

**HUC-JIR ALUMNI SURVEY of 2005:**

**The Views of Rabbis, Cantors, Educators, and Communal Professionals**

Steven M. Cohen

Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy

HUC-JIR, New York

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## 2005 Survey of HUC-JIR Alumni

In support of work in clarifying the major policy choices confronting HUC-JIR, the Strategic Planning Committee commissioned this study of the alumni of HUC-JIR. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first social scientific effort to engage the entire available alumni body of HUC-JIR in helping think through the important issues facing the College-Institute.

The needs of the Strategic Planning Committee dictated the issues addressed in this study. Accordingly, the survey focused primarily upon the skills and attributes required for effective and successful practice of rabbis, cantors, educators and communal professionals – the four professions whom HUC-JIR trains. The key questions it asked the alumni are:

- What skills and attributes are most critical for effective performance of these professions?
- How do the alumni assess their own mastery of these skills and attributes? Where are they most and least ready and able to lead their congregations, schools and other agencies effectively?
- How do they assess the mastery of their professional colleagues, i.e., other HUC-JIR alumni in their own fields? Where are others relatively strong and relatively weak?
- How do they assess their experiences at HUC-JIR? To what extent did their HUC-JIR education contribute to their growth in specific areas? Where did HUC-JIR add a lot, and where did it add little or nothing at all?

In addition to exploring matters relating to professional skills, this survey examined other areas as well. Among them is the readiness of the alumni to act on behalf of their Alma Mater. Other topics included selected indicators of their career experience, their Jewish education and socialization, and standard socio-demographic characteristics.

## Methods

Several individuals contributed to drafting the survey. Most prominently, these included (in alphabetical order): the HUC strategic planning consultant, Shifra Bronznick, strategic planning committee co-chairs, Greg Brown and Barbara Friedman, RHSOE Chair, Sara Lee, and Director of Alumni Relations, Joy Wasserman. (PAT: please check titles)

After several revisions, we settled upon a final draft, and engaged Research Success Technologies of Jerusalem (Ezra Kopelowitz) to post the survey on the web. The instrument consisted largely of multiple-choice questions, but also included a few queries where respondents could write their answers in their own words.

With the assistance and encouragement of the HUC-JIR Alumni Council, we sent e-mail invitations, signed by President David Ellenson, to nearly 2,500 HUC-JIR alumni, with graduation dates stretching back to 1946 (the most senior living alumnus who responded to our survey).

The survey elicited responses from 1582 rabbis, cantors, educators, and communal professionals, constituting over 60% of those with accurate e-mail addresses. The extraordinarily high survey response (most coming during the lead-up to the High Holidays) is itself testimony to the interest and commitment of the alumni to their former institution of higher learning.

The findings reported below comport with, reinforce, and refine those obtained in other parts of this study process. In broad strokes, the alumni agree with the current students and the congregational leaders whom we surveyed. They also agree with the numerous key informants interviewed in the site visits to all four campuses. In short, while the results for this study are the sole basis of the statistical findings reported here, our confidence in these findings is buttressed by numerous other sources of data.

## Findings

### Professional Profile

Preliminary to exploring the substantive results, we present the basic contours of these alumni-respondents, including their professional training, their current employment, and their Jewish socialization as children and adolescents. All are useful for putting the major findings into perspective.

### Congregational Rabbis the Most Frequent Career Choice

The survey respondents constitute the diverse range of careers which the alumni have pursued. Almost half (44%) are congregational rabbis; while rabbis of all sorts constitute 57% of all living alumni of HUC-JIR (as projected from these findings). In addition, substantial numbers are “non-pulpit” rabbis, cantors, Jewish educators, communal professionals, university faculty or related careers, as well as a catch-all category of all other career pursuits.

	Number of respondents	Percent of the sample
Congregational rabbi	689	43.9
Other rabbi	201	12.8
Cantor	141	9.0
Educator	151	9.6
Communal Professional	113	7.2
University, etc.	118	7.5
Other	158	10.1
Total	1582	100.0

## 2005 Survey of HUC-JIR Alumni

### **Four campuses, with differing specializations**

Where alumni complete their studies is a function of the degrees they pursue. Rabbis study at all campuses, while cantors, educators and communal professionals study at specific locations. Some alumni, especially those who pursued two degrees, report completing their HUC-JIR studies at campuses other than where they began, or undertook the bulk of, their graduate training. Rabbinical students completed their training largely at Cincinnati and New York. Almost all cantors studied in New York. Los Angeles holds the lead for educators, with some hailing from the New York campus. Los Angeles is also the exclusive home to those trained by HUC-JIR in communal service. The vast majority of academics emerged from Cincinnati, the only campus to award a Ph.D.

