Promoting the Religious Development of Jewish Boys:

A Literature Review and Environmental Scan

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Introduction

Moving Traditions is a non-profit organization based outside of Philadelphia, PA. The organization's mission is to find, create, and deliver resources to inspire people to draw on Judaism at key lifecycle moments and stages – such as birth, adolescence, marriage, parenting, aging, and death. Moving Traditions has had great success developing programming designed to effectively connect adolescent girls with Judaism. The *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* curriculum has been adopted by hundreds of Jewish institutions of all denominations across the U.S, touching the lives of thousands of adolescent Jewish girls each year. By connecting Jewish learning and values to the day-to-day developmental needs of girls, the program makes Judaism relevant and engaging for this population.

Moving Traditions has now decided to turn its attention to the world of Jewish adolescent boys[1]. Anecdotal evidence suggests that boys are considerably less well served than girls by existing Jewish programming. Numerically, they are underrepresented across the landscape of existing Jewish youth programs, and there is reason to believe that those boys who do participate are less engaged than their female peers. But what is the extent of the problem? With this literature review, we hope to provide an informed answer to this question.

We begin our investigation by surveying the broad landscape of American religious involvement writ large. In both Jewish and non-Jewish communities, how religiously involved are young people in general? How involved are boys and girls in all types of religious programming? Exploring these questions ensures that our exploration of work done within the Jewish community is appropriately contextualized within the broader environment.

[1] The term "adolescence" has been defined in a variety of ways. While there is general consensus that the term refers to a period of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive change between childhood and adulthood, the age range in which this transformation occurs varies widely. For the purposes of this research, we choose to align ourselves with the World Health Organization's definition of adolescence as occurring between the ages of 10-19 (Goodburn & Ross, 1995).

We then review the literature related to youth development. Once again, this research is not specifically focused on Jews or Judaism. Rather, it presents an overview of the burgeoning movement to promote positive development. In seeking to support strengths, as opposed to preventing pathology, the youth development movement has begun to explore a broad range of questions with a clear relevance to our interests with this project. What qualities foster resilience in the face of adversity? What does positive, healthy development really look like? How can programs foster this kind of development? We provide an overview of this literature in the belief that this information will illuminate our investigation into Jewish boys in relevant and valuable ways.

Lastly, we present a review of research devoted specifically to Jewish boys. There is currently a vast infrastructure of programs, schools, camps, youth groups, and other educational endeavors working with—though usually not focused on-- Jewish boys. We gather together the research and literature focused specifically on this infrastructure, with a particular focus on the ways existing programs meet—or fail to meet—the needs of Jewish boys.

We conclude our literature review with an overview of key findings, and highlight frontiers for further research and exploration.

Scanning the Environment: Adolescents and Religious Involvement Writ Large

Until recently, scientific research exploring the religious life of American adolescents has been fairly limited (Smith, Denton et al. 2002; Benson 2004). However, a major study of the subject is currently in progress by researchers at the University of North Carolina. The National Study of Youth and Religion promises to be the most in-depth and rigorous survey of this topic ever completed; although the study will not be fully completed until 2010, the research has been underway for several years and several reports of the findings have already been released. The result is a snapshot of the role and impact of religion in the lives of American teens.

The study finds that the majority of American adolescents are religiously involved to some degree. The authors state,

> "One of the most widespread and persistent stereotypes about U.S. teenagers is that they are alienated from 'established' or 'organized' religion and that this alienation is increasing. Much popular writing about adolescents assumes this view; however, empirical data suggest that this stereotype has little basis in fact. The majority of 12th graders in the United States—about two-thirds—do not appear to be alienated or hostile toward organized or established religion. Only about 15 percent appear to be alienated from religion, a number comparable to the percentage of U.S. adults who are alienated from religion. Another 15 percent of U.S. teens appear to be simply disengaged, neither warm nor cold toward organized religion." (Smith, Faris et al. 2004, p. 5)

In an effort to provide more detailed insight into the nature of this religious involvement, the researchers review a set of surveys administered to a nationally representative sample of U.S. adolescents. In a report called "Mapping American Adolescent Religious Participation" (Smith, Denton et al. 2002), the authors draw upon the following three widely respected surveys: *Monitoring the Future* 1996, *Survey of Adolescent Health* 1995, *Survey of Parents and Youth* 1998. Each of these surveys was designed to explore a range of topics (drug use, school achievement, parent-youth relationships, etc), but each included at least a few questions relating to religious affiliation and

involvement. By combing this data set for questions devoted to religion, the authors sought to map the landscape of adolescent religious involvement across the U.S.

A few of their findings are useful for putting work with Jewish boys in context. For example, the study includes data regarding the overall religious affiliation of American youth. Table I presents this information (Smith, Denton et al. 2002, p. 601):

Table I: Religious Affiliation of American Adolescents

Religious Denomination	***Percentage of Affiliated Adolescents***
Catholic	24%
Baptist	23%
CC/Disciples of Christ	9%
Methodist	6%
Lutheran	4%
Other Protestant	4%
Pentecostal	3%
Presbyterian	2%
Episcopal	1%
Holiness	Less than 1%
Jehovah's Witness	Less than 1%
Latter Day Saints	Less than 1%
Assemblies of God	Less than 1%
Jewish	Less than 1%
Buddhist	Less than 1%
AME, AME Zion, CME	Less than 1%
None	13%

The authors also explore frequency of attendance at religious services. They note that conservative religious groups, and groups with higher percentages of African-American members, have the highest level of attendance at religious services; youth in the minority religious groups (Jews, Buddhists, Quakers, etc) attend the least (Smith, Denton et al. 2002, p. 601).

However, the data related to participation in religious youth groups complicated this picture. The study states,

> Youth group participation varies by religious tradition…58% of Mormon youth, one half of protestant youth, somewhat less than half of Jewish and Muslim youth, and one-third of Catholic adolescents reported having participated in a religious youth group in the seven days prior to the survey. Interestingly, 3 of 10 "nonreligious" adolescents are involved in religious youth groups…Religious minority youth tend to be involved in youth groups the least, with Jewish and Christian Science youth the possible exceptions (Smith, Denton et al. 2002, p. 603).

Table 2 presents a breakdown of youth group participation by religion:

Table 2: Youth Group Participation by Denomination

Religious Denomination	***Percentage of Adolescents Involved in Youth Groups***
Mormon	58%
Protestant	49%
Jewish	44%
Muslim	43%
Catholic	32%
No Religion	30%
Jehovah's Witnesses	20%

(Smith, Denton et al. 2002, p. 603)

The study also notes that adolescent participation differs by region of the country. Data suggests that the South has the highest level of religious involvement, followed by the North Central states and then the West. The study states:

> American adolescents who reside in the Northeast are consistently the least likely to attend church weekly and the most likely to never attend church. Even so, we should keep in mind that more than one-third of youth are attending church weekly, no matter what the region (Smith, Denton et al. 2002, pp. 607-608).

