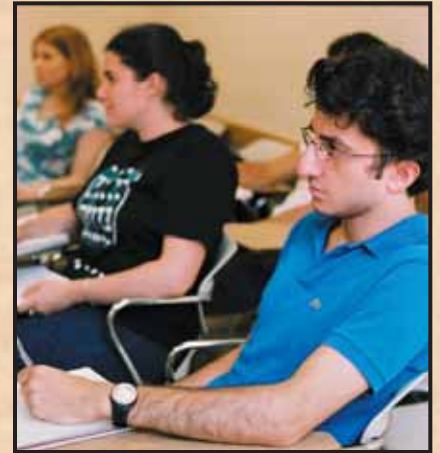


“Eight Up”

The College Years



**The Jewish
Engagement of
Young Adults Raised
in Conservative
Synagogues,
1995–2003**

by Ariela Keysar and
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**Funded by
The AVI CHAI Foundation**



**A Project of the Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism
The Jewish Theological Seminary**

Jack Wertheimer, *Director of the Ratner Center*

“Eight Up ”: The College Years—The Jewish Engagement of Young Adults Raised in Conservative Synagogues, 1995-2003” was funded by the AVI CHAI Foundation. The conclusions and interpretations are those of the authors.

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Foreword

Foreword

This report on Jewish college students represents the third stage in a longitudinal study of young Conservative Jews. Launched in the mid-1990s as an unprecedented opportunity to track young Jews as they made their way from one educational milestone to the next, this project has focused on the bar/bat mitzvah class of 1994-95. In its first phase, the project surveyed recent bar and bat mitzvah celebrants, young 13 year-old-boys and girls who had recently marked their passage to Jewish responsibility in a Conservative synagogue in North America. The resulting findings provided an important baseline to understand the future development of this cohort. It generated rich data on the background and Jewish education of these youngsters, their understanding of the bar/bat mitzvah celebration, and their aspirations as future members of the Jewish community.

Four years later, the same population was re-interviewed to determine the impact of the high school years. We were eager to learn how the same young people situated themselves *vis à vis* the Jewish community: To what extent, if any, did they continue with their Jewish education, involvement in the life of a synagogue, and identification with the Jewish people? The major findings of this study appeared in a publication entitled “*Four Up: The High School Years, 1995-1999.*” (This study is available online at the website of The Jewish Theological Seminary—www.jtsa.edu.)

Three and a half years later, this project reinterviewed the same cohort of young people, now mainly in the second semester of their junior or senior years of college. Once again, we sought to understand how these young women and men participated in Jewish life, both on campus and off. We were eager to learn about their self-understanding as Jews, changes in their outlook regarding the religion and peoplehood of the Jews, and their engagement with Jewish communal life. Widespread use of the Internet provided us with an opportunity to create an interactive exchange between some of these young people. (A sampling of their views is recorded in this publication.)

One of the many noteworthy features of this study is the insight it provides into the impact of momentous events that coincided with the college years of this cohort. “*Eight Up*” offers us a first glimpse of how college-age Jews reacted to the “war on terrorism” and the so-called second Intifada in Israel, as well as the upsurge of global anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. The report provides particularly rich information on how this population of young Jews incorporated these new developments into its Jewish self-understanding.

“*Eight Up*” represents a third collaboration between the Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism and Drs. Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar. Barry Kosmin conceived of this longitudinal project over a decade ago, and, much to his credit, has shepherded the study through each of its stages. Ariela Keysar has played a critical role in managing the multifaceted project and in the analysis of the data. Together they have prepared a compelling new report that adds to our understanding of how Jewish identity is shaped during the college years.

As was the case with the previous study, “*Four Up*,” this project has been supported generously by the AVI CHAI Foundation. Strongly committed to strengthening Jewish education and engagement, the board of the AVI CHAI Foundation has been highly supportive of this ongoing research. Special thanks are due to Arthur Fried, chairman of the AVI CHAI board, Yossi Prager, Executive Director North America, and Dr. Marvin Schick, consultant to the foundation, for their encouragement and challenging questions. Chancellor Ismar Schorsch of The Jewish Theological Seminary has continued to take a strong interest in the work of the Ratner Center and its mission to help strengthen Conservative Judaism through continuing research and analysis.

Jack Wertheimer, Director
Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism

Introduction

The college years loom particularly large for Jews because the Jewish community sends a disproportionately high percentage of its youth to study at colleges and universities. Young people today are following in the footsteps of their parents. According to the UCLA study of America's Jewish freshmen (Sax, 2002), 84% of fathers and 81% of mothers of Jewish freshmen are themselves college graduates.

The present study provides us with a unique opportunity to gauge the impact of the college years upon Jewish identification because it is part of an ongoing longitudinal project. Since 1995-96, we have tracked members of the Conservative Jewish movement's bar/bat mitzvah class of 5755 (in the Jewish calendar) as they have made their way from middle school through high school and now into the final years of college. We are in the unusual position of being able to compare the views and behavior reported by nearly 1,000 Jewish college students from the U.S. and Canada with what they reported four and eight years earlier, thus enabling us to measure changes over time, and particularly during the course of the college years. Given the high rate of college attendance within our bar/bat mitzvah "class" of 5755 (1994-95), we are ideally positioned to trace the impact of that experience.

Our report addresses four themes: First, we describe how the decisions to attend a particular college and how to allocate time once enrolled are shaped by Jewish considerations. Second, we examine the historical and political context of the period when the class of 5755 studied in college, and its impact on these students. Third, we track the development of this generation's Jewish connections. And finally, we explore what has remained stable and what has changed in the period from 1995 to 2003 in the ways these young people connect to Jewish life.

Since the College Years project involved both quantitative and qualitative components, the findings we present include both the statistical results of a telephone interview survey and the actual "voices" of over 50 of these same survey respondents. The extracts from these conversations, which accompany the tables and charts, were recorded during face-to-face focus group sessions and in online chat rooms. They illustrate the reasoning that gave rise to the survey findings and they help provide context and meaning to the numbers. The quotes also provide an insight into the language these young people use to express their opinions about Judaism and the ways in which they respond to the Jewish issues raised by this project.

Such a time-series recording of the development of young people is a significant breakthrough in understanding how contemporary young North American Jews mature. There has never been a longitudinal study of the Jewish population extending over eight years. This is a landmark study tracking crucial life-cycle events, behavior and outlook from the bar/bat mitzvah rite of passage through high school and college years. All three phases of the study were carried out following the highest scientific standards, using professional and innovative survey research methodologies. To learn more about the research design, how the sample was maintained, its attrition rate, and a test of non-response, review the technical materials in Appendix A and Appendix B.

FINDINGS: SECTION I

The College Experience

Decision-Making:

The Jewish Factor in Choosing Where to Go to College

Judaism was a factor when I was looking at all the schools.

I would hate to be in one of these really small southern schools, where I was one of three Jews on campus.¹

At the time of the College Years Survey in the spring of 2003, all but 72 of our 1,006 respondents were enrolled in an institution of higher education. Like the rest of Jews in their age cohort, these young Conservative Jews overwhelmingly partake of the college experience. In the general Jewish population, the National Jewish Population Survey of 2000-2001 reports that approximately 90% of college-age Jews actually enroll at institutions of higher learning (although not all actually graduate).

Accordingly, we sought to learn about the decision-making process that led these young Jews to seek out particular campuses: How do Jewish high school students decide where to go to college? And what are the factors that play a role in that decision?

Such decisions are undoubtedly shaped by multiple considerations, such as academic record and economic constraints. Students are influenced by where their friends and relatives apply. Their parents tell them about their own academic experiences.

Is there also a Jewish factor? We asked the students: “How important was it for you to attend a college with a lot of Jewish students?” We also asked to what extent a strong Jewish institutional presence on campus played a role in their decision-making. Table 1 provides the breakdown of their answers to the first question, indicating that for over 60% of the respondents, the presence of other Jews was an important factor:

Table 1

The Importance of Attending a College with a Lot of Jewish Students—2003 (n=932)

Very important	25%
Somewhat important	36%
Not too important	20%
Not important at all	19%

Beyond the presence of Jewish students, we tried to ascertain whether an institutional Jewish presence was of any relevance. We asked:

Table 2

To what extent did a strong Jewish presence on campus, such as a Hillel program, play a role in your choice of college?—2003 (n=932)

A major role	20%
A minor role	38%
No role at all	42%

For the b'nai mitzvah class of 5755 the Jewish facilities factor played some role for around 60% of students, but it was less crucial than having a sizeable Jewish student body.

Among those who responded affirmatively to these questions, here is a sampling of their reflections about the value of a strong Jewish student life on campus:

For almost three years now I've been leading — or helping others lead— Friday night Shabbat services at Hillel. It's the most rewarding thing I've done on campus. I've been fortunate to watch our group grow to 30 or so at least, when we didn't have a minyan my freshman year. Many participating have not felt engaged in their Judaism since they escaped religious school. To watch the community grow and strengthen through work and experience and education and fun and prayer and food has been tremendous.

I'm missing a lot these days solely for the reason I'm currently studying abroad in London and I'm on a program that is 30 students from my school - and I'm the only Jew. Therefore I haven't really been participating in any Jewish activities - for example no Purim celebrations. And I miss sharing Shabbat dinner with others.

Where Do They Study?

Since the majority of these students stated a preference to attend a college with a lot of Jewish students, did that actually happen? Where did they end up enrolling? At first sight they appear to be very widely and thinly dispersed, with 932 students spread over 280 educational institutions. Within our sample population, 153 colleges are represented by only a single respondent, including schools as diverse as the U.S. Naval Academy and a community college in New Mexico. This wide dispersal reflects the overall geographic mobility of the national Jewish population, which has moved away from the Northeast over the past few decades. Still, there are significant Jewish student concentrations on certain campuses. Notably, 15% of the students can be found at just six universities. Within our sample, the University of Michigan with 35 respondents (4% of the total) appears to be the most popular campus choice, followed by Indiana (26 students), Wisconsin/Madison (22), Rutgers (21), and Maryland/College Park (21). Other big state universities with large concentrations are Arizona and Florida. Altogether, 11 campuses house 25% of this large sample and 47% can be located on just 32 campuses.

Private schools accounted for 40% of the student body, the most popular of which were Cornell and George Washington universities. Representation at Ivy League schools was above the national average, but only 9% of this sample of students had enrolled in those schools. More students attended community colleges and art schools than were in the Ivy League. Students enrolled at colleges in the West tended to disperse more widely: over 50 students attended more than a dozen colleges within the California public educational system.

In today's open American and Canadian societies, Jewish students have many educational options and access to all types of institutions of higher learning, without restrictions. They are probably constrained only by their own academic abilities and financial means. The UCLA study of Jewish freshmen around the country found Jewish students present at 98% of universities and 84% of public four-year colleges (Sax, 2002). It also found that Jewish students in the U.S. are more likely than non-Jews to attend residential colleges and universities, often at great distances from home.

“Getting away from home” is a popular option for many full-time Jewish freshmen (Sax, 2002).

We find that those who wish to study at a college with a strong Jewish presence on campus can achieve this aim. And those who do not want a Jewish social environment can choose remote campuses with hardly any other Jewish peers.

The Jewish Environment on Campus

The Jewish environment varies according to the number and proportion of Jews on the campus (see Table 3) as well as the institutional resources available. There is no typical pattern. The external environment—such as the size of the urban area and the size of the local Jewish population—also has an impact on the students. Students on large commuter campuses obviously have a very different educational, as well as Jewish, experience from that of students who go to a small liberal arts, residential college.

New York City, for example, provides a unique Jewish environment for students. One student talks about the synergy between New York City and college that allowed her to integrate her religion into everyday life:

Jewishness is now a part of me. [When I was] growing up I felt that Judaism was forced on me but after being here [in New York] and going to Israel, I feel differently. Now Jewishness is the background and it is just part of daily life. It is the first time I feel comfortable being labeled a Jew.

Most campuses, however, do not provide the kind of access to Jewish religious and cultural institutions that are within easy reach of schools in the New York area. Thus, students who wish to be connected to Jewish organizations and facilities on most campuses have to search them out, even in places like Ann Arbor, Bloomington, and Madison, where economies of scale make their delivery easier.

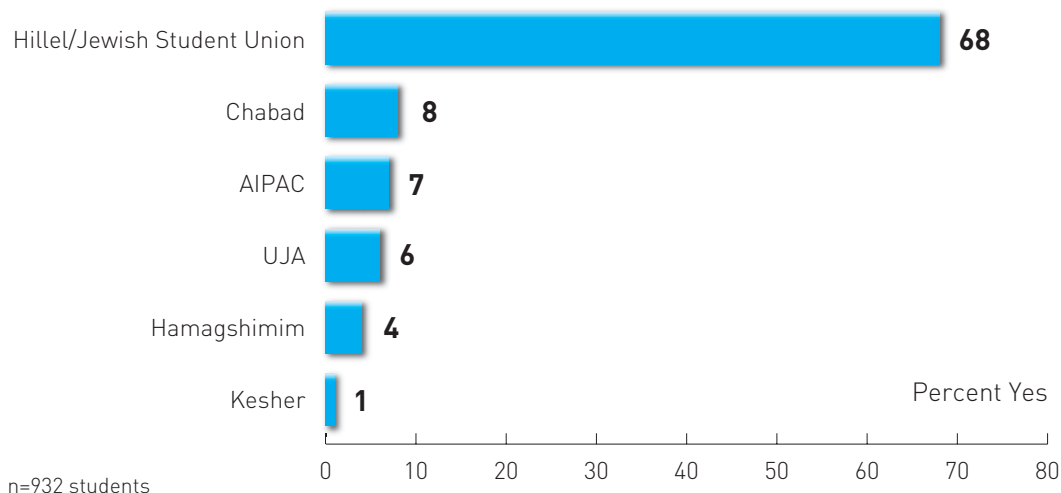
Table 3

What proportion of students in your college/university would you say are Jewish?—2003 (n=932)

All or almost all	1%
Most	3%
Half	10%
Some	69%
Almost none	16%
Not sure	1%

Chart 1

Do you belong or have you belonged to any of these Jewish organizations or services?



Jewish Participation on Campus

Jewish student centers, such as Hillel, are found on campuses throughout North America. Hillel, The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, seeks to provide opportunities for Jewish students to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity. It tries to appeal to all types of Jewish students—to those who are interested in a social group with Jewish activities, such as Shabbat meals and holiday gatherings, and to others who are interested in religious services on Friday evenings or Shabbat. In a study titled *Religion on Campus*, the Hillel Jewish Student Center is described as a “campus ministry organization” like those of other religions (Cherry, et al., 2001). The authors quote a student who went to Hillel “to be with other Jews..., and it kind of grew on me” (p.48).

The above findings from Cherry’s study are supportive of our own but they are based on qualitative case studies limited to four U.S. campuses. In contrast, the College Years Survey covered over 1,000 respondents. It asked them whether they currently or had ever belonged to any of the Jewish organizations or services set out in Chart 1. The findings show that over two-thirds of the students belong or belonged to Hillel or a Jewish Student Union (JSU). How then do they feel about these central Jewish organizations on campus? Some students expressed ambivalence toward Hillel during the focus and on-line group sessions, but most claimed they wanted to spend time in an exclusively Jewish environment of some kind.

The people are not very friendly nor is the building very welcoming; the services take forever; and people stare at you if they don’t know you. Hillel is supposed to be THE place to make the Jewish connection but Hillel does not do it.

I think that the same people come every Friday night so if you do not come with them, you do not feel like you can just come to Hillel intermittently and out of the blue.

Other students, however, viewed Hillel positively:

I think that now that I am at college, I go to services a lot more than I used to when I was living at home with my parents. I think the reason it has changed is because Hillel has given me a place to pray and meet new people as well.

I have never visited the Chabad House on campus. But I do go to Hillel programs and enjoy doing that. They provide Friday night services and dinner and I enjoy going there. They also have other activities through the week in which we get to meet other Jews on campus.

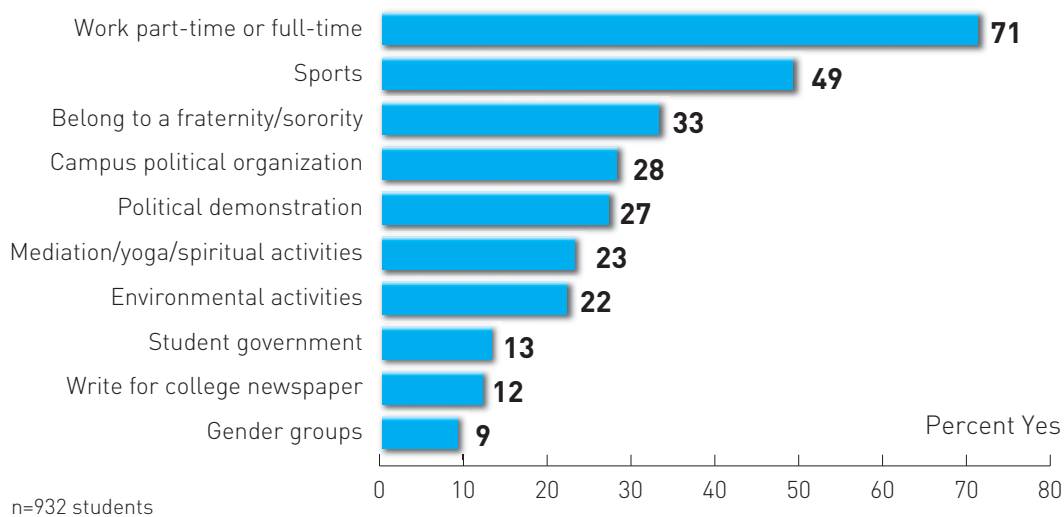
Only a small minority of these students belong to other, more “boutique” Jewish organizations on campus of a religious, philanthropic or political nature, whether Chabad, Young Judea, or Hamagshimim.

