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Strengthening the Identity
of Jewish College Students

Ukeles Associates, Inc.

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FOREWORD

Events of the past year have focused considerable Jewish communal attention upon the college campus. First, a college experience is considered normative for almost all American Jewish high-school graduates. Thus, while Jews are only 2.5 percent of the overall American population, and even fewer are college age given the "birth dearth" and graying of the American Jewish community, Jews constitute approximately 5 percent of the campus population. The Jewish community naturally agonizes over the preservation of Jewish identity among its youth, while speeches delivered by Khalid Muhammed and Louis Farrakhan raise the specter of anti-Semitic bigotry leaving Jewish students feeling vulnerable.

To explore these concerns and the possibility for Jewish communal programming on campus, the American Jewish Committee commissioned a series of focus groups of Jewish college students on a variety of American campuses. These focus groups, conducted by Ukeles Associates, a firm specializing in Jewish communal strategic planning, suggest ways to both understand today's campus population and to plan accordingly for it.

Sociologists frequently divide American Jewry into three tiers: communal activists (20-25 percent), the unaffiliated (15-20 percent), and the "great middles" (50-55 percent), who are at most marginally involved in the community. By contrast, the portrait drawn here of Jewish college students suggests a four-part division: committed activists; the "empathetic," or Jews involved sporadically, especially in times of crisis; "ambivalent Jews," who do little Jewishly and are most likely to assimilate; and "invisible Jews," who do not identify at all. The focus groups suggest that the primary targets for communal outreach consist of the "empathetic" and "ambivalent," recognizing that large numbers of "invisible" Jewish college students are probably beyond the reach of the community. To be sure, it is painful to write off any Jew. However, in terms of utilizing limited communal resources in the most productive ways, we must recognize that some losses are inevitable in any case.

In addition to defining the target for communal outreach, the focus groups were also suggestive in terms of the content of communal programming. First, Jewish density on campus is critical to maintaining Jewish identity. To be sure, several students commented that having small numbers of Jews on campus challenges people to assert their identity. However, there was no question that it was far easier to maintain Jewish identification on campuses with critical masses of Jewish students. The message to graduating high-school seniors ought be clear: Choosing an institution with a high concentration of Jewish students significantly enhances the chances of preserving one's Jewish identity.

Similarly, the community has a responsibility to assert the importance of marrying another

Jew. Focus groups uncovered the clear intention of Jewish college students to marry within the faith. Communal programming ought to build on that preference rather than be neutral on questions of interdating and intermarriage.

Thirdly, the community ought to concern itself with the image it projects of Jewish heritage and culture. Jewish college students often lack appreciation for the salience of Jewish tradition in the contemporary world and do not understand why leading a Jewish life is important. If the focus of Jewish identity on campus centers too heavily on the Holocaust or anti-Semitism, the community misses the opportunity to demonstrate the joys of leading a Jewish life and the beauties of the Jewish heritage.

Lastly, the focus groups underscored the importance of trips to Israel as Jewishly transforming experiences. Israel legitimates Jewish identification, for the message of the Jewish State is that being a Jew and living in a Jewish society are exciting and positive things to do. Yet many students have not been to Israel at all. For many others, trips had occurred too early in their development to have much impact. Careful planning is necessary to enable larger numbers of Jewish college students to visit Israel, participate in experiences that are indeed transformative, and maximize their resources for the community upon their return to the States.

As Jewish college students encounter the multiculturalist ethos so prevalent on today's campuses, they will meet numerous challenges to their beliefs as Jews: Is Jewish culture legitimate within the panoply of American ethnic and religious expressions? Are the values of all cultures equal, or are there absolutes and universals transcending particular heritages? Can one strike the appropriate balance between particularist emphasis upon one's own people with broader societal concern for what unites us all?

These questions have no simple answers. The Jewish heritage suggests a dialectic between universalist and particularist imperatives rather than opting for one set of values over the other. Clearly, Judaism has much to offer young people as a "countercultural" value system that challenges accepted beliefs and prevailing customs. The challenge to the Jewish community lies in making the Jewish choices so compelling that young people will wish to lead a Jewish life and to share it with their loved ones.

Steven Bayme, *National Director*
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American Jewish Committee

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Many others contributed to the success of this project. First and foremost was Dr. Shulamith Elster, our focus group facilitator, to whom we extend our deepest gratitude. Without her steadfast commitment and tireless energy and enthusiasm, this report would not have been possible. Richard Joel, Bill Rudolph, and Ruth Cernea of Hillel Foundation were tremendously important in this effort; they gave generously of their time, helped us frame key policy issues, and offered us the support and assistance of their campus directors and staff. The Hillel staff and student volunteers were also invaluable to us on all the campuses we visited. Lastly, we would like to thank the 155 students who took the time to speak with us and share their thoughts, concerns, and experiences. It is because of their honesty and candor that we are able to present the findings and recommendation contained within this report.

Jacob B. Ukeles, *President*
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Ukeles Associates, Inc.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The college experience is crucial in the intellectual and social development of many young people. During the college years, the Jewish identity of American Jewish college students may be enhanced or diminished in the competition among diverse formative influences. If Judaism is a vital, relevant, and exciting part of the college experience, the student's Jewish identity may be firmly established for a lifetime.

This report, based on a series of focus groups conducted with Jewish college students in the fall of 1993, documents the "voices" of Jewish college students and assesses the needs and opportunities for strengthening Jewish life on campus.

Findings

We found four types of Jewish college students—the activists, the empathizers, the ambivalent, and the invisible. The activists might be Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, or secular; what unites them is not the specifics of their beliefs or practices, but the extent to which the depth of their Jewish commitment is expressed in actions and behaviors.

The empathizers "feel" distinctly Jewish and feel an affinity for other Jews. Though typically they are only moderately or sporadically involved in Jewish life, they tend to be the "swing" group on many campuses. On campuses with active Hillels and charismatic leadership, this group responds both positively and enthusiastically to effective outreach efforts.

The ambivalent students are those who identify as Jews but are unsure about what being Jewish means—both in general and in terms of their own lives. They lack answers to the question: Why be Jewish? Despite their current lack of involvement, many students in this group *are* curious about Judaism.

The fourth group of Jewish students are essentially invisible on campus—they are the ones who almost by definition steer clear of focus groups, surveys, or other situations seen as Jewish or focusing on Jewish students. Though they have family members who are or were Jewish, members of this group by and large do not think of themselves as Jewish.