Most importantly for our purposes, the study also explores gender differences in adolescent religious participation. Across all denominations, the data is quite clear that girls are more involved than boys. The study highlights some key statistics:

1) Of the youth that report having "no religion"
    - 45% are girls
    - 55% are boys
2) 14 % more boys than girls have never participated in a religious youth group

The authors state, "Clearly, using these measures of religious participation, American adolescent girls are more involved in religious activities than are boys" (Smith, Denton et al. 2002, p. 105).

While these gender-related findings are surely the most relevant to our interests, the National Study of Youth and Religion presents some additional insights that provide valuable context for our work. For example, the research finds that religiously involved teens tend to have higher levels of self-esteem and hold more positive attitudes about life in general than do non-religious teens. The authors state:

> "The 31 percent of all 12th graders who attend religious services weekly and the 30 percent of high school seniors for whom religion in very important are significantly more likely than non-attenders and the non-religious to
>
> - Have positive attitudes toward themselves

- Enjoy life as much as anyone
- Feel like their lives are useful
- Feel satisfied with their lives
- Feel like they have something of which to be proud
- Feel good to be alive
- Feel like life is meaningful
- Enjoy being in school" (Smith and Faris 2002, p. 7)

In addition, the study finds that religious adolescents are less likely than their non-religious counterparts to engage in a whole host of risky behaviors such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, trying drugs, and skipping school; they are more likely to engage is constructive activities like volunteering, playing sports, or participating in student government (Smith and Faris 2002). Religious youth are also more likely to report that their parents have a positive relationship, based on practices such as fathers and mothers expressing love for each other, insulting each other, or compromising with each other (Smith and Kim 2003).

The study also asked open-ended questions exploring the nature of adolescent religious belief. These findings are presented in a book entitled *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Smith and Denton 2005). Although a complete review of this material is beyond the scope of this literature review, the basic finding is intriguing. The authors note that while the majority of teens see themselves as religiously involved, they are notably unable to list basic tenets of their religious beliefs and are unable to articulate the nature of what it is they do believe in. The responses from the teens can be distilled to a general set of themes implying that one should do good and be nice because some remote deity wants you to feel good about yourself. The authors coin the term "Moral Therapeutic Deism" to describe this theology, and suggest it may be replacing a broad spectrum of more detailed and morally demanding religious theologies across the landscape of American religious life.

The various findings of the National Survey of Youth and Religion provide a valuable overview of the environment in which the Jewish community's work with boys occurs. The study makes clear that Jews are a very much a minority religion in America. Jewish adolescents show a fairly high level of involvement in religious youth groups, and we can expect the religious participation of Jewish youth to mirror regional differences highlighted here. We have no reason to believe that Jewish youth differ from other American teens in terms of the role religious involvement plays in risky behaviors, constructive activities, and quality of family relationships. Also, the study compels us to consider the degree to which Jewish youth subscribe to the doctrine of "Moral Therapeutic Deism" as opposed to a more nuanced understanding of Jewish theology.

Finally, the data is quite clear that across all denominations, and in every measurement of religious involvement, girls are more active than boys. As our investigation narrows its focus to explore work done specifically within the Jewish community, it is useful to keep this broader perspective in mind.

The Youth Development Movement: A Review of the Literature

As educators exploring best practices in connecting with adolescent boys, we are mindful of the fact that recent trends in the domain of secular youth work can inform our efforts in valuable ways. For that reason, we turn our attention now to a brief overview of the youth development movement.

In recent years, a major shift in thinking has occurred among psychologists, educators, youth workers, and policy makers interested in adolescent development. For years, the field had pursued a focus on problem identification and prevention. Research and practice based in this perspective asked questions such as "How do we prevent delinquency?" or "What are risk factors that lead to alcohol or drug abuse?" While there is value to this line of inquiry, a consensus has begun to emerge that this focus on preventing problems does not sufficiently support the development of young people (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Larson 2000; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000).

Thus, this original focus on pathology, delinquency, and problem prevention has begun to be supplemented by a new interest in health, resilience, and opportunity development. This new focus leads to a different set of question to guide theory and practice; examples might include "What is positive development?" and "What factors foster resilience in the face of adversity?" This new interest in positive psychology and asset promotion is known as the youth development movement (Benson and Pittman 2001).

Despite the growing interest in the topic, however, there is much about positive development that we still do not know. As Larson (2000) states,

> We have a burgeoning field of developmental psychopathology but have a more diffuse body of research on the pathways whereby children and adolescents become motivated, directed, socially competent, compassionate, and psychologically vigorous adults. Corresponding to that, we have numerous research-based programs

> for youth aimed at curbing drug use, violence, suicide, teen pregnancy, and other problem behaviors, but lack a rigorous applied psychology of how to promote positive youth development. (p. 70)

Scholars and practitioners are in the early stages of exploring strength and resilience through rigorous research. In a special issue of the journal *American Psychologist* devoted to the topic of "Happiness, Excellence, and Optimal Human Functioning", Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) note that:

> Prevention researchers have discovered that there are human strengths that act as buffers against mental illness: courage, future mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance, and the capacity for flow and insight, to name several. Much of the task of prevention in this new century will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people. (p. 7)

It is clear that this new interest in health and strength has generated considerable enthusiasm. In their book *Trends in Youth Development: Visions, Realities, and Challenges*, Benson and Pittman (2001) note that:

> In the past fifteen years, countless programs, agencies, funding initiatives, professionals, and volunteers have embraced the term 'youth development'. Linked more by shared passion than by formal membership or credentials, these people and places have contributed to a wave of energy and activity not unlike that of a social movement, with a multitude of people 'on the ground' connecting to a set of ideas that give sustenance, support, and value to increasingly innovative efforts to build competent, successful, and healthy youth. (p. vii)

As this interest in positive development has grown, the list of factors correlated with psychological health and resiliency grows longer each year. Examples include a supportive family life, social supports at school, religious values (more on this later), aspirations, perceived self-competence, motivation to do well, supportive peers, sense of agency, and initiative (Benard 1991; Deci 1995; Jessor, Van Den Bos et al. 1995; Brandtstadter 1998).

Not surprisingly, practitioners and policy makers have endeavored to turn these growing laundry lists of desirable factors into useful, applicable frameworks to inform practice. While several of these frameworks have been presented, one organization, the Search Institute, is clearly at the forefront of this applied development movement. Their list of 40 developmental assets is grounded in rigorous research, and continues to gain support and influence amongst evaluators and funders of programs serving youth.