Other Activities and Social Involvements on Campus

To put the level of participation in Jewish organizations in perspective, we also asked students about their involvement in other activities. A majority of students work at some point during college, either part-time or full-time. Sports are the most popular form of recreation. Almost half of Jewish students participate in varsity, club or intramural sports.

Chart 2

Have you participated in any of these activities?



Fraternities and sororities attract around one-third of the respondents. The group sessions revealed that their members are largely enthusiastic about their “Greek life.” The UCLA study of Jewish freshmen went further, finding that “Jewish students display disproportionate interest in the Greek system of fraternities and sororities” (Sax, 2002, p.3).

As shown in Chart 2, the students are somewhat more likely to participate in political activities on campus than in meditation, yoga or “spiritual exercise.”

We speculate that the apparent need to work places a significant constraint on the time students have to invest in extracurricular activities. The pressure to work may result from the recent economic downturn as well as the rising costs of a college education. But time spent earning money probably limits the time available for Jewish activities, including *tzedakah*, which involves acts of charity and good works.

The importance of this *mitzvah* was recognized by one respondent:

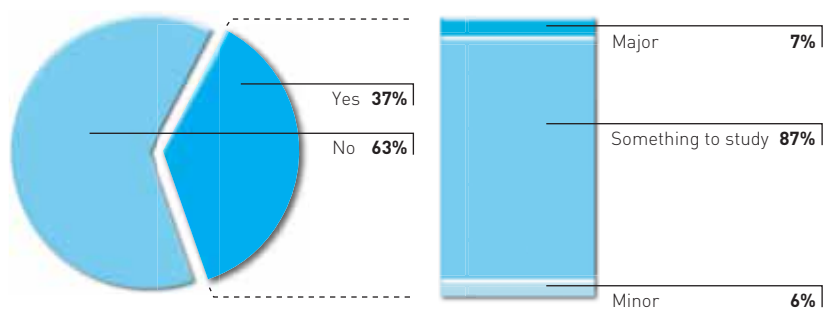
In particular I associate Judaism with (social) justice (I think I gave my Bar Mitzvah speech on this).

The level of volunteering has declined since high school. While in high school, 85% of the students said they volunteered in the community, but only 64% make that claim now that they are in college. Clearly, there are fewer opportunities in college and less encouragement or incentive to volunteer than in high school. Interestingly, among those who continue to do voluntary work, almost half volunteer in both the Jewish and general communities. The main areas of their volunteer involvement are social action and cultural causes.

Jewish Studies

Jewish studies courses have never before been available in such variety or quantity. Thirty-seven percent of the students in our sample population have taken one or more Jewish studies courses in college. As shown in Chart 3, for the vast majority (87%) who take Jewish studies, such courses are not a major focus but “just something to study.”

Chart 3 In college, have you taken any Jewish studies courses?



n=932 students

The offerings obviously vary across colleges, but, overall, of those who take Jewish studies in college, 40% have taken a Hebrew language course and 23% have taken a Holocaust studies course.

Yet Jewish studies do not attract the majority of these Jewish students. For some 20% of the sample, such courses are not available at their colleges or universities. In the case of students who attended day school or Hebrew high school, the introductory level courses that are mainly available may not be challenging or interesting enough, offering only a repetition of their previous studies.

Undergraduate interest in religious studies is a general phenomenon. The authors of *Religion on Campus* (Cherry et al., 2001) assert that a student at a western university “was more likely to take a religious studies course than to participate in an extracurricular religious organization (p. 79).”

FINDINGS: SECTION II

Capturing the Historical Context

The b'nai mitzvah class of 5755 was fortunate to spend its high school years in relatively good times. The period that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 was a time of rising economic prosperity and growing religious and ethnic tolerance. Anti-Semitism barely registered on the radar screen of Jewish life in North America during their high school years. As these students went off to college in 1999 and 2000, Americans felt secure and Israel was seemingly on a road to peace.

This halcyon period began to change with the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, which saw the start of a coordinated campaign of terrorism and political hostility against Israel and against Diaspora Jews in countries such as France and in North Africa. The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent war on terrorism abruptly altered the political climate in the United States. Those opposed to Israeli and U.S. policies particularly focused their “agitprop” efforts on college campuses. Arab, Muslim and leftist students organized highly public demonstrations on campuses, advocating economic and academic boycotts of Israel. All these activities have had an impact on the quality of campus life experienced by Jewish students.

How did our sample of young Conservative Jews cope, having been educated and socialized by a Jewish religious movement that emphasizes Jewish peoplehood and Zionism, coupled with full participation in general society? The advantage of our longitudinal study comes into play here, since we can reveal not only the current feelings and opinions of this cohort, but how these young people have changed since the placid years of the 1990s.

The Effect of September 11

In my Arabic class — right after 9/11 happened — the teacher wanted to know how many students would be taking off for the Jewish High Holidays. So there I was in this class of 22 other students — most Arabs and Muslims — and I was the only one who raised my hand. Initially I was very intimidated which was not a good feeling. But eventually it was empowering to claim my religion.

Our questionnaire asked a question commonly posed to the general public about attendance at religious services following the September 11 attacks:

Table 4

In the weeks after the terrorist attacks on September 11, were you more likely to attend religious services, less likely, or didn't the attacks have much effect on that?—2003 (n= 1,006)

More likely	29%
Less likely	3%
No effect	68%

In all, Table 4 shows that just over a quarter of these young Jews increased their attendance at religious services following the terrorist attacks on September 11, compared with 20% among Americans in general.²

The college students were also asked about specifically Jewish gatherings or memorial services:

Table 5

In the weeks after the terrorist attacks on September 11, were you more likely to attend Jewish gatherings, either on or off campus, less likely, or didn't the attacks have much effect on that?—2003 (n= 1,006)

More likely	24%
Less likely	3%
No effect	73%

As shown in Table 5, the attacks on September 11 did not seem to encourage the majority of these students to seek Jewish companionship. Only 24% reported increased attendance at Jewish gatherings either on or off campus. Presumably, they saw the tragedy as a general American one with little specific Jewish relevance.

In the months after the September 11 terrorist attacks, half of these students reported that they became more patriotic. As shown in Table 6, the September 11 events were less likely to promote patriotic feelings among Canadian students, not a surprising finding.

Table 6

In the months since the terrorist attacks on September 11, have you become more patriotic, less patriotic, or did the attacks not have much effect on that?—2003

	U.S. (n= 955)	Canada (n= 51)
More patriotic	51%	41%
Less patriotic	10%	6%
No change	38%	53%

Anti-Semitism

At one party that I went to, another person stormed out of the party muttering: "I have to get out of here — cannot deal with all the Jews here!"

A classmate told me that he thought that 9/11 was a Jewish conspiracy.

In high school I joined a golf club and at some point, a classmate said to me: "I never met a Jew before. But you don't have horns or a tail." This guy was not joking.

The above quotations from group sessions we conducted are some of the stronger comments elicited when we raised the issue of anti-Semitism. Because Jews are a small minority of the population, many of their student peers are unfamiliar with Jews and Judaism. It is nonetheless instructive to examine changing perceptions of anti-Semitism among our population through the use of longitudinal data.

To accurately track attitudinal changes over time, we present here the responses restricted to the 969 students who responded to all three waves of the longitudinal study, namely to the 1995, 1999 and 2003 surveys. Responses of students who responded in 1995 and 1999, but not in 2003, while valid and interesting, are not included in this section of the report, whose purpose is to track changes over time in the attitudes of a fixed group of students. Because some of the answers are no longer included, the response percentages for 1995 and 1999 that are published here are slightly different from those contained in the original reports. The adjusted findings, namely the answers the 969 students gave in 2003, 1999 and 1995, will be used in the comparative analyses all the way through the report.

Table 7**Is anti-Semitism a major problem for Jews today in the U.S./Canada?**

969 students responding to all three waves

1995	1999	2003
Yes 70%	Yes 52%	Yes 50%

Despite the heightened tensions of the previous two years, and their change of environment from high school to college, our student respondents' perception of threat from anti-Semitism barely changed from 1999 to 2003. Moreover, they are more sanguine than they were as 13- and 14-year-olds in 1995. A comparison of the figures in Tables 7 and 8 also suggests a narrowing gap between the perception of anti-Semitic threat and actual experience of anti-Semitism over the time span.

Table 8**Have you ever been subjected to anti-Semitism in your neighborhood or at School? 1995–2003**

969 students responding to all three waves

1995	1999	2003 (Since College Began) ³
Yes 29%	Yes 42%	Yes 48%

Table 8 records, for 1995 and 1999, the cumulative lifetime exposure to what this generation defined then as anti-Semitism. The findings for 2003 relate only to the period since the students entered college. Around half of our sample of college students consider they have been subjected to anti-Semitism either off or on campus. This is a similar proportion to those who think it is a major problem for the community. The Canadian scores are higher, with 67% claiming in 2003 that they had been "subject to anti-Semitism in the past three years."

As young people mature, they tend to put more weight on their own experiences and less on what they have been told by others. This might explain the convergence over eight years between students' beliefs about the problem of anti-Semitism and their reports of their own experience with it.

Anti-Zionism

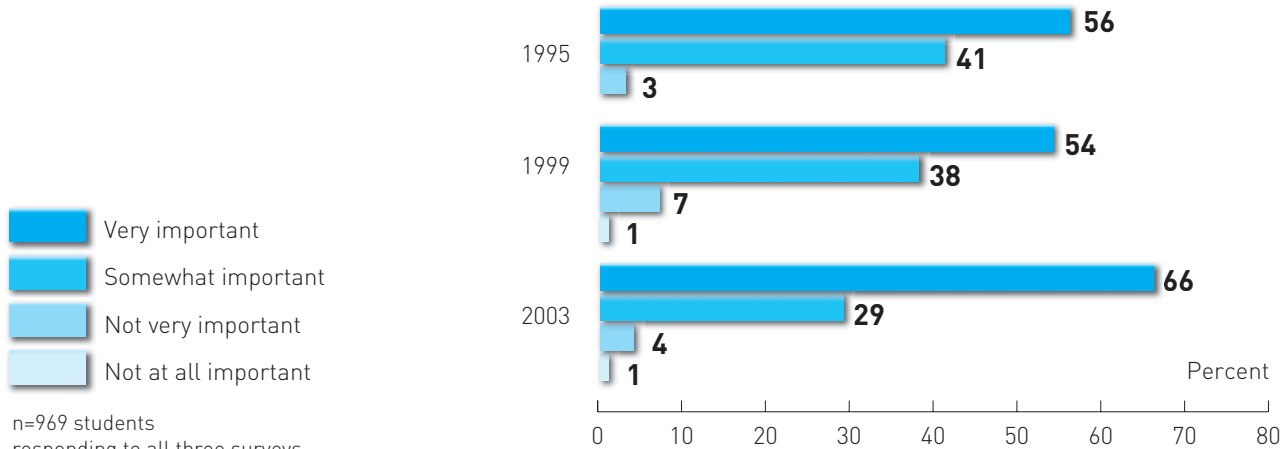
I didn't really confront it until I got to college when the Intifada started. Then, in the first weeks of the Intifada, the windows in a classroom building were plastered with pictures of Palestinian children that had been killed.

... There are several professors at my school who are Jewish but who stand with the pro-Palestinians and it makes it much more difficult for outsiders to understand what is going on.

Many enemies of Israel as well as some Jewish critics of its government's policies make the distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. To what extent do these students agree with this distinction between opposition to the national liberation movement of the Jewish people and prejudice against Jews per se?

We asked our college students whether they were ever affected by anti-Zionism on campus. Interestingly, more students claimed to have been personally affected by anti-Zionism on campus (34%) than by anti-Semitism on campus (22%). Evidently, the students distinguish between incidents related to anti-Semitism and those related to anti-Zionism. Moreover, Canadian students were more likely to feel under siege on campus: half of them answered that "personally I have been affected by anti-Zionism on campus." One student stated that on several occasions when he wore his *I Stand with Israel* tee shirt, he was shoved and pushed.

Chart 4

How important is Israel to you?


Israel Solidarity

Despite these experiences of anti-Zionism and the general assault on Israel on some campuses, most of the students in our sample report a remarkably high level of loyalty toward Israel. In group sessions, students, and particularly some of the males, were especially revealing about how their Zionist commitments had intensified. Here is a sampling of observations:

The fact that this tiny country was transformed in a mere 50 years from a barren desert into a thriving intellectual, cultural and economic center — this is unheard of throughout history!

Israel created most of our modern Jewish heroes.

My parents and I practice very different Judaism. They are what I would call “good Conservative American Jews” and with me, my Judaism is totally based on my relationship with Israel.

I think Israel is so important to the Jews, and am so grateful that we have such a place to flee to if we (any Jews living in Diaspora) ever need it.

Solidarity with Israel has grown stronger across this sample of young people since 1999. Chart 4 shows that two-thirds of our college cohort report that Israel is “very important” to them; by comparison, just over half the sample reported such commitments in earlier phases of our longitudinal study. Almost none said that Israel is “not at all important.” In fact, among the small minority who felt disconnected from Israel in high school, half have become far more positive in the interval.

The rise in the students’ Israel consciousness and their “Zionist outlook” may be attributed to the political situation in the Middle East since September 2000. We speculate that with the Jewish homeland under severe attack, identification with Israel has become a more important element of their personal Jewish identities.

Israel Visits

Before my visit to Israel, I did not feel such a strong connection to Israel.

Being in Israel made me proud to be Jewish!

Direct experience of seeing the land and coming into contact with its people is widely thought to lead to more intense Zionist and pro-Israeli feelings. This certainly seems to be the case among our sample. It is interesting to note that despite the recent problems, the proportion of students who had visited Israel rose between 1999 and 2003.

Table 9**Percentage of Respondents Who Had Ever Visited Israel 1995-2003**

969 students responding to all three waves

1995	1999	2003
24%	55%	60%

More than half of this cohort had visited Israel by the time of their high school graduation. Fourteen percent had visited since enrolling in college, including 5% who were first-time visitors. Thus, for most of the college students, these were re-visits to Israel. This is a significant finding, given the upsurge of violence since the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000. It also means that these students have now visited Israel at higher rates than their own parents, only 54% of whom had visited Israel as of the time of our survey in 1995.

Most of the visits to Israel during college were with the Birthright Israel program⁴ (37%), or family trips (22%); a small minority went on their own (8%).

Aliyah

For normative Zionism, the most clear-cut expression of loyalty to the cause is the desire to settle in the homeland. Sixteen percent of the students indicated that they see themselves going to live permanently in Israel. An additional 7% responded “maybe” to the question: “*Do you ever see yourself going to Israel on Aliyah?*”

That nearly a quarter of these young North Americans expressed interest in moving to Israel — in a survey conducted during the Iraq War and the Intifada — suggests a remarkable level of pro-Israel feeling within this cohort.

Political Fallout

Interestingly, most of the students in our sample who are from the United States (as compared to Canada) express both American patriotism and strong support for Israel. In the present geopolitical context of a robust U.S.-Israel alliance, these feelings can readily exist in tandem. The students are apparently unconcerned by possible charges of dual loyalty. The current situation seems to have reinforced the overall Conservative Jewish ideology, with its heavy emphasis upon pro-Israel and pro-Zionist teaching. We have encountered no instances of “self-hating” or anti-Zionist Jews within our sample of over 1,000 young people. Rather, the Jewish identity of these students has evolved toward more intensive identification with Israel and Jewishness. This suggests that their formal education, upbringing and Jewish experiences prepared them well to cope emotionally and ideologically with the current crisis.

While the intensity of anti-Israel hostility has not thrown the American students too much on the defensive, Canadian students in our sample, by contrast, feel more isolated and vulnerable. This is presumably because the government and the general political atmosphere of their country are more hostile to Israel and U.S. Middle East policies.

FINDINGS: SECTION III

Reflections on Jewish Life at Age 21

Jewish Identity and the Meaning of Being Jewish

There are many different ways of being Jewish and forming a Jewish identity. What does it mean to the class of 5755? Does it involve ritual, observing Halacha (Jewish law), giving to charity? Does it mean social ties to family or connecting to other Jews? Or does it mean a sense of historical continuity and purpose? Our respondents reflected on such matters in the group sessions as well as in their survey responses. They were surprisingly clear and articulate on the subject.

To me being Jewish means many things. The most important of them is it means that I am a member of a community, a community with traditions. I look at being Jewish as being a member of an extended family. To me being Jewish also holds religious value but the first thing that comes to mind when considering being Jewish is the community that I am part of.