At what HUC-JIR campus did you complete your studies? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Cincinnati	55	52	0	8	4	80	36	41
New York	40	44	99	21	7	9	17	37
Los Angeles	4	4	1	70	89	11	48	21
Jerusalem	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Key:

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## 2005 Survey of HUC-JIR Alumni

### Diverse Periods of Study

We were able to elicit the cooperation of alumni who graduated over a period of six decades. At the same time, the distributions of graduation dates vary by career. The non-pulpit rabbis report more attendance in the earlier years than other careers. Among those who shade toward more recent years of attendance are the educators, and to a lesser extent the cantors and communal professionals, reflecting the relative recency of the establishment of these programs (more recent than the long-standing program in rabbinic studies), and perhaps reflecting the decision by some educators and communal service professionals to leave their former careers with the elapse of years.

When did you complete your studies at HUC-JIR? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
2000-2005	16	9	21	28	21	13	18	17
1995-1999	14	11	13	15	12	10	13	13
1990-1994	9	15	18	16	12	12	12	12
1980-1989	23	26	31	20	21	22	28	24
1970-1979	23	18	10	19	33	26	22	22
Before 1970	15	27	8	1	1	17	8	12
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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**Where they work: Mostly, but not only, in congregations**

Where do these alumni work? By definition, all the congregational rabbis work in congregations, as do the vast majority of cantors who largely enact their profession by leading worship services and other activities in congregational settings. A substantial minority of non-pulpit rabbis work outside the Jewish community.

About half the educators work in congregations, with 36% seeing themselves as working for the congregation and 10% for the congregational school,

About one fifth of the communal professional alumni work outside the Jewish community, and over three quarters of those classified as academics work in university settings. Those classified as “other” largely work outside the Jewish community.

Of all HUC-JIR alumni in all professional careers, almost 3-in-5 work for congregations; about 1-in-5 work in other Jewish settings; and 1-in-5 work in settings outside of organized Jewry.

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Your primary place of professional employment is a ... (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Congregation	100	0	95	36	10	4	7	57
Jewish Day School	0	6	0	10	2	1	2	2
Jewish pre-school	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
Congregational school	0	1	0	10	0	1	0	1
Hillel	0	6	0	1	4	2	0	1
College, university, etc.	0	10	1	4	5	78	9	9
Jewish federation	0	3	0	3	18	0	0	2
Jewish agency	0	33	2	14	41	0	5	9
Other agency (not Jewish)	0	42	2	21	21	14	77	18
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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2005 Survey of HUC-JIR Alumni

**Rabbis and Cantors work in Reform setting; Others in mixed settings**

Almost all congregational rabbis and cantors work in Reform settings, as do 59% of the educators. In contrast, for communal professionals, non-pulpit rabbis and educators, Transdenominational settings are the major alternative to Reform.

With which denomination is your work setting affiliated, if any? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
Reform	92	44	89	59	13	73
Conservative	4	1	8	11	10	6
Orthodox	0	1	0	0	2	0
Reconstructionist	1	2	0	1	1	1
Transdenominational	2	31	1	21	36	12
Other Jewish	1	7	1	3	5	2
Other, not Jewish	0	2	1	0	0	1
None	1	13	0	5	33	6
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100

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**Personally, most, but not all, are Reform; and many academics are non-Jewish**

Not surprisingly, as many as 78% of HUC-JIR alumni identify as Reform, as do even more congregational rabbis (95%) and cantors (91%). In contrast, among the communal professionals, just 42% see themselves as Reform, with Conservatism (34%) as the major alternative. Among the academics, almost half (45%) are not Jewish, and almost as many (40%) are Reform.

You now identify as ... (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Reform	95	79	91	79	42	40	45	78
Orthodox	0	2	0	0	5	2	7	1
Conservative	3	6	7	9	34	5	17	8
Reconstructionist	1	3	0	2	5	0	5	2
Other Jewish	2	11	2	11	14	9	11	6
Not Jewish	0	0	0	0	0	45	16	5
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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Consistent with these patterns, we see that almost all alumni were raised by two Jewish parents, and in a few cases by a single Jewish parent (i.e., in an intermarried home). The lone significant exceptions are the academics, where about half report having been raised by non-Jewish parents.

Are/were your parents Jewish? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Both parents Jewish	98	98	93	96	99	50	79	92
One parent Jewish	2		6	3		1	2	2
Neither Jewish	1	2	1	1	1	49	19	6
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Cantors work in larger congregations, on average**

Congregational professionals work in congregations with a wide range of family units. Of the rabbis, almost a quarter work in congregations with 1000 or more family units, and half of their congregations number 500 or more families. The size of congregations where cantors work is somewhat larger, reflecting the fact that smaller congregations, with smaller budgets, can afford to engage a professional cantor trained at HUC-JIR. Educators too work in congregations somewhat larger than their rabbinic counterparts, with almost two-thirds of all educators working in congregations with 500 or more family units.