The 40 assets are divided into two categories: external assets (these focus on the environment in which youth live) and internal assets (these focus on personal characteristics of the youth themselves). The list of assets is as follows (Search 2006):

Table 3: The Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets

External Assets		
Support	*Family Support*	Family life provides high levels of love and support
	Positive Family Communication	Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s)
	Other adult relationships	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults
	Caring Neighborhood	Young person experiences caring neighbors
	Caring School Climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment
	Parent involvement in schooling	Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school
Empowerment	*Community values youth*	Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth
	Youth as resources	Young people are given useful roles in the community
	Service to others	Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week
	Safety	Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood
Boundaries and Expectations	*Family Boundaries*	Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts
	School Boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences
	Neighborhood	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring

	boundaries	young people's behaviors
	Adult role models	Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior
	Positive Peer influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior
	High expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well
Constructive Use of Time	*Creative Activities*	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts
	Youth Programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations
	Religious Community	Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution
	Time at home	Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week

Internal Assets		
Commitment to Learning	*Achievement Motivation*	Young person is motivated to do well in school
	School Engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning
	Homework	Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day
	Bonding to school	Young person cares about her or his school
	Reading for Pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week
Positive Values	*Caring*	Young person places a high value on helping other people
	Equality and Social Justice	Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty
	Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stand up for her or his beliefs
	Honesty	Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy"
	Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility
	Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs
Social Competencies	*Planning and Decision Making*	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices
	Interpersonal competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills

	Cultural Competence	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/ racial/ ethnic backgrounds
	Resistance Skills	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations
	Peaceful conflict resolution	Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently
Positive Identity	*Personal Power*	Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me"
	Self-esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem
	Sense of purpose	Young person reports that "my life has a purpose"
	Positive view of personal future	Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future

Collectively, these assets illuminate the landscape of personal and environmental qualities that support healthy, positive youth development. The Search Institute (2006) explains:

> Studies reveal strong and consistent relationships between the number of assets present in young people's lives and the degree to which they develop in positive and healthful ways. Results show that the greater the numbers of Developmental Assets are experienced by young people, the more positive and successful their development. The fewer the number of assets present, the greater the possibility youth will engage in risky behaviors such as drug use, unsafe sex, and violence…The reality is that the average young person surveyed in the United States experiences only 19 of the 40 assets. Overall, 59% of young people surveyed have 20 or fewer of the 40 assets.

From this perspective, then, a key challenge for anyone working with youth involves the effort to support existing assets in the lives of young people, and promote—or introduce—new assets that may not be currently present.

Resilience and Religious Identity

As an educational organization that develops religious programming for Jewish adolescents, Moving Traditions has a particular interest in the connection between religious

identity and resilience. A brief review of the youth development literature makes a clear case that strong religious identities and commitments correlate with resilience in adolescents. This was highlighted already in this paper in findings from Larson (2000), as well as in the 40 developmental assets ("Young person spends one or more hours a week in activities in a religious institution") (Search 2006). The theme is echoed repeatedly throughout the youth development literature. For example, a study by the National Resilience Resource Center finds that:

> For both younger and older youth, personal importance placed on religion and prayer is associated with decreased frequency of cigarette smoking and drinking…with less frequent marijuana use in older teens and correlated with delayed sexual activity (Blum and Rinehart 1997, p. 28)

Other studies report related findings. One overview of several studies presents the following findings (Pew 2006):

> One study detected a robust positive influence of church attendance on both reading and math achievement--though one which did *not* vary in its influence across poverty contexts (Regnerus 2000). Another research team found in their sample of rural Iowa families that religiously involved youth tend to excel in school, and as their religiosity increased, so did their academic progress (Elder and Conger 2000). This same model proved true in Harvard economist Richard Freeman's study of church-going's influence on the school performance of African-American male youth in high-poverty neighborhoods.

While a complete review of this literature is beyond the scope of this essay, these few citations suffice to support the strength of this correlation. In case after case, increased religious involvement has been shown to correlate with multiple dimensions of youth strength, resilience, and positive development.

Programs that Promote Assets

In addition to identifying individual assets and organizing them into applicable frameworks, the youth development movement has also focused attention on the nature of programs that effectively support positive development. Again, these efforts are focused on understanding and supporting programs that build resilience and strength, as opposed to preventing pathology and delinquency. This applied research has generated insights into the nature of programs that best support assets similar to those presented above.

In his article entitled "Toward a Psychology of Positive Youth Development", Larson (2000) describes his research exploring different contexts of youth programming. Using a methodology called the "experience sampling method", he asked young people to report their levels of both concentration and intrinsic motivation during a variety of activities over the course of several weeks. His findings provide an interesting perspective into the types of experiences that most effectively engage young people.

Larson found that during the regular school day, young people experience high levels of concentration but very low levels of intrinsic motivation: they were working hard, but were not particularly engaged in the experience. During unstructured experiences with friends, the results were reversed: they reported high levels of intrinsic motivation with low levels of concentration. In other words, they really wanted to be involved, but the activity was notable undemanding and unchallenging. It was during what Larson calls "structured voluntary activities"—sports, afterschool programming, music lessons, club activities, etc—that the ideal experiential mix emerged. Young people involved in these activities reported both high levels of concentration and high levels of intrinsic motivation. They were working hard, and they felt highly motivated to engage with the experience.

Larson states,

> The unique combination of psychological states, intrinsic motivation with concentration, suggests that adolescents are awake, alive, and open to developmental experiences in a way that is less common in other parts of their daily lives. (2000, p. 175)

According to this line of research, programs that effectively promote resilience are able to provide this type of psychological experience. Such programs allow young people to choose an activity they are enthusiastic about engaging in (for some that may mean sports, for others art or music), and then provides a structured environment that challenges each individual in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways.

Other research has highlighted additional elements of effective programs. The Center for Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) has developed a list of characteristics of high-quality youth development programming (Peterson, Marek et al. 2006). The organization believes that quality programming promotes belonging, independence, mastery, and generosity (CYFAR 2006). Their research suggests that programs that succeed in creating those outcomes:

1. Are guided by program theory in their development, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability
2. Involve participants and their families in meaningful ways
3. Are comprehensive to meet the multiple needs of individuals, families and communities
4. Create supportive environments for children, youth, and families
5. Promote resiliency in individuals, families, and communities and
6. Are characterized by collaborations among individuals, agencies, and organizations

The themes that emerge in CYFAR's research appear frequently in the youth development literature. Effective programs are informed by a clearly articulated theory, provide safe and supportive spaces for young people, engage broad networks across the community, and are based on norms of collaboration and cooperation. Practitioners seeking to develop effective

programming are encouraged to keep these themes in mind as they design and implement their youth initiatives.