Though I am not a religious or spiritual Jew, being Jewish has still played a fundamental role in my life. Being Jewish for me is interacting with other Jewish people with whom I often have much in common, it is about appreciating the struggle and excellence of our people, it is about feeling connected and engaged in a community separate from the mainstream, it is about brotherhood, it is about common experiences, it is about belonging, it's about unity, and it is about acceptance.

Being Jewish to me means identifying with (my) Jewish heritage.

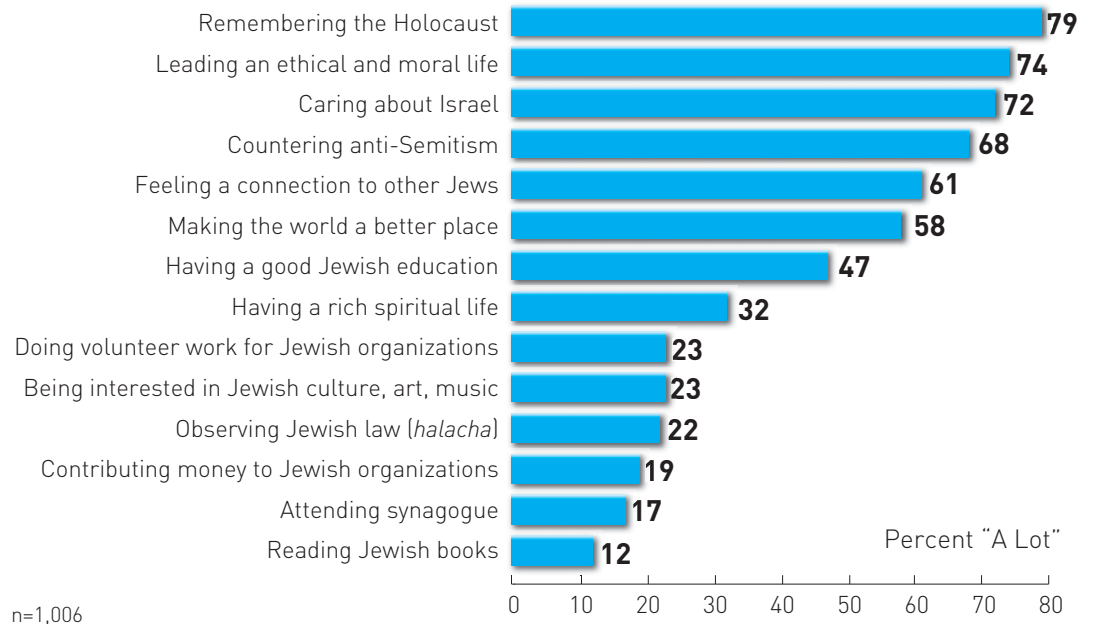
For most of this cohort of college students, Jewishness is closely connected to events in Jewish history. A great majority (79%) say that for them, remembering the Holocaust is “a lot” of what being Jewish involves. Leading an ethical and moral life is the second most important element. Only 17% consider attending synagogue as central to what being Jewish involves. (See Chart 5.)

This may well be a generation-specific pattern. Kelner’s study of Taglit/Birthright Israel participants shows generally the same rank order of answers to questions on the meaning of being Jewish (Kelner, 2002). Both Birthright participants and the “*Eight Up*” cohort give the highest importance to remembering the Holocaust, leading an ethical life, and caring about Israel. Both Birthright participants and the “*Eight Up*” cohort give the lowest importance to religious practice and observing Jewish law. Overall, the “*Eight Up*” cohort attributes greater importance to all the items. They represent a homogeneous group that is uniformly well educated in Judaism, in contrast to the diverse group of young Jews among the Birthright participants.

The “*Eight Up*” cohort score high on peoplehood, 61% saying that being Jewish involves “feeling a connection to other Jews.” The emphasis these young people place on concerns about peoplehood, or “*klal yisrael*,” and the stress they place on moral and ethical aspects of Judaism probably explain their reaction to the current political situation. National feeling and pride in their heritage dominate the list of virtues that the students consider highly important: remembering the Holocaust, leading an ethical and moral life, caring about Israel, countering anti-Semitism, feeling a connection to other Jews, and making the world a better place (“*Tikkun Olam*”). In contrast, traditional or normative religious rituals rank low for them: observing Jewish law, contributing money to Jewish organizations, attending synagogue. These and cultural activities such as reading Jewish books, which is in last place, do not constitute important aspects of their Jewish identities.

Chart 5

“There are many different ways of being Jewish. For you personally, how much, if at all, does being Jewish involve?”



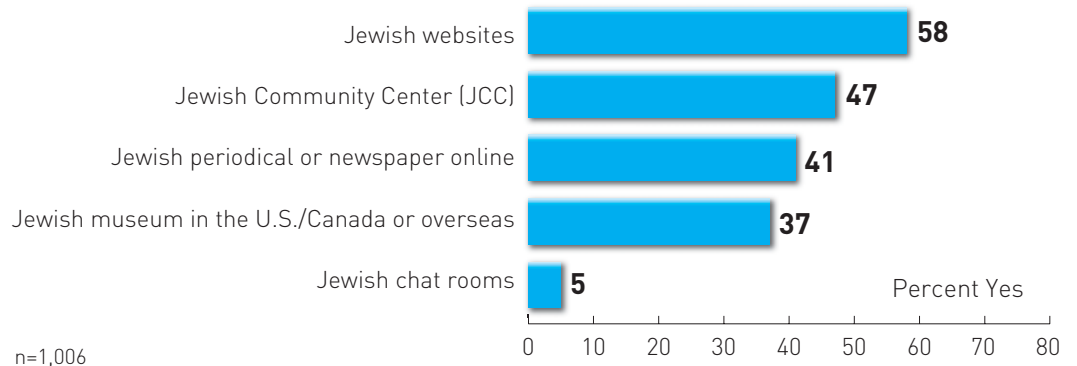
Jewish Communications

Today's college students and young people in general search for information, friendships, and even spiritual activities online, using the World Wide Web. This is a high-tech generation that creates its own virtual community. In fact, we utilized modern technologies to administer part of the data collection by conducting online focus groups. (See the discussion on methodology, Appendix A). Overall, the majority (58%) of the class of 5755 had visited Jewish websites during college, and 41 percent had read a Jewish periodical, magazine or newspaper online (See Chart 6).

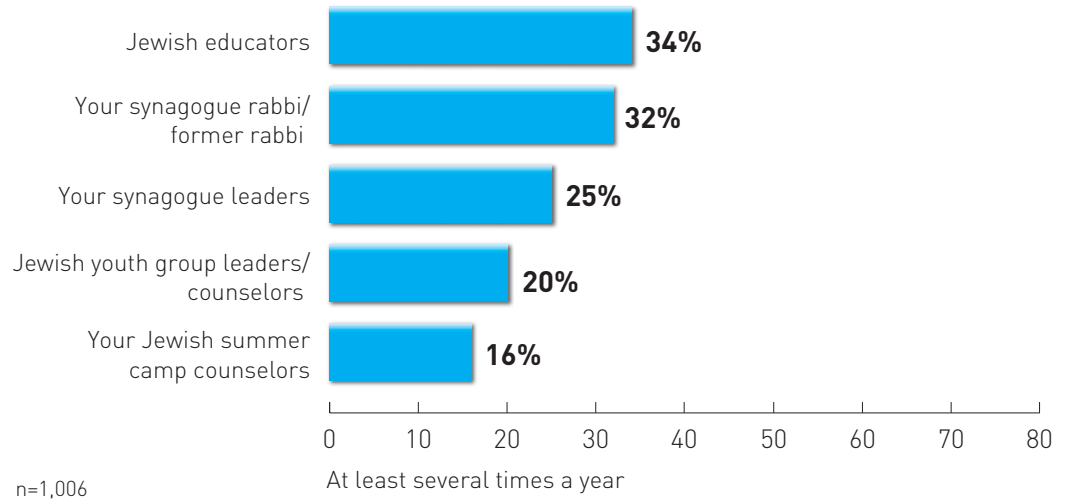
Interestingly, 37% of the respondents report that they visited a Jewish museum in the U.S. or Canada or overseas during the past year. This is quite a high level of cultural tourism. It substantiates our other findings that show these students' preference for Jewish culture and heritage over the more religious/ritualistic aspects of Judaism.

Chart 6

In the past 12 months have you visited the following?



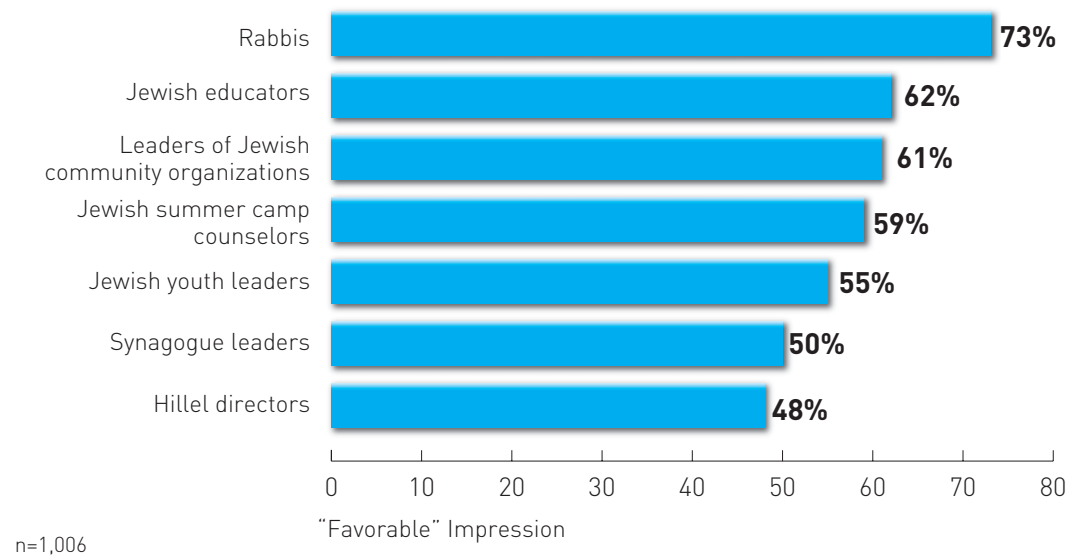
An additional useful indicator of how these young people connect to Jewish life is the ongoing communications they maintain with Jewish role models. The students were asked about their contacts with various Jewish professionals.

Chart 7**How often do you personally communicate with the following people?**

As Chart 7 indicates, 34% say they communicate at least several times a year with Jewish educators and 32% with their synagogue rabbi or former rabbi. These figures suggest a surprisingly high level of contact with Jewish educators and rabbis among this cohort of university students. As we shall see below, this is correlated with their attitudes and aspirations.

Attitudes Toward Jewish Leaders and Leadership Roles

In addition to asking about their ongoing personal communication with individuals, we sought information on the attitudes of these young people toward the organized Jewish community. How does the rising generation of North American Jews perceive communal leaders? Rather than test this through a “beauty contest” display of the agencies of the Jewish community, we sought to discover how these students perceive Jewish professionals and persons in authority with whom they have come into contact.

Chart 8**What is your overall impression of the following people?**

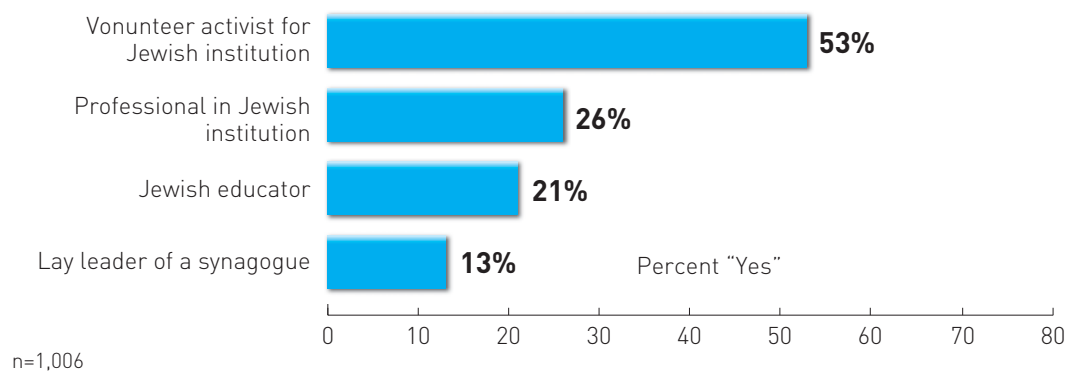
The Jewish leaders most highly regarded by college students are rabbis. Almost three-quarters gave the Conservative rabbinate a favorable score. Jewish educators are in second place, trailing by more than 10 percentage points. The least favorably regarded are Hillel directors and synagogue lay leaders. This rank order and pattern of respect for professionals correlates very closely to the pattern of personal contacts and communication maintained by students with the various types of professionals.

These overall impressions about Jewish leaders, in turn, help shape the students' attitudes and plans for their own involvement in the Jewish community. (See Chart 9.) Despite their high regard for rabbis, when they contemplate their own personal Jewish involvement in the future, the students prefer to play a communal/ethnic rather than religious role. More than half of the students answered positively about becoming a volunteer activist for a Jewish organization, but, as might be expected from the responses in Chart 8, they regard lay leadership of a synagogue as the least attractive area.

An unexpected finding is that these students express a high level of interest in playing a role in the field of Jewish education. Over 20% of the students would consider working as a Jewish educator. Although the following were not specified, such a role might presumably include not only serving as a schoolteacher but also working as a university professor or summer camp director, as well as a leader in the field of informal Jewish education. Interestingly, there is no gender difference in this list of preferences: both men and women expressed similar attitudes and goals.

Our findings somewhat contradict those of the UCLA study of freshmen, which show Jewish students less likely to aspire towards careers in education (Sax, 2002). In the area of career interests, apparently, the students represented in the “*Eight Up*” cohort are unique.

Chart 9

Do you ever see yourself becoming a...**Parents as Jewish Role Models**

Close family ties are a feature of these young people's lives—some students reporting that they talk with their parents daily. Perhaps as a result, this generation's sense of Jewishness and their Jewish identity are very much linked to their families. When asked to name their Jewish role models, more than half of them chose family members: one-third of the students chose their parents, 15% chose their grandparents, and 5% said other relatives.

The next most important role models for the class of 5755 are rabbis, cited by 9% of the students. This is consistent with their generally favorable impression of rabbis (See also Chart 8). A range of individuals come next, of whom Golda Meir is the most popular role model, mentioned by 5% of the students, followed by Sandy Koufax, who was chosen by 4% of this cohort.

A notable aspect of our qualitative sessions was the young people's desire to talk about their parents:

I think the most important factor in shaping my Jewish identity was my parents. Hands down, no question about it. They raised me in a Jewish household and brought me to Hebrew school and the synagogue. They were and still are always active in the Jewish community, taking on leadership roles. And we have a lot of family friends in the Jewish community. So just growing up in that environment really shaped my Jewish identity. It wasn't just one event or one experience, but rather a lifetime of experiences that has made my Jewish identity what it is.

One student describes the relationship with her parents as follows:

We have an amazing relationship. They're in my business about everything. It's good. It keeps me grounded, I think. I think if they didn't do that I would kind of wander off a little bit. But I'm happy, 'cause it's a support system. I feel very stable. I like knowing they're there. I like that I don't have to hide things from them. It makes it easier on me.

It is noteworthy what does not surface when these young people discuss their upbringing. This is not a 1960s-style generation. There is very little sense of hostility, anger or rebellion among our respondents. They are not overly critical of Jewish life, its institutions or personnel. Certainly they show great respect and affection for their parents with whom, as we noted earlier, they seem most likely to associate their strong sense of Jewish identity.

I highly appreciate the Jewish environment in which my parents brought me up, and I will always respect that. Though they encouraged my involvement in Jewish schooling and social activities, I was never forced to get involved beyond my own comfort zone and I was able to independently create my own Judaism, not a Judaism that my parents imposed on me.

As I was growing up, I realized that my parents raised me in a way that was different from most other children. They emphasized all cultural aspects of Judaism, but were very "laid back" about religious beliefs. The older I got, though, the more I realized that many people found this method of religion to be hypocritical (especially non-Jewish people). As I was exposed to more cultures and religions, I realized that this non-religious/extremely cultural practice was unusual.

Now that I am in school I appreciate the way that my parents brought me up much more. I am impressed that they were able to present Judaism in a way to me that made me want to continue on in my Jewish education. I don't know how much has really changed in the way I view them and my upbringing, as I have always appreciated the fact that they didn't force religion onto me, but rather allowed me to grow an understanding and appreciation of Judaism for myself.

Spirituality and Prayer

Really, the only spiritual activities that I participate in are services... Attending services makes me feel like a "good Jew," and I feel more at rest with myself both during and after services.

I no longer participate in spiritual activities on campus, at least not any Jewish rituals meant to be spiritual. Running and meditating are spiritual for me. I used to go to Friday night services at Hillel. The benefit was it made me feel like a "good person." It was cleansing. But I no longer find meaning in prayer or reading Torah like I used to.