[Only for those working at a congregation] About how many family units belong to your congregation? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ca	Ed	All
1500+	10	9	9	10
1000-1499	13	14	15	14
750-999	10	18	11	11
500-749	17	26	30	19
400-499	10	14	8	10
300-399	10	8	13	10
200-299	10	2	11	9
100-199	15	6	2	13
Under 100	5	2		5
Total	100	100	100	10

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**Congregational rabbis: Half work alone**

When asked to characterize their job title, almost half the congregational rabbis called themselves “solo rabbi.” Most of the others are divided between those in supervisory roles (“senior rabbi”), and those in a subordinate positions (associate and assistant rabbis). These results suggest an approximate 1:1 ratio between senior rabbis and those they supervise.

In-service training programs may need to recognize the different professional challenges experienced by rabbis who work alone, as do about half those in pulpit positions, and those who supervise or are supervised by others.

[Congregational rabbis only] How would you describe your current position? (Entries are percentages)

Solo rabbi	46
Senior rabbi	21
Interim rabbi	1
Associate rabbi	12
Assistant rabbi	6
Rabbi emeritus	8
Cong. educator	2
Other	4
Total	100

**Educators job titles: One third are “Congregational educators”**

The HUC-JIR Schools of Education train their students to assume positions, ideally, as “congregational educators,” in which they would see themselves, and would be seen by others, as having responsibility for life-long Jewish learning in the congregation. This professional definition may be contrasted with serving as religious school head or principal, where one’s responsibilities rest chiefly with educating children.

Against this context, is noteworthy that just 32% of Jewish educator-alumni see themselves as “congregational educators.” Almost as many see themselves as heads of schools or principals, while almost a third are working elsewhere in Jewish education.

[Educators] How would you describe your current position? (Entries are percentages)

Congregational educator	32
School principal, head	12
Teacher	17
Other in Jewish ed	30
Other not in Jewish ed	10
Total	100

**Hours worked: Barrier to congregational rabbis?**

When asked to estimate the number of hours per week they work, congregational rabbis reported the longest hours, with 70% responding 50 or more hours per week. Among the other professions only from 35% to 43% reported working as many hours. The contrast between congregational and non-pulpit rabbis is especially striking: just 14% of the pulpit rabbis work less than 40 hours a week, while 38% of the others work in what may be regarded as less than full-time positions. Rabbis interested in working part-time find more opportunities to do so outside of congregations. Women are more likely to work part-time and to work in non-pulpit positions.

About how many hours per week do you work professionally? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
50 or more hours	70	39	43	35	39	55
40-49 hours	17	23	40	25	34	23
30-39 hours	6	13	5	9	13	8
20-29 hours	5	11	4	13	11	7
Under 20 hours	3	14	9	19	4	7
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100

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**Congregational rabbis lead are the best compensated, followed by cantors**

We asked alumni to report the value of their income alone and their total compensation package. Results below include both full-time and part-time professionals. Congregational rabbis report the highest levels of compensation, with 35% earning (in total compensation) \$150,000 or more, as compared with just 15% for cantors, 11% for non-pulpit rabbis, and 6% for the educators. Median income reflects these patterns as well. For congregational rabbis, the median package is about \$125,000, as compared with about \$110,000 for cantors, about \$85,000 for non-pulpit rabbis, \$75,000 for communal professionals, and \$70,000 for educators. (These results may well understate the compensation of senior or solo congregational rabbis, some of whom receive housing or a housing allowance from their congregations.)

A more in-depth understanding of professional salaries would need to take into account seniority, full-time employment, region, size of congregation, status of position (e.g., senior rabbi, solo rabbi, assistant rabbi), and, of course, gender.



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About how much do you earn annually just in straight income, without benefits? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
\$200,000+	5		1	1	4	1	6	3
\$150,000-\$199,999	14	5	3	4	7	5	7	9
\$125,000-\$149,999	12	6	5	3	2	3	4	7
\$100,000-\$124,999	17	15	19	6	12	9	6	14
\$75,000-\$99,999	33	21	46	22	18	16	18	28
\$50,000-\$74,999	12	29	13	30	29	33	21	20
Under \$50,000	8	25	13	35	28	34	38	19
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

What is the total value of your annual compensation package, including both income and benefits? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
\$200,000+	16	3	4	2	9	5	12	10
\$150,000-\$199,999	19	8	11	4	4	5	5	12
\$125,000-\$149,999	14	11	14	5	7	8	3	11
\$100,000-\$124,999	25	20	36	12	14	15	10	21
\$75,000-\$99,999	13	17	11	25	20	18	17	16
\$50,000-\$74,999	6	18	11	14	29	27	29	14
under \$50,000	7	24	14	38	17	24	25	16

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**Personal characteristics: Gender, age, marital status**

Men comprise majorities of academics and rabbis, with even more men serving as rabbis in congregations than among those outside the pulpit. Women comprise two-thirds or more of educators, cantors, and communal professionals.