Policy Recommendations

1.0 *The campus must become a communal priority.*

1.1 *The dollar resources allocated to campus programs must be expanded.*

- 1.2 *The resources need to be targeted.*
 - 1.3 *The quality of existing programs needs to be upgraded.*
 - 1.4 *The key to quality is personnel, and significant investment needs to be made in recruiting, training, and compensating high-quality campus professionals.*
- 2.0** *The communal presence on campus needs to be more responsive to real diversity.*
- 2.1 *Strengthen student access to the Jewish public affairs agenda.*
 - 2.2 *Strengthen opportunities for Jewish cultural expression on campus.*
- 3.0** *Jewish communal policy should try to influence individual decision-making about colleges based on the Jewish dimension.*
- 3.1 *Parents should shift their emphasis from encouraging their children to go to Hillel after they are on campus to learning more about the Jewish quality of the campus before they go, and encouraging them to focus more on the nature of the Jewish life on campus as one of the criteria for deciding what schools to apply to.*
 - 3.2 *A good, clear, appealing brochure is needed that can be used by Jewish schools, congregations, and youth movements to “rank” schools Jewishly—rating the Hillel, rating the Jewish Studies program, and describing the culture and ambience.*
- 4.0** *Strategies for enhancing Jewish identity should respond to the four types of students, with the greatest priority to the “empathizers” and the “ambivalent.”*
- The Empathizers
- 4.1 *More investment in Israel experiences for college-age people.*
 - 4.2 *Maximum investment in experimentation.*
- The Ambivalent
- 4.3 *Create nonjudgmental settings for them to learn about Judaism.*
 - 4.4 *Create nonjudgmental settings for Jewish experiences.*
- The Activists
- 4.5 *The Jewishly active students need to be empowered and supported—in the quality and location of physical space at Jewish centers that are their home away from home.*
 - 4.6 *Activists need to be made aware of opportunities for postcollege Jewish involvement in a more systematic way.*

Recommended AJC Campus Program

The AJC can, and should, play a role on the American college campus as part of the overall effort of the organized Jewish community to strengthen Jewish identity. We recommend that AJC function in cooperation with National Hillel.

Rationale

We have identified three major reasons for AJC involvement:

1. To present the “AJC way” as one relevant model of Jewishness to college students.

2. To add resources to this important arena of Jewish life.
3. To help solve the difficult problem of how to connect those students who are not currently active in Jewish life on campus.

Suggested Program Model

1. **AJC should target a limited number of campuses (e.g., 15 to 20) of two types:**
 - Small, elite schools that typically do not have a Hillel presence (e.g., Williams, Amherst, Reed, Carleton, Swarthmore, Haverford, Wellesley).
 - Large state universities with very large Jewish enrollments that are outside of major metropolitan Jewish communities.

2. **Several different program elements should be developed that could be packaged differently in different locations:**
 - An AJC library of Jewish public affairs materials.
 - Where there is a nearby AJC chapter, that chapter should develop a special relationship with one of these campuses.
 - AJC national departments should work together to come up with a program series at a campus.

Consistent with the policy recommendations contained within the body of this report, we believe that Hillel programs on most campuses should, and with proper encouragement will, make the transition from “place” to “gateway.” In that context, AJC should be one of the organizations connected to the college world.

INTRODUCTION

Across the continent, deep concerns have surfaced about Jewish continuity, in part because of the very high intermarriage rate and the probability that most children of intermarried couples are not raised as Jews. Although most people do not marry while in college, they do have formative social experiences that shape their views of the kind of person they are likely to marry. Jews are a minority on virtually all campuses; thus random encounters are likely to be with non-Jews. Virtually all Jewish young people are involved in some form of higher education. As Seymour Martin Lipset has pointed out, Jewish educational achievements may actually be undermining Jewish continuity. "A major source of the extremely high ratio of intermarriage is the almost universal pattern of attendance by Jews at colleges and universities with universalistic norms."

The college experience is a crucial element in the intellectual and social development of individuals in our society, including self-identity. College is a time for experimentation; an opportunity to explore new ideas, new values, new lifestyles, and to meet new kinds of people.

Increasingly, the organized Jewish community recognizes the college campus as both a threat and an opportunity. Since the 1920s, the central Jewish organization on campus has been the network of Hillel Foundations sponsored by B'nai B'rith. Over the past several years, as needs have surpassed its funding capacity, B'nai B'rith has reduced its allocations to Hillel by nearly \$2 million. At the same time, Federations have moved into active funding and planning relationships with local college organizations, most often in partnership with Hillel. Increased allocations by a number of Federations in recent years have not been sufficient to offset the reductions in funding by B'nai B'rith. Where college campuses are not located in or near organized Jewish communities, this places an added strain on the local funding model for the college campus.

The national Jewish community faces major issues of funding, organization, policy and program. A major rethinking of how Jewish life on campus should be structured and how Jewish identity of Jewish college students can be strengthened in the face of the challenges outlined above has been undertaken by the CJF Task Force on Jewish University Student Services. Hillel is now an independently constituted national organization—Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to report on qualitative findings from a series of focus groups conducted among Jewish college students in the fall of 1993 and, in doing so, to highlight

some of the salient issues regarding Jewish life on campus and their possible policy implications for the organized Jewish community.

Focus groups were conducted as a means of collecting qualitative information to help illuminate the challenging policy issues facing the community. Specifically, we sought to:

- Document the “voices” of Jewish students on campus—their reasons for participation or nonparticipation in Jewish campus activities; the nature and extent of their self-identification as Jews; their views of intermarriage, Israel, and other salient issues
- Assess the needs and opportunities for strengthening Jewish life on campus with a focus on building Jewish identity during this formative period in people’s lives

Methods

Focus group studies produce findings that are directional, *not* quantitative in nature. Focus groups allow researchers to gain a better understanding of their target population, and to use information gathered during the groups as a directional guide for developing program and outreach strategies that would both appeal to and fulfill the needs of the target population. Drawn from a small, nonrandom sample, focus group findings are not *statistically* significant.

A focus group is a group interview. A trained interviewer uses a structured discussion guide consisting of open-ended questions—the kind that call for discursive answers rather than forced choices among predetermined responses.

The major advantages of focus group research are:

- Participants answer in their own words without filtering their responses through the structure of preconceived answers.
- Focus groups allow researchers the flexibility to pursue interesting lines of inquiry or curtail less fruitful lines.
- Most important, focus groups allow respondents to bounce ideas off one another, generating greater depth and sophistication of responses.

The first step in preparing the focus groups was to work with an American Jewish Committee (AJC) Advisory Committee to articulate a series of hypotheses about the major issues to be explored with Jewish college students. Ukeles Associates used these hypotheses to develop a structured discussion guide for the focus groups. With one exception, the focus groups were moderated by Dr. Shulamith Elster, professor of Jewish Education at Baltimore Hebrew University and a skilled facilitator, who was trained in Ukeles Associates focus group research techniques.

During November and December 1993 we visited eight college campuses throughout the United States, meeting with 155 students in focus groups arranged with the assistance of local campus coordinators and with the cooperation of Hillel directors and staff.

Exhibit 1. Distribution of Schools, Using Criteria

<u>REGION</u>	<u>FUNDING</u>		<u>HILLEL</u>				
Northeast	4	Public	4	Strong	2	Not strong	2
Midwest	2	Private	4	Moderate	3	No Hillel	1
West	2						
<u>SIZE OF JEWISH POPULATION</u>							
				Very large (3,000 or more)	2	(UCLA; Rutgers)	
				Large (1,500-2,999)	3	(Indiana; Wash U.; GW)	
				Medium (500-1,499):	2	(Delaware; Harvard)	
				Small (< 500)	1	(Reed)	

Thirteen focus groups were held on the following eight campuses: George Washington University in Washington, D.C.; Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana; Reed College in Portland, Oregon; Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey; University of California in Los Angeles, California; University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware; and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. In selecting campuses, we sought a mix of: regions; campus types—i.e., residential and commuter; Jewish student density, including schools with small Jewish populations (<500), medium (500-1,499), large (1,500-2,999), and very large ($\geq 3,000$); public and privately funded schools; highly prestigious competitive schools and less competitive schools; schools with strong, active Hillels, schools with smaller, less active Hillels, and those with no Jewish institutional presence; campuses in close proximity to an organized Jewish community and those remote from one. Exhibit 1 illustrates the way in which the selected schools satisfied these criteria.