Unfortunately on campus I don't have time for ritual activities. It is simply not able to fit into my schedule, nor is it a huge priority in my life. However, though religious spiritual

occasions are absent right now, I still consider myself a very spiritual person. I find music to be intensely spiritual and am very involved in writing/listening/playing. I appreciate the moments with friends that I tend to regard as spiritual.

On campus, many of my friends go to Chabad dinners and Shabbat services from time to time. It's a great way to feel immersed in Jewish culture and be reminded about our spirituality. Plus it is always a good feeling to be surrounded by other Jews and hear about how G-d touches our lives.

Spirituality is a fashionable buzzword in contemporary American life, and students respond positively to the term, as shown in the quotations above and the charts below (See Charts 10, 11, 12). Students stress the importance of spirituality in their own lives and many say it gives them a feeling of fulfillment. They also agree that it helps them to understand life's purpose. But what do these students mean by spirituality? When probed, some said they found spiritual fulfillment in religious rituals such as Shabbat services. But many others find spiritual fulfillment primarily through non-religious activities, from running to meditation to music. Clearly, strong spiritual feelings don't always translate into Jewish observance.

Our results agree with the findings of some studies and differ with others. For example, in case studies of four campuses in the U.S., Cherry, DeBerg and Porterfield describe American students in general as having a keen interest in "spirituality" rather than in "church" or "religion" (Cherry et al., 2001).

One expression of spirituality beyond organized services is personal prayer. Half the sample (49%) said they engage in personal prayer at least occasionally. This is quite similar to the proportion who said so in high school and an increase since the bar/bat mitzvah years (39%) (See Table 10).

Table 10

Personal Prayer Outside of Synagogue or Organized Religious Services 1995-2003

969 students responding to all three waves

Pray on your own in 1995:	39%	
Engage in personal prayer:		
Frequently	17%	18%
Occasionally	33%	31%
Rarely	34%	32%
Never	16%	19%

Plans for the Future

Graduate School

According to the UCLA study of Jewish freshmen, Jewish students are attracted to colleges' academic reputation, social reputation and national rankings. They are also likely to choose colleges according to their ability to prepare students for admission to top graduate and professional schools (Sax, 2002).

Indeed, we find that a great majority of the students, thinking ahead, say that they intend to go to graduate school. Only 16% do not intend to continue their higher education. This yet again reflects the high educational aspirations of the bar/bat mitzvah class of 5755 (See Table 11).

Chart 10

**Response to statement:
My spirituality gives me a feeling of fulfillment.**

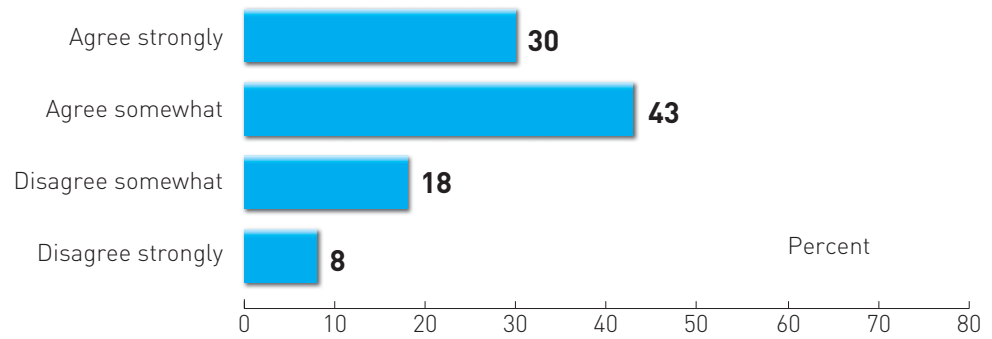


Chart 11

**Response to statement:
Maintaining my spirituality is a priority for me.**

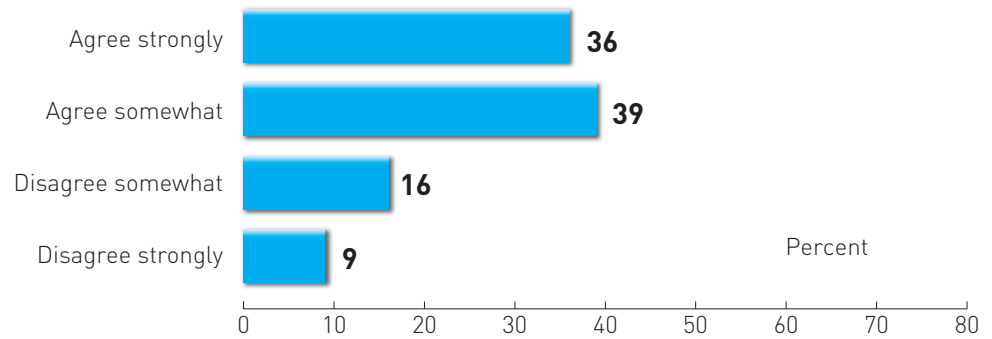


Chart 12

**Response to statement:
My spirituality helps me to understand my life's purpose.**

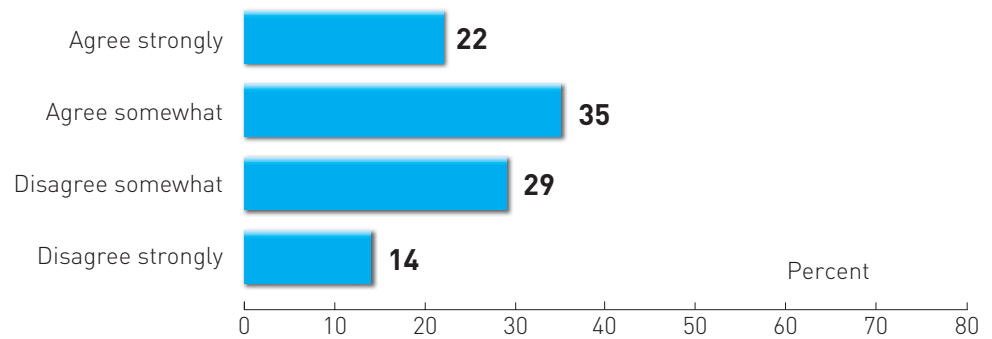


Table 11

Plans to Go to Graduate School—2003

(n=932)

Yes	71%
No	16%
Don't know	13%

Jewish Aspirations

The survey findings suggested that an important theme to probe in the group sessions would be these young people's aspirations for their "Jewish lives" over the next few years. They seemed to have clear ideas about where they were headed and what their issues were.

In three years, one student said:

I think I'll still have Jewish connections, but not as many as I have right now in college, given that I'm in a Jewish fraternity and am active in Hillel. Once I get into the work-force, there will almost definitely be less Jews that I associate with on an everyday basis. However, I still hope to keep in touch with all the Jewish people I know now.

Another participant, who was planning to attend graduate school immediately following graduation, said that when she relocates she intends to seek out a "Jewish connection."

It is the same approach I used when I first moved away for college. This Jewish connection grounds me and helps me get centered.

One participant nicely captured the sentiments conveyed by many in the focus groups:

The internal aspects of Judaism do not and will not change. They are constants and will remain constant in my life. It is the external aspects that change and fluctuate depending on external factors so that sometimes I may practice/observe more or less. My hope and anticipation however is that at a minimum, I will always go to Conservative synagogue services because that is what I was raised with, and I feel at home and comfortable in that environment.

College students recognize that the changes that occur in their lives influence their attitudes and worldview.

It's already been changing. I went to a Schechter day school through the 8th grade and didn't know anything else. Then I went to public high school and Judaism fell by the way-side...I was not interested in my religion. I went to Israel for 2nd semester of my junior year of high school and it changed my life. It provided me with this identity that I love. I realized that I am beyond privileged to belong to this people with this history. It took another year or two for the lessons of that time in Israel to really affect my life. In that interim period I met my girlfriend now, who is not Jewish. When I met her, my view on intermarriage was one of indifference. Now, I strongly oppose it. I don't believe Judaism to be a race, however. It is a people — and I do believe that conversion should be fully recognized. I would marry a non-Jew if she totally converted...and though I despise Orthodox Judaism, I would prefer, should I marry a convert, that she convert with an Orthodox rabbi, since I always want it to be an option in my life to make aliyah. Why the Israeli rabbinate only recognizes Orthodox conversions is another mess entirely.

Connections to the Jewish community do not necessarily translate into regular synagogue attendance:

I don't want to be the one who goes to Temple every day or every week, but I want to be a member of a Jewish community in the Conservative movement. I want to be able to reach out to that community in times of tragedy (shiva) or in times of jubilation (weddings, bar mitzvahs). I grew up with a good community, and though sometimes I thought it wasn't so great, I do want to have a community of Jews to be involved with.

FINDINGS: SECTION IV

The Evolution of This Cohort’s Jewish Commitment: Comparing the Results of the 1995, 1999 and 2003 Surveys

Our longitudinal study enables us to measure the impact of the college experience on this cohort of young Conservative Jews. Because our time series records replies from the same group of people to a set of the same questions on three separate occasions, we can place their current attitudes, opinions and behaviors in an evolutionary perspective. We can tease out those attributes that were in place and fixed even by 13 or 14 years of age in 1995 and others that have changed and developed since then.

Jewish Pride and Peoplehood

Holidays and Tikkun Olam make me feel proud of being Jewish.

We noticed from the outset in 1995 that this cohort felt very strongly and positively about being Jewish. In 1995 hardly any of our respondents thought it an unimportant part of their own lives. There was some slight erosion in the strength of this feeling between 1995 and 1999, during the high school years, but it was mainly a movement into the middle range or neutral categories rather than to outright negativity. This decline has now been largely halted. Table 12 shows that the past four years have seen no significant movement on this key identity item.

Table 12

The Importance of Being Jewish in Your Life 1995-2003

969 students responding to all three waves

	1995	1999	2003
Very important	69%	61%	55%
Somewhat important	29%	31%	35%
Not very important	2%	6%	8%
Not at all important	<1%	2%	1%

The strong sense of Jewishness expressed in high school and earlier has apparently consolidated through the college years. The majority of these students still feel that being Jewish is very important in their lives. Moreover, fewer than 10% feel that being Jewish is not important. Therefore, we can conclude that the college years do not seem to be eroding a strong sense of Jewish identity within this cohort.

We have employed an inverse indicator — the lack of shame — to measure these young people’s pride in their Jewish heritage. Since teenagers often feel embarrassed about personal matters, we introduced a question in 1995 to tap into their feelings about membership in the Jewish group. We were somewhat surprised to find in our survey of the high school years that very few of these youngsters said they were ever embarrassed about being Jewish.

Table 13

Embarrassment About Being Jewish 1995-2003

969 students responding to all three waves

		1995	1999	2003
Ever?	Yes	8%		
How often?	Often		<1%	<1%
	Sometimes		12%	12%
	Never		87%	88%

Table 13 clearly shows that this cohort of young Jews has hardly changed in its denial of having negative feelings about being Jewish. The vast majority does not feel embarrassed about being Jewish. Both at ages 17–18 and at 20–21, most “never” feel embarrassed about being Jewish, and only 12% “sometimes” feel embarrassed. The strong positive Jewish identity expressed by this cohort was corroborated by statements made by individuals during the group sessions.

I have never felt ashamed of being Jewish.

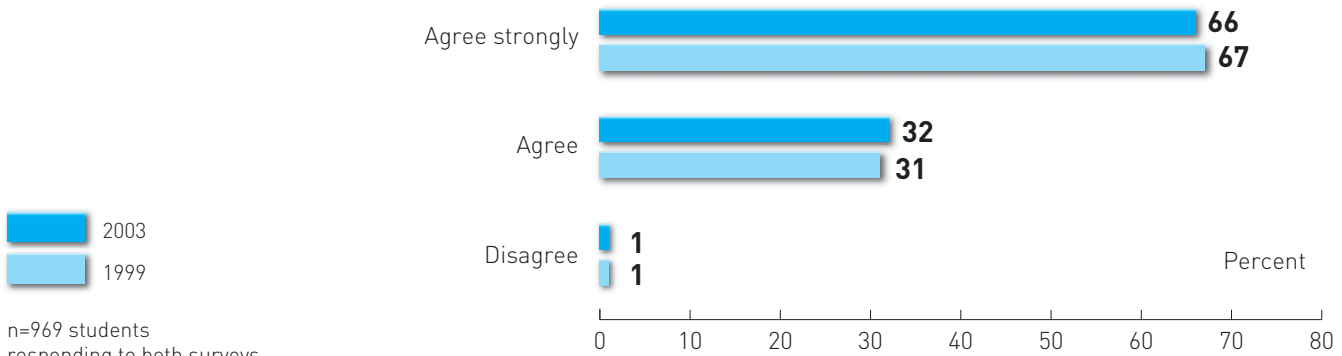
I love our Jewish History and how long and rich it is.

I am proud of all the struggles that my people have gone through to be where we are today. That is what makes me proud about being Jewish.

This cohort of young Jews is neither embarrassed nor ashamed of being Jewish. On the contrary, just as they did at high school, college students overwhelmingly express pride as Jews and in their heritage.

Chart 13a

I am proud to be a Jew.



The strong feelings of peoplehood, namely feeling connected to the Jewish people, which were expressed in high school, prevail during college. (Chart 13b) In addition, the value of *Ezrat Achim* (helping fellow Jews) has been instilled in this cohort. The great majority maintain a sense of responsibility toward Jews in need around the world (Chart 13c). As we will show, religious observance and practice have declined during the college years while Jewish pride and connectedness have persisted, if not somewhat increased.

Chart 13b I feel connected to the Jewish people.

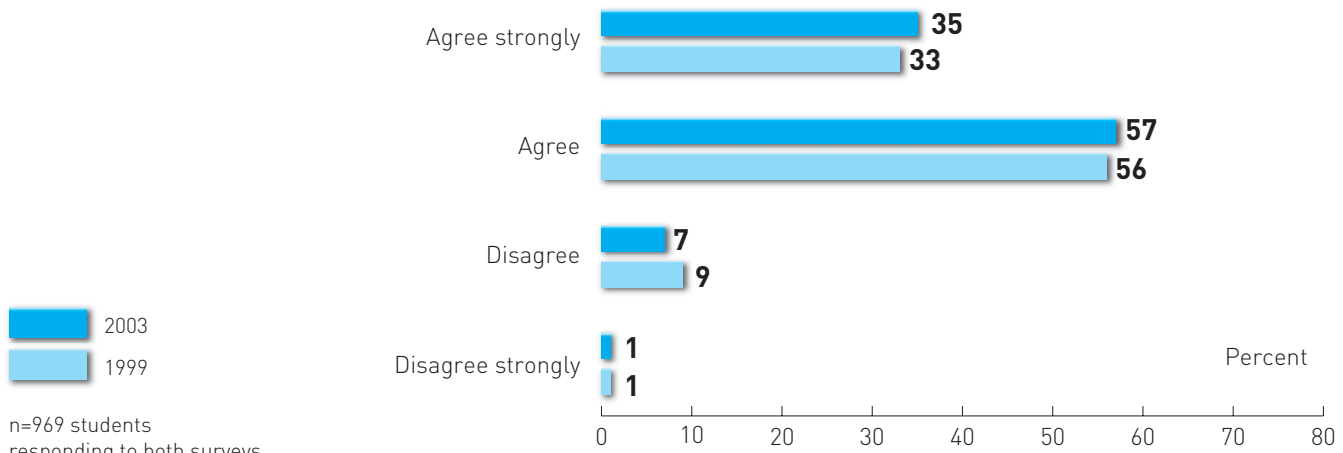
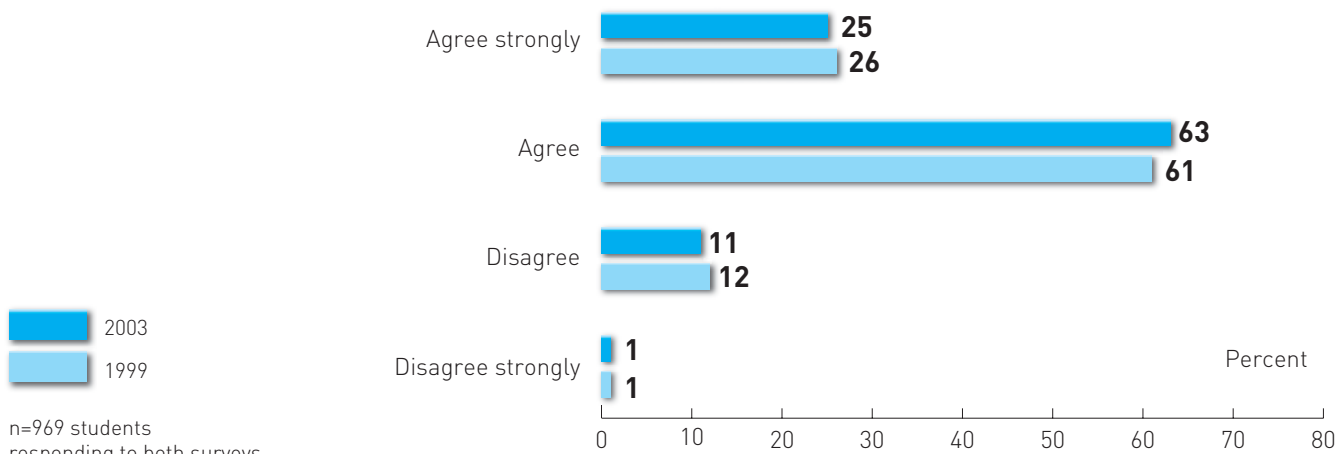


Chart 13c I feel a responsibility to help Jews around the world.