Recent years have seen more women enter HUC-JIR. As a result, in all professions, women make up a greater fraction of professionals in the younger age cohorts (and the current student bodies) than for the corresponding professional group in its entirety, as reported below.

In terms of age, academics are the oldest, followed by non-pulpit rabbis, congregational rabbis, cantors, communal professionals, and Jewish educators (with the youngest age distribution of all). These distributions reflect differences when HUC-JIR inaugurated certain programs, as well as typical longevity associated with each career track.

The career groups vary somewhat with respect to marital status. For example, the proportion married is highest for congregational rabbis (89%), followed by non-pulpit rabbis (81%), educators (76%), and cantors (71%). Between 3% and 5% of each of these career groups report they are living with partners, suggesting a degree of normative acceptance of this choice, even for clergy in Reform Judaism.

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Gender (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Male	77	61	31	21	32	81	59	61
Female	23	39	69	79	68	19	41	39

Age (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
65+	13	19	6	4	6	27	10	13
55-64	25	20	21	14	23	24	33	24
45-54	27	33	35	29	22	29	27	28
35-44	23	23	26	27	25	16	13	22
Under 35	12	6	12	26	23	5	17	13
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Marital status (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Married	89	81	71	76	68	88	80	82
Living with partner	3	5	4	3	7	2	5	4
Never married	4	8	7	10	15	5	11	7
Divorced or separated	4	5	15	7	6	4	4	6
Widowed	0	2	2	4	4	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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**Importance of skills: People skills, communication, emotional intelligence**

We asked the alumni several questions related to a variety of skills and attributes related to their professional performance. On most questions, we found a high degree of correspondence across professions, albeit with a few exceptions that will be noted below.

When asked to assess the importance of several skills, the entire sample ranked five as comprising the most important:

- “People skills”
- Communication skills
- Emotional intelligence
- Teaching skills
- Leadership skills

The one deviation from this pattern is that communal professionals ranked community-building and management as highly important.

The alumni, across all professions, also attached relatively little importance to other skills. Those ranking lowest were:

- Familiarity with the way in which the Jewish community functions
- Hebrew language ability
- Ability to be a spiritual mentor
- Connection to, familiarity with Israel

Again, we find differences by career.

- Congregational rabbis also assigned relatively low scores to managerial and political skills.
- Cantors ranked low community-building.

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- Educators gave a low ranking to their own religious commitment.
- Communal professionals differed from the other alumni in selecting their own collection of characteristics as ranking low: pastoral skills, religious commitment, Jewish text knowledge, Hebrew, and spiritual mentoring ability. Obviously, these skills are more relevant for the work of congregationally based professionals, and, as we have seen, few communal professionals work in congregational or explicitly religious settings.

Men, more than women, saw pastoral skills and religious commitment as important for their success. Women more often than men cited community building and people skills. More recent graduates put more emphasis than the veterans upon managerial skills and community-building, and less emphasis on religious commitment.

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In order for you to be effective and successful, to what extent is each of the following important?  
(Percent answering, “Extremely important”)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
“People skills”	87	82	92	92	94	88
Communication skills	81	81	78	83	83	81
Emotional intelligence	75	70	77	72	75	74
Teaching skills	77	71	77	82	10	70
Leadership skills	71	65	57	75	70	69
Pastoral and counseling skills	69	62	57	10	15	55
Jewish learning and text skills	59	47	43	60	7	51
Spiritual or religious commitment	58	53	55	35	7	50
Managerial skills	33	42	40	68	72	43
“Political” skills	37	38	44	50	50	40
Community-building skills	48	40	36	65	74	40
Familiarity with the way in which the Jewish community functions	31	33	31	49	74	37
Hebrew language ability	35	32	49	28	7	33
Ability to be a spiritual mentor	35	36	46	13	4	31
Connection to, familiarity with Israel	24	23	18	36	29	25

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**How alumni view their lay leaders' views of the importance of professional skills**

We then asked the alumni to select the 3-4 traits that they thought their lay leaders would regard as most important.