Final Thoughts

The literature related to youth development presents a wealth of insights that inform our work with Jewish adolescents in valuable ways. First, the youth development focus on strength and resilience argues for framing our interest in work with Jewish youth in a particular way. Instead of asking "How might we keep Jewish youth from disconnecting from Judaism?" (a problem-prevention approach), this perspective suggests that we ask questions like, "How might we foster intrinsic motivation to engage with Judaism?" or "How can we structure young people's natural interest in ultimate issues in a Jewish context?" (an asset-based, strength-building approach).

In reviewing this literature, we are reminded that an entire landscape of youth workers, scholars, and policy makers is just beginning to seriously explore how to effectively promote positive development. In asking how to do this work with Jewish youth in a way this is supported by informed theory and rigorous research, we place ourselves at the forefront of a growing movement that extends far beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community.

The focus on assets provides a valuable framework for thinking about how to design and implement effective programs. Furthermore, the recurring findings related to the correlation between religious involvement and positive development invests our work with a new importance. Fostering a meaningful and lasting connection with Judaism is not only valuable for its own sake; research suggests that this type of connection correlates with higher grades, lower levels of drinking and drug use, and other dimensions of healthy development (Blum and

Rinehart 1997; Pew 2006). From this perspective, the value of our work is broadened and deepened.

Finally, the findings related to effective programming provides guidance in our efforts to design quality programs for Jewish teens. The value of structured, voluntary activities—once again—supports the importance of our efforts, and the focus on clear theory and norms of collaboration reinforce our intentions in undertaking this research. Ultimately, our efforts to design and implement high-quality programs that engage Jewish teens can both be informed by and contribute to the burgeoning interest in youth development theory and practice.

Illuminating the Landscape of Jewish Boys:

A Review of the Literature Focused on the Jewish Community

In recent years, several major studies exploring the experience of young people in Jewish settings have been published. Although none of these studies have been primarily focused on gender differences, they all include gender to some degree in their analyses. This body of research therefore provides valuable insights into questions at the heart of our own investigative agenda.

Consider, for example, a study entitled *Shema: Listening to Jewish Youth*, commissioned by the Minneapolis Jewish Federation. The research was conducted in cooperation with The Search Institute, and involved surveys of more than 400 young people in the Minneapolis Jewish community, as well as focus groups to gather more in-depth data. The purpose of the study was to explore, in a scientifically rigorous way, the experiences of young people in the Minneapolis Jewish community.[2]

The study covers a broad range of topics. It explores the degree to which young Jews in Minneapolis participate in various Jewish programs (synagogue, youth group, service opportunities, Israel trips, etc), and examines the connection between those experiences and the way young people feel about Judaism and their Jewish identity. The report suggests that many young people found existing Jewish opportunities to be unappealing or unrewarding; however, many of the young people who were involved found meaning and value in the experiences, and reported having a stronger Jewish identity. The report suggests a community of young people

[2] For a detailed explanation of the sampling methodology used in this study, see Appendix A. We know this information will be useful for those readers seeking a deeper understanding of the studies, but we did not want to complicate the report text with this important but complex technical information. For this reason, the sampling methods for the major studies cited in this report are included in an appendix.

divided between a relatively small, active and committed core, and a large periphery of uninvolved Jewish teens. The report states,

> One way of looking at this issue is to note that a small group of Jewish adolescents are highly involved and that it is probable that they will remain involved over the long term…These data also suggest that a substantial number of youth are completely uninvolved in Jewish-sponsored activities…Another way of looking at this is to ask the question: Should the focus be on those highly involved youth or should the focus be shifted to involve youth who are either less involved or even unaffiliated? If focus is to be directed to those adolescents who are less involved, then Jewish observance must be made more appealing and engaging to them. Involvement can be increased by using data from this study about adolescent interests and concerns to inform programming changes." (p. 63)

Fortunately, the *Shema* study does include a wealth of data and findings related to gender. Because some of this data is so relevant and potentially informative, we have included several tables from this study in Appendix B. Readers seeking a more detailed understanding of the general findings we report here are encouraged to review that material. For our purposes here, however, we only include a few tables that highlight particularly meaningful gender-related findings.

With regards to gender, this study quite clearly reinforces themes that emerged from the larger national surveys of youth. Boys, in general, are less involved in Jewish life, and they consistently report finding less meaning in their Jewish experiences than their female peers. The raw data provides a rich source of nuance and insight that supports these broad generalizations. Table 4 presents responses to a question exploring "what makes Jewish experiences meaningful", with responses broken down according to gender:

Table 4: Responses to the question "What makes Jewish experiences meaningful?" by gender

Of the Jewish activities that are meaningful, what is it about them that makes them meaningful? (yes)	Males (%)	Females (%)
I like making a difference	77	81
I like talking to other kids and sharing what we think and feel	70	83
These activities really help me grow as a Jew	65	76
Doing things with my friends is important to me	93	93
I like to meet new people	91	94

I feel welcome	82	80
They are fun	81	85
There are caring, enthusiastic adults and teachers	64	67
They focus on helping me to be a good person	59	61
I have input into planning and decision making	56	60
Activities are based on my own interests	57	62
They are a part of passing down Jewish traditions	61	70
They involve teaching others	67	63
I learn more about myself	55	69
They help me become competent in my Jewish skills	61	65
They help me feel good about my Jewish identity	78	84

In their review of this data, the authors state:

> Significantly more females than males reported that they found an activity meaningful because it was fun. Respondents' reports show that females more often than males finding activities meaningful because they like talking to other young people and sharing "what we think and feel," because they value activities that help them grow as Jews, because they have input into planning and decision making, because activities are based on their interests, and because activities help them feel good about their Jewish identity. (p. 42)

These data make it clear that—in almost every category—girls report more meaning in their Jewish experiences than do boys. Two findings in particular may be worth noting. First, the most dramatic gap between boys and girls relates to the question "I like talking to other kids and sharing what we think and feels" (boys: 70%; girls: 83%). Second, only two questions generated a higher response rate from the boys. These were: "They involve teaching others" (boys: 67%; girls 63%), and "I feel welcome" (boys: 82%; girls 80%). Collectively, those findings may highlight key challenges and opportunities in effectively engaging boys with Judaism.