Commitment to Religious Behaviors

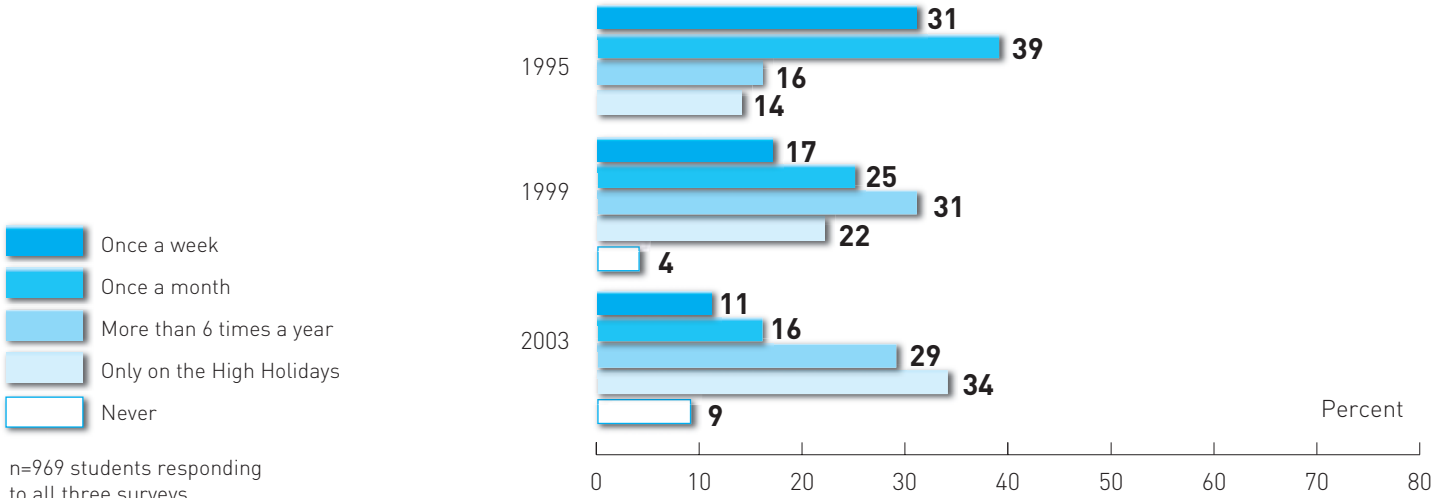
Synagogue attendance is obviously important to the Conservative movement. It is a symbol of personal commitment to public prayer and is widely seen as an overall indicator of the health of the religious community. Chart 14 demonstrates that levels of synagogue attendance have declined considerably over the period from 1995-2003.

There appears to be continuing attrition in synagogue attendance during college. While a large group of the teenagers (42%) attended at least once a month in high school, only 27% of college students do so. A plurality of students (34%) now attends only on the High Holidays and a growing proportion presently claims never to attend synagogue. Here we see a measurable effect of leaving home for college, where peers rather than parents may become the prime influence on religious behavior.

Chart 14

Synagogue Attendance

1995: How often do you intend to go next year?
 1999 & 2003: How often do you go?



Nevertheless, some respondents do remain committed to the familiar habit of going to synagogue regularly.

I participated in Friday night services last week at Hillel Center. I enjoy the services because it is a time to reflect on the week and the upcoming week. It is much like the services at home and I like it because I know all the prayers.

The observance of Kashrut, the Jewish dietary laws, is another important standard emphasized by Conservative Judaism. A behavior requiring daily commitment, it is also open to “renegotiation” in the college environment, when young people are away from the influence of the parental home.

Table 14

Kashrut Observance Outside the Home* 1995-2003

969 students responding to all three waves

	1995	1999	2003
	39%	31%	28%
Vegetarian		2%	2%

* Percentage responding “no” to: “Do you eat meat and dairy foods when you go out?”

Note: In 1999 and 2003 we recorded a voluntary answer of “Vegetarian,” which was not presented as an option.

Unlike synagogue attendance, patterns of Kashrut observance have eroded only slightly in college. Although most of the teenagers do not observe the dietary laws, and only 28% do not eat meat and dairy foods when they go out, the pattern has not changed drastically since high school. This seems to indicate that the efforts made to offer kosher facilities and meals on many campuses have succeeded in assisting those students who wish to remain committed to this practice.

Another important, though less frequent, indicator of Jewish religious practice is fasting on Yom Kippur. While more than three out of four of the college students continue to follow this annual practice, they are less likely to fast on Yom Kippur than they were in high school. Although the decline since 1999 has not been substantial, this slow but steady decrease is yet another indication of the erosion of religious behavior.

Table 15

Percentage of Respondents Fasting on Yom Kippur 1995-2003

969 students responding to all three waves

1995*	1999	2003
90%	86%	78%

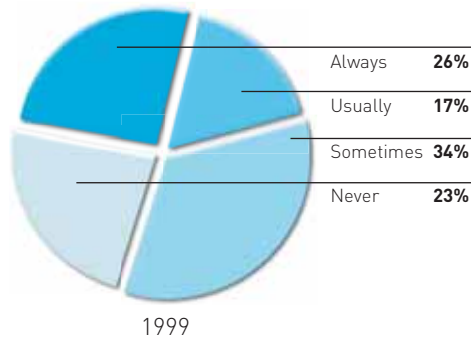
*Intend to fast

During high school, students were about as likely to fast as their parents. In 1995 we discovered that 87% of the parents of these young people fasted on the Day of Atonement. We presume that this pattern did not change in subsequent years. Yet while in 1999, 86% of the high school children also fasted on Yom Kippur, by college the percentage of students who fasted had dropped. (See Table 15.)

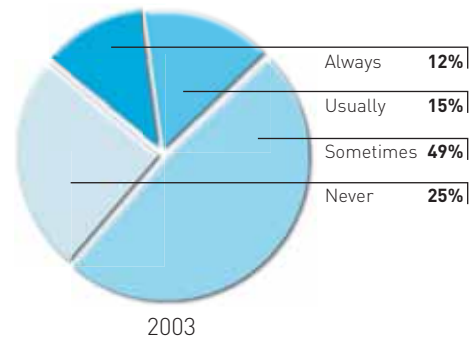
College students are less likely to do something special on Friday night or Saturday to mark the Jewish Sabbath than they did in their parents' homes during high school. The falloff in Sabbath observance during the college years is shown in Chart 15. This could reflect the greater difficulty of marking Shabbat away from home, or it could reflect the students' lack of interest. Some students are simply less observant than their parents are, as reflected in their own assertions. (See also Chart 17 on religious observance compared to their parents.)

Chart 15

1999: How often does you family do something special on Friday night or Saturday because it is the Jewish Sabbath?



2003: How often do you do something special on Friday night or Saturday because it is the Jewish Sabbath?



969 students responding to both surveys

For roughly a quarter of the respondents, Shabbat observance in some form continues to be meaningful, but it may entail a struggle:

I want to be connected with the Jewish community through going to synagogue, as well as just spending high holy days with the Jewish community. I think the most important thing is to continue to go to Shabbat services and eat with the Jewish community.

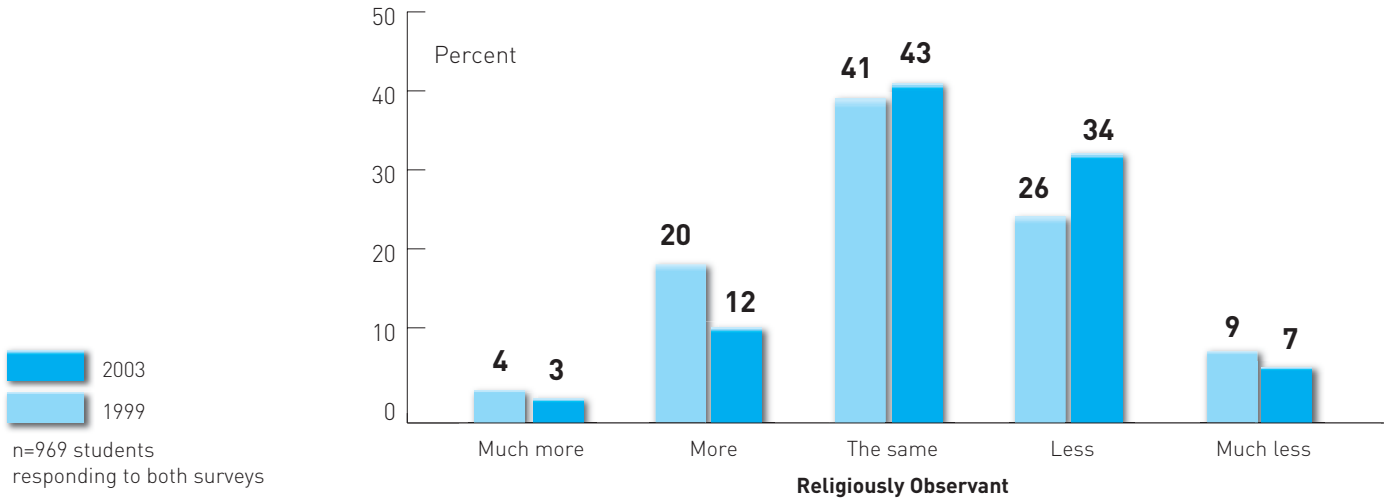
The most difficult observance to keep is the Shabbat. With this I go on and off. At home, I am able to not drive, watch TV, use the computer, radio, etc. On campus, however this is not the case. This is a question that has deeply bothered me at times. Why can I keep Shabbat at home and not at college?

Already in high school this cohort perceived erosion in their religious observance in the years since the intense bar/bat mitzvah year. This erosion continues during the college years. Focusing

on the 969 respondents to both surveys in 1999 and 2003, we see in Chart 16 that 41% of the students report being less or much less religiously observant than they were when they left high school. Moreover, the proportion of students who claim to be more religiously observant decreases from 20% in 1999 to 12% in 2003.

Chart 16

**1999: More or Less Religiously Observant than in Bar/Bat Mitzvah Year
2003: More or Less Religiously Observant than when Left High School**



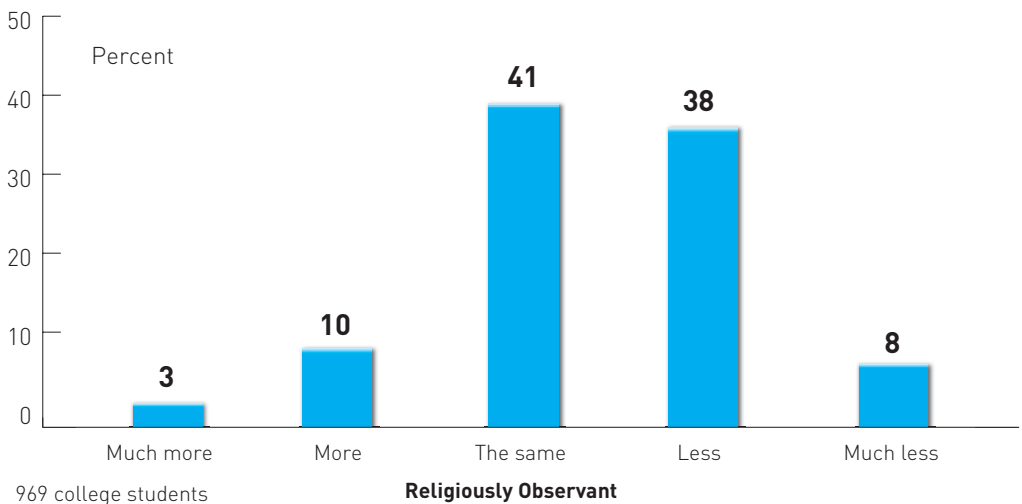
I am much less religious than I was back home, but I think it would be almost impossible to be very religious at a school like mine. Although we have many Jews here, the atmosphere is not one that is very conducive to being religious.

What I am lacking right now is a more religiously oriented campus.

Comparing their religious life-style at college with their parents' homes, 41% of the students say that they maintain the same level of observance and 46% say that they are less religiously observant. (See Chart 17.) These patterns confirm the trend toward disengagement from religious observance that we have already seen.

Chart 17

In comparison with your parent's home, your present life style is:



Commitment to Conservative Judaism

Chart 18 I don't really think of myself as a Conservative Jew.

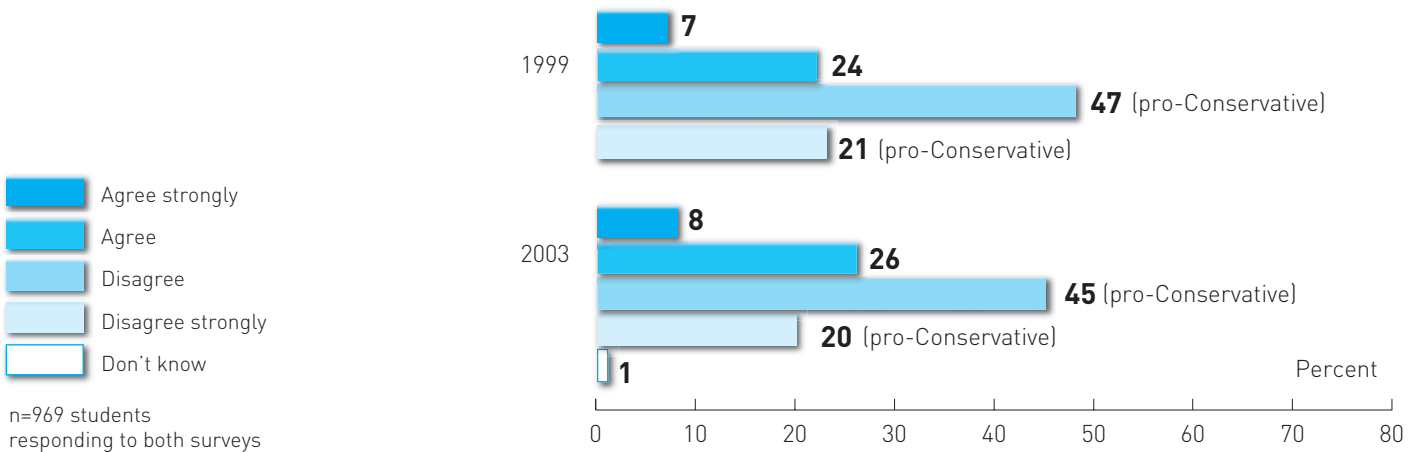


Chart 19 I don't think I could ever be Orthodox.

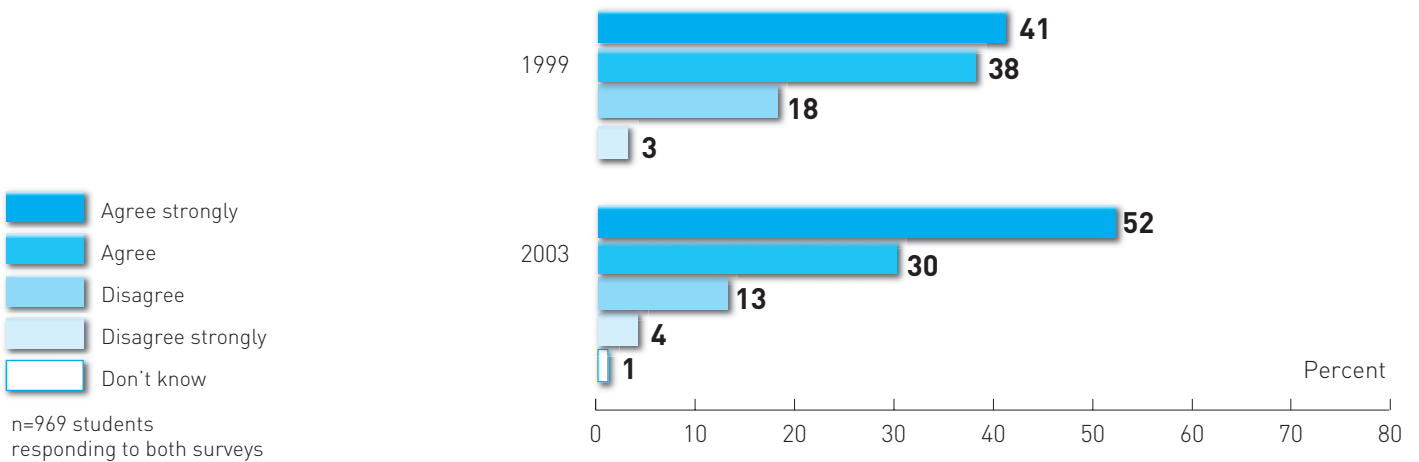
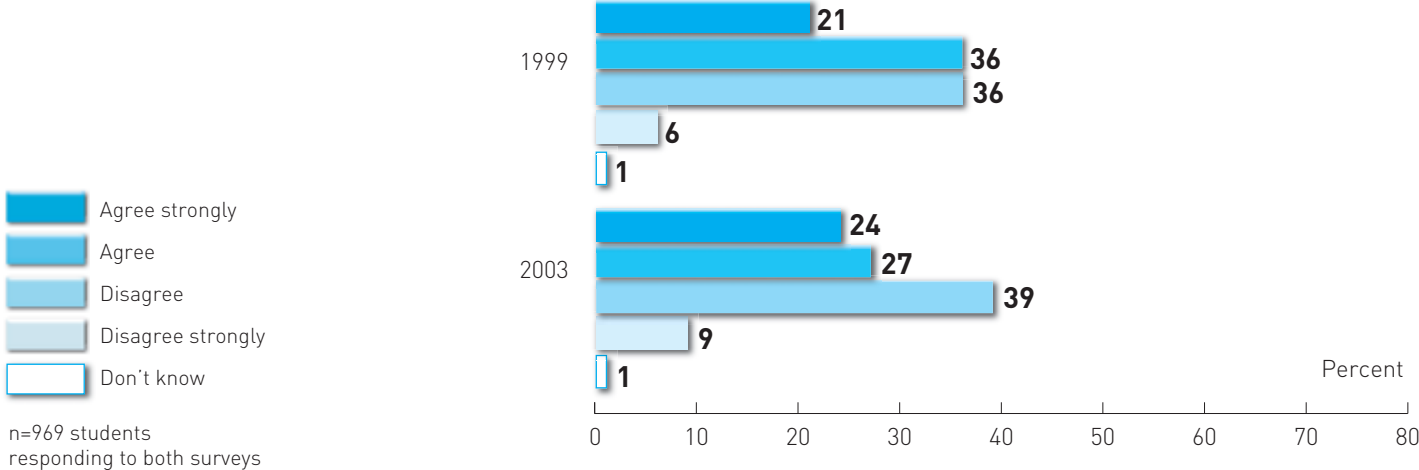


Chart 20 I don't think I could ever be Reform.