For the most part, alumni see their lay leaders as sharing their own (the alumni's) views of the more and less important skills in their work. With that said, we may still note a few important differences when comparing the assessments by alumni and their impressions of their lay leaders' notions. Two in particular may be observed: Emotional intelligence drops off the list of most important traits. In contrast, pastoral skills join the list of important skills.

Otherwise the results with respect to perceived views of lay leaders largely replicate those for the alumni own evaluation of the importance of selected characteristics, both in terms of the total sample, as well as for specific professions.

Men more than women thought their lay leaders judged them on the basis of their pastoral skills.

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If you asked your lay leaders, board members, or counterparts, which would they say are the 3-4 most important areas by which they judge your performance? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
“People skills”	68	55	81	68	73	68
Leadership skills	52	55	30	60	64	51
Teaching skills	63	51	74	59	8	58
Pastoral and counseling skills	66	46	44	4	8	49
Communication skills	40	42	32	47	54	41
Community-building skills	21	29	13	37	59	26
Jewish learning and text skills	24	28	18	30	0	22
Managerial skills	11	30	10	48	65	22
Spiritual or religious commitment	23	27	33	7	2	21
Emotional intelligence	11	10	15	8	14	11
“Political” skills	6	13	9	10	24	9
Familiarity with the way in which the Jewish community functions	3	8	2	7	29	6
Hebrew language ability	1	2	9	4	0	3
Connection to, familiarity with Isr	1	4	0	3	4	2
Ability to be a spiritual mentor	9	10	21	3	1	9

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**Most capable: teaching, people skills, pastoral skills, more**

We asked the alumni to choose the 3-4 skills where they feel the most capable and those where they felt they most “most need to grow,” a question that reflects their self-assessment of their strengths and their assessment of the value of the skill in question.

Overall, alumni reported the highest self-assessments with respect to teaching skills, people skills, and pastoral skills (reflecting the views of the large number of rabbis). In contrast, communal professionals saw their strengths consisting of people skills, community-building, communication, and leadership. For the others, leadership and communication ranked just below the top group.

In other words, overall and with respect to specific professions, the alumni assessment of their strengths largely concurred with their sense of what’s important to succeed. In their view, they are strong in the areas they need to perform effectively.

Men, more than women, saw themselves as especially capable with respect to text skills and pastoral skills. Women ranked themselves higher than men with respect to emotional intelligence, but lower in terms of political skills.

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In which 3-4 areas do you feel the most capable? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
Teaching skills	69	62	74	80	14	65
“People skills”	51	47	66	54	67	53
Pastoral and counseling skills	50	60	36	5	12	41
Communication skills	34	31	30	33	48	34
Leadership skills	30	24	24	43	48	31
Jewish learning and text skills	36	32	16	38	4	31
Emotional intelligence	24	27	36	19	29	25
Spiritual, religious commitment	26	30	39	17	2	25
Community-building skills	16	18	9	20	57	20
Hebrew language ability	13	18	18	22	5	15
Managerial skills	11	12	12	29	38	16
Connection to, familiarity w Isr	12	8	4	8	15	10
Ability to be a spiritual mentor	9	16	20	3		10
Familiarity with way in which Jewish community functions	5	11	2	12	38	9
“Political” skills	8	5	8	6	17	8

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**Need to grow: Hebrew and text, management and political skills**

Their choices of where they would most like to grow are revealing. At the top of the list are:

- Hebrew language ability
- Jewish learning and text skills
- Managerial skills
- “Political” skills

The same four choices reach the top tier for all careers. Ranking near this top group of skills for congregational rabbis is “ability to be a spiritual mentor,” a function central to their role.

The interest in growing in Hebrew and text knowledge is intriguing, in that these areas are not among those seen as particularly important in order for these professionals to be effective. Their desire to grow in these areas cannot derive from narrowly utilitarian motivations. Rather, knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish texts reflects a key element in their professional identities, one fostered, in part by their educational experiences at HUC-JIR. Their interest in managerial and political skills, on the other hand, no doubt reflects the struggles and challenges they are now experiencing as working professional leaders.

One implication that can be drawn from these findings is that these 4-5 areas represent identified felt needs on the part of the alumni, and that they cut across all careers. This pattern suggests that in-service programs emphasizing these areas may well appeal to a large number and a diverse array of HUC-JIR alumni. One can easily imagine in-service professional education days divided between periods of text study, and sessions devoted to management and people skills.