Equally intriguing is the study's exploration of the ways existing Jewish programming "turns off" young people. Table 5 presents those results broken down by gender:

Table 5: Responses to the question "What turns you off about Judaism?" by gender

Of the Jewish activities that are not meaningful, what is it about them that "turns you off"? (yes)	**Males**	**Females**
Classes or activities are repetitious	68	60
There are cliques or snotty kids there	58	67
My parents force me to do them	23	19
Jewish activities keep me from participating in non-	30	25

Jewish activities		
Jewish activities are boring	25	17
I don't like the people or teachers leading activities	29	30
It's always the same people there	47	43
They have hypocritical teachers or leaders who don't really care about what's right	26	15
Jewish rules and traditions don't mean anything to me	8	4
They waste time and nothing is accomplished	34	29
They pressure me to be more observant	22	12
I don't like so much religious structure	34	25
The kids are rowdy and the rules are not enforced	32	35
I can't bring my non-Jewish friends	24	23
Kids aren't involved in decision making	35	28
Nothing that is presently offered interests me	41	32

Again, there are some clear differences between the ways boys and girls find meaning (or fail to find meaning) in their Jewish experiences. The authors note,

> Adolescent males consistently reported higher percentages of reasons, compared with females, that they did not think Jewish-sponsored activities were meaningful. Significantly more males than females reported that activities were "boring" (25% of males versus 17% of females), that they dislike "so much religious structure (34% versus 25%), and that "nothing that is presently offered interests me" (41% versus 32 percent) (p. 47).

While the *Shema* study goes into considerable detail in its data analysis, it offers only the broadest recommendations for ways to effectively address these gender imbalances. The study's two gender-related recommendations are:

- Consider whether the current structure of Jewish-sponsored activities includes enough options for adolescent males.
- Using data from this survey, develop new strategies for programming that will more appropriately tap the interests of adolescent males (p. 59).

While the Shema study illuminates dynamics of gender differences in Jewish life in some valuable ways, there is clearly more work to be done in exploring the landscape of existing infrastructure and delineating best practices in work with both girls and boys.

Another valuable and relevant source of information is a study entitled *Jewish Adolescents: American Teenagers 'Trying to Make It'*, conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University (Saxe, Kelner et al. 2000)[3]. This research is similar to the *Shema* study in that its goal was to explore—in a scientifically rigorous way—the experiences and attitudes of Jewish youth. This time, the authors interviewed nearly 1,300 post Bar/Bat Mitzvah young people located in a diverse array of communities across the state of Massachusetts. The result is a detailed and robust portrait of Jewish youth and they ways they do—or do not—connect with existing institutions in the Jewish community.

The report revealed (or, perhaps it is more accurate to say it confirmed) a pattern of widespread decrease in involvement in Jewish education following the completion of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Findings that highlight this trend include the following:

- Nearly 100% of 7th graders are involved in some form of Jewish education; by 12th grade, the number drops to 56% (p. 2)
- Disillusionment begins early: More than half of teens ages 11 or 12 say they seldom or never enjoy Hebrew school (p. 3)
- Jewish adolescents put considerable time and effort into both school and extra-curricular activities, making it difficult to find time for Jewish experiences (p. 4)

Most significantly for our purposes, the authors note that "Gender matters—A Lot" (p. 5). The authors state,

> To treat our teenage children in a gender-neutral manner would be to miss the way they really do experience life as girls or as boys. Differences in values appeared across the board, the largest being the more boys (49%) than girls (31%) placed high value on money. Boys also more frequently valued leisure time. For their part, girls were more likely to value creativity, family, being Jewish, finding meaning in life, and working for social justice. Girls had more positive feelings toward their Jewish

[3] See Appendix A for a summary of the sampling methodology.

> experiences (including schooling) and were more open to continuing such activities. Although still a minority, more girls than boys said that they enjoyed their Jewish schooling and did not think of their Bat Mitzvah as their graduation from Jewish school. In fact, girls participated in greater numbers in formal Jewish education in every grade except ninth. Girls were more likely than boys to say that they wanted to get more involved in Jewish life after Bar/Bat Mitzvah, were more interested in Israel experience programs and more likely to have their connection to Judaism enhanced by that experience (Saxe, Kelner et al., p. 5).

Again, the pattern of greater involvement and engagement amongst Jewish girls is confirmed by this study.

Another relevant study was conducted by the B'nai Brith Youth Organization (TRU 2005)[4]. This study involved a survey administered to a national sample of 1153 Jewish teens ages 10-18. The study's primary finding was a high level of interest in religion, combined with a hunger for a more meaningful connection to religion. The study states:

- *68% of teens ages 13-18 say religion and faith are important to them.*
- *Less than a quarter of all teens (24%) say religion is not important.*

However, while more than 2 out of 3 teens say they value religion, they are dissatisfied with their opportunities to connect with religion:

For those teens who say religion is important to them:

- *92% want a better connection with their religion.*
- *52% of teens are looking for less conventional ways to connect with their religion.*
- *43% are not sure how to connect.*
- *40% say it is difficult to connect with their religion.*

The BBYO study also presents an analysis by gender. These findings are as follows:

More girls than guys value religion in their lives.

[4] See Appendix A for a summary of the sampling methodology.

- *72% of teen girls – ages 13-18, compared to 64% of Teen boys ages, 13-18, say religion is important in their lives.*
- *Older girls, ages 16-18, place a much higher value on religion (70%) than do boys the same age (55%).*

For boys especially, there is a need to keep them engaged.

- *74% of teen guys, ages 13-15 say religion is important to them.*
- *55% of teen guys ages 16-18 say religion is important to them.*

Once again, the pattern of higher engagement by girls than boys is reaffirmed. In addition, this study highlights a trend of decreased religiosity through the later teen years.

Finally, another exploration of gender dynamics among Jewish adolescents appears in the *Jewish Teen Engagement Planning Report*, produced by Lori Port of the Los Angeles Jewish Federation (2005)[5]. Once again, the purpose of this report was to understand why relatively few Jewish teens in the Los Angeles area were involved in Judaism, and recommend ways to address the problem. Among the handful of key findings of this report was a gender dynamic: "Jewish girls are more active and interested in Jewish programs, both formal and informal" (p. 4).

The report cites the research highlighted here to support the claim that girls are less engaged than boys. It also draws on developmental research exploring the characteristics of boys. For example, the report cites a journal article describing boys in the following way:

> Active with a preference for gross versus fine motor skill usage; preference to demonstrate caring through actions rather than words; inclusive in group settings; preference for problem solving strategies over processing situations; the tendency to 'open up' while engaged in activities and to prefer 'play' in structured and competitive environments with strict rules of fairness (Port, p. 11).

[5] This report did not involve original research. It cites the 1997 Los Angeles Jewish Population Survey, the LA Bureau of Jewish Education list of children enrolled in religious schools, and the *Jewish Teens in America* study to support its gender-related assertions (p. 7)

The report also refers to a report by Michael Holtzman of the Union of Reform Judaism entitled the *Young Men's Interim Report* (URJ 2005)[6]. The report (discussed in more detail below) posits that the reform movement has grown increasingly feminine, due to increasing levels of involvement of women at all levels. The change may be making it harder for boys and men to comfortably engage with the movement.