I like the more traditional education I received within the Conservative movement and the liberal perspective that allows me, as a woman, to use it in a more leadership-oriented way.

I think being a Conservative Jew is a happy medium in college. I dislike Reform Judaism in the sense that I feel it loses a lot of Jewish culture and the Torah in it. However, with the load of college [work], I couldn't see having sufficient commitment to living as an Orthodox Jew.

I like being a Conservative Jew because I find it is the perfect balance. My life does not revolve around my religion, so I don't think I could be Orthodox. I also find that Reform Judaism is a bit too "christianized" for me. Since I speak Hebrew, Conservative Judaism appeals to me. There is not much that turns me off about Conservative Judaism. I find it is the perfect mix.

Since Conservative is in between the two extremes, I often feel like Conservative rabbis or leaders don't know where the line is fully drawn. Since they themselves do not seem to know, it makes it all the more difficult for people to follow. I have much trouble explaining to friends why Conservatives have kept certain Orthodox traditions, while leaving other traditions behind. At the same time, I don't know how to explain why Reform has reformed too many things according to Conservatives

I was raised a "Conservative" Jew, but I long for the day when all Jews realize they are a distinctive unique people and unite. I wrote a song about it called "United Zion."

To what extent do these college students who have been raised in Conservative synagogues and homes still feel connected to the Conservative movement? This item was measured in two different ways. First, we investigated how closely our respondents identify specifically with the Conservative denomination. (See Chart 18.) Then we determined how they feel about the alternative synagogue movements to the right and left, the Orthodox and the Reform. (See Charts 19 and 20.)

Almost two-thirds of the students currently disagree with the statement, "I don't really think of myself as a Conservative Jew." By disputing the negative, they are affirming a positive identification with Conservative Judaism. The same pattern of response was expressed by these students when they were in high school.

While the college experience seems to have made little negative impact on these students' commitment to Conservative Judaism, it has changed their attitude toward the other synagogue movements. The proportion of students who strongly agree that they could never be Orthodox rose from 41% in 1999 to 52% in 2003. At the same time, the overall attraction of Reform Judaism rose slightly. Only 51% now say they feel they could never be Reform, down from 57% in high school. The alienation from Orthodoxy might be a reaction to the Israel experience among some respondents.

I am also a bit embarrassed by the ultra-Orthodox movement in Israel. They have a free pass through their life and do not have to serve in the military. They get money from the government just to study Torah.

Differing views about Conservative Judaism were expressed in the focus groups. Some of the students gave voice to the feeling that the Conservative movement did not meet their needs or reach them personally. One student was particularly critical:

I am waiting for someone to sit me down and tell me what Conservative Judaism is, but here I am studying with the people who invented the movement and they do not have a definition. I don't feel that there is a real movement per se.

Another participant found this very "looseness" of the Conservative movement inviting and appealing:

I love that there is no set ideology ... people can pick and choose what they want to practice and believe.

While many of the participants in our sample expressed no close connection in their current lives to the Conservative movement, quite a few of these same respondents had positive memories of the way they had been brought into Jewish life through movement-sponsored activities and organizations. Several of the participants spoke highly of their summers at the respective Ramah camps, recalling with fondness the sense of community and the spirit of Shabbat in camp. *“The Shabbat atmosphere was amazing – it was like an oasis,”* wrote one. Others recalled good memories of trips and activities sponsored by the United Synagogue Youth, the youth arm of the Conservative movement. Even though participants complained about the lack of learning during their Hebrew high and Sunday school days, they found the social side appealing. *“Once [we] were there, it was really social. [We] talked all during class and we were all bad. I hate to say it, but thinking back, Hebrew School was fun. All my friends went.”*

Commitment to Jewish Friendships, Dating and Marriage

We noted earlier that most of this cohort of young Conservative Jews seek out Jewish connections in college and expressed an interest in studying on campus alongside other Jews.

Chart 21 Proportion of Friends Who are Jewish

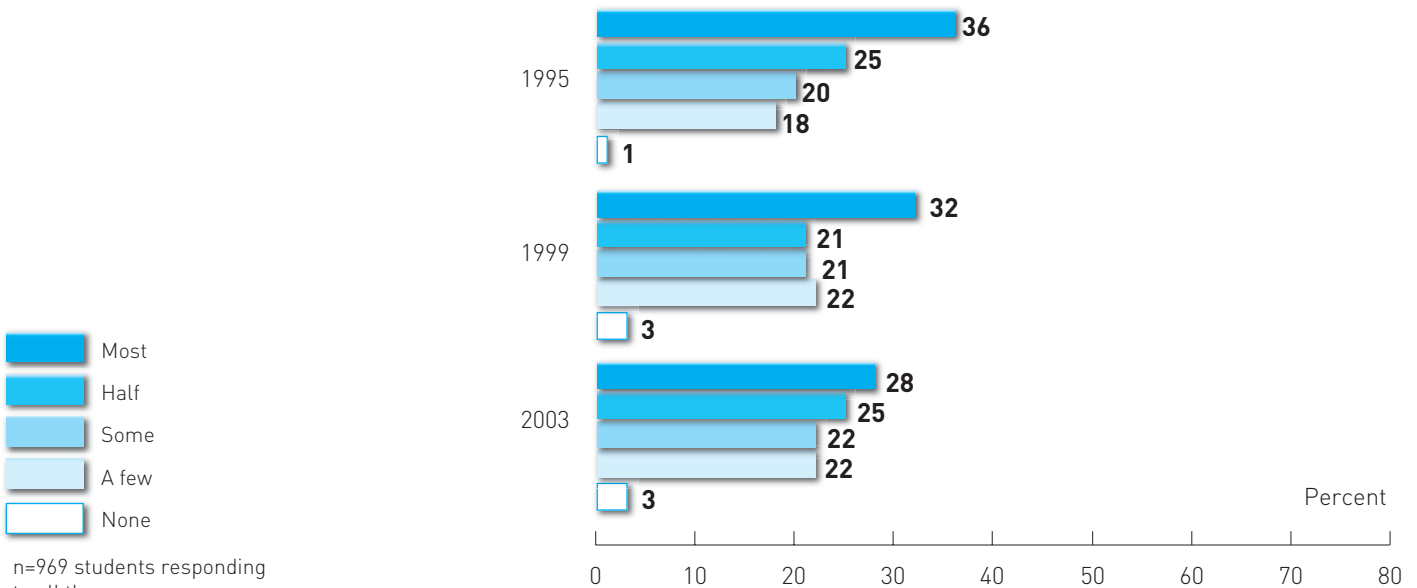


Chart 21 shows that the class of 5755 maintained its overall pattern of close friendships with other Jews from ages 13-14 through ages 20-21. Even at college more than half of them say that most or half of their friends are Jewish. That was also the case during the bar/bat mitzvah year and through the high school years. Apparently these students still manage to find plenty of other Jews on campus and have formed new Jewish friendships.

Most of my friends are Jewish and I do think it is on purpose even if you don't mean it – it is just because they think like you.

Some students came from very closed social environments at high school and one respondent admitted:

I met my first non-Jewish friend when I entered college.

On the other hand, some of our respondents had the opposite experience:

My family moved from Chicago to New Mexico where I was (along with 5 other people in a high school of 2,000) the token Jew at my high school (not that I minded in the least).

Patterns of friendship and dating are important because they are closely linked, at least in their potential social consequences, to interfaith marriage. Interfaith marriage is an issue that concerns the Jewish community and Jewish parents. We began asking about this issue in 1995. At that time, the recent b'nai/b'not mitzvah had relatively liberal attitudes on the issue, with 65% agreeing with the statement: “It is OK for Jews to marry people of other religions.”

In 1999 and 2003, we asked the same question, but formulated differently. Given that these young people were likely to be dating, we used a more direct and personal approach.

Table 16

How important is it for you to marry somebody Jewish? 1999-2003

969 students responding to both waves

	1999	2003
Very important	58%	51%
Somewhat important	31%	36%
Not at all important	11%	13%

As they did in high school, a majority of these college students still regard choosing a Jewish partner as important for themselves personally. Although there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of college students who think that it is “very important” to marry somebody Jewish, life on campus does not seem to have shifted the attitudes of this cohort dramatically.

Family ties and loyalties are particularly important to most of these young people, and many students expressed concern about their parents’ attitudes on the issue of interdating and intermarriage. We asked them, “How much does your father/mother pressure you to date Jews?” Quite similar to the high school years, mothers are more likely than fathers to pressure their children to date Jews. While only 23% of fathers, both in 1999 and 2003, pressured their children “a lot” to date Jews, 32% of mothers in 1999 and 38% of mothers in 2003 pressured their children “a lot” to date Jews. It is interesting to note the slight increase in maternal pressure once the child is away from home and older. Possibly, Jewish mothers are more open and more expressive about interdating and intermarriage than are fathers.

In the group sessions, students described in detail their parents’ attitudes:

My mother said that she would kill herself. She said that she would jump out of a building if I told her that I was marrying a non-Jew.

My mom says that I can date whomever I want as long as when it comes to marriage that they want to convert.

My mom just wants me to date/marry within the religion for my grandparents. I dated a non-Jewish girl before, and my mom didn’t care because she knew that I was not going to marry her.

Some parents are liberal on the issue:

My mom really hasn’t said anything about this at all, but my dad converted so she really cannot say much about it.

My parents are pretty cool. They are mostly concerned about the person's values and ethics and not the religion per se.

My dad wants me to marry someone decent and who makes me happy. The religion factor is not a huge deal.

Current dating behavior, as shown in Table 17, reveals a discrepancy between marital aspiration and actual social choices.

Table 17**Dating Patterns—2003**

969 college students

When you date, do you...	
Date only Jews	18%
Prefer Jews but will also date non-Jews	41%
Not care if the date is Jewish	35%
Prefer to date non-Jews	2%
Not date	3%

Given the rise in the age of marriage in recent decades, most of these students do not regard marital choice as an immediately relevant issue. Because they do not intend to marry until well after college, many students make a distinction between dating and getting married, and view their current dating relationships as temporary. This is how some of the students explained their point of view:

I view dating as something casual to do now while I am in college, in order to find out what I like/don't like in a boyfriend. This is how I plan to know what I will want in a long or even permanent relationship with someone. I am not looking for a permanent relationship now, and although I plan to marry someone Jewish, I have not yet dated someone Jewish in all 20 years. (whoops) ...I don't feel it's necessary to only date Jewish boys right now as I am NOT looking for a husband at this time, but rather having fun and meeting new people.

I feel dating maybe not Mr. Perfect but Mr. Fun for right now is more appropriate considering all of the other uncertainties. I would prefer to date Jewish guys and I fully plan on marrying someone Jewish.

I see dating as an opportunity to meet new young Jewish women. I have never dated a non-Jew, but I do not object to it. I have never dated a non-Jew because most of my friends are Jews and I feel like the Jewish community in Montreal in particular is one big community. However, I personally do object to marrying a non-Jew. Dating and marriage are two different things. Marriage is a lifetime commitment, whereas dating is more for having fun and meeting new people. Currently I am definitely not looking for a long-term relationship.

I view dating right now as an exploration of what I want in a guy. I am not looking for a lifetime relationship right now because I am still in college. I don't plan to get married until I finish college.

It is important to note that these college students do not seem particularly attracted to, nor do they advocate permanent relationships with non-Jews. Moreover, none of our respondents voiced an aversion toward Jews of the opposite sex. Whether this cohort will maintain its commitment to in-marriage with another Jew is as yet unknown.

Exploratory Analysis: Gender, Geography and Jewish Education

Egalitarianism

As noted before, Jewish mothers of today's college students, like Jewish fathers, have attained high levels of education—43% of mothers and 54% of fathers have a graduate degree. These mothers, it is claimed, choose education and career rather than the traditional role of “homemaking” (Sax, 2002). The largely undifferentiated gender patterns are also found among their children. In both earlier phases of this study—in 1995 and 1999—we discovered only minor gender differences on most behavioral and attitudinal items within this cohort. In fact, one important theme of the report on the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Survey was “the triumph of egalitarianism” and the “doubling of Jewish participation.” In the coeducational atmosphere of most Conservative synagogues, similar inputs had produced similar outputs, irrespective of gender. However, in the High School Survey, girls tended to place more importance on being Jewish and on Kashrut observance than did boys.

We tested whether this egalitarian behavior pattern persisted during the college years. Once again, we observed that gender differences are negligible across most items. In a few others, girls continue to exhibit slightly stronger Jewish involvement.

The biggest gap between male and female college students is found in Kashrut observance. A higher proportion of females than males report not eating dairy and meat outside the home. A slightly higher percentage of females also claim that being Jewish is important, as compared to males. On other measures, such as frequency of synagogue attendance during college, the importance of Israel and having mostly Jewish friends, men and women were indistinguishable.

Table 18

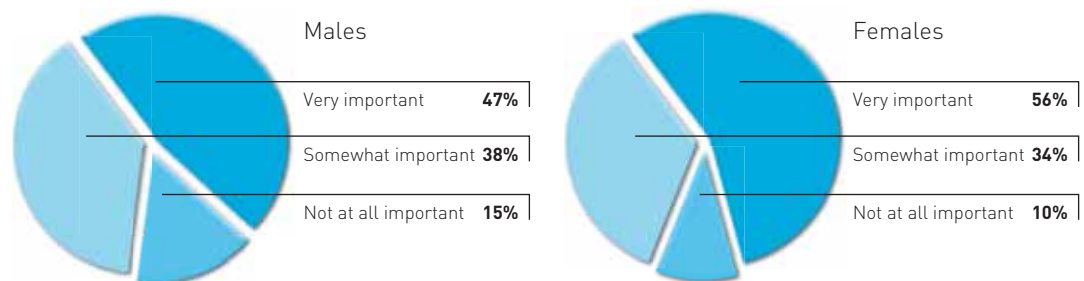
Men vs. Women in Jewish Behaviors and Attitudes

	Males (n=517)	Females (n=452)	Chi-Square Tests
Do not eat meat and dairy outside home	24%	33%	p<0.01
Attend synagogue monthly	26%	28%	— ⁵
Say being Jewish very important	52%	59%	p<0.05
Say Israel is very important	66%	67%	— ⁶
Say most friends are Jewish	26%	30%	— ⁷

Women also express more commitment than men to marrying somebody Jewish. (See Chart 22.) When it comes to dating, female students are more likely than male students to date only Jews, 22% and 15% respectively. Still, the attitudes toward intermarriage and dating behavior seem to go in the same direction for both men and women. The sociodemographic consequences will be evident only in the future, when they actually choose their marriage partners.

Chart 22

How important is it for you to marry somebody Jewish?



Asked only of students who expect to get married: males=506; females=440

Region of Origin

Another background characteristic that is often assumed to account for differences among North American Jews is geographical location. In the previous two surveys, no clear regional patterns emerged among Conservative Jewish youth. We investigated this factor again in 2003 by region of origin, i.e., where our respondents were raised.

Again, the differences by country and region are mixed and show no consistent pattern. For example, American students who are originally from the South claim the lowest Kashrut observance — only 20% report not eating meat and dairy together when they go out, compared with 29%-30% of college students from other regions of the United States and 31% of Canadian students. The expression of strong feelings about being Jewish is highest among American students who are originally from the West and the Midwest (61% and 59% say that being Jewish is “very important” in their lives), compared with Canadian students (only 44% say that being Jewish is “very important”).