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In which 3-4 areas do you think you most need to grow? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
Hebrew language ability	45	47	60	53	46	48
Jewish learning and text skills	42	42	59	35	42	43
Managerial skills	44	41	39	28	28	40
“Political” skills	34	45	47	40	36	38
Ability to be a spiritual mentor	31	25	20	21	13	26
Teaching skills	10	11	5	6	19	10
Pastoral and counseling skills	23	13	32	24	7	21
Community-building skills	24	15	12	22	17	20
Leadership skills	17	15	8	19	19	16
Familiarity with the way in which the Jewish community functions	11	12	20	9	5	12
Emotional intelligence	10	10	8	13	17	11
Spiritual or religious commitment	16	16	5	15	8	14
“People skills”	5	6	5	8	7	6
Communication skills	9	5	8	15	10	9
Connection to, familiarity with Israel	7	6	15	8	12	8

Key:

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### **Colleagues' strengths: Hebrew and text; Israel and religious commitment**

We asked the alumni to reflect on other HUC-JIR graduates in their field, giving us another view of the strengths and weaknesses of our alumni. We asked respondents to select the 3-4 areas where they are strongest (in their view) and the 3-4 where they most need to grow. Not surprisingly, we find an inverse correlation in these two rankings. That is, in general terms, the areas ranked as the strongest were the least often cited as the areas where their colleagues need to grow. Conversely, the areas which few selected as particularly strong were among those cited by many as areas where their colleagues need to grow.

Generally, the ratings of rabbis (in or out of congregations), cantors, and Jewish educators replicated one another. Those of communal professionals differed, and will be treated separately below.

In four areas rabbis, cantors, and educators saw their colleagues as particularly strong:

- Jewish learning and text skills
- Connection to, familiarity with Israel
- Hebrew language ability
- Spiritual or religious commitment

Not surprisingly, these four areas replicate the core of HUC-JIR education. They relate to substantive knowledge and religious commitment.

At the other extreme, alumni were least impressed with their colleagues' skills in these areas:

- Communication skills
- Managerial skills
- "Political" skills
- Ability to be a spiritual mentor
- Emotional intelligence

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Most of these traits also ranked high on the “need to grow” question, suggesting that the alumni are fairly convinced that these are among their colleagues’ weakest areas.

We may compare these results (answered with respect to one’s colleagues) with those seen earlier in which they assessed their own strengths and needs. Combining the responses to the two questions, we find a consensus with respect to managerial and political skills – these are areas where alumni believe that both they and others need growth. With respect to leadership, communication, and people skills, they point to their colleagues as needing help, but not to themselves. We suspect that it is more difficult to admit to being deficient in a personal quality, such as people skills, than in a professional skill, such as management.

As noted above, the communal professionals made a somewhat different set of assessments. They saw their colleagues’ particular strengths as entailing the areas of understanding the Jewish community, leadership, and community building, all of which revolve around the core function of Jewish communal professionals. Among the weaker areas they cited several that are more appropriate to rabbis, cantors and educators. Leading the list of areas where they think their colleagues should grow are political skills, leadership, management, and emotional intelligence.

Men, more than women, saw their colleagues as strong in Hebrew, but as needing to grow in pastoral skills. Women ranked their colleagues higher than did the men with respect to leadership, and familiarity with the Jewish community.

Younger people (i.e., more recent graduates) were more critical than older professionals with respect to Hebrew language and political skills, but were more upbeat with respect to leadership skills.

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Now, please think about recent HUC-JIR graduates in your field you may know. In which 3-4 areas would you say they are the strongest? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
Jewish learning and text skills	57	54	61	51	23	53
Connection to, familiarity with Israel	44	40	50	24	20	40
Hebrew language ability	45	44	50	21	2	39
Spiritual or religious commitment	36	33	31	26	18	32
Teaching skills	28	27	34	38	10	28
Pastoral and counseling skills	25	33	12	16	7	22
“People skills”	16	20	16	21	29	19
Leadership skills	11	15	13	49	49	19
Familiarity with the way in which the Jewish community functions	13	15	17	18	52	18
Community-building skills	13	12	11	23	49	16
Communication skills	12	11	9	15	18	12
Managerial skills	8	9	7	22	30	11
“Political” skills	8	11	7	10	16	9
Ability to be a spiritual mentor	8	5	10	6	6	7
Emotional intelligence	6	7	4	5	4	6

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And in which 3-4 areas do they most need to grow? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
“Political” skills	31	36	43	38	46	35
Leadership skills	38	32	31	22	25	34
Managerial skills	34	37	35	27	34	34
Emotional intelligence	34	24	34	17	25	30
“People skills”	32	20	36	26	15	29
Pastoral and counseling skills	26	21	39	25	8	25
Jewish learning and text skills	22	32	16	20	24	23
Hebrew language ability	19	28	14	28	30	22
Community-building skills	23	20	20	19	13	21
Communication skills	20	15	26	12	22	19
Ability to be a spiritual mentor	17	24	20	25	19	19
Spiritual or religious commitment	15	22	12	23	5	16
Familiarity with the way in which the Jewish community functions	15	17	16	9	14	15
Teaching skills	15	8	9	20	15	14
Connection to and familiarity with Israel	3	4	1	9	14	5

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### **Where HUC-JIR most and least contributed**

In parallel with the questions reported above, we also asked alumni to cite the 3-4 areas where HUC-JIR contributed the most, and the least, to their growth and development. Again, the ranking of one question mirrored, in reverse, the ranking of the other.

