and development, at the same time, will require empathy and understanding. In other words, educators will need to remember their own boyhoods even as they are no longer bound by their experiences. Because of generational change, there is a slight preference for younger men in the role of group leader, but only if they have had sufficient time and opportunity to reflect on their experience and to grow through its binds and limitations. And this preference does not necessarily trump the many advantages – maturity, education, experience – that come with having an older man in the role.

It is clear that the educator must be able to run a group of boys at various developmental levels, understand the implications of the various phases of boys’ development, and understand the implications of this on the way the group is structured and facilitated. He must also be able to take the pulse of the group in ongoing ways throughout as the foundation of his facilitation. The understanding required presupposes first-hand experience and the ability to convey empathic connection to boys.

- The educator’s experience and comfort with curricular topics will make the topics themselves more authentic to boys and will thus translate better to them. In addition, then, to being connected to their own experience as a males, educators ideally will also have had opportunities to reflect on topics like identity, emotional expression, brotherhood, sexuality, sexism and relationships with females, homophobia and so forth.

Many of these topics can be awkward and uncomfortable for boys; when the educator himself is awkward as well, awkwardness can be insurmountable. That does not mean the educator has to present a seamless, smooth façade; rather, he can be human and uncomfortable so long as he can point the boys to the way forward: how has he negotiated these issues? We have seen significant differences in the success of groups working through topics like self-expression, brotherhood and manhood, depending on the educator's tone and comfort.

- Still even with the most competent facilitation, boys can get hung up on certain topics. Usually these are moments that ask boys to transgress powerful peer norms against being vulnerable, admitting uncertainty or upset. How delicately poised, on a fragile foundation of denial and concealment, boys' egos can seem requires great sensitivity and insight on the part of the educator. Theoretically, adults are in a stronger, more secure position and can relate to boys feeling insecure with some compassion and optimism. In practice, however, many men still harbor their own, unexamined insecurities and when these are touched become more withdrawn, reactive or protective. Such moments fail to offer boys sufficient direction through their disconnections from each other and themselves.

Boys want to share on difficult subjects but often cannot take initiative to do so; many will “wait” for the ice to be broken before they will risk disclosure. An adult who is both able to empathize and still offer confident leadership can employ a range of tactics, one of which will always be personal disclosure and modeling which reduces the boundary between his leadership role and the other members of the group. Such disclosure also models risk-taking and can ease the way for more inhibited boys.

In addition, the educator can enable the group at these points by being directive (asking individuals follow up questions seeking elaboration – e.g., “what do you mean?”) and structuring sharing (e.g., go arounds) so that everyone is expected to contribute.

- Seating arrangements and other physical aspects of the group should be monitored so that boys always thoughtfully include everyone. While it is a good idea to let groups establish themselves and learn to manage their own norms, the educator is in charge of ensuring that they stay within certain bounds of inclusivity and thoughtfulness toward each other.

We have seen the significance of these seemingly minor matters for a group's cohesion and safety in pilot groups. One group, for example, in which sports was a big focus, found the two boys who were least athletic left to sit on the outside of a undersized dinner table after a particularly engaged basketball game. These boys, already feeling marginalized by the prominence of sports prowess, certainly experienced this seating arrangement as a not-too-subtle reinforcement of their marginal status.

- In a very similar way, food is a big deal in boys' groups. While eating will always be a desirable feature of group meetings, like competition and athletics it can dominate boys'

interactions and their group process. It is important to schedule food breaks carefully and be sure to limit amount of time boys eat. For a 2-3 hour meeting, it is not necessary for too much time to be devoted to eating.

Adolescent boys are serious about their food. In the pilot phase, for example, there were a couple of exercises – a taste test and a justice role play – in which food was manipulated to make curricular points. Both these exercises were compromised however by boys' limited patience for having their appetites messed with.

Selecting a Boys' Group Educator

As organizations, once they have decided to offer programs for boys, consider the type of educator they need for the program, the following is a list of essential qualities. It is unlikely that organizations can identify educators who exhibit all of these qualities, but it is important that the reason the qualities matter be understood and that organizations plan to support educators' development and offer training in these directions.