The difference between our results and those arising from cross-sectional national surveys is that our sample represents a select population: All our students, irrespective of whether they were raised in the Northeast or the West, come from families sufficiently committed to arrange for their children to celebrate their bar/bat mitzvah in a Conservative synagogue. National studies of the entire Jewish population that find differences among Jews by region probably reflect the variation in the denominational composition by region rather than differences within synagogue groups.

Jewish Educational Experiences

Since our sample is relatively uniform in terms of background characteristics — age, family type, home language, general education, and Jewish education to age 13 — and since gender and geography hardly influence the results, we had to look elsewhere in 1999 to explain the range of behaviors and opinions we discovered. The most robust model in explaining individual differences among our respondents was an experiential one based on socialization factors. We discovered that participation by Jewish teenagers in a range of informal and formal educational programs was significantly associated with normative religious behaviors and enhanced Jewish identity. A clear hierarchy emerged based on the intensity of the exposure and the time investment, ranging from Jewish day school attendance to no Jewish involvements at all after the bar or bat mitzvah.

A surprising finding in 1999 was the salience of graduation from four years of Hebrew high school. However, the analytical problem we faced was that it was impossible to know in which direction causality ran. We assumed that socialization activities produce stronger attachment to Judaism. However, it is also likely that families who are more attached to Judaism are more likely to commit themselves to the financial and time obligations necessary to assure intense socialization for their children (Keysar et al., 2000). In other words, factors related to home background and exposure to formal and informal Jewish education are all too easy to conflate.

The College Years Project provides another opportunity to test the thesis that more teenage exposure to Judaism produces more committed adult Jews. In 2003 we could measure how lasting the effects were once young people left home and experienced the independence and autonomy allowing them to make their own choices. We hypothesize a model in which young people are highly influenced by their parents while living at home, but less influenced once they are on their own. According to this model, strong Jewish beliefs and behaviors during the college years can be attributed primarily to Jewish education in prior years, rather than to continuing direct and daily parental influence.

The Jewish day school sub-sample is based on only 46 students, most of them educated in Conservative, not Orthodox, day schools. The Hebrew high school sub-sample, based on 291 students, is more robust. As the following findings demonstrate, the data are consistent with previous findings.

Ritual and Jewish Identity

Table 19 provides data on two measures of religious practice, regular synagogue attendance and observance of the dietary laws; Table 20 provides data on two Jewish identity markers, the importance of being Jewish and the importance of Israel to the respondent. The pattern of results is quite similar to those found for these respondents when they were seniors in high school. The model's clear hierarchy operates in college just as it did four years earlier. This suggests that the intensification thesis is valid, and that increased Jewish inputs in the teenage years produce increased Jewish outputs in adulthood.

Table 19

Synagogue Attendance and Kashrut Observance by Jewish Educational Experiences

Jewish Experiences Prior to College	% Attend Synagogue Monthly	% Do Not Eat Meat & Dairy Out
Day school (n=46)	37	56
Hebrew high school grad. (n=291)	43	37
4+ years summer camp (n=77)	31	32
Youth group (n=340)	22	24
None (n=215)	11	16
Spearman Correlation	p<0.001	p<0.001

Though many kinds of Jewish experience in the high school years are significant, some interesting distinctions re-emerge. The day school — presumably the Schechter system — seems particularly adept at instilling the importance of Kashrut observance and the value of Israel. Students who graduated from Hebrew high schools seem to surpass students of Jewish day schools in frequency of synagogue attendance. They seem to match the day school graduates' strong Jewish expression but not their Zionist passion or Kashrut observance. Regular attendance at summer camp during the teenage years seems to have particular value in the realm of Jewish identity, as shown in Table 20. These findings reiterate the patterns we reported in the “*Four Up*” study (Kosmin, Keysar, 2000) and are supported by our research in “The Camping Experience” (Keysar and Kosmin, 2001).

Table 20

Importance of Being Jewish and of Israel by Jewish Educational Experiences

Jewish Experiences Prior to College	% Say Being Jewish Is Very Important	% Say Israel Is Very Important
Day school (n=46)	67	85
Hebrew high school grad. (n=291)	70	77
4+ years summer camp (n=77)	67	77
Youth group (n=340)	51	63
None (n=215)	34	47
Spearman Correlation	p<0.001	p<0.001

Friendships, Intermarriage and Dating

The Jewish educational experiences are further correlated with other important social behavior and attitudes, namely Jewish friendships and dating. These markers further validate the patterns that emerge in Tables 19 and 20.

Teenage friendships seem to be sustained through college. Table 21 illustrates that those students who attended Jewish day school during high school as well as those who attended Jewish summer camps for four years or more after the bar/bat mitzvah are the most likely to say that most of their

friends are Jewish. In fact, as might be expected, all the Jewish day school students in our sample have some Jewish friends, and none of them reported having no Jewish friends. Students who graduated from Hebrew high school also score high on Jewish friendships, though they trail day school students and those with extensive Jewish summer camp attendance during high school. The latter group reflects the apparent strength and persistence of Jewish friendships that are cultivated in summer camps.

Table 21**Proportion of Friends Who Are Jewish by Jewish Educational Experiences**

Jewish Experiences Prior to College	% Say Most of Friends Are Jewish
Day school (n=46)	39
Hebrew high school grad. (n=291)	34
4+ years summer camp (n=77)	39
Youth group (n=340)	24
None (n=215)	21
Spearman Correlation	p<0.001

Hebrew high school graduates express the strongest commitment to marrying a Jew. As shown in Table 22, almost two-thirds of them say that it is very important to marry somebody Jewish. The most significant result, however, is obviously the large negative effect produced by having no Jewish educational or socialization experiences after age 13. Only one-third of students with no Jewish educational experiences believe that it is “very important” to marry somebody Jewish.

Table 22**Importance of Marrying Somebody Jewish by Jewish Educational Experiences⁸**

Jewish Experiences Prior to College	% Say Very Important
Day school (n=45)	62
Hebrew high school grad. (n=286)	67
4+ years summer camp (n=74)	57
Youth group (n=332)	46
None (n=209)	34
Spearman Correlation	p<0.001

Attitude toward intermarriage is a theoretical question regarding possible future action. The crucial research question is how this variable correlates with actual dating behavior during the college years. With regard to their current commitments, 30% of Jewish day school and Hebrew high school students date only Jews. They are followed by 23% of those with intense summer camp experience and 13% of those with youth group experience. Only 6% of students with no Jewish educational experiences since bar/bat mitzvah date only Jews. This linear pattern follows a by-now expected direction.

All forms of Jewish education and socialization seem to have some additive value for positive Jewish behavior and attitudes. Hebrew high school and summer camps seem to show as lasting an effect as Jewish day school, though at different levels. The 2003 findings suggest that the college experience does not seem to erode the gains made during the high school years. One obvious lesson to be learned is the net value of investing in *any* form of Jewish education or socialization during the high school years, a crucial time in the identity formation of young people.

Conclusions

The university and college campuses of North America are not strange and alien places for today's young Jews. Unlike many of their predecessors, members of the current generation do not enter the "hallowed halls" with the goal of re-inventing themselves and seeking to throw off their parochial ties to an old world religion or a foreign ethnicity. It has been some time since Jewish students approached higher education with the belief that they were finally making contact with the mainstream of society.

The generation gap that was such a feature of 1960s student life seems to have narrowed almost to nothing for our respondents. We have documented in the College Years Survey how the students treasure their parents as role models. Moreover, our qualitative research has made clear that ties between the generations are strong. Today's students report that they have quite close and good relationships with their parents, communicating with them frequently with the aid of ubiquitous cell phones and e-mail. Their parents, for the most part, are college graduates themselves who understand and appreciate their children's academic, social and financial concerns. Most were more radical and rebellious in outlook when they were students than their children are today. These contemporary college students grew up in a time of peace, prosperity and social cohesion, and the data we have gathered from the survey and the focus groups reveal them to be a contented rather than an angry generation. They seem comfortable both with their suburban Americanism and their Conservative Judaism.

The family orientation of the cohort of 5755 reflects a general pattern among young people today. In the UCLA study, both Jewish and non-Jewish freshmen indicated that raising a family is an important life goal. This was the third goal for Jews in 1977, but number one for both Jews and non-Jews in 1999 (Sax, 2002). In one of the focus group sessions, when asked about plans for the future, one female student stated that within five years...

I hope to be taking my children to Hebrew School and will be hearing the same complaints as when I was dragged to Hebrew School.

Just as the cohort of 5755 does not see college as an opportunity to draw away from parents and their values, they do not seek to throw off links to their community. Indeed, many students report that they retain strong ties with rabbis and formal and informal Jewish educators. It is therefore not surprising that we discovered more continuity rather than discontinuity on most indicators of Jewish identity and attachments during the college years.

What we believe is new and unique about this cohort is the declining importance of gender. This is a truly egalitarian group of young people (Wertheimer, 1996; Keysar and Kosmin, 1997; Kosmin, 2000; Kosmin and Keysar, 2000). We tested nearly every survey finding in search of a gender difference and could discern only a few that were of statistical significance. This finding is of the utmost importance for understanding and working with this cohort of young people. It reflects the success of the Conservative movement and of American society in achieving the goal of providing equal opportunities to males and females.

In general, we have discovered that the pattern of Jewish student activity on the average North American campus is more focused on social and political aspects of Jewish life than on the religious realm. This is evident in the data we presented showing the consolidation of Jewish friendships and involvement in pro-Israel activities alongside a decrease in religious involvement from its peak in the early teenage years. Observing Jewish law, Halacha, and religious ritual is not a pri-

ority for most of these young people. They lean more toward a liberal Judaism rather than a normative or Orthodox version. They tend to create individual Jewish lifestyles with which they can feel comfortable.

Yet, clearly these college students are not breaking away from Judaism or even Conservative Judaism. None of the more than 1,000 respondents report that they are attracted to other religions or had fallen prey to missionaries and cults. They emphasize Jewish values regarding belief. They cherish their heritage and have a strong sense of Jewish peoplehood.

This cohort evidently does not follow the assumed pattern of establishing independence from parents at the cost of religious identity, a pattern that Cherry et al. found in their discussions with students (Cherry, et al., 2001). Although our respondents admit to being less religiously observant than they were during high school, attending religious services less frequently, and observing the Sabbath less often, they are still proud of being Jewish and accept basic Jewish values. For example, they feel a responsibility to help other Jews in need around the world. For a great majority of them, Judaism continues to provide important guiding principles to live by.

One of the most striking findings of this third phase of our longitudinal study is the students' increased attachment to Israel. Emotional ties to that country have strengthened since 1995. While only 56% said that Israel was "very important" to them when they were age 13, presently 66% feel that Israel is "very important." We attribute the strengthened attachment to Israel of this cohort over the years to the increase in travel to the Jewish state. While only 24% had visited Israel by the start of high school, that proportion jumped to 60% during the college years. Some have visited Israel more than once. Studies of participants in the Birthright Israel program, a diverse population of young Jews 18 to 26 years old across the spectrum of Jewish denominations, also emphasize the receptivity of young North Americans to the message of Zionism and their enthusiasm for Israel (Kelner, 2002; Saxe et al., 2002).

Our own previous research in an earlier phase of this longitudinal study explored the consequences of strong ties to Israel. In a multivariate analysis we linked Jewish identity and attachment to Israel, showing that willingness to visit Israel is the most important factor predicting very strong Jewish identity among bar/bat mitzvah students (Keysar and Kosmin, 1999).

In the College Years Project, we have captured a moment in history. These students were in college at the time of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the second Intifada in Israel has continued during their studies. We might have expected these students to be cowed by the sometimes antagonistic, anti-Zionist environment on some campuses and the radical pro-Palestinian rhetoric expressed by some faculty. Yet far from winning them over or causing them to defect, the anti-Zionist vitriol that they face on many campuses has resulted in a substantial rise in this cohort's sympathy toward Israel. We found politically sophisticated students who remain loyal to the Jewish people and state. This sentiment was particularly fervent among those who had personally visited Israel and had received a good education in Jewish and Zionist history at Hebrew high school, day school, summer camp and the youth movements. Our findings corroborate the research findings on Taglit/Birthright as well as the overall strategy of the Birthright program, and confirm the value of encouraging young North American Jews to visit Israel.

It is important to state that our test of non-response that follows in Appendix B validates our claims that the findings presented here are an accurate representation of this cohort's opinions and behaviors. There is statistical evidence that the respondents to the College Years Project are indeed representative of the "Four Up" high school sample. Many of the positive findings about the Jewish identity of this cohort come together in the following statement by one of the college students we interviewed. Although the testimony is from a rather atypical individual, it reflects a clear success story from a communal perspective, demonstrating how home and educational influences can operate to create future Jewish leadership:

My parents and I have nearly always been closely in synch on Jewish matters. They both grew up feeling deeply attached to both the religion and culture of Judaism. They have been able to provide me with a stronger educational background Judaically than they were able to receive in the small communities in which they grew up. I attended Solomon Schechter for elementary school and am now majoring in Jewish Studies. Right now I'm enjoying exposure to all movements of Judaism. I grew up Conservative and still most closely identify with it. The first major point we disagree over is my desire to study abroad in Israel. They share my desire to do so — but hope that I will delay my plans for a little while. Everything they've helped cultivate in me — both in terms of gut feelings and intellectually — point to my needing to be there while I'm still in college and during this decisive time.

Policy Implications and Suggestions

It is important to realize that among this new generation and in the 21st century, the process of psychological and religious development has changed. Through television and movies, they are exposed to different ideas and ways of life at earlier ages. This, of course, is a challenge to the formation of Jewish identity, because young Jews no longer follow the ways of their parents unquestioningly. However, it also presents an opportunity. If young people make up their own minds about their beliefs, then their Jewish identities may be more durable than those of people who have simply done what they're told. To influence the decisions of today's independent-minded young people, it is crucial to start early and present the Jewish religion and culture in a way that is attractive and meaningful to them.

The considerable early investment in this cohort's informal and formal Jewish education by parents and Jewish educators seems to have been well repaid. Knowledge and education help create loyal and articulate Jews. The Jewish educational experiences prior to college, mainly during high school, seem to have a lasting effect in shaping Jewish involvement during the college years. The importance of an intense Hebrew high school education, documented in the *"Four Up"* study, continues to hold years later, with the Jewish values that were instilled carrying on into college. Moreover, any investment in early Jewish socialization of adolescents provides an advantage over no Jewish formal or informal educational experiences after the bar/bat mitzvah. Even students who only attended Jewish youth groups during high school scored higher than those with no educational experiences on all the Jewish markers. Intense Jewish summer camping ranks higher and is associated with stronger Jewish connections.

Given the high rates of enrollment in college, it is surprising that only a limited amount of research has been completed on the impact of the college years upon the Jewish engagement and identity of young Jews.

The tendency of Conservative Jewish youths to gravitate to a small number of campuses is a potentially useful finding. The fact that around half the Conservative Jewish population can be reached on 30 or so campuses, offers considerable scope for delivering services to this population. Among these campuses there are around a dozen with the critical mass to make offering some specialized and sophisticated services directed at Conservative Jews feasible.

The value of Israel experience programs is highlighted by the evidence we have gathered. Those who advocate the benefits of helping as many young Jews as possible to see Israel and to meet their Israeli peers are vindicated by the results of this study. Our findings suggest that this experience inoculates young Jews against anti-Zionist propaganda. It is probably wise, therefore, to seize the moment and open new and more channels to Israel and to Israeli young people through online communication as well as exchange visits.

The egalitarianism of Conservative institutions has produced a cohort for whom gender does not lead to differences in behavior or beliefs, and is not an issue.

The fact that extended years of higher education seem to be the norm for this cohort has implications for the intermarriage picture. Many young people will still be in school, or have recently finished school, at the time they begin to choose marriage partners. This phenomenon could potentially reduce the rate of intermarriage, since the concentration of Jewish numbers and the intensity

of Jewish social life and networks is much greater on campus than later on in the workplace, when young people have embarked on their careers. Special efforts are clearly called for to enhance Jewish connections on campus.

The modern Jewish dilemma of desiring social integration in the broader society but segregation in marriage is apparent in the dating patterns of these young people. Reducing intermarriage rates is an essential goal for Conservative Judaism. Achieving it, however, is not simple. Striving to maintain the Jewish networks that were formed during the college years is one approach. This can be done by encouraging university alumni ties among Jewish students. Social, cultural and religious activities can provide opportunities for young Jewish men and women to meet and socialize. Such activities for Jewish singles are recommended for college students as well as for graduates. The fact is that students do not fully understand how their current liberal dating patterns may deflect them from the path to Jewish marriage. It is important to heighten students' awareness of this potential conflict.

Communication is the key factor in community development in the 21st century.

Online technology: The Web is the best way to reach young people today. They are familiar and comfortable with chat rooms. They are constantly online. They can be reached via the Web no matter where they are — at home, in school, in the U.S. or abroad while traveling — and at any time of day or night. One rabbi we encountered keeps in touch by e-mail with the college students whom he instructed for bar and bat mitzvah.

Social networks: Jewish college students should be kept engaged by making use of all possible social networks. Hillels and Jewish student unions need to welcome freshmen and reach out to older students. Jewish fraternities and sororities should be encouraged.