Focus group participants were selected to reflect the diversity of Jewish students on campus. We set out to speak to a mix of men and women, freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, and students with different Jewish backgrounds, including varying levels of formal and informal Jewish education, with Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and secular upbringings, and with varying degrees of current Jewish identification.

To ensure that we would speak with students with varying levels of Jewish identification, we asked campus coordinators to recruit participants with strong, moderate, and low or no Jewish identification and involvement. Exhibit 2 shows that the operational definitions we used as an identity index combined level of ritual observance with involvement in Jewish activities on campus. Students classified as having low or no Jewish identity, for example, were those who engaged in a maximum of one Jewish ritual a year (e.g., a Passover seder) and participated in no organized Jewish activities on campus. Those considered strongly identified, on the other hand, engaged in a minimum of five ritual observances a year and were actively involved in Jewish campus activities. The moderately identified students fell between these two groups.

Our campus coordinators had no difficulty recruiting strongly identified students to participate in the focus groups. They had more difficulty attracting moderately identified

Exhibit 2. Operational Definitions of Participant Groups

Group	Defining characteristics	Source
Low or no Jewish identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No involvement with any organized Jewish activities on campus (e.g., Hillel) (No, or very little—i.e., 0-1 ritual observances a year, e.g., Passover seder)	Informal network—friends, roommates, etc.
Moderate Jewish identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed up for something at Hillel or other organized Jewish group/entity; sporadic & minimal involvement (2-4 major holidays generally observed—Passover, Hanukkah, Yom Kippur fast, High Holy Days services)	Hillel director; Jewish fraternity
Strong Jewish identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved in organized Jewish activities on campus (e.g., Hillel). • (High level of observance - i.e., 5 or more ritual observances - major holidays <u>plus</u> observe Sabbath, keep kosher, celebrate Purim, Yom Ha-atzmaut, etc.) 	Hillel director

students, and some had an extremely hard time attracting the less identified students. Faced with very low turnouts in our first attempts to run the moderate and low identified groups, we subsequently offered small cash honoraria to participants in all groups.

Of the 155 students we spoke to on eight campuses, 60 percent were female and 40 percent were male; 23 percent were freshman, 23 percent were sophomores, 37 percent were juniors, and 17 percent were seniors.

THE ISSUES

There are a number of significant policy issues related to Jewish life on American college campuses that are important to the organized Jewish community and that provide a potential focus for research and analysis.

- *Levels of Jewish Identity / Forms of Expression.* How identified and Jewishly involved are today's Jewish college students? Does the population consist of more than just the involved and the uninvolved? Are the currently uninvolved interested in some kind of involvement or Jewish expression?
- *Interests and Activities.* Are Jewish students actively involved in campus activities? Does general involvement preclude Jewish involvement or vice versa? What are major interest areas of college students? Do Jewish students have different or other interests from the general college population?
- *Israel.* How important is Israel in the lives of American Jewish college students? How much do they know and care about Israel? Do Israel experiences universally strengthen Jewish identity, or does the impact depend on the age at the first trip and prior strength of identity?
- *Perception of / Role of Jewish Campus Organizations.* How is Hillel perceived on campus by students who are not involved? Is Hillel inviting and attractive to students who are neither activists nor very religiously observant? From a student perspective, are there areas in which Hillel could or should be more involved?
- *Formative Jewish Experiences.* What do students identify as important experiences that have strengthened their sense of Jewish identity? Have childhood trips to Israel, youth group involvement, formal Jewish education, and camp experiences had an impact on the college population? What college experiences strengthen or reinforce Jewish identity?
- *Jewish Studies.* Does Jewish Studies play a role in strengthening Jewish identity for students who are questioning it? Do Jewish Studies professors play a significant role outside of the classroom?
- *Impact of the College Experience on Jewish Identity.* What factors help determine whether a student will identify more or less strongly in college than s/he may have

growing up? Does the universalizing nature of the college experience preclude Jewish identity and involvement for some students?

- *Interdating*. How prevalent is interdating? Is it only the least identified students who interdate? Are moderately and strongly identified students open to the possibility of interdating? Do students see a correlation between interdating and intermarriage?

FINDINGS

It is important to recognize the diversity of Jewish students and campus life. The Jewish college community is no more homogeneous than any other set of Jewish communities in the United States. Campus life is affected by regional variations in culture and lifestyle. Commuter campuses are different from residential campuses or campuses with both commuters and residents. On any given campus, some Jewish students are deeply involved in Jewish campus life, some uninvolved, and some marginally or occasionally involved. A small, elite liberal arts college, like Haverford or Williams, is a very different place from a megauniversity like the University of Michigan or New York University.

On some campuses, Jewish life is strong and well organized (e.g., via Hillel) while on other campuses—some with many Jewish students—there is little going on. Some colleges and universities are in, or near, organized Jewish communities (e.g., Boston, New York, the Bay area); others have large Jewish student populations that are far from major Jewish population centers (e.g., Binghamton, Penn State). Though Jewish students can be found on virtually every U.S. campus, a recent CJF study shows that 50 percent of all Jewish students are concentrated in forty major institutions, and 80 percent are at 109 universities with Jewish student populations greater than 1,000.

Jewish Identity / Jewish Expression

At the Passover seder, we read of four kinds of children in relation to the story of the Exodus, and perhaps in relation to any piece of Jewish history or involvement. Because these children come to Judaism from different vantage points, they require different teaching approaches in learning about Judaism. It is only through an appreciation of where these children are that we can effectively reach them.

On the American college campus, we also found four types of Jewish “children”:

- *The activists* feel Jewish and lead Jewishly active lives.
- *The empathizers* feel distinctly Jewish, but are only moderately involved in Jewish life, if at all.
- *The ambivalent* identify as Jewish, but have only a vague sense of what that means to them.
- *The invisible* either do not consider themselves Jewish or do not wish to be identified as Jewish.

Our focus group findings suggest that these categories may be more useful than the broader

categories recently developed by the CJF Task Force on Jewish University Student Services, which divided the Jewish student population into essentially two groups: the identity active and the identity passive.

The Activists

The Jewishly active students were the easiest to find. Although they were not always involved in Jewish activities on campus, they were actively involved in Jewish observances and Jewish living. These students might be Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, or secular; their Jewish interests might be political or cultural or religious or a mixture. What united them was not the specifics of their beliefs or practices, but the extent to which the depth of their commitment was expressed in actions and behaviors.

Jewish density on campus had been a factor in their choice of college, regardless of whether or not they were Jewishly active on campus. They had high levels of formal Jewish education and strong ties to Israel. Three-fourths of these students (74 percent) had been to Israel; many had been there more than once, and some planned to make aliyah. A large number of students in this group had spent or were planning to spend a semester or year studying in Israel. Most (but not all) came from strongly affiliated families, and intended to marry Jewish and raise their children Jewish.

One strongly identified student at Harvard described how his Jewishness was a priority: "I structure my life so as to be a part of the community." A Rutgers student expressed her pride in her heritage: "I just think that when you are a direct descendent of Abraham and Sara it strengthens. And that's what makes Jewish people unique, and I'm proud."