- *Deep Working Understanding of Boys and their Development*
The educator must have a deep and broad understanding of boys, their internal worlds, and their developmental needs and trajectories. A boys' group educator must have this knowledge in order to be able to effectively run a group of boys at various developmental points, understand the implications of the various phases of their development, and understand the implications of these issues and needs on the way the group is structured and facilitated.
- *Relates Easily to Boys and Appreciates their Interests*
In addition to understanding boys' developmental stages and needs, the educator needs to possess the ability to relate with individual boys and a group of boys, build rapport with them and to understand and value their individual and collective interests. To achieve this, the educator needs to be well-versed in what boys are interested in at various ages and stages of development and he needs to show genuine enthusiasm for these interests.
- *Educator Experience, Comfort and Ease*
The educator must feel comfortable and confident about his own skills and experience in working with boys in order for the boys to feel comfortable and secure that the group is in good hands. This is vital to the authentic engagement of the leader and the boys. It is also a key for the educator to be able to translate the curriculum to the boys in a seamless and easy manner that instills confidence and helps build trust, security, and comfort.
- *Emotional Maturity*
The educator must possess the emotional maturity necessary to raise uncomfortable and even taboo topics with a group of boys, particularly since the boys will often feel uncomfortable and not ready to tackle certain issues. Within group interactions, the

educator must always be many steps ahead of the boys in terms of decision making and interaction style.

- *Critical, Reflective and Intentional Capacity*
The educator must be critical, intentional, and reflexive about the group process and his role(s) within it. This requires deep engagement with the curriculum as well as the ability to provide an analytic frame and process for the boys to reflect on the process, their feelings, the curricular materials with meaning and depth. It also means that the educator must understand both the macro and micro goals of the group and be able to go back and forth between these goals.
- *Coolness within Responsible Adulthood*
The educator must be able to negotiate between being cool and fun and being a responsible role model that the boys can trust will always take up a responsible, wiser role. He must understand how to use this knowledge, experience, and expertise in ways that are engaging but not preachy or judgmental.
- *Progressive Understanding of Judaic Content and Jewish Culture(s)*
The educator must have a good balance of Jewish content knowledge and of Jewish American Jewish culture in its many complex forms. As well, he must have a deep understanding of the place that the macro sociopolitical milieu of American society has in burgeoning Jewish male identities. The educator must understand the place of these realities in a Jewish boys' group, i.e., that it is a negotiation to get the group content at the right place in terms of being Jewish enough in substantive ways while not being too didactic or exhibiting the more negative aspects of Hebrew School.
- *Charismatic and Funny*
A boys' group educator must be able to infuse humor, lightheartedness, playfulness and fun into group sessions so that they are exciting and engaging (balanced with knowing when to be serious). As well, he needs to be charismatic so that the boys are enthralled with and impressed by him and so that they see him as someone they want to spend time with and emulate. This should also mean that he is highly articulate and facile with talking about feelings, desires and hopes.
- *Empathic, Sensitive and a Good Perspective-Taker: A Mensch*
The educator must understand himself to be a role model of what being a Jewish man can be. In this sense, he must be able to model having a receptive sensibility and a profound sense of possibility; a way of being a Jewish man that shows one can be strong and cool and still be a kind, empathetic, sensitive person who takes others' perspectives and cares deeply about their feelings. He must be able to communicate the value of this way of being in the world.

- *Not Afraid to Feel and to Model Uncomfortable Feelings*
The educator should understand and model that uncomfortable feelings are okay and even useful when reflected upon. As such he needs to actively support the boys when they're uncomfortable and model his own raising of his threshold for discomfort. This should be framed and explicated as a learning opportunity when it arises.
- *Deeply Respectful of Women and Girls*
The educator must be clear about the importance of respecting, appreciating and valuing girls and women and must help foster this sensibility in the boys both proactively and reactively when issues arise. A critical understanding of gender socialization is essential to this understanding and ability to communicate about gender roles and respect.
- *Versatile and Improvisational*
The educator must be versatile and flexible in general and specifically with the curriculum and group. Creativity and a cutting-edge educational perspective are vital to this as is a deep knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and group dynamics.
- *Critical and Progressive Thinker*
The educator must be a critical thinker in general and specifically around topics like gender roles and dynamics, sexism, homophobia, media influence, socialization, culture and ethnicity. As well, he must be progressive in terms of issues of sexuality and lifestyle choices more broadly.
- *Savvy about Impact of Anti-Semitism on Identity Development*
The educator must understand a psychosocial perspective on anti-Semitism and its role in Jewish ethnic identity development as well as broader issues like minority status and marginalization, mainstream norms, and pressure to fit into a broader American, Christian-centered society.
- *Critically Self-reflective*
The educator should have the ability to reflect critically in his own life experiences, their relevance to the boys and the group. He must also be able to examine his role(s) in the group in ways that help foster group health and reflection. This requires that he be able to examine and analyze his behavior and actions with a reflexive sensibility and, further, that he understand this as a central aspect of being a boys' group educator.
- *Committed to and Passionate about the Work*
The educator must be committed to the work of educating Jewish boys and must feel passionately about its importance and its value to the boys and the Jewish community more broadly.