After reviewing this broad collection of research, Port makes the following recommendations about how to address this challenge:

- Using developmental data—offer programs designed specifically for boys that are: low social pressure, task-oriented, short-term, structured, physical and/or intellectually challenging with tangible rewards.
- Review current co-ed programs to enhance their "boy-friendliness."
- Offer programs for fathers and sons
- Support male youth workers (p. 4).

What Happened to Gender? Research that Overlooks the Gender Question

The *Shema*, *Trying to Make It*, BBYO, and LA Federation studies are all rigorous, ambitious efforts to explore the experiences of Jewish young people. All these studies devote some portion of their analyses to questions of gender, and emerge with some clear findings regarding the different ways boys and girls connect with existing programming. However, several studies we encountered follow a different path. Although their methods are equally rigorous and their sample sizes equally large, several prominent studies of young Jews simply overlook or ignore questions of gender.

Consider, for example, a 2002 study conducted by the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education (CAJE)[7]. Much like the Shema and "Trying to Make It" studies, the CAJE research represents an attempt by a local community (in this case, Philadelphia) to understand the

[6] See Appendix A for summary of sampling methodology.
[7] The studies in this section are highlighted because they do not provide a gender analysis; because this report does not provide a detailed presentation of the findings of these studies, we have not included detailed overviews of their methodologies.

experiences of Jewish adolescents in the face of a dramatic drop-off in Jewish involvement following the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year. The CAJE study relied on focus groups, surveys, and interviews with a total of 800 Jewish adolescents in the greater-Philadelphia region. It highlighted the following five key themes in its findings (Ravitch 2002):

1) The Jewish education system needs to undergo a paradigm shift (Enlivening Jewish learning: This is not your father's Hebrew School)
2) Teacher Training and Curriculum Development (Learning to teach and teaching to learn: The need for quality control)
3) Diversifying curriculum, instruction, and programming for Jewish youth ("One size does not fit all")
4) Parental roles in post B'nai Mitzvah retention ("It takes a village to raise a family")
5) The collective abandonment of Jewish Youth ("Out of Site, Out of Mind")

The study elaborates the ways that each of the themes represents a challenge to keeping Jewish youth engaged beyond the Bar/Bat Mitzvah years. Significantly, the study makes no mention of any gender-related findings. Despite the depth and rigor of its data collection and analysis, the CAJE study does not explore for gender differences at all.

Another example can be found in a study entitled *Limud by the Lake: Fulfilling the Educational Potential of Jewish Summer Camps*, conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University (the same group responsible for the *Trying to Make It* study). The *Limud by the Lake* research was commissioned by the Avi Chai foundation; they were thinking of expanding their funding related to Jewish camping, and wanted to explore whether camping merited additional resources. The study involved site visits at 18 different Jewish camps (from multiple denominations) and surveys of nearly 5,000 Jewish young people.

The research draws a vivid portrait of the camping universe: why it is unique, where it excels, what challenges it faces, and how funders might make the greatest impact in this sector. Like the CAJE study, however, it makes no mention of gender or the ways boys and girls engage differently with the summer camp experience.

Another example of a major research effort that makes no mention of gender issues is a report entitled, *OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the I-Pod Era (Reboot 2005)*[8]. This research was commissioned by an organization called Reboot, which describes itself as "a national network dedicated to leading a generational conversation about changes in identity, community, and meaning from a Jewish perspective" (p. 3). The study represents a rigorous effort to explore the way Generation Y (defined as people born between the years 1980 and 2000) engages with religion.

The methodology involved surveying 1,385 young people between the ages of 18-25, employing complex sampling methods to highlight dynamics among different religious or ethnic groups (i.e. Jews, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and Muslims). The report provides an informative overview of the way young people—raised in a landscape of instant messaging, cell phones, text-messaging, I-Pods, and all the dynamics of individuation and community building these technologies represent—connect with religion.

The report makes a clear case that this generation is the most diverse in history, and that it places a premium on highly individualized, personal expressions of spirituality and religion (as opposed to membership in organized religious institutions). After exploring dynamics of religious affiliation and engagement, the report suggests that this group might be broken down into three distinct groups:

[8] See Appendix A for summary of sampling methodology.

1) The Godly (27%) for whom religion and God are a central part of their lives and are comfortable with traditional forms of religious practice
2) The God-less (27% for whom religion plays little role, but who may have spiritual or ideological aspects to their religious identity
3) The undecided, in the middle (46%) who are uncertain, yet positive, about their religious identities and lean towards informal and expressive practices over the formal and institutional involvement (p. 6)

The report is a thoughtful and rigorous examination of the changing nature of identity, religious involvement, and attitudes towards spirituality in the current generation of young people (both Jewish and non-Jewish). It provides much to think about when considering the challenges and opportunities of engaging young people with Judaism, but offers no mention of gender as a factor in any of their analyses.

Jewish Denominations and Gender

Although the landscape of organizations and programs working with Jewish youth is vast, many of these institutions can be clearly grouped according to Jewish denominations. For example, the Conservative movement has its own network of affiliated synagogues, supplemental Hebrew schools, its own youth group infrastructure, and its own network of camps (Ramah). The Reform movement offers its own network of these programs (synagogues, NIFTY, reform summer camps). Movements like the JCC and Young Judea also offer an integrated array of programs for affiliated young people. In addition, there are numerous independent, non-denominational or pluralistic programs that work with Jewish youth as well (Genesis at Brandeis, Panim el Panim, and the American Jewish World Service summer high

school programs are prominent examples). However, the denominations represent clear clusters of integrated programming designed to reach out to vast numbers of affiliated youth.

As part of our research, we set out to explore how much the Jewish community understands its own efforts to connect to Jewish boys. We contacted each of the major denominations and movements to ask if they had conducted any sort of research or analysis on this topic. Significantly, our search turned up only two completed studies exploring the way its member organizations engaged with boys. While almost everyone we spoke with about the topic expressed interest in the subject, it is clear that the denominations have only begun to rigorously explore this topic.

Given the results generated by so much of the literature we have reviewed here, it is not surprising to find that the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) investigation into its work with boys turned up some considerable differences in the way engaged boys and girls. The study involved collecting statistics regarding male and female involvement across all of the Reform movement's many programs that work with youth (synagogues, camps, youth groups, Israel trips, the Religious Action Center, etc.). The findings were dramatic (URJ 2005):

- Girls consistently outnumber boys at URJ camps, though the ratio varies by camp.
- URJ Kutz Camp shows the greatest disproportion, with the male population hovering around 27-28% over the past several summers.
- Males comprise 42% of the participants in our NFTY regional programs.
- NFTY's leadership is even more skewed towards females than its general membership.
- Our EIE and Meitav programs, which are geared towards our most highly-engaged youth, average 41% male participants.
- Fully 78% of our NFTY Mitzvah Corps participants in the past three years were female.
- Males have composed 35% of the population at recent KESHER Conventions.
- Males have composed only 33% of the population of the Striking Sparks Biennial program.