Special programs and services: Students need to be informed and updated about these, with information distributed online, since college students check their e-mail constantly.

Data bases: Jewish campus organizations need to keep updated data bases on Jewish students and contact them on a regular basis.

Since over 90% percent of Jewish young people attend college, funding and human resources for campus services need to be a priority for the community. This is particularly crucial at a time when Jewish students are far more exposed to anti-Israel attacks than are older members of the community.

Moreover, given the high percentage of Jewish college students in our cohort and in general who plan on going to graduate school and professional programs, Hillel and other Jewish organizations need to find ways to serve this older constituency in their mid-twenties.

As more Jewish students plan to extend their studies beyond college, the benefits of continuing the longitudinal study are amplified. The next phase of the study, hopefully in 2007, will capture many of them in graduate school. Regular monitoring of the student population, its opinions and needs, has to be recognized as crucial for the future well-being of the community.

The success of the College Years Project in gaining high levels of participation in both the survey and focus group components of the study demonstrates that Jewish students appreciate being asked their opinions and having the opportunity to express themselves on Jewish topics. Such research deserves the attention and support of Jewish leaders and philanthropists.

In the words of one student:

I just think that being in college is a very awkward but important time in a Jew's life. There is no parent around to encourage us to get involved and go to synagogue but at the same time many of us are searching on our own to find those aspects of Judaism that are important to us. I know for me the Jewish studies courses I have taken have really been the best thing I could have done for my Jewish identity. The professors were amazing, I got to take a trip (for credit) tracing Sephardic Judaism across Mediterranean Europe, and I find myself more proud and knowledgeable as a Jew. Universities need to work on gearing Jewish programs more to students' interests, maybe by just talking to some kids and doing some sort of survey like this. At the very least, it will get them started thinking about how Judaism fits into their lives and maybe even get them motivated to be active in the university's Jewish community.

This longitudinal study of young Jewish people raised in homes affiliated with Conservative synagogues was initiated on the premise that the bar and bat mitzvah ceremony is not only the most widespread Jewish rite of passage but is also the most important Jewish identity-forming experience. Despite the skepticism of some among the religious and educational elites in the community, it was our belief that the “Jews in the pews” took this rite of passage very seriously and were highly invested in it emotionally. Our view has not changed through the three phases of this study from 1995 through 2003.

Here is one of the college student recollections recorded during an online discussion group we organized:

The most important thing that has shaped my Jewish identity was my bar mitzvah. On this day I felt holy and I felt a connection with the Jewish people. It is a special feeling that I will never forget. This day also made me realize that being Jewish is more than just a religion. It is an opportunity for Jewish people to come together and celebrate a special occasion when a boy transforms into a Jewish man.

Appendix A

Methodology

The research design for the College Years Project 2003, which forms the third phase of the Longitudinal Study of Young Conservative Jews, integrates qualitative data collection (in-depth focus group sessions) with quantitative data (a telephone survey). This innovative and integrated design, using both qualitative and quantitative components, was praised and highly recommended by the President of the American Association for Public Opinion Research at its 2003 annual meeting. In his presidential address to hundreds of survey methodologists, Dr. Mark Schulman described this longitudinal study in detail and cited it as an example of how social science research ought to be carried out in the 21st century.

A. Quantitative Data Collection

1. Pre-Test

Nineteen students from List College of The Jewish Theological Seminary participated in the pre-test. It began on October 31 and finished on November 19, 2002. The interviews were very useful in testing and refining our questionnaire. The second version was tested in the last nine interviews. It took 21 minutes to complete on average and it was smoother and better understood.

List College students were recruited through the office of the school's Dean, Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz. We selected both male and female students at different stages of their college careers. Each student received \$50 for his/her participation.

2. Mailings

Students were sent a letter from the Ratner Center at JTS, signed by Professor Jack Wertheimer, requesting them to participate in the College Years Survey. In the same package we included a card for the students to fill out their contact information, including email address. We asked them to mail it back to the market research firm, Schulman, Ronca and Bucavalas, Inc. (SRBI), and provided them with a stamped envelope. In the letter the students were informed about a SRBI website where the College Years Survey is described.

The mailings started on December 12 to all respondents in the 1999 High School Survey as well as a few students of the 1995 Bar/Bat Mitzvah Survey who were not interviewed in 1999.

3. Telephone Interviews

The telephone interviews started on December 26, 2002. Ariela Keysar conducted a series of training sessions for the interviewers of SRBI. The goal was to find the students in their parents' homes during the midwinter vacation. Both Ariela Keysar and Barry Kosmin monitored a sample of the telephone interviews with the students.

The telephone interviews were scheduled according to the dates the letters were mailed to the students. In other words, those who were mailed letters on December 12 or 13 were called first.

At the end of each telephone interview, students were offered the opportunity to participate in the focus groups, which took place in March–April 2003.

The telephone interviews continued until July 11, 2003.

Overall 1,006 students completed the telephone interview of the College Years Survey. In all, 969 students participated in all three waves of the longitudinal study, in 1995, 1999 and 2003. The number of completes in the College Years Survey exceeded the number who participated in all three waves because some students who did not participate in the 1999 survey did participate in the 2003 survey.

The response rate is 75% when the 1,295 respondents of the High School Survey are the baseline. The response rate is 69% if we divide the number of completes (1,006) by the number of students who were dialed (1,461). The latter number includes participants in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Survey who did not complete the High School Survey.

Only 80 students (5.5% of the 1,461) refused to complete the College Years Survey, and 220 students (15%) were not located. In another 148 cases (10%), continuous attempts to interview the students failed. Some of these cases can be viewed as refusals. The program was set to call people back 45 times before giving up, vs. 8 to 10 times in typical surveys.

Locating Mobile Families and Students

Commercially available search programs provided some help in locating the addresses and phone numbers of families for whom we lacked up-to-date records. In February 2003, 755 cases were sent to Experian, which uses post office files. It provided some information on 485 of the families, and telephone numbers for 416 of them.

SRBI managed to interview 12 students living abroad. Three were in Israel; three in Italy; two in England; two in Australia; one in New Zealand; and one in the Czech Republic.

As mentioned earlier, we initially sent packages to the students, including cards to fill in contact information. Of the 1,461 students, 209 returned their cards indicating best time, by telephone or e-mail, to contact them. The post office returned 94 postcards with incorrect addresses. Later we managed to use Web look-ups to relocate 18 of these returned cards.

B. Qualitative Data Collection

1. Traditional Focus Groups

Focus groups are interactive sessions of participants who share a common cause or trait. In our research, all participants were part of the longitudinal study of young Conservative Jews. They were recruited from respondents in the telephone interviews of the College Years Survey who agreed to take part in these sessions.

Since the questions in the focus groups were open-ended, they offer the researchers a wealth of data to follow up on the topics discussed in the telephone interviews. Moreover, these sessions enriched the data with quotes from the students, allowing them to express their ideas and feelings in detail and in their own words.

Focus groups not only deepened our understanding of the study's hypotheses, but also provided opportunities to highlight different attitudes and behaviors by recruiting diverse group of participants. The task and challenge of the moderator was to encourage different voices and ideas to be heard, not only the most strongly voiced or commonly held views.

The focus groups took place in late March in two different locations. The first was conducted in New York City at the campus of Columbia University, with eight students from New York University, Barnard and Columbia present. The second focus group included 11 students in the Midwest. It was held at the Hillel House at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

One lesson we learned is that it is difficult to recruit men to participate in face-to-face meetings. Men are possibly less likely to feel comfortable talking about their personal lives in front of other people. Thus, female students were over-represented in the meetings in both New York and Michigan. We were able to rectify the gender bias by recruiting more male students for the online discussions.

2. Online Bulletin Board Research

The face-to-face focus groups were complemented by online bulletin board sessions that took place at the beginning of April during a six-day period from Sunday to Friday. In all, 36 students participated in the daily discussions. Each student was paid \$100 for his or her time.

Online bulletin boards are like chat sessions except that they occur asynchronously. The moderator posts questions on a secure website. Participants log on and respond to the questions at their convenience during the period assigned for the research. Each participant can see the answers that others have given, but only after posting his or her own comments. Participants are encouraged to interact with one another, not just with the moderator. The moderator and researchers have the opportunity to follow up and probe certain questions with all or some of the participants during the course of the discussions. Thus, the result of these sessions is a rich, multi-faceted dialogue.

Online focus groups allow researchers to gather respondents who are geographically widespread. In our case, it allowed us to hear voices of students in remote colleges in the U.S. and Canada. Because we could locate college students who did not study with other Jews, we were able to involve those students who are hardly exposed to a Jewish environment on campus.

One of the critical advantages of online focus groups is convenience. Participants like the flexibility they provide. The bulletin board methodology allows respondents to take part whenever and wherever they wish to. They feel that they offer the best use of their time and appreciate being able to get in and out of the discussions (Theo Downes-Le Guin, et al., 2002). Some researchers claim that the lack of time pressure on the part of the respondents even enhances the quality of the discussions: "Participants remark that self-pacing allows them to post more thoughtful ideas and to reply more thoroughly to other participants' posts" (Theo Downes-Le Guin, et al., 2002).

Another advantage of bulletin board group discussions is that they prevent one or more individuals from dominating the discussion. Opportunities are given to everybody to express their opinions. This results in less group bias.

The disadvantage of these discussions is the absence of the spontaneity, dynamics and real-time interaction of in-person focus groups. Sometimes it is hard to keep participants engaged over a long period of time and through multiple interactions. The challenge, as in any other focus group, is to generate stimulating discussions that will interest participants, and encourage them to continue to play a part in the sessions.

The convenience of bulletin board discussions makes them more suitable for research on college students of this high-tech generation. The personal topics covered in our research make the online discussions more desirable. Due to their relative anonymity and less pressured setting, they offer opportunities for more candid responses as compared to the traditional focus groups where peers may influence each other.

We were able to hear the voices of dispersed students from areas not covered by the face-to-face focus groups, including remote colleges in the U.S. and Canada. Some of the students logged on and participated in the discussions while studying abroad. These students, who were interviewed on the telephone earlier in the winter, spent the spring semester abroad in Europe and Australia, yet were eager to join the discussion group online. Since the students were able to take part at any time of the day or night, obstacles created by time zone differences were overcome. This arrange-

ment is optimal and convenient for students who do not necessarily operate during regular hours. Many students study or chat online in the middle of the night.

The online sessions generated a wealth of thoughtful remarks far beyond our expectations. Each day students conversed about a different broad topic. Every day a different set of questions was posted covering the specific topic. The topics that were discussed were: the family; dating and relationships; religious life on campus; Jewish identity; anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism; and plans for the future.

To illustrate how successful this endeavor was, we share the following anecdote. On Saturday night, April 6, after midnight, the first set of questions was posted. Thirty seconds later, at 12:00:30, the first answer was given. Students were so eager to be part of this experience that they could not wait to start. They wanted to share their ideas with us. They wanted their voices to be heard. Here, then, is still another policy implication stemming from our work: the Internet provides an opportunity to engage college-age Jews in serious reflection on what being Jewish means to them.

Appendix B

A Test of Non-Response to the College Years Survey Using 1999 Findings

The issue of non-response raises concerns about the representativeness of any social survey. Typically, researchers do not know the characteristics of people who do not respond to surveys. Specifically, they do not know whether the attitudes and behaviors they study are different for respondents and non-respondents. In this case the question is: Do college students who participated in the 2003 survey differ from those who participated in 1999 but were not found or refused to participate this time? One possible hypothesis is that less Jewishly connected students are more likely to “drop out” and so be underrepresented. To put it another way, the students who are proud of their Jewish heritage could be more willing to take part in this type of social inquiry. Such a self-selected sample would skew the findings towards a more positive portrait of this cohort of college students as highly committed young Jews.

Fortunately, the longitudinal study design allows researchers to track the characteristics of non-respondents — or at least those who responded to one survey but not subsequent ones. Some basic demographic traits such as gender, age and geography are known from previous stages. Further, attitudes and behavior information collected in previous phases also can be used to compare respondents and non-respondents.

Hence we can compare the differences between respondents to the College Survey and the original universe of the 1999 High School Survey reported in the “*Four Up*” publication.

Profile of Respondents

A. Demographics and Geography

There were no statistically significant differences by gender in the likelihood of responding to the 2003 College Years Survey.

Regional differences are also not statistically significant. Canadian students were generally more likely than their American counterparts to respond to the College Years Survey.

Since we are following the bar/bat mitzvah class of 5755, age is not an issue. Respondents and non-respondents are obviously of the same age (up to a one-year difference).

B. Jewish Educational Experiences

In general, there are only very minor differences between respondents to the College Years Survey and the overall “*Four Up*” sample in 1999 in terms of their educational experiences. Students who completed the College Years Survey were more likely than the entire cohort to be Hebrew high school graduates and less likely to be students who were not involved in any Jewish educational experiences during high school. Hebrew high school graduates were indeed the sub-sample most likely to complete the College Years Survey; 83% of them responded to the 2003 survey.

Table 23**Reanalysis of 1999 Survey: Jewish Educational Experiences**

(percentage)

Jewish Experiences Prior to College	Those Who Also Subsequently Completed College Years Survey	Total of Those Who Completed High School Survey
Day school	5	5
Hebrew high school grad.	30	27
4+ years summer camp	8	8
Youth group	35	34
None	22	26
Total	100%	100%
Number of students	969	1295

C. Religious Attitudes and Behaviors

Students who completed the College Years Survey expressed slightly stronger feelings about the importance of being Jewish compared with the overall “*Four Up*” cohort. However, the differences are only in the range of 2–4 percentage points in any category.

Table 24**Reanalysis of 1999 Survey: The Importance of Being Jewish in Your Life**

(percentage)

	Those Who Also Subsequently Completed College Years Survey	Total of Those Who Completed High School Survey
Very important	61	57
Somewhat important	31	33
Not very important	6	8
Not at all important	2	2
Total	100%	100%
Number of students	969	1295

Students who completed the College Years Survey also expressed stronger feelings about the importance of marrying somebody Jewish. But again the patterns shown for these respondents and the overall 1999 respondents are quite similar. As shown in Table 25, the differences are only 2–3 percentage points.

Table 25**Reanalysis of 1999 Survey: The Importance of Marrying Somebody Jewish**

(percentage)

	Those Who Also Subsequently Completed College Years Survey	Total of Those Who Completed High School Survey
Very important	58	55
Somewhat important	31	31
Not at all important	11	13
Total	100%	100%
Number of students	969	1295

The patterns of synagogue attendance are also quite similar. Students who completed the College Years Survey are somewhat more likely to attend synagogue more frequently than the overall sample. Yet again the differences are minor (See Table 26).

Table 26**Reanalysis of 1999 Survey: Synagogue Attendance**

(percentage)

	Those Who Also Subsequently Completed College Years Survey	Total of those Who Completed High School Survey
Once a month	42	39
More than 6 times a year	31	30
Only on High Holidays	22	26
Never	4	4
Total	100%	100%
Number of students	969	1295

Interestingly, there are no differences in patterns of Kashrut observance between respondents to the College Years Survey and those who did not respond to the survey.

D. Attachment to Israel

Students who completed the College Years Survey expressed slightly stronger feelings about Israel in 1999 compared with the overall “*Four Up*” cohort.

Table 27**Reanalysis of 1999 Survey: The Importance of Israel to You**

(percentage)

	Those Who Also Subsequently Completed College Years Survey	Total of Those Who Completed High School Survey
Very important	54	52
Somewhat important	38	39
Not very important	7	8
Not at all important	1	1
Total	100%	100%
Number of students	969	1295

E. Jewish Friendships

There are no significant differences between students who completed the survey and those who did not in their patterns of Jewish friendships.

In summary, clearly there are no significant differences between respondents to the 2003 College Years Survey and the overall “*Four Up*” cohort as reflected in their responses to the 1999 High School Survey. Looking at their demographics and other Jewish markers, such as synagogue attendance, feelings about being Jewish, attachment to Israel and commitment toward marrying somebody Jewish, we find mostly close similarities between the respondents and the overall “*Four Up*” cohort. These comparisons are important since they endorse the validity of the College Years Survey findings. Thus we can assume that the survey results on Jewish connections during the college years are hardly affected by the inevitable attrition of the sample. They reflect the actual development in the Jewish engagement of this cohort of college students and are not an artifact of a failure to contact some previous respondents to the longitudinal study.

Notes

Notes

¹ Each quote represents an individual student. Throughout the report we present the voices of different speakers.

² Source: CBS News/New York Times Poll, September 2002.

³ To arrive at our figures for 2003, we have added together the positive responses to these two questions: Have you yourself been subject to anti-Semitism off campus in the past three years? And: Have you personally ever been affected by anti-Semitism on your campus?

⁴ An educational trip to Israel offered free to young Jews 18-26 years old who have not previously participated in any educational program in Israel. Between 2000 and 2002, over 25,000 young North American Jews participated in the Birthright program (Sales and Saxe, 2004).

⁵ These differences between men and women are not statistically significant.

⁶ These differences between men and women are not statistically significant.

⁷ These differences between men and women are not statistically significant.

⁸ This question was asked only of those who indicated in a previous answer that they expect eventually to get married.

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