The Empathizers

These students were not the Jewish activists, but they still "felt" distinctly Jewish, and felt an affinity for other Jews. One student captured the essence of this sentiment: "I know when I'm around Jewish people I feel a common bond . . . I came to realize that there are differences . . . even though I might not know anybody, I can feel we care about each other. Somebody will understand me when I say I'm shvitzing! We just are different. We do things differently. We're family." This tended to be the group that joined Jewish fraternities and sororities.

Approximately half of this group (46 percent) had traveled to Israel; those who had not were relatively knowledgeable about Israel and were either planning to go there or were interested in going. Their involvement with Hillel was sporadic, if at all—on most campuses they didn't feel that it was "theirs" often because of Hillel's emphasis on observance. On campuses where Chabad leadership was particularly dynamic and welcoming, these students often found Chabad an appealing alternative to Hillel, one that satisfied their yearning for community. These Jewishly inclined students were well aware of current intermarriage rates, and felt pressure from home to date and marry Jewish. For the most part, they were open to interdating but intended to marry Jewish.

The Ambivalent

These were the students who were unsure about what being Jewish meant—both in general

and in their own lives. One student from Washington University explained: “I went to Hebrew school and had a bar mitzvah, but I don’t know what Judaism is all about.” They lack answers to the question: Why be Jewish?

The students we spoke with who fell into this category *did* almost nothing Jewish—with the exception of perhaps celebrating Hanukkah or attending a Passover seder—yet unlike the “invisible” group, they self-identified as Jewish. These students were generally raised Reform or “just Jewish,” and their formal education usually ended with their bat/bar mitzvah. Only one-fourth of them (24 percent) had been to Israel, and Israel did not figure prominently in their lives. These were the students who would think of going to France because they studied French before they would think of going to Israel. They were the most assimilated of the three identified groups; if involved in the Greek system, they did not usually seek the Jewish fraternity/sorority. They interdated without much thought, and generally thought that if their spouse were Jewish it would be “a bonus,” but that Jewishness was not a prerequisite.

The most important finding regarding students in this group is that they *were* interested and curious about Judaism and what it meant to be Jewish. One student said: “I would like to know more. I come from a community with lots of Jews where nobody did or knew anything about being Jewish.” This curiosity and interest is largely untapped, because Jewish campus organizations have, until now, been either unwilling to meet these students on their own Jewish terms or have been ineffective in reaching them.

Another way to compare the three types of students who did self-identify as Jews is presented in Exhibit 3. In response to the question “How important is being Jewish in your life?” 96 percent of the activists, 61 percent of the empathizers, and 22 percent of the Jewishly ambivalent said it was very important.

The Invisible

We were largely unsuccessful in reaching the fourth group of Jewish students—the nonidentified or invisible—who almost by definition steer clear of focus groups, surveys, or other situations seen as “Jewish” or focusing on Jewish students. When asked how many Jews there were at Reed, a focus group participant said: “We don’t know because we can’t find them.” We believe that a large portion of the 500 Jewish students at Reed were in this “invisible” group.

Exhibit 3. Importance of Being Jewish

Importance of being Jewish	Identification groups			
	Activists	Empathizers	Ambivalent	Overall
Very important	96%	61%	22%	63%
Somewhat important	4%	36%	41%	28%
Not very important	0%	3%	37%	9%

These were the students who may have Jewish relatives, but who didn't think of themselves as Jewish. A student at Reed explained how difficult it was to get some students to participate in Jewish activities. He quoted a fellow student as defining his Jewish identity this way: "Well, I'm half Jewish. My dad was Jewish. Really, I'm not Jewish and I'm not religious, so I'm not Jewish."

Campus Factors Influencing Jewish Identity and Expression

A core group of students will inevitably become activists, regardless of campus conditions. Our focus group findings suggest, however, that for students outside of this core group, a combination of campus factors may influence the extent to which they behave Jewishly. The most significant factors appear to be:

- Jewish density
- Strength of Hillel and other Jewish campus organizations
- Leadership of Hillel and other Jewish campus organizations
- Campus culture

It is the interaction of these variables, rather than any single variable, that seems to have a critical impact on the degree and nature of student involvement in Jewish campus life.

Jewish Density

Exhibit 4 shows both the size of the undergraduate Jewish population and the percentage of the undergraduate population that is Jewish for the eight campuses we visited. Jewish density can best be seen as a combination of total number—or critical mass—and Jewish population as a proportion of the total population. Although there are significant numbers of Jewish students on all of the campuses we visited—all except Reed have populations of more than

Exhibit 4. Jewish Population and Density of Focus Group Schools

School	Undergraduate population	Estimated Jewish undergraduate population *	Percent Jewish
Reed	1,200	500	42%
Washington U.	4,500	1,600	35%
Rutgers	8,500	3,000	35%
George Washington	6,000	2,000	33%
Harvard	7,000	1,500	21%
UCLA	24,000	4,300	18%
Delaware	14,000	1,400	10%
Indiana	27,000	2,000	7%

* All figures are estimates for the undergraduate Jewish population, except Delaware and Rutgers which are for the total student population. Undergraduate Jewish numbers for these two campuses are therefore overstated here.

Source: Peterson's College Database, 1994 (for undergraduate figures); The Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus, 1993 (for Jewish population figures).

1,000—they vary widely in terms of density. If, for example, we broke down our sample by relative density, Washington, GW, Rutgers, and Reed would be high-density schools (with Jewish populations higher than 30 percent); UCLA and Harvard would be medium-density schools (with Jewish populations around 20 percent); and Delaware and Indiana would be low-density schools (with Jewish populations of 10 percent or less).

As a general rule, the higher the density of Jewish students on campus, the more activities there are for Jewish students and the easier it is to be Jewish. As we heard from the students at George Washington and Washington University, however, sometimes high Jewish density works in the reverse, making it so easy to be Jewish that students do not feel the need to get involved in Jewish campus life. This seemed to be particularly true for students who were otherwise strongly identified Jews. A Jewishly active student at GW explained: “It’s easier to find someone Jewish on this campus, but also easier not to find someone . . . Because of the numbers you don’t have to affiliate. It’s a little too easy to be Jewish. There is no reason to find out more or to reach out.”

Surprisingly, low Jewish density can sometimes *strengthen* Jewish identity. Being a minority at a low density school seems to compel some students to self-identify as Jewish and become active in Jewish campus life. This seemed to be particularly true for those who generally had moderate or low levels of Jewish identity, and who probably would not have become actively involved on a campus with higher Jewish density. One student at Washington University observed: “Where there are fewer Jews, we are more challenged Jewishly.” As evidence, she cited the fact that her twin sister attended Georgetown—where there were fewer Jews—and she was more involved, feeling a responsibility for the development of Jewish activities: “Due to the numbers, she feels pressure to build a community.”

A student at Indiana expressed her new-found responsibility for self-identifying: “Just being here sitting in a class and realizing I am the only Jewish person. We had a discussion . . . the question was with Bush when he wanted to put prayer back in the schools. More than half the class said he should . . . I don’t agree, because there are different religions. How can you do that? I never realized that Jews were such a small percent of the population. It’s weird. My high school was more than 50 percent Jewish . . . now I think about tradition a lot and holidays a lot. Going home is more special. It just made me more aware.”

Although Jewish density clearly has an impact on the behavior of Jewish students on campus, other campus factors interact with density to help predict the extent to which students outside the core group of activists will become involved in Jewish life on campus. Significant differences in participation rates on campuses with comparable Jewish densities help shed light on this phenomenon.

In comparing the active students we met with on the various campuses, our focus group facilitator observed: “The Indiana students were strongly identified indeed, but more diverse a group than the groups of Jewishly active students we met at Rutgers and Harvard.” Given Indiana’s low Jewish density, strong Hillel (with its attractive, conveniently located new building), and the fact that it is a residential campus somewhat isolated from any organized Jewish community, it is perhaps not surprising that it was at Indiana where the strongly identified group most notably extended beyond the core group of campus activists.

Relative participation rates of students with moderate levels of Jewish identity can also be rather illuminating, showing the relative impact of various factors on the participation of those students who are usually *not* actively involved in Jewish campus life. The moderately identified students we met at Indiana had a Hillel participation rate of 80 percent, compared with 50 percent at Washington University, which has a higher Jewish density, 44 percent at Harvard (higher Jewish density and numerous urban distractions), and 33 percent at Delaware (comparable Jewish density, but considerably weaker Hillel tradition).

Strength of Jewish Campus Organization(s)

When Jewish density and other factors combine to “prime” students for Jewish involvement, it is essential that there be something there to meet their needs. At the eight campuses we visited, we found varying levels of a national organized Jewish presence. On one extreme was Reed, with a struggling Jewish Student Union and nothing else for the 500 Jewish students who made up more than 40 percent of the population. On the other extreme was Washington University, which had four paid full-time Hillel professionals. Some Hillel facilities were attractive, centrally located, welcoming, and bustling with activity. Others were cold, forbidding, out of the way, and dead. Indiana and Harvard have shiny new million-dollar buildings; Rutgers has an old building on the wrong side of the tracks that was described by a student as an “empty mausoleum.”

Chabad has a strong presence on some of the campuses we visited, and appears to be attracting a number of moderately identified students at Indiana, Delaware, and Rutgers. At Rutgers the popularity of Chabad—which is on the *correct* side of campus—seemed to be as much a reaction against Hillel as it was a function of effective Chabad leadership and outreach. At Indiana and Delaware, however, the appeal of Chabad could be attributed to particularly dynamic rabbis who were very effective at reaching out to students who, as minorities on isolated campuses with relatively low Jewish densities, were seeking a warm, inviting place where they could feel that they belonged to a community.

One Delaware student explained why she was attracted to Chabad: “Chabad has an image of being zealous. My parents were worried and they called my rabbi to check it out. The rabbi wanted the sorority sisters to participate and light Hanukkah candles. When I was sick he actually called me and brought me chicken soup! When you go there on Friday night you have a good feeling like being with your family. He’s so approachable.”

Leadership of Jewish Campus Organization(s)

To a large extent, the strength (and appeal) of the campus organization can be attributed to the strength of the leadership. Of the seven campuses we visited with an organized Jewish presence, we found considerable disparity in leadership. While some people were true leaders—dynamic, creative, cooperative, and forward thinking—others were not. One student expressed her frustration with the weak Hillel on her campus: “It’s hard to believe that we’re struggling now because of our director. Don’t you think we should look to a rabbi for leadership?”

The importance of being able to work cooperatively with students, in a way that is both

effective and relevant to them, cannot be understated in the college setting. The attraction Chabad had on some campuses, particularly for moderately identified students, shows the extent to which charismatic leadership can combine with effective outreach to make the difference in terms of whether or not students will become involved.

On some campuses there was a clear sense of strong student leadership, while on others it was more disorganized or superficial.

Campus Culture

Campus culture also has an effect on whether students outside of the core group of activists will participate in Jewish life on campus. A function of region, size, competitiveness, remoteness, and whether a campus is commuter or residential, campus culture is much less tangible than the other factors. It defines the mood on campus, including which kinds of activities and forms of personal expression and identity are “cool” and which are not.

Of the campuses we visited, Reed had the strongest sense of campus culture, one that discouraged organized Jewish involvement and expression despite the fact that over 40 percent of the student population was Jewish. When asked whether Reed was a welcoming place for Jewish students, one student replied: “Reed isn’t welcoming to . . . anyone. Everyone intellectualizes everything. No one talks to one another. It is an intellectual battleground and an antiemotional environment. To be an intellectual is to have no emotional reaction. At Reed, if you’re Jewish, you are an expert at being Jewish.”

One student from UCLA—the only commuter campus in the study—gave this explanation for why he was not involved with Jewish activities on campus: “I have a life at home, have friends from there. I don’t need to be involved.”

Different campus cultures require different approaches, strategies, programs, and activities. For program and outreach efforts of Jewish campus organizations to be effective, campus leadership must understand and be responsive to the particular campus culture in which it operates.

Interests and Activities

Most of the students we met with were involved in extracurricular activities, and most of them were involved in more than one. Contrary to popular perception, those who are involved in Hillel tend to be involved in other activities as well—both Jewish and non-Jewish. Jewish and non-Jewish activities often complement each other; involvement in one does not have to be at the expense of another. We did get a sense, however, that students find a number of things competing for their time, and they tend to be reflective and thoughtful in both their choice of activities and their level of involvement.

Interestingly, students tended to feel that their participation in projects such as tutoring or crisis intervention was “better” if sponsored by a university-wide organization or a cause-specific organization rather than under the auspices of Hillel or a Jewish organization.

Israel

Half of all the focus group participants had been to Israel. As expected, there were significantly different rates of travel between the three groups: three-fourths (74 percent) of the activists had been to Israel, while fewer than half (46 percent) of the empathizers had, and only one-fourth (24 percent) of the Jewishly ambivalent had.

The strength of the impact of Israel experiences on the views of students was very apparent, particularly among the activists. One student said: "Hopefully I can go back. After Israel it was easier for me to become more religious. I'm going to study Hebrew this summer and maybe get a job as a counselor with one of the summer programs." Moderately identified students also spoke of experiences in Israel helping to strengthen or clarify their sense of Jewish identity. One moderate student at Washington University explained: "In Israel I discovered it was who I was, not what I did. You are defined by who, not by what [i.e., religious observance]." Another student said: "I was international vice president of BBYO and went to Poland and Israel on the March of the Living. It was awesome. I'm not a full-fledged member of Hillel, but I was active in organizing the Holocaust vigil here."

The relationship between the age at which a young person travels to Israel and the impact of this trip is a critical issue for the organized Jewish community. One student at UCLA commented that there was little or no lasting impact from a bar mitzvah trip to Israel with family, including a ceremony atop Masada. A student at Washington University also made a case for waiting until one is old enough to really get something out of the experience: "I waited to go for the first time until I was seventeen and I appreciated it. It meant a lot more to me to wait. Many of my friends who went to Orthodox day schools went every year. But it was very special to go to Israel with USY and then to go again with NATIV."

Of those who had never been to Israel, students in the three groups had different intentions and degrees of interest in going. Most of the strongly identified students who had not yet been had plans to go. Most of the moderately identified students either had plans to go or were interested in going. Most of the weakly identified students who had not been were more interested in going someplace else (e.g., Europe).

In answer to the question "Do you have plans to go to Israel?" responses from students in the low identified groups included: "Other places—like Paris—interest me more"; "Guns on the street terrify me"; and "I'm intimidated as a Reform Jew that people will make me feel like a nonpracticing Jew. As a Jew I might not measure up." When asked what has kept these students from going to Israel, the most frequent answers were time and money. Students in this group did indicate that if they were offered a free trip they would definitely go!

Money (and in some cases time in academic schedules) was a barrier to participation in Junior Year Abroad programs in Israel. In several instances, the lack of formal university programs with Israeli institutions was also a barrier. At Delaware and Washington University, it appears that university regulations and existing program priorities do not work to support junior year programs to Israel. At Delaware, interested students can go on a mid-year program (December-January) every other year, and at Washington University architecture and pre-med students are not permitted these types of programs. (One might think that an

architecture program would benefit significantly by travel to Israel, as well as to other places with significant Jewish historical interest.) Education students at Indiana also cited restrictions or required program elements that would preclude a junior year program in Israel.

One of the pleasant surprises we encountered during the focus groups was the degree to which students who were "not so Jewishly involved" on campuses such as Washington University, Delaware, and Indiana were knowledgeable about AIPAC and involved. Twenty-five percent of all participants said that they were involved in political groups, and this seemed to be almost exclusively AIPAC. Thirty-nine percent of strongly identified students were involved, 19 percent of moderates, and 11 percent of low identified students.

Perception of / Role of Jewish Campus Organization

Hillel clearly meant different things to different groups of Jewish students. Many Jewish activists felt and acted like they were "coming home" when they walked into Hillel. Less active students often did not feel quite so welcome or comfortable there. One activist described what Hillel meant to him: "Hillel serves a special role—religious, intellectual, spiritual—and from that comes social. Jews who don't want this can go elsewhere for the social." A Washington University student who was Jewishly inclined but not active said: "Hillel could be more personalized. It could be more welcoming. With such large numbers of Jewish students on campus, there are many places to meet Jewish friends other than at Hillel."

Many Reform students said Hillel failed to meet their needs because it catered to the more traditional group. They expressed feeling that they didn't "belong" at Hillel because they were not religious enough. One student said: "When the High Holidays come I don't have much connection with the people at Hillel who come for religious convictions and I don't feel it." On some campuses students described Hillel activists as "exclusionary," making them feel unwelcome.

Students who were not actively involved in Hillel said they wanted a Jewish "social center"—a home away from home where they felt they "belonged." They also made it clear that it was not only Hillel programming and activities that encouraged or discouraged broader involvement, but also the Hillel facility itself. In addition to the location and the physical space, the "feel" of Hillel was important—the sense of a warm, welcoming atmosphere. One student said of the Hillel on her campus: "Hillel is lacking in a homey feeling. It's a big building without any pictures on the wall."

Formative Jewish Experiences

One student who was the only Jew in his high school class in Oregon was the only participant to volunteer strong positive comments about his rabbi. "The rabbi was wonderful, dedicated, inspiring." Nobody else mentioned the impact of leaders or educators while growing up.

The most actively Jewish students were the best-educated Jewishly, yet many of them indicated that they did not come from observant homes. Several told of their own religious

“transformation”—often the result of a particular experience or set of experiences, such as study in Israel, camping, campus friends, and growing self-awareness.

Youth movement trips—USY, NFTY, March of the Living—were frequently cited by students as meaningful high school experiences leading to a desire to go to Israel as a college student either for a semester program or for the summer.

For many students, Jewish experiences or exposure on campus did more to strengthen or solidify their Jewish identity than family or childhood experiences had previously done. A number of students told of being motivated by classmates, roommates, and others to learn more about Judaism or seek Jewish experiences. Students at Indiana spoke highly of Jewish Studies professors and how they had helped students to better appreciate their Jewishness.

Jewish Studies

Students from all three groups reported turning to Jewish Studies to “learn more” or “broaden their perspective.”

Some students were turned off by a perceived emphasis on negatives binding Jews together (i.e., the Holocaust and anti-Semitism). Referring to the fact that at Reed one of two Jewish Studies course offerings is “The Holocaust,” a student asked: “Is victimization and persecution the history of Judaism? Is this what it means to be a Jew?”

In a discussion of Jewish Studies, one student expressed what he thought was a need for positive role models: “We are all looking for powerful role models of Jewish men. You know, men who are not wimpy scholars. You know, powerful rabbis who had the strength to keep a community together. There was a course—‘Four Men Who Shaped the Modern World.’ Three of these were Jews. No one ever talked about that.”

At the University of Delaware, one could be a Jewish Studies minor by taking the following four courses: “Introduction to Religion,” “Holocaust,” a literature or history course, and a Middle East Studies class.

Faculty

Jewish faculty members had minimal, if any, involvement in Jewish life on the campuses we visited.

Raising the question about Jewish faculty often elicited discussion of whether a certain professor was Jewish, followed by recitation of an anecdote or specific reference to the professor’s behavior—e.g., he told a Yiddish joke, or he once came to speak at Hillel, or he used Yiddish words or terms. At Washington University, the anecdote involved a particular professor who wore a kippah and arranged for another professor to proctor an examination given on Sukkot.

On several campuses, specific mention was made of professors who came to a Holocaust/Yom HaShoah observance on campus. On most campuses students mentioned that professors did

come—when invited specifically—to participate in Hillel sponsored activities. There did not appear to be any difference in participation between Jewish Studies professors (other than Hillel rabbis who taught) and other professors who “just happened to be Jewish.”

At Reed, where there were probably more Jewish professors than those few who identified as Jews, only one professor was cited as having anything to do with “Jewish life” on campus. She appeared to be interested in reaching out to students, and this was evidenced by her willingness to serve as a “signatory” for the Jewish Student Union on campus.

At Reed, the feeling was that many faculty members were atheists. One student who had attended all three of the Portland synagogues had yet to run into a faculty member there. (There were no religious services on campus!)

Jewish Identity and the Impact of the College Experience

Basic patterns of Jewish identity and involvement seemed to change little since high school for most of the students. Yet at the same time, contact with other cultural/ethnic/religious groups prompted some students—particularly those with low or moderate levels of Jewish identity—to question their own Jewish identity and beliefs.

At Indiana, a student spoke about the influence a more Jewishly identified student had on her identity: “My roommate Rachel has made me more aware. I am learning a lot. I’ve been learning since I came here. I want to take a religion class. I feel uneducated. I want to go to Israel because I want to learn about it.” A student at Delaware reported: “My roommate is a Born-Again Christian. All of this makes you start to question where you are from.”

Intermarriage

Students of all groups were well aware of current statistics on intermarriage, and on every campus students reported hearing about it (or “getting the lecture”) from parents and grandparents who were “preoccupied with the whole issue.” One Indiana student expressed her exasperation: “I’m so tired of hearing about it, getting beaten over the head with this all of the time. This talk is pessimistic and it hampers interfaith relationships.”

Many students—particularly those with low levels of Jewish identity/involvement—had direct family experience with intermarriage (parents or siblings).

Most of the students we met with (in all groups) expressed a *preference* for marrying Jewish and the *intention* of marrying Jewish. At the same time, however, there was an equally strong sentiment (among all but the most actively Jewish students) that “you never know where a relationship will lead” and that “love conquers all.”

Students with the highest levels of Jewish education and identification were the most likely to make a connection between intermarriage and Jewish continuity. One student commented: “I wouldn’t jeopardize the future of the Jewish people! I’m the product of an intermarriage that failed!” A number of students indicated that the child of an intermarriage would be deprived of some of the special Jewish events of their own lives (e.g., a bar or bat mitzvah)!

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The External Environment: The Broader American Community

In thinking about communal intervention on the campus, there is a tendency to ignore the forces in the society at large. This tendency is likely to lead community leadership to seriously understate the seriousness of the challenge. Three conditions of the current culture in the United States at the end of the twentieth century are critical:

- Americans are generally receptive to intermarriage with other religious and ethnic groups. This was not the case as recently as thirty years ago. Jonathan Sarna cites a wide array of information to document this change and its implications. For example, in 1960 in Seattle only 8 percent of native Japanese-American women married non-Japanese; by 1975, in that same community 49 percent of Japanese women were intermarrying. Today, a substantial majority intermarry.
- In the open society, powerful ideas and values are accessible to all but the most rigidly exclusionary subcultures. Even committed Jewish young people are more like non-Jews or uncommitted Jewish young people than unlike them in their music, clothes, sports, and sexual behavior. Thus Judaism is at best an add-on, not a replacement set of values and behaviors.
- The commitment to the "mosaic" of multiculturalism in academia seems to support black and Hispanic identity, not necessarily Jewish identity. Jews are often defined out of multiculturalism by these other groups on the grounds of affluence, a religious rather than ethnic label, and by virtue of being white.

Thus the broader American society is not supportive of the efforts of the organized Jewish community to strengthen Jewish commitment and identity among young people. Creating opportunities for Jewish enrichment on the college campus is challenging, difficult, and in many ways goes against the tide.

Policy Recommendations

1.0 *The campus must become a communal priority.*

In the past, the attitude of the organized Jewish community has been that the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations were "taking care of" the campus. This posture, if it ever was appropriate, is clearly not appropriate anymore. The resources going into most campuses

are pitifully small: an estimated \$50 per year per Jewish college student nationally—less than the cost of an athletic pass at a Big Ten university. The Jewish community must significantly expand the resources allocated to the campus community.

1.1 *The dollar resources allocated to campus programs must be expanded.*

The moves by the Council of Jewish Federations to increase support and create a system of continental accountability for this clearly national problem are important and appropriate, although it is likely that more resources will be needed. The single most important finding of our research is that substantial numbers of Jewish students, from the activists through to the ambivalent, represent potential consumers of Jewish programs on campus. Based on our interviews, the vast majority of Jewish students on campus are not invisible, and have not turned their backs on their Jewishness.

1.2 *The resources need to be targeted.*

The concentration of Jewish students on a relatively small number of campuses suggests that resources can and should be targeted—regardless of past history—so as to reach the greatest numbers of Jewish students.

1.3 *The quality of existing programs needs to be upgraded.*

The quality of existing programs, staff, and facilities were found to have a major impact on the students, their interest in their own Jewishness, and the quality of their own identity. The National Hillel program of accreditation will go a long way toward upgrading standards of quality.

1.4 *The key to quality is personnel, and significant investment needs to be made in recruiting, training, and compensating high-quality campus professionals.*

2.0 *The communal presence on campus needs to be more responsive to real diversity.*

The Jewish communal presence on campus needs to be more responsive to where students are. Hillel needs to become less a place and more a series of gateways, less a program and more a facilitator. Historically, one “came” (or didn’t come) to Hillel. In the future, Hillel needs to become a point of access to a network of opportunities for various kinds of Jewish enrichment. In this context, Hillel needs to build bridges to other resources in the Jewish community.

2.1 *Strengthen student access to the Jewish public affairs agenda.*

The strongly expressed interest of students in Jewish public affairs, particularly in the context of the complexity of black-Jewish and Arab-Jewish relations on campus, needs to find expression in ways that the traditional apparatus cannot satisfy. Organizations such as the American Jewish Committee should play an important role in responding to this need.

2.2 *Strengthen opportunities for Jewish cultural expression on campus.*

Even those students who self-identify as Jews by religion do not necessarily define themselves as “religious.” Rather, as one student expressed it, they see themselves as Jews by culture: “Being Jewish is not as much a religion as a culture—a way of life.” This parallels the finding in the National Jewish Population Survey, that even most of those who self-identified as Jews by religion view being Jewish as being part of a cultural group.

Many students, in fact many college administrations, view Hillel as a religious entity. Students need to be encouraged and supported in creating their own Jewish cultural programming. Over time, Hillel needs to reconstruct itself into an access point for Jewish culture and civilization, including but not featuring religion. University administration needs to be educated to the complexity of what it means to be Jewish in the 1990s.

3.0 *Jewish communal policy should try to influence individual decision-making about colleges based on the Jewish dimension.*

3.1 *Parents should shift their emphasis from encouraging their children to go to Hillel after they are on campus to learning more about the Jewish quality of the campus before they go, and encouraging them to focus more on the nature of the Jewish life on campus as one of the criteria for deciding what schools to apply to.*

3.2 *A good, clear appealing brochure is needed that can be used by Jewish schools, congregations, youth movements—with a Jewish “ranking” of schools—rating the Hillel, rating the Jewish Studies program, and describing the culture and ambiance.*

4.0 *Strategies for enhancing Jewish identity should respond to the four types of students, with the greatest priority to the “empathizers” and the “ambivalent.”*

The Empathizers

The wide variation we saw in Hillel participation rates among members of this group shows the extent to which they are often the “swing” group on campus. Though they are Jewishly empathetic and inclined, their participation and identity are very much contingent upon effective outreach, programming, and leadership.

4.1 *More investment in Israel experiences for college-age people.*

While many in this group have been to Israel, this includes family trips, often when they were quite young. In some cases, their experience is negative or insignificant. For some students, an Israel travel and study experience while in college was transformative—changing vaguely Jewish feelings into Jewish action. In the current enthusiasm for Israel travel for teens, the college age should not be overlooked, including more support for study abroad programs.

4.2 *Maximum investment in experimentation.*

While they are more comfortable around other Jews and say they want to marry Jews, they lack a community. Hillel, by and large, doesn't seem to work for them, and the fraternity or sorority experience that many of them share doesn't provide any Jewish

content in their lives. A wide variety of organizations may need to come on campus, in a wide range of experiments, to learn more about how to “turn this group on.”

The Ambivalent

4.3 *Create nonjudgmental settings for them to learn about Judaism.*

The best thing about this type of student is that many seem to be genuinely curious about what being Jewish means: if they can't answer the question about why be Jewish, they at least find the question of interest. Jewish Studies departments, which often focus primarily on serious students and faculty publishing, need to invest in developing attractive courses and minicourses in basic Judaism. Jewish history, information about Jewish ideals and ethics, multiple models of being Jewish—this information needs to be made accessible.

4.4 *Create nonjudgmental settings for Jewish experiences.*

The Activists

4.5 *The Jewishly active students need to be empowered and supported—in the quality and location of physical space at Jewish centers that are their home away from home.*

4.6 *Activists need to be made aware of opportunities for postcollege Jewish involvement in a more systematic way.*

These students represent a crucial pool for future professional and lay leadership in the community. They need to be made aware of, and provided with access into, career opportunities in Jewish communal service.

The Invisible

While one always wants to keep a welcome mat out, it does not seem to be a very good use of scarce communal resources to invest in people who fundamentally do not identify as Jews at any level or in any sense. Individuals of this type are difficult to reach; they will come if self-motivated.

RECOMMENDED AJC CAMPUS PROGRAM

The AJC can, and should, play a role on the American college campus as part of the overall effort of the organized Jewish community to strengthen Jewish identity. We recommend that AJC function in cooperation with National Hillel.

Rationale

We have identified three major reasons for AJC involvement:

1. **To present the "AJC way" as one relevant model of Jewishness to college students.** AJC is the most sophisticated and broadly based public affairs organization on the American Jewish scene. Its commitment to diversity and high intellectual standards should appeal to many college students, most of whom are probably only dimly aware of the Committee. To a significant extent, AJC leaders are potential role models for the mostly secular, mostly professional college graduates who do want to remain Jews, but are not quite sure what their options are.
2. **To add resources to this important arena of Jewish life.** The human and financial resources available to Jewish college students are woefully short of the needs. Most Hillels are understaffed and underfinanced. The AJC represents a pool of volunteer and professional talent that should be brought to bear on this critical arena of Jewish communal policy to supplement, not compete with, the existing efforts.
3. **To help solve the difficult problem of how to connect those students who are not currently active in Jewish life on campus.** As a community we know relatively little about what works and doesn't work in college campus "outreach." AJC expertise can form part of the great experiment that must take place over the next decade if we are to make progress on this critical agenda.

Suggested Program Model

1. **AJC should target a limited number of campuses (e.g., 15 to 20) of two types:**
 - **Small, elite schools that typically do not have a Hillel presence (e.g., Williams, Amherst, Reed, Carleton, Swarthmore, Haverford, Wellesley).** While these schools represent a very small proportion of the total number of Jewish students, their quality attracts bright students with major future leadership potential.

- **Large state universities with very large Jewish enrollments that are outside of major metropolitan Jewish communities.** Such schools are typically starved for resources, and while there usually is a Hillel, the needs and opportunities dwarf the available Hillel capacity.
2. **Several different program elements should be developed that could be packaged differently in different locations:**
- **An AJC library of Jewish public affairs materials.** In addition to multiple copies of AJC's own publications, the AJC could provide each campus with important Jewish books, and the best of the Anglo-Jewish magazines and newspapers from around the country. One might also include video materials as these become increasingly available.
 - **Where there is a nearby AJC chapter, that chapter should develop a special relationship with one of these campuses.** The chapter could sponsor a career day, bringing to the campus interesting and important people from their own ranks who are active as Jews and also are important in their professions. The chapter could make a special effort to help Jewish students on that campus find meaningful and interesting summer jobs. AJC alumni of that campus should be involved wherever possible in such efforts.
 - **AJC national departments should work together to come up with a program series at a campus.** Thus different departments could take responsibility for developing one program that could be presented at each campus. Wherever possible, the AJC would seek the joint sponsorship of the Jewish Studies department and the Hillel Foundation (where one exists). For example, one could envision a four-part annual series: one program on Israel (e.g., with visiting Israeli faculty and/or students); one program on intergroup relations; one program in Jewish communal affairs; and one program in the international arena. AJC would provide the speakers, assist with publicity, underwrite costs of refreshments, etc.

Consistent with the policy recommendations contained within the body of this report, we believe that Hillel programs on most campuses should, and with proper encouragement will, make the transition from "place" to "gateway." In that context, AJC should be one of the organizations connected to the college world.

[For low and moderately identified students:]

4. Are you curious about Judaism and Jewish life? Do you want to know more than you do?

3. Perception of / Role of Jewish Campus Organization

1. What are your impressions of Jewish activities on campus?
2. Do you have impressions of the students who are involved in these activities?
3. Think back, what were some of your first impressions of Jewish life on campus?
[Probe: To what extent have these first impressions been confirmed? How? OR . . .
To what extent have your impressions changed over time?]
4. What would it take (what might have to change) to get you or your friends involved in Hillel (or some other organization) and/or other Jewish activities?
5. In your view, what could/should be done to make activities more appealing (or interesting) to students such as yourself?
6. Are there specific types of Jewish activities that would interest you?

4. Israel

1. Where have you traveled in your high school and college years?
2. How many of you have been to Israel? [NB: Count aloud or otherwise record the response.]
[Probe: When was your first visit, and what did you do? Organized program? Under whose auspices?]
3. Did this trip have any kind of impact on you? If so, in what way?
4. If you haven't been to Israel, are you considering going?
[Probe: If yes, when are you considering going? How? If not, what stands in the way of going? Lack of information regarding programs? Finances? Other considerations?]
5. To what extent are you involved in Israel-centered activities? Is this a popular activity on this campus?

5. Inter-marriage

1. To what extent are you aware of the most recent statistics on intermarriage?

2. How do you feel about interdating? What about intermarriage?

6. Role of Jewish Faculty

1. To what extent are Jewish faculty members visible/active within the Jewish campus community?
[Probe: Tell me about the type of activities/places they are likely to attend/be found.]
2. Under what circumstances would you turn to a Jewish faculty member for information (advice, assistance, guidance)?

This has been a very interesting afternoon. I thank you for your candor. It is important that student views be heard and that people who are concerned with these issues be aware of your points of view. They are very important to us.

Before you leave, please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire . . .

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Please fill in or check the appropriate response.

1. In which of the listed activities do you participate? (please check all that apply)

- Academic group or club _____
- Band, orchestra or choir _____
- Campus publication _____
- Drama/theater group _____
- Intramural sports _____
- Political group _____
- Public interest group _____
- Hillel activities _____
- Other Jewish campus organizations _____
- Jewish sorority/fraternity _____
- Nondenominational sorority/fraternity _____
- Student government _____
- Varsity or junior varsity sports _____
- Volunteer work with on-campus group or organization _____
- None _____

2. How important is being Jewish in your life?

- Very important _____
- Somewhat important _____
- Not very important _____

3. Which denomination do you identify with?

- Conservative _____
- Reform _____
- Orthodox _____
- Reconstructionist _____
- Just Jewish _____
- Other _____

4. Did you ever receive any formal Jewish education, such as Hebrew school, Sunday school, day school or private tutoring?

- Yes _____ No _____

5. What was the major type of schooling you received?

- Sunday school or other one-day-a-week _____
- Part-time—more than once a week, Talmud Torah, or Heder _____
- Informal Jewish educational program _____
- Full-time Jewish school, day school, or yeshiva _____
- Private tutoring _____

6. While growing up did you attend any of the following kinds of sleepaway camps?
(check all that apply)

- Camp with Jewish program and/or religious or communal sponsorship _____
- Camp where most campers were Jewish and run by a Jewish family (but little or no Jewish programming) _____
- Camp with nonsectarian or non-Jewish sponsorship _____
- Never attended sleepaway camp _____

7. Which of the following did you participate in while growing up? (check all that apply)

- Jewish day camp _____
- Jewish tour group _____
- Jewish youth group (like USY or Young Judea) _____
- None of the above _____

8a. Have you ever been to Israel? Yes _____ No _____

8b. If yes, when was your first trip? When I was young—before high school _____
In high school _____
Between high school and college _____
In college _____

9. How often do you currently do each of the following things?

	All the time	Usu- ally	Some- times	Only at home	Never
• Light candles on Friday night	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Observe the Sabbath in some fashion (other than lighting candles)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Attend a Passover seder	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Observe Kosher dietary rules	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Light Hanukkah candles	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Have a Christmas tree	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Celebrate Purim	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____



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	All the time	Usu- ally	Some- times	Only at home	Never
• Attend High Holy Days services	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Celebrate Yom Ha-atzmaut (Israel Independence Day)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Fast on Yom Kippur	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Age: _____ yrs. old

Sex: Male _____ Female _____

Class: Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____ Senior _____