- Peer organizations are also experiencing a shortage of high school- and college-aged men in their programs. (p. 2)

The study moves beyond reporting statistics to present some possible responses to the situation. The authors recognize that conventional wisdom may be a poor guide to how to proceed, explaining,

> There are also a number of popular misconceptions about programming for young men. For example, hands-on community service seems not attract young men and the presence of a male NFTY advisor has no effect on the participation of boys. Moreover, single-gender programming is not the solution to the gender imbalance.
> Boys are attracted to hands-on, energetic activities that involve independent play within groups and allow them to feel comfortable and competent. Since current Reform Movement programming often does not fit this description, we must either teach boys how to succeed within the current structure or we must provide structures and programming that are wholly different from what currently exists. (p. 3)

The report provides a long list of possible ways the movement might effectively address the ubiquitous gender imbalance. A partial list of suggestions is as follows:

For NFTY:

1. Provide resources for our youth leaders and youth workers to help them develop more dynamic and more active programming.
2. Develop boys' skills as leaders, mentors, Jewish practitioners and teachers so that they feel like they are an essential part of the Jewish community.
3. Focus on hiring more male staff for events so that boys will have mentors on-site..

For URJ camps:

1. Provide unique program choices for boys and girls, allowing an entire unit to choose (for example) between basketball, music and nature.
2. Develop a father-son kallah at every URJ camp.
3. Provide male staff with the skills and opportunity to develop mentoring relationships with their campers.

For URJ member congregations:

1. Increase intergenerational programming so that boys (and girls) have more access to older Jewish mentors.
2. Establish formal and informal mentoring systems throughout your synagogue.
3. Match younger boys with older high school mentors. (pp. 3-4)

The URJ recognizes that this dynamic mirrors a broader trend across the landscape of religious involvement in the U.S. The report states,

> This trend affects other liberal Jewish organizations as well as some Christian denominations. Jewish youth movements such as BBYO experience a similar gender imbalance and many Christian groups are working to increase male participation through retreats and mentorship activities. And this trend continues into adulthood. A rabbi leading services on Shabbat evenings sees the sanctuary filled with women. Church leaders notice the same effect on Sunday mornings. Increasingly, synagogue committees, religious school staffs and clergy positions are predominately filled by women.
>
> This leaves us with a question: Where are the men going? (p. 5)

In an article entitled *Gender Variations in Jewish Identity: Practices and Attitudes in Conservative Congregation*, Tova Halbertal and Steven M. Cohen shine a spotlight on gender dynamics within the Conservative movement (Halbertal and Cohen 2001). This study uses data from the 1990 National Jewish Population Study to explore gender dynamics across the Conservative movement. The research generated a complex set of findings: On the one hand, men continue to be more engaged than women in liturgical and congregational leadership roles. On the other hand, women were more engaged than men in the social and educational activities at Conservative congregations (p. 37).

The authors offer several possible explanations for this dynamic. The higher levels of male engagement in leadership roles may be a residue of historically male leadership, as well as persisting differences in liturgical and educational competencies. The higher levels of female involvement in social and educational activities may reflect women's greater orientation to relational and care-giving activities (p. 37).

These studies exploring gender dynamics within different denominations generate provocative findings and offer thoughtful analyses related to the observed gender

differences. Given the ubiquitous nature of the findings related to greater female involvement across so many dimensions of Jewish life, the paucity of rigorous research exploring this issue is notable. Clearly, the various Jewish denominations have only begun to focus thoughtful, rigorous attention on gender differences, their implications, and appropriate responses.

Discussion and Key Findings

Our purpose in undertaking this research has been to illuminate the world of Jewish boys. We are familiar with anecdotal evidence suggesting that boys are less involved and less engaged in Jewish life than their female peers, and we set out to determine whether rigorous research supported or contradicted these stories.

As an education non-profit, however, we are not interested simply in research for its own sake. We hope to use these findings to inform the creation of successful, exciting programs that succeed with boys in ways other programs fail. In undertaking this challenge, we bring certain philosophical assumptions to the task: First, we assume that gender dynamics within Judaism reflect—at least to some degree-- dynamics in American religious life writ large. Second, our bias is to focus on questions of health, strength, and optimal experience. Instead of asking, "How can we stop boys from dropping out?" we ask "How can we support boy's engagement and involvement?" Finally, we are, ultimately, interested in working specifically with Jewish boys.

Based on these philosophical starting points, we set out to accomplish three goals with this research:

1) Scan the environment to understand the relationship between gender and religious involvement writ large, across multiple religions in the United States.
2) Briefly review the literature related to youth development, to better understand the implications of focusing on promoting health and resilience in adolescents, as opposed to preventing problems and delinquency .
3) Review the literature specifically devoted to Jewish youth with a focus on matters of gender.

Through the process of pursuing these goals, a set of key findings has emerged.

1) **The research supports the anecdotal evidence: Boys are less engaged than girls.**

   Our review of the literature makes it clear that the anecdotal stories are accurate. Across the landscape of American Jewish life, girls are more engaged than boys. A careful review reveals some complexities in this finding (for example, there are elements of Jewish life that appeal more to boys than girls), but the broad pattern is indisputable.

2) **Any research into work with Jewish boys must be taken in context.**

   As this report shows, gender dynamics in the Jewish community mirror larger dynamics at work in the culture write large. Across all religions, denominations, ages, and regions, women are more involved in religious institutions and more engaged by religious and spiritual pursuits then men.

3) **Current research exploring the experiences of Jewish youth suggests that these gender dynamics represents an emerging frontier of inquiry.**

   On the one hand, some major academic studies of Jewish youth have gathered a wealth of data related to gender differences, and provide a rigorous analysis of these dynamics. These studies are unanimous in their assertion that "gender matters", and nearly all report findings highlighting lower levels of involvement and engagement in religious programming by Jewish boys. On the other hand, it is still not unusual for a major research study focusing on Jewish youth to ignore the gender issue completely. According to our research, the major denominations have only begun to explore this topic with discipline and rigor. In addition, while

these studies often offered recommendations for how to increase boy's involvement with Judaism, there has been very little research exploring whether any of these programmatic or educational initiatives are actually effective. We are clearly at the very beginning of understanding how to effectively engage and involve Jewish boys.