- *Process Oriented*

The educator must have experience with group process and managing group dynamics. He must see and understand that value of this perspective for groups broadly and boys' groups specifically and must have the experience with this population to know how to accomplish effective group process. He must also be able to take the pulse of the group in ongoing ways throughout as an ethic and strategy of facilitation.

Concluding Comments

As we indicated at the beginning, there are a growing number of initiatives aimed at boys around the world. Moving Traditions has undertaken its *Campaign for Jewish Boys* with the hope that it might develop an approach that has both intellectual integrity and a good chance at success. A developmental process that emphasized careful research and stakeholder involvement across several stages has led to two important outcomes – a more general Framework for working with Jewish boys and a particular curriculum designed with boys in mind. Both outcomes will be challenging, for boys, for group leaders and for organizations committed to boys, but they are intended to be. The better world we wish for begins, we feel, with new identities for boys and girls, so that new ways of relating to themselves, each other and the world can be discovered.

Organizations seeking to make a home for boys should appreciate how challenging it actually is for adults who have grown up within our present society, with its gender scripts and relations, to offer boys such new possibilities. Our experience has taught us the critical importance of support and training for the leaders selected to meet with boys in groups intended for them. Without such support, the tendency to revert to old, often unconscious, ideas comes to dominate the leaders' group facilitation and, thereby, to reproduce old patterns for being male. It is possible – even critical – to offer boys a place, a home, that is more open to their imaginations and their hearts. We urge those wishing to undertake this work to appreciate how important it is that we get it right.

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Appendix A

Moving Traditions Campaign for Jewish Boys Developmental Pilot Survey May 3, 2009

Pre-Program Survey:

We are interested in learning about your experiences and thoughts before you begin the Moving Traditions Campaign for Jewish Boys program. We promise that your answers will be kept confidential; survey responses will only be viewed by the research team. Please be as honest as possible and respond to questions with as much detail as you can. Thank you for your time.

Background Information

Name: _____

Age: _____

Grade: _____

Name of School: _____

Family Background: _____

Questions about Jewish Affiliation

1. Using a scale from 1 to 5, can you rate the importance of religion in your life?

Not very important *Extremely Important*
1 2 3 4 5

Can you explain that response here:

2. How satisfied have you been with your experiences with -

Jewish education:

Dissatisfied *Extremely Satisfied*
1 2 3 4 5

Services attended:

Dissatisfied *Extremely Satisfied*
1 2 3 4 5

Youth Group:

Dissatisfied

1

2

3

4

Extremely Satisfied

5

Summer camp:

Dissatisfied

1

2

3

4

Extremely Satisfied

5

3. Does your family currently belong to a synagogue? Yes/No

If so, which one?

If not now, did they ever belong to a synagogue and for how long?

Which synagogue(s)?

4. Did you have a Bar Mitzvah? Yes/No

5. Are both of your parents Jewish? Yes/No

6. Does your family observe Jewish holidays? Yes/No

If yes, which ones? (Please circle)

Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur Shavuot Sukkot Chanukah Purim Passover

7. Do you observe Jewish holidays? Yes/No

If yes, which ones? (Please circle)

Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur Shavuot Sukkot Chanukah Purim Passover

8. Do you observe the Sabbath? Yes/No

If yes, in what ways?

How many times a month?

9. Does your family observe the Sabbath? Yes/No

If yes, in what ways?

How many times a month?

10. Do you belong to a Jewish youth group? Yes/No

Did you ever?

If yes, which one(s) and for how long?

11. Do you attend a Jewish summer camp? Yes/No

Did you ever?

If so, which one(s) and for how long?

Group Involvement

12. How did you learn about this group?

13. Why did you decide to come?

14. Did you know others in the group before coming?

15. What have you heard about it?

16. What do you hope the group will involve?

17. Are you hoping to become more connected to other Jewish guys? If so, in what ways?

18. Do you have concerns about being involved in this group?

19. Can you describe your expectations of this group?

20. Is there anything else you can tell us that will help us understand how you're thinking about this program as it begins?

Appendix B

Moving Traditions Campaign for Jewish Boys

Developmental Pilot Survey

June 10, 2009

Post-Program Survey

We are interested in learning about your experiences and thoughts now that you have completed the Moving Traditions Campaign for Jewish Boys program. We ensure confidentiality which means that your responses are viewed by outside researchers to better understand you and the fit of this program with your experiences and needs. Please be as honest as possible and respond to questions with as much detail as you can. Thank you for your time.