At the top of the list were, Jewish learning and Hebrew (except for the communal professionals who learn little Hebrew at HUC-JIR).

At the bottom of the list were the following:

- Leadership skills
- Communication skills
- Community-building skills
- “People skills”
- Emotional intelligence
- Managerial skills
- “Political” skills
- Ability to be a spiritual mentor

(To be sure, there are a few exceptions here. The educators’ list of areas where they benefited the least would exclude leadership, but include pastoral skills. The communal professionals’ list of areas where HUC-JIR contributed least to their development is as above, excluding leadership and community-building, but including pastoral skills, religious commitment, and teaching.)

Men’s and women’s views differed in this area far more than others reported above. Men gave HUC-JIR more credit for their growth in Hebrew and text. Women claimed to have grown more with respect to leadership, management, community-building, people skills, and familiarity with the Jewish community.

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More recent graduates more readily cited HUC-JIR positively with respect to pastoral skills and connection to Israel. On the other hand, they were more sparing in their praise in the areas of Jewish text, communication, and community-building.

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In which 3-4 areas did HUC-JIC MOST contribute to your growth and development? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
Jewish learning and text skills	91	91	79	83	53	85
Hebrew language ability	73	65	65	51	9	63
Connection to, familiarity with Israel	39	36	43	23	18	35
Teaching skills	21	22	27	52	9	24
Familiarity with the way in which the Jewish community functions	13	17	21	37	79	23
Pastoral and counseling skills	25	32	15	7	5	21
Spiritual or religious commitment	22	24	40	11	7	21
Leadership skills	4	4	5	41	30	11
Communication skills	10	12	6	7	10	10
Community-building skills	2	4	2	15	59	9
“People skills”	4	3	5	7	9	5
Emotional intelligence	3	4	2	6	7	4
Managerial skills	1		2	12	14	3
“Political” skills	2	2	1	4	11	3
Ability to be a spiritual mentor	2	4	4	2	8	3

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In which 3-4 areas did HUC-JIC LEAST contribute to your growth and development? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
Managerial skills	63	56	55	29	29	54
“Political” skills	48	47	67	48	28	48
Ability to be a spiritual mentor	33	33	25	44	48	35
Pastoral and counseling skills	30	35	37	42	21	32
Leadership skills	40	25	36	10	7	31
Community-building skills	32	23	25	12	5	25
Spiritual or religious commitment	28	25	14	20	26	25
Emotional intelligence	23	25	21	23	25	24
“People skills”	23	20	27	23	6	21
Teaching skills	14	18	17	12	27	16
Hebrew language ability	9	15	13	14	63	16
Familiarity with the way in which the Jewish community functions	15	15	17	12	6	15
Communication skills	8	6	12	14	8	9
Connection to and familiarity with Israel	4	5	4	11	15	6
Jewish learning and text skills	3	8	10	4	9	6

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**Frequent use of in-service professional development programs**

The results point to certain felt and recognized needs for in-service professional development. We find, with varying degrees of uniformity, a consensus on areas which are:

- Important for effectiveness (in their eyes, and the eyes of their lay leaders)
- Needed for growth (in themselves or their colleagues)
- Unattended to during the years at HUC-JIR (reports of limited contribution)

One way to address these needs, obviously, is by way of in-service professional development programs. Indeed, the vast majority of alumni are already accustomed to participating in such programs. Over 80% have done so in the past year, and about a third actually attend three or more such programs during the course of the year.

During the past year, how often, if at all, did you take part in some form of professional development? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	All
Never	20	16	16	15	19	19
Once or twice	47	44	53	45	56	47
Three times or more	33	39	31	40	26	34
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

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**Readiness to help HUC-JIR**

Most alumni are willing to help with the recruitment of students. The congregational rabbis score especially high in this respect.

Not as many though, just up to a fifth, are willing to help with fundraising. Again, of all the careers, congregational rabbis are among the most willing to do so, perhaps because they have access to affluent potential donors in their congregations.