Conclusion

Although this review of relevant literatures provides a wealth of insight and information, it is clear that a great deal remains to be explored. Our review makes it clear that gender matters, and that existing institutions serve girls better than they serve boys. Beyond that, there is little that can be said with certainty. How might Jewish institutions more effectively engage boys? Are there clear best and worst practices in working with Jewish boys? Given the ubiquity of the gender differences across all religions, what are reasonable expectations in seeking to increase the involvement and engagement of boys? Is it more desirable to work on helping boys thrive within existing programs, or should we focus on developing new programs that more effectively meet boys where they are at? These are all important questions that merit considerable exploration in the months and years ahead.

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Appendix A

Detailed overviews of methodologies used in the studies cited in this literature review. All information in this Appendix represents a summary of the "Methodology" section of the report cited :

Shema: Listening to Jewish Youth (1998)

Sample included 414 Jewish youth in the greater Minneapolis region. The names were collected from the local Federation's youth commission database and from the Bar and Bat Mitzvah lists of local synagogues. Surveys were sent to a list of 1,114 names; the 414 returned surveys represent a 37% response rate. According to a 1994 population study, the total number of Jewish youth in the region is approximately 3,900. The number of responses represents slightly more than 10% of the total population (as of 1994), and "this percentage is thought to be large enough to generalize to the entire Jewish youth population in Minneapolis, including the unaffiliated". (p. 5). It is possible to take issue with this last comment, due to the high relative rate of affiliation of the survey population – nearly 100% belong to synagogues.

***Jewish Adolescents: American Teenagers 'Trying to Make It'* (2000)**

The sample for this study focused on households with teenagers who had become b'nei mitzvah in Boston-area synagogues within the past five years. The sample includes the entire population of b'nei mitzvah in 18 of the 20 congregations included in the study; for the remaining two synagogues, the population of b'nei mitzvah was sampled because the congregations were so large. The study also oversampled students from Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and community day schools to ensure adequate representation of Jewish day school students. Due to insufficient participation, the final analysis did not include respondents from Orthodox synagogues and day schools.

During the Spring and Summer of 1999, telephone interviews were conducted with the parents of the teens included in the sample. Then, 12-page questionnaires were mailed to the teens, along with a cover letter and $10 cash incentive (a "token of our appreciation" for returning the instrument). Thanks to this incentive and follow-up mailings, very high response rates were obtained (82% of adolescents contacted).

The final data set consisted of 1,284 teens from 1,118 households.

BBYO Teen Survey (2005)

This research was done by a marketing firm, not an academic institution. The methodology is as follows:

"BBYO commissioned Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU) to conduct a comprehensive research project to better understand teenagers' attitudes toward religion. TRU fielded a study October 19-24 2005 among a national sample - a total of 1153 respondents, ages 10-18, completed the questionnaire. Quotas were set to ensure that a representative number of teenagers from each of the following age segments completed the survey: 10-12 year olds, 13-15 year olds and 16-18 year olds. The data were weighted for key demographic variables (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, parent education and region) to reflect the national population. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the samples in total (at the 95 percent confidence level) and plus or minus four points for teens only." (this explanation appears on the BBYO website and can be found at: http://www.bbyo.org/index.php?c=529&kat=Press+Release)

URJ Young Men's Project (2005)

"Over the past five months, the URJ Youth Division has gathered statistics on male and female participation in our programs. We have gathered data from our camps, NFTY regions, NFTY Conventions, NFTY in Israel summer trips, EIE High School Semester in Israel, Mitzvah Corps programs, the Meitav Youth Fellowship, RAC *L'Taken* Seminars and KESHER programs. All the statistics are provided at the end of this report in Appendix A. Enrollment data was also collected from selected other Jewish communal organizations that provide programs for adolescent youth." (p. 6)

Appendix B

Additional gender-related findings from "*Shema: Listening to Jewish Youth*" (Leffert and Hearing 1998).

Table 6: "How important is each of the following to you in your life (very or somewhat)?" (p. 10)

How important is each of the following to you in your life (very or somewhat)?	*Males*	*Females*
Being Jewish	91	93
Having knowledge of Jewish life and Jewish History	81	88
Having a connection to Israel	71	84
Volunteering in the Jewish Community	53	66
Participating in the Jewish Community	64	81
Observing the Jewish Holidays	80	91
Keeping Kosher	19	36
Attending Synagogue/ temple services	62	73
Wearing a symbol indicating I am Jewish (i.e. Star of David)	49	69
Dating only a Jewish Person	37	47
Marrying someone who is Jewish	66	74
Donating money to Jewish causes	72	81
Keeping informed about current events that affect Israel and world Jewry	77	82
Raising my children Jewish	88	91

Table 7: How concerned are you about the each of the following problems? (p. 12)

How concerned are you about each of the following problems? (very or somewhat)	*Males*	*Females*
Anti-Semitism	59	72
Safety for Israel	82	87
Jewish Refugees	57	62
Intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews	38	54
Making Judaism meaningful to young people	62	75
Peace in the Middle East	78	80

Table 8: "How concerned are you about each of the following problems?" (p. 12)

How concerned are you about each of the following problems? (very or somewhat)	*Males*	*Females*
AIDS/HIV	66	72
Unemployment	44	46
Crime and Violence	77	89
Destruction of Natural Resources	64	66
Drug Abuse	65	77
Poverty	63	75
Pollution	68	76
Homelessness	63	77
Human Rights Violations	68	72
Illiteracy and poor education	57	67
Population Growth	45	43
Race Relations	69	73
Sexism and Sexual Harassment	53	77
Threat of nuclear destruction	38	40
Education	79	88
Health Care	57	70
War	63	70

Table 9: The Observance of Jewish Rituals (p. 14)

Had or planning to have Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Males	Females
Yes	100	96
No	0	4
In which of the following activities do you participate?		
Services	86	88
Religious Educational Classes	74	73
Synagogue Youth Group	72	66
Youth Service projects	39	45
Volunteer in Congregation	37	43
How often do you go to synagogue or temple services during the past year?		
Never	2	<1
High Holiday only	11	10
High Holiday and a few times	43	43
Once per month	7	6
2-3 times per month	17	16
Weekly or more	20	25

Table 10: "How meaningful are each of the following Jewish activities to you?" (p. 40)

How meaningful are each of the following Jewish activities to you? (very or somewhat)	Males	Females
Camp	57	70
Sunday school or afternoon Hebrew School	36	50
Teaching Synagogue programs	23	41
Religious Services	60	74
Preparation for Bar/ Bat Mitzvah	59	61
Family Celebrations	79	86
Social Activities	74	83
Volunteer work in the Jewish community	40	57
Jewish-sponsored clubs, groups	38	51
Retreats	42	50
Attend/ be counselor at Jewish day campe	34	46
Attending confirmation classes	39	48