Name: _____

Group Location: _____

Group Leader: _____

1. How many sessions did you attend? _____
2. Did the group meet your hopes and expectations? Yes/No
If yes, how so? If no, why not?
3. What did you get/learn from these sessions? (Please be as specific as possible)
4. What were the most interesting and/or engaging parts of sessions?
5. What were least interesting or engaging parts of sessions?
6. Which activities stand out for you and why?
7. Which aspects of the curriculum stand out to you and why?
8. What suggestions would you make to improve the group?
9. Do you feel you connected with the other guys in the group? Yes/No
If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
10. Do you feel you connected with your group leader? Yes/No
If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?

11. Do you see your group leader as a role model?
If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
12. Did the group affect your feelings about being Jewish? Yes/No
If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
13. Would you like this group to continue? Yes/No
If yes, in what form? If no, why not?
What might change that for you?
14. Would you seek out other experiences/programs like this now? Yes/No
If so, what kinds of programs or experiences?
15. Overall, how would you rate your experience?

Negative					Extremely Positive
1	2	3	4	5	
16. If you were telling other guys about this program, what would you say?
17. What could make this experience better for other guys we will offer it to?
18. What would you not like to see happen again in this group?
19. Is there anything else you can tell us that will help us understand how you feel about this program and experience?

Appendix C

Moving Traditions Campaign for Jewish Boys

Research Observation Reflection Sheet

Please fill out this reflection sheet during and/or immediately following the session. It will be very helpful to have your insights for the data analysis. Please provide as much detail as possible.

Date: _____
Location: _____
Facilitator Name: _____
Number of Boys: _____
Location: _____
Module Topic: _____

How boys are recruited?

Nature of the observed relationship between the boys and the facilitator (tone, --)?

Characteristics of the facilitator (both what you know and what you observe)?

Nature of the boys' relationships with each other? Please cite examples.

Did it seem that there was trust in the group? Please cite examples.

Were there instances of risk taking? Please cite examples.

Were there any hot button issues (e.g. sex, homophobia, peer harassment)? Please cite examples.

Were there any critical incidents? Please cite examples.

Overall, how well did curriculum "work" with where boys were? How did facilitator adapt curriculum?

Any other impressions?

Appendix D

Moving Traditions Campaign for Jewish Boys

Interview Guide

4/25/09

Philadelphia Developmental Pilot

Stop action process, querying:

What's working? What's not working? What could make this moment work better? What is missing for you?

Other Pilot Sites

At end of group, debriefing for a few minutes without facilitator present:

Highlights? What could be better?

Parents

Two groups, at first meeting and third:

First

Why did your son come? Expectations? Concerns?

Why did you want your son to come? Hopes? Concerns?

What barriers do you see that might prevent him from participating in a Jewish boys' group?

Mid-way

How is group experience going?

What feedback do you get?

What do you observe?

Author Biographies

Sharon M. Ravitch is a senior lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, where she serves as the interim director of, and faculty research fellow in, the Center for Collaborative Research and Practice in Teacher Education. Ravitch teaches master's and doctoral-level courses including qualitative research, ethnography, academic literacies, dissertation development and instrument design, research on teaching, fieldwork and mentoring, and race and cultural issues in urban education for the Foundations and Practices of Education Division, the Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership, and the Teach for America program. Ravitch earned two master's degrees from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, one in Human Development and Psychology and the other in Education. She earned her doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania in an interdisciplinary program that combined anthropology, sociology, and education to study issues of culture and identity in the American Educational System. Ravitch authored the book *School Counseling Principles: Multiculturalism and Diversity* (American School Counselor Association, 2006) and co-authored a book entitled *Matters of Interpretation: Reciprocal Transformation in Applied Development Contexts for Youth* (Jossey-Bass, 1998). She publishes articles and book chapters in the area of qualitative research broadly and ethnography and practitioner research specifically.

Michael C. Reichert is a practicing psychologist who earned his doctorate in Professional Psychology and received additional clinical training at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic. He has specialized in work with children, families and males in a clinical and consulting practice for the past 25 years. He created and served as Director of an urban youth development program, Peaceful Posse, sponsored by Philadelphia Physicians for Social Responsibility, and currently serves as Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Boys' and Girls' Lives, a research consortium of independent schools operating in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Reichert has published and spoken at conferences, schools and to community groups on subjects related to boys' and girls' lives and traumatic disruptions in children's experience. He has consulted to and conducted training for many independent schools, is currently on staff at The Haverford School outside of Philadelphia. Recent publications include a forthcoming book, *Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys* (Jossey Bass, 2010), *Defying Normative Male Identities: The transgressive possibilities of Jewish boyhood* (Youth and Society Online, June, 2009) and *Reaching Boys: An international study of effective teaching practices* (Phi Delta Kappan, 2009).