If HUC-JIR were to ask you to help in the following ways, do you think you would be willing to do so? (Percent “Definitely yes”)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Identify potential students	61	46	48	45	39	56	29	51
Counsel,encourage potential students	69	59	56	52	50	59	34	59
Identify potential donors	18	16	8	10	12	17	7	14
Speak with potential donors	23	20	17	19	23	22	7	20

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**Frequent mentoring**

Further evidence of the readiness of HUC-JIR alumni to engage in recruitment comes in the responses to two questions on mentoring. Over two-thirds have engaged in some form of mentoring over the course of their careers, with the bulk of those who have not done so concentrated among recent graduates. In fact, most alumni claim to have mentored two or more individuals in their professions.

At the same time, most alumni also report that they themselves have been mentored by someone in their field. Over a third report two or more instances in their careers.

Have you ever served as a mentor to someone in your field, be it formally or informally? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
No	31	28	30	19	25	22	39	30
Once	21	10	21	18	8	3	18	17
Twice or more	48	63	49	63	67	75	43	54
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Have you ever been mentored by someone in your field? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
No	40	43	39	24	27	38	39	37
Once	25	20	24	22	31	17	25	24
Twice or more	35	38	37	54	43	45	37	39
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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**Most raised Reform; Widespread experience with informal Jewish education**

The willingness of the alumni to help with student recruitment, their prior experience as mentors and mentees, and the high rates with which they identify as Reform Jews all suggest elements of connection, commitment, and reciprocity. For the most part, they are committed Reform Jews and favorably inclined toward profession and HUC-JIR. These findings' significance and implications ought not be overlooked. They suggest a resource that can be drawn upon to the benefit of HUC-JIR and the Reform movement.

Further evidence along the same lines can be gleaned from their answers about their Jewish upbringing, socialization, and education.

As many as 62% were raised Reform, although the figure is much lower for the academics (31%; however, of the half who were raised Jewish, 62% were raised Reform). The rate of Reform upbringing is highest for the congregational rabbis (72%) who symbolically are the most visible embodiment of Reform Judaism to the laity.

While only about 10% went to Jewish day school, the utilization of other forms of Jewish education is rather frequent. A third went to a Reform camp, and even more went to another Jewish camp. About half belonged to NFTY, and almost as many went to another Jewish youth group (sometimes, in addition to NFTY). As many as 42% went to Israel in their youth. In college, most participated in Hillel, and over two-thirds took a Jewish Studies course. In fact, almost half took three or more such courses in college.

In other words, the various educational arms of the movement are working, both singly and together, to produce the professional leadership of the movement. From a recruitment point of view, these results also point to Hillel programs and Jewish Studies courses as venue where future Reform professionals may be identified. And they point to youth groups, camps and Israel experience programs where future Jewish professionals are incubated.



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[IF ONE or BOTH PARENTS JEWISH] In what Jewish denomination were you raised, if any?  
(Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Reform	72	65	56	60	47	31	52	62
Orthodox	6	10	9	3	10	5	5	7
Conservative	16	19	24	23	33	10	17	19
Reconstructionist				1	3		3	1
Other Jewish	5	5	9	13	7	4	5	6
Not Jewish	1	2	2	1	1	50	19	7

[IF ONE or BOTH PARENTS JEWISH] As a youngster (before age 18), did you ... (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
Attend day school	9	12	10	15	16	6	11	10
Attend URJ Camp	35	29	25	34	22	32	33	32
Attend another Jewish educational camp?	36	38	38	45	50	43	50	40
Visit Israel?	40	40	28	57	54	32	49	42
Participate in NFTY?	55	43	32	55	31	44	44	48
Another J youth gp?	41	56	42	48	65	35	53	46
Participate in Hillel	61	70	33	61	61	54	63	59

Did you take Jewish Studies courses in College? (Entries are percentages)

	Cr	Ra	Ca	Ed	Cp	Ac	Oth	All
No	27	28	54	18	25	35	31	29
One or two courses	24	22	30	20	34	26	26	25
Three or more	50	50	17	62	41	39	43	46

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### **Concluding Remarks**

The results here point to numerous similarities that cut across rabbis, cantors, and educators, and to a lesser extent, Jewish communal professionals. In many ways, the academics are distinguished from the other HUC-JIR alumni.

To a large extent (although not uniformly) these findings point to the need to develop an assortment of leadership skills, as well as interpersonal skills. They also underscore the contribution of HUC-JIR in providing a grounding in Jewish text skills, Hebrew language, and familiarity with Israel and the Jewish community.

The evidence also demonstrates the value and power of Jewish educational institutions in the Reform movement (and elsewhere) to educate and motivate the professional leaders of the future.

In these and other ways, this study of HUC-JIR alumni helps provide the basis for HUC-JIR policy-makers and academic leadership to undertake informed reflection and decision-making in the months and years ahead. The high rates of cooperation on the part of the alumni also point to the feasibility of conducting additional such research, as other questions emerge.