

Building

Jewish



A STUDY OF YOUNG JUDAEA ALUMNI

Identity

FALL 1998

CONDUCTED FOR HADASSAH, THE WOMEN'S ZIONIST ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA, INC.

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BUILDING JEWISH IDENTITY: A Study of Young Judaea Alumni

At a Glance...

For more information, please call 212-303-8014
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"The Young Judaea experience exerts a powerful impact upon adult Jewish identity years after the alumni have completed their active involvement in Young Judaea. The Young Judaea experience lowers intermarriage, elevates ritual observance, raises community activity, promotes involvement with Israel and increases all other types of Jewish involvement."

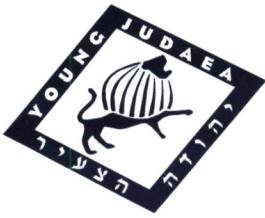
- Professor Steven M. Cohen,
Melton Centre at The Hebrew University

WHY do a Study?

- 1990 National Jewish Population Study (NJPS) painted a disturbing picture of the state of American Jewish continuity.
- Intermarriage among the recently married was reported to have reached 52%.
- A wide body of research points to the effectiveness of informal Jewish education in maintaining Jewish continuity.
- Young Judaea's complete range of informal Jewish education programs was long believed to have been extremely successful at building Jewish identity and commitment to Zionism.
- The hypothesis regarding Young Judaea's effectiveness needed to be tested.

HOW was it Conducted?

- The 1998 Study was commissioned to explore the impact of the Young Judaea experience on generations of alumni.
- The study was conducted by marketQuest, Inc., a Westchester, NY based market research company, in conjunction with Professor Steven M. Cohen, of the Melton Centre at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Professor Cohen is widely accepted as one of the preeminent scholars on North American Jewish demography.
- More than 600 alumni, representing a variety of levels of involvement with Young Judaea from across the complete range of Young Judaea programs, were surveyed.
- Survey results were compared to those compiled by Professor Cohen in his 1997 National Survey of American Jews (NSAJ), commissioned by the Jewish Community Centers Association (JCCA). A weighting system was utilized to create comparability between the two samples.



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WHAT did we Find?

- Young Judaea alumni marry other Jews at a rate of 95%.
- Recently married, young adult alumni marry other Jews at a rate of 91%.
- Young Judaea alumni are dramatically more committed to Jewish religious observance:
 - Shabbat candle lighting: 59% v. 24%
 - Kashrut in the home: 44% v. 15%
 - Synagogue membership: 79% v. 43%
- Young Judaea alumni are dramatically more committed to Jewish organizational life:
 - Belong to Jewish organizations: 63% v. 31%
 - Serve on boards of Jewish organizations: 50% v. 17%
 - Use local JCC/YM-YWHA 55% v. 30%
- Young Judaea alumni have a greater connection to Israel:
 - Been to Israel: 92% v. 39%
 - Been to Israel more than once: 71% v. 18%
- Young Judaea alumni are dramatically more committed to the Jewish people:
 - Feel responsible for care for Jews in need: 93% v. 45%
- Young Judaea alumni are more Jewishly philanthropic:
 - Donate to UJA: 59% v. 40%
- 65% of female Young Judaea alumni are members of Hadassah.

CONCLUSION

- According to Professor Steven M. Cohen, "The Young Judaea experience exerts a powerful impact upon adult Jewish identity years after the alumni have completed their active involvement in Young Judaea. The Young Judaea experience lowers intermarriage, elevates ritual observance, raises community activity, promotes involvement with Israel and increases all other types of Jewish involvement."
- Young Judaea's impact on Jewish identity compares favorably with results recently reported by the Orthodox Union, in its study of the impact of its youth movement, the National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY). Young Judaea is the only pluralistic youth movement able to make such a claim.
- Hadassah's sponsorship and support of Young Judaea have reaped extraordinary benefits for generations of American Jews and for the broader American Jewish community at large.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Against a background of heightened anxiety over assimilation and the future of American Jews, this study seeks to assess the long-range impact of Young Judaea upon the Jewish identity of its alumni. It addresses a straightforward question: How do former participants in any of the variety of Young Judaea programs over nearly half a century differ from their counterparts in several critical areas of Jewish involvement? These include in-marriage, ritual practice, communal affiliation, attachment to Israel, and a commitment to raising Jewishly involved children. In the simplest of terms, how, if at all, did the Young Judaea experience affect the Jewish identities of former participants years later?

At the heart of this report are findings from telephone interviews among two representative random samples. One consists of 603 Young Judaea alumni residing in the United States. The other consists of 190 Young Judaea alumni who made *aliyah* and are now living in Israel. To assess the impact of Young Judaea, we compared the alumni, particularly those living in the United States, with respondents from a recently conducted national study of American Jews.

The findings are clear and consistent.

The Impact of Young Judaea on Adult Jewish Identity

Young Judaea alumni scored higher than comparable American Jews on all available measures of Jewish identity, often by large margins. This generalization holds up under controls for socio-demographic characteristics. This finding strongly suggests that the Young Judaea experience — be it through participation in clubs, Israel experiences, camps, national conventions, or other programs — brought about the high rates of Jewish involvement in the adults decades later.

Selected findings markedly illustrate this point. Of alumni under the age of 40, only 9% were married to non-Jews, far lower than the estimated intermarriage rate for the young adult American Jewish population at large (estimated by researchers as ranging from 40% to 52%). As an example of the differences in ritual observance, nearly three times as many Young Judaea alumni as other American Jews keep separate dishes for meat and dairy products at home (44% versus 15%). Whereas 43% of American Jews belong to synagogues, as many as 79% of Young Judaea alumni are members of congregations. Moreover, half of the Young Judaea alumni (exactly 50%) serve on boards of Jewish organizations, almost three times as many as among American Jews (17%). The gaps between Young Judaea alumni and other

American Jews for other measures are equally remarkable, pointing to a group of alumni who are significantly more in-married, observant, affiliated, and communally active than American Jews in general.

The analysis focused on the comparison between American Jews and Young Judaea alumni living in the United States. Predictably, the Young Judaea alumni who went on to make *aliyah* scored even higher on some Jewish identity measures than did those who remained in the United States. On no measures did the Israeli alumni score appreciably lower than the Americans. Had we included the Israeli alumni along with those who remained in America, we would have further widened the impressive numerical differences between Young Judaea alumni and the nationwide control group.

Widespread Satisfaction with the Young Judaea Experience

Overall, in retrospect, the Young Judaea alumni were very pleased with their experiences in the organization. More specifically, most alumni believe that Young Judaea provided them with a positive life experience, gave them a very good Zionist education, and substantially enhanced their connection with Jews and Judaism.

Thus, not only did the Young Judaea experience objectively exert a positive Judaic impact on the alumni, the former Young Judaeans subjectively thought well of their experience.

Widespread Hadassah Membership

As many as 65% of the female Young Judaea alumnae are now members of Hadassah. In addition, consistent with the age structure of the organization as a whole, Hadassah membership among the alumnae increases with age.

For the alumnae, a critical barrier to membership in Hadassah entails a lack of feeling an affinity for the organization based on perceptions of an aged membership and lifestyle differences. On the other hand, one of the attractive features of Hadassah, for them, is its association with Young Judaea.

BACKGROUND: THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

For several years, major sectors of American Jewish leadership have been apprehensive about the very future of a distinct and vibrant religious and ethnic community in the coming century. Many wonder whether younger adult Jews and their children will perpetuate their ties to one another, intensive Jewish home life, Jewish cultural achievements, and the communal organization that has characterized American Jewry throughout the latter part of the twentieth century.

It is amidst the concern for American Jewish survival that this study closely examines the adult alumni of Young Judaea programs. Against the background of widespread intermarriage and its threat to American Jewish continuity, the Jewish identity patterns of Young Judaea alumni are critical for assessing the future of American Jewry in general. As a class, Young Judaea alumni represent more than themselves alone; they also constitute a highly significant sub-population within American Jewry. They are actively involved Jews who have participated in intensive frameworks of informal Jewish education in their youth.

The pivotal position of Young Judaea alumni is apparent when we consider simultaneously the Orthodox and the intermarried. Most observers would agree that Orthodoxy has succeeded in facing the challenges of modernity. In terms of sheer involvement in ritual

practice, organizational affiliation, and informal ties to other Jews, the intermarried are situated at the other extreme from the Orthodox. Between these two poles lies the crucial “middle” of American Jewish identity. These Jews and their offspring will determine the contours of American Jewry in the 21st century. In effect, it is here that the battle for Jewish continuity and vitality will be lost or won. The continuity of the Orthodox alone, barely one in ten American Jews, would be too narrow to ensure the continuity of American Jews. The fate of the intermarried will hinge on the ability of the non-Orthodox to build communities attractive enough to absorb the intermarried and their children. Therefore, however one views the matter, the character of affiliated, non-Orthodox Jews is crucial to the entire American Jewish future.

Accordingly, the success (or failure) of Young Judaea in producing Jewishly involved and committed adults years later bears upon a very important question. Can American Jews, who are outside of Orthodoxy, perpetuate a strong group identity and community involvement? If only for this reason, this study of Young Judaea takes on special significance.

Evidence that Young Judaea “works” would send the important message to American Jewish communal leaders and to rank-and-file parents that non-Orthodox American Jews can succeed in becoming committed and

involved members of the American Jewish community.

This study was commissioned to determine the impact of Young Judaea upon adult Jewish identification. To what extent are Young Judaea alumni committed and active Jews? Moreover, to what extent can the Young Judaea experience be credited with contributing to their current levels of commitment and involvement?

Indeed, there is good reason to predict a significant long-range impact of Young Judaea. The organization sponsors not one isolated program or type of program, but a vast array of Jewish educational instruments that may well operate synergistically. The major programs include the following:

- ◆ A national network of clubs designed to provide year-round Jewish educational and social experiences for participants
- ◆ Five regional summer junior camps and one high school age camp
- ◆ Israel programs for high-school students, a full-year program for high school graduates, and junior-year abroad programs at The Hebrew University and Ben Gurion University for college students
- ◆ College/university programs
- ◆ National and regional conventions

In examining the impact of Young Judaea's network of programs, this study builds upon a pilot study, undertaken in 1993. The former study demonstrated that, on average, Young Judaea alumni tend to have a stronger Jewish identity than the Jewish population as a whole. This study re-examines those issues in more detail, and with greater methodological

precision and concern for comparing the Young Judaea alumni with comparable Jews of their age and background. In so doing, we can more precisely and accurately assess Young Judaea's long-range impact.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- ◆ To assess the impact of the Young Judaea experience on Jewish identity
- ◆ To discern alumni perceptions of their Young Judaea experience
- ◆ To measure Hadassah membership among Young Judaea alumni

METHOD

Design

This research relied upon data collected in a random sample survey of Young Judaea alumni living in the United States and Israel. The analysis of the American alumni compared the results of this survey with those derived from the 1997 National Study of American Jews (NSAJ), a survey conducted separately and before the Young Judaea study. Further, we compared the rates of intermarriage in the Young Judaea alumni sample with those reported in the analysis of the 1990 National Jewish Population Study (NJPS), sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federations.

We matched the 1997 NSAJ data with the Young Judaea sample on important variables controlling for differences in gender, age, education, census region, marital status, presence of children in the home and Jewish educational background. To do so we undertook a statistical procedure known as "weighting," a technique presented in more detail below.

The Young Judaea Samples - American and Israeli

The 1998 Young Judaea survey sample (American segment) consisted of 603 alumni who reside in the United States. We extracted the names of potentially eligible respondents from the Young Judaea alumni database, consisting of over 6,000 names in all (all numbers

are approximate). The database was built in three steps. At the beginning of the process, Young Judaea had about 2,500 names and telephone numbers of alumni on record, as well as numerous names without addresses or phone numbers. For entries initially lacking telephone numbers, Young Judaea contracted with a major list-provider company located in Virginia to conduct a "unique name" search. That is, the company explored by computer publicly available databases, including voter registration and motor vehicle files, searching for the appearance of highly unusual names. The final step entailed canvassing Young Judaea alumni who provided contacts with an additional 1,500 alumni. (We decided not to sample Canadian Young Judaea alumni so as to maintain strict comparability with the American control study.)

A professional telephone-interviewing center under the administrative direction of Alan Ganapol interviewed the respondents by telephone.

In addition to the American-based sample, we also interviewed 190 Young Judaea alumni who made *aliyah* (migrated to Israel). This report treats this segment separately. We interviewed the Israeli sample by telephone, under the direction of both Professor Steven M. Cohen and marketQUEST's representative in Israel.

The Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire covered the following areas:

- ◆ Young Judaea participation - this area covered specific programs in which the respondent was involved.
- ◆ Young Judaea attitudes - these questions asked about attitudes towards various Young Judaea experiences in which respondents participated.
- ◆ Jewish religious behavior - e.g., attendance at seders, synagogue membership and attendance, observance of kashrut.
- ◆ Jewish attitudes - feelings about Judaism, God, social networks, Israel and Jewish organizations.
- ◆ Membership in other Jewish youth organizations and Hadassah.
- ◆ Jewish education and upbringing, family composition and socio-demographic characteristics.

To the extent possible, we replicated items found in the 1990 National Jewish Population Study and the 1997 National Survey of American Jews, whose usefulness for this study is explained in detail below. Replicating questionnaire items, a practice frequently conducted in survey research, allows for more credible and explicit comparisons, and it provides a greater assurance that questions will be understood by respondents and useful to the researcher.

We adjusted the Israeli questionnaire to exclude those items which had little meaning in Israel, or whose meaning takes on a very different character in Israel than in the United

States. These included perceived closeness to Jews and to Israelis, number of visits to Israel, intention to make *aliyah* (obviously, the Israeli alumni all did so), and Jewish educational experiences of the alumni's children. (In a sense, all their children were attending an equivalent of a full-time Jewish day school, and all their youth groups were, by composition, Jewish youth groups.)

The 1997 National Study of American Jews - Comparative Sample

In 1997, Professor Steven M. Cohen conducted a National Survey of American Jews (NSAJ) throughout the United States for the Jewish Community Centers Association (JCCA). The NSAJ data were derived from a mail-back questionnaire completed by 1,005 Jewish respondents throughout the United States. The survey was fielded in June and July 1997 by the Washington office of Market Facts, Inc., a national survey research company.

Cohen drew the respondents for the JCCA control group from Market Facts' Consumer Mail Panel. This Panel consists of about 368,000 Americans who have agreed to respond occasionally to surveys on a variety of concerns. About 8,400 of these households were home to one Jewish adult. Market Facts constructed the sample so as to approximate distributions on the following socio-demographic measures calculated from the 1990 NJPS data: household size, age, education, and number of Jewish adults. (The NJPS - National Jewish Population Survey - surveyed over 2,000 Jewish households nationwide.

Sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federations, the study remains the authoritative source in the sociological and demographic study of American Jews.)

The JCCA sample was limited to those who declared their religious identification to be Jewish. About 80% of American Jews identify Jewish as their religion, and the rest declare their religion to be “other” or “none.” The latter are among the least involved Jews in the population. Accordingly, the JCCA survey under-represents the Jewishly less involved, that is, those who identify as Jews culturally (or ethnically), but not religiously. Consequently, it slightly over-estimates the overall American Jewish population’s levels of Jewish identification. Therefore, its use as a benchmark here produces conservative, somewhat understated estimates of the impact of Young Judaea.

Weighting the 1997 National Survey of American Jews: The characteristics of Young Judaea alumni take on greater meaning when compared with the NSAJ sample, representing the larger American Jewish population. To what extent do the alumni score higher or lower than other American Jews on measures of Jewish involvement?

But, simple differences between Young Judaea alumni and other American Jews cannot provide the total and final answer to the key question of this study. That is, how much of an impact, if any, does the Young Judaea experience exert upon adult Jewish identity? Simple comparisons fail to take into account a large number of confounding background factors. Thus, in order to isolate the impact of the

Young Judaea experience, we sought to remove, statistically, all background factors.

The main problem with trying to assess the impact of Young Judaea by comparing the alumni with other American Jews is that the alumni are not randomly distributed throughout the American Jewish population. They share certain characteristics that might predispose them to higher or lower levels of Jewish identification. Young Judaea alumni are self-selected. Their Jewish schooling, for example, figures to have been more intensive than that of the average American Jew their age. As we discovered, Young Judaea alumni report higher levels of education and income, both of which are associated with higher levels of Jewish communal involvement and lower rates of intermarriage. In addition, the alumni grew up in and reside in regions of the country with higher rates of Jewish affiliation. All of these “advantages” need to be factored out if we are to assess the “pure” impact of Young Judaea.

However, at the same time, Young Judaea alumni share the “disadvantage” (with respect to Jewish identity) of being at a relatively early stage in life and the family configurations that accompany young adulthood. Few Young Judaea alumni are elderly, and many are young adults. Accordingly, relatively fewer of the alumni are married parents, a family stage associated with higher rates of Jewish activity.

Any assessment of the impact of Young Judaea needs to take into account both sorts of confounding factors — those that promote Jewish involvement (such as better Jewish school-

ing), and those that impede involvement (such as young adulthood). To accomplish this objective, we had to adjust the sample of American Jews to take into account the special characteristics of Young Judaea alumni that obscure the real impact of their Young Judaea experience. We undertook this adjustment through a procedure known as “weighting,” where certain respondents are assigned more weight (or “votes”) and others less weight, depending upon their characteristics.

The weighting approach that we used adjusted the NSAJ sample so as to account for its demographic differences with the Young Judaea alumni. The procedure, in effect, assigns under-represented groups more “weight” such that the two samples have nearly equal distributions on the key demographic variables. The factors taken into account in matching the NSAJ to the Young Judaea study sample are as follows:

- ◆ Gender
- ◆ Age
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Census region
- ◆ Marital status and presence of children in the home
- ◆ Jewish educational background

Table 1 presents results for three groups: The column headed by “Young Judaea Alumni” reports the distributions of major socio-demographic characteristics for the 603 respondents.

The second column, headed “National Study of American Jews,” reports the distributions of

these characteristics for the unadjusted sample (that is, before the weights were applied).

The last column, headed “Adjusted National Study of American Jews” shows the distribution of characteristics for the adjusted national sample, that is, after it was weighted so that it would closely match the profile of the Young Judaea sample.

The impact of the weighting on the NSAJ sample induced several changes in its composition. Our weighting procedures increased the proportion of females, reduced the average age, elevated the educational and income distributions, reduced the number of married people and parents, reduced the number living in the South, and elevated the intensity of Jewish education. The application of the weights produced an adjusted national sample of American Jews (third column) that very closely matched the profile of Young Judaea alumni (first column).

The Israeli alumni (who are treated separately in the analysis and are not included in Table 1) differ from the Americans in a few respects. Fewer of the Israelis are under age 40 (27% versus 47% for the Americans), and more are in their forties (41% versus 24%). Consistent with this age distribution, more Israeli alumni were currently married (78% versus 62%), and have children (85% versus 63%). At the same time, their Jewish schooling distributions and their denominational background when growing up closely approximate those of the American-based alumni.

The distinctive age distribution of the Israeli alumni suggests that they have mirrored the

TABLE 1:
Weighting the Comparative Sample

	Young Judaea Alumni (%)	1997 National Study of American Jews (%)	Adjusted National Study of American Jews (%)
Gender			
Men	29	51	29
Women	71	49	71
Age			
65+	10	25	11
50-64	18	20	20
40-49	24	18	23
30-39	20	21	18
25-30	27	12	26
No Answer	2	5	1
Education			
Graduate Degree	39	28	39
BA/BS	39	32	39
Less than BA	22	40	23
HH Income			
\$100,000+	29	13	25
\$55,000-100,000	41	38	40
Under \$55,000	30	49	35
Location			
New York State	27	24	27
Northeast/Northcentral	44	35	43
South	15	25	15
West	14	16	15
Family			
Married	62	74	62
Children at Home	32	47	31
Jewish Schooling			
Day School	13	7	11
Hebrew School	63	48	62
Sunday School	15	22	17
Other/None	9	23	10

rise and fall of *aliyah* over the years. American *aliyah* peaked in the early 1970s when many of the middle aged alumni of Young Judaea were in their early twenties, an age when many people make *aliyah*. Evidence of a decline since then can be seen in the rela-

tively smaller number of younger adults among the Young Judaea alumni now living in Israel.

Background: Involvement of American and Israeli Alumni in Young Judaea Programs

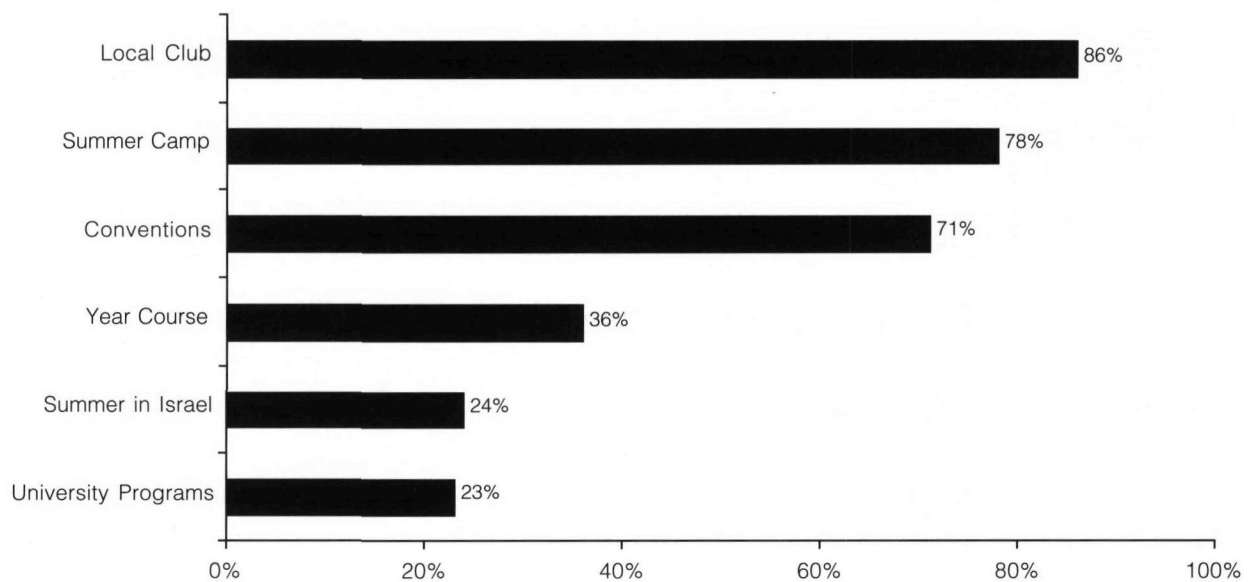
The respondents were not simply “former members” of Young Judaea. Rather, many reported involvement in several Young Judaea programs, having had numerous points of contact with the Zionist youth movement. This multiplicity and diversity of involvement testifies to the synergistic quality of Young Judaea’s varied program offerings.

To elaborate, the American alumni reported high levels of involvement in the broad range of Young Judaea programs, of which the local

club and the summer camp were the most widely utilized. In particular, we found that among the American alumni:

- ◆ Nearly 9 out of 10 were associated with a local club
- ◆ Almost 8 out of 10 attended a Young Judaea summer camp
- ◆ More than 7 out of 10 went to at least one convention
- ◆ Nearly 4 out of 10 went on Year Course in Israel
- ◆ Somewhat less than a quarter went on a short-term summer program in Israel
- ◆ In addition, almost 1 out of 4 were involved in University programs.

CHART 1:
American Alumni: Broad Young Judaea Participation

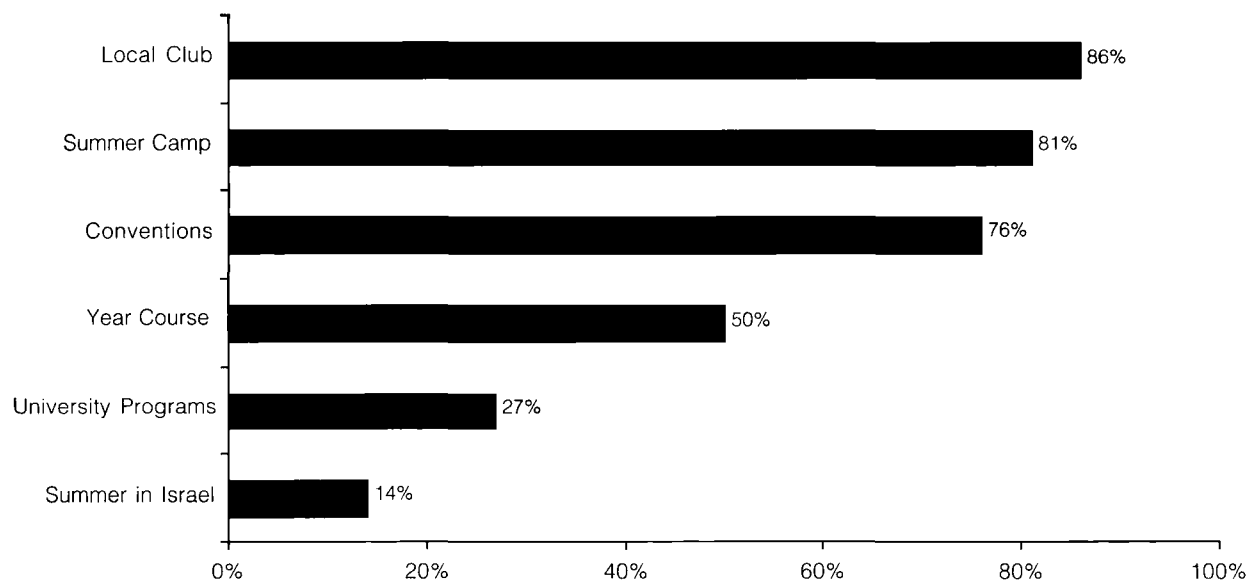


The Israeli sample profile of program involvement emerged as quite similar to their counterparts living in the United States. What appears to differentiate the two groups is their respective participation in Young Judaea's Israel programs. Those living in the United States were less likely to have gone on Year Course (post high school/pre-college year in Israel). However, more of them spent a summer in Israel (6 week program in Israel for high school students).

- ◆ 50% of the Israeli alumni have gone on Year Course as compared with 36% of American alumni

- ◆ In contrast, only 14% of Israeli alumni participated in a Young Judaea summer program, as opposed to 24% of the Young Judaea alumni residing in the United States.

CHART 2:
Israeli Alumni: Similar Patterns of Participation Except that More Attended Year Course



THE IMPACT OF YOUNG JUDAEA ON JEWISH IDENTITY

This research seeks to determine the extent to which the Young Judaea experience made a difference in the levels of Jewish commitment and involvement of Young Judaea alumni living in the United States. The tables and graphs which follow present the relevant figures for the Young Judaea alumni and for the demographically adjusted 1997 National Study of American Jews (NSAJ) sample. In addition, the tables include a column labeled the "Young Judaea difference" that shows the extent to which Young Judaea alumni differ from their counterparts on each of the measures.

In-marriage & Inter-marriage

Perhaps the most striking finding is the exceedingly low rate of intermarriage by Young Judaea alumni. Of those married, 95% were married to Jews and, conversely, 5% had married non-Jews who had not converted to Judaism.

The low rate of intermarriage among Young Judaea alumni compares favorably with that found more generally among American Jews. In our statistically adjusted sample of American Jews from the NSAJ, 77% were married to Jews, implying a 23% intermarriage rate, more than four times that found among demographically comparable Young Judaea alumni. As a technical note, we emphasize that these figures refer to the cumulative intermarriage rate, or the propor-

tion intermarried over the years. In contrast, the recent intermarriage rate, in a period of rising intermarriage, is higher than the cumulative rate.

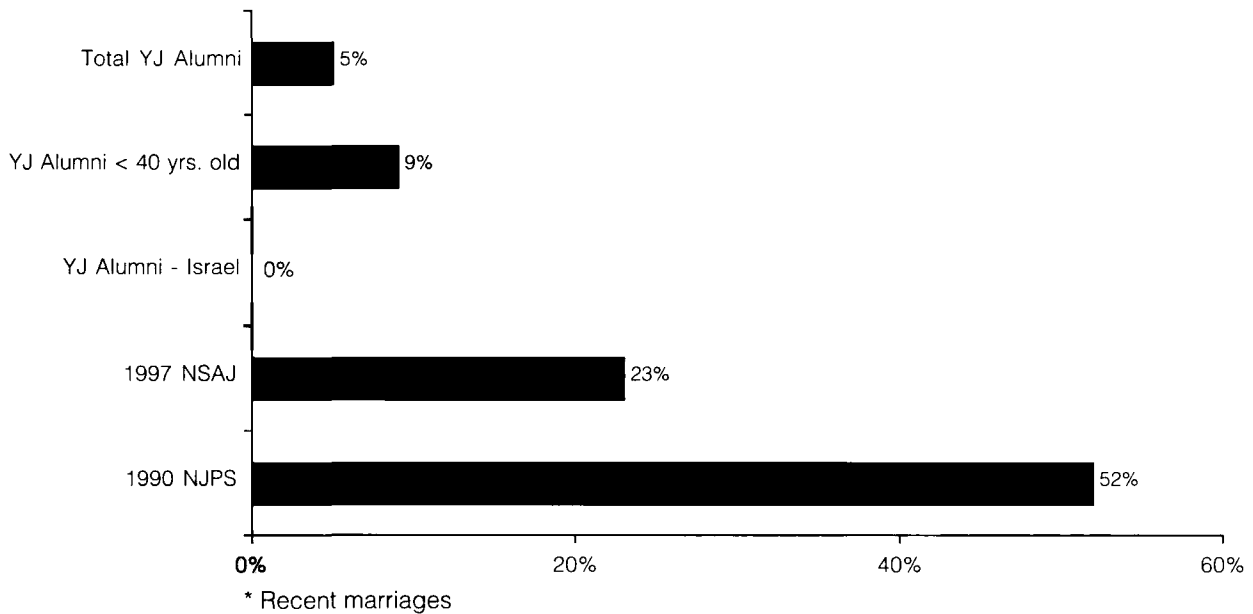
Putting the Young Judaea in-marriage data into an historical context, we note that analysts of the 1990 National Jewish Population Study (NJPS) reported that 52% of Jews who recently married (i.e. in 1985-90) chose a non-Jewish partner who had not converted by the time of the survey. However, a substantially lower percentage (9%) of Young Judaea alumni under 40 years of age, a group approximately comparable to those who married in that period, married a non-converting non-Jew. (The Young Judaea questionnaire did not include a question on the year of marriage. The marriage patterns of younger adult Jews approximate those who have recently married.)

Consistent with their lower rates of intermarriage, Young Judaea alumni are more committed to the endogamy norm. As many as 82% of the alumni agreed with the idea that Jews should marry Jews, as opposed to 60% of the control sample. We asked them to contemplate the hypothetical circumstance of their own children weighing the idea of marrying a non-Jew. Of the Young Judaea alumni, 46% would oppose such a marriage, nearly double the number (25%) among American Jews in the NSAJ sample.

Further, all of the married Young Judaea alumni now living in Israel have married someone who is Jewish.

The Young Judaea alumni living in Israel, in fact, report very comparable ritual frequencies, although they were somewhat more

CHART 3:
Far Fewer Young Judaea Alumni Have Intermarried



Ritual Practice/ Observance

With respect to ritual practice, the Young Judaea alumni also outpace the NSAJ control group. For the most widely observed practices (e.g., Passover Seder), the differences between the alumni and the control group are small, owing to a “ceiling effect.” Those practices that are very widely observed allow for little room for the Young Judaea experience to exert an impact. However, with respect to the less widely observed practices, the gaps between Young Judaea alumni and the control group are great. For Shabbat candle lighting, we find a gap of 59% (Young Judaea alumni) versus 24% (others), and for the keeping of separate sets of dishes for meat and dairy at home, 44% versus 15%.

likely to fast on Yom Kippur (82%) and light Shabbat candles (also 82%). In short, had we included the Israeli respondents in our calculations, we would have further widened the gaps between the graduates of Young Judaea’s programs and the larger American population.

TABLE 2:
Young Judaea Alumni Observe Jewish Ritual Practices More than Others

	Young Judaea Alumni	1997 NSAJ (Adjusted)	Young Judaea Difference
Participate in a Passover Seder	97%	88%	9%
Light Hanukah candles	99%	91%	8%
Fast on Yom Kippur	84%	66%	18%
Light Shabbat candles	59%	24%	35%
Keep separate sets of dishes for meat and dairy products	44%	15%	29%

These gaps are especially impressive in light of the moderate emphasis that the Young Judaea educational curriculum places on ritual practice, as contrasted with its far more clear and consistent emphasis on Zionism. We can only speculate on the meaning of these rituals to the Young Judaea alumni. In all likelihood, the holiday practices and ritual observances carry an ethnic-cultural significance as much as, if not more than, a religious significance. If Young Judaea does not see itself as providing a particularly religious or spiritual experience, it does strongly emphasize attachment to Jewish people, history, tradition, and custom. We view the relatively high levels of so-called religious ritual observance as indicators of widespread adoption of this decidedly more ethnic message in the Young Judaea curriculum.

Consistent with this view, Young Judaea alumni heavily identify as Conservative Jews (58%), just a few (15%) are Reform or Reconstructionist (15%), and hardly any (8%) are Orthodox. The rest (19%) identified with a variety of other non-denominational options. In contrast with comparable American Jews, Young Judaea alumni today

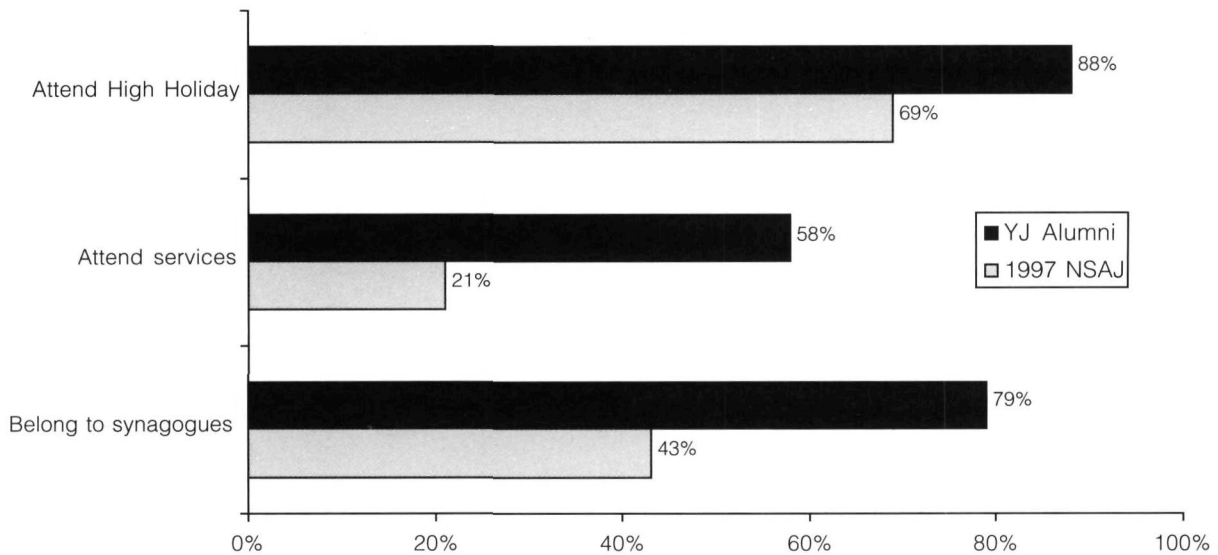
are far more Conservative and far less Reform (in parallel with their childhood patterns of denominational identity). The Conservative preponderance is consistent with the ritual findings and interpretation offered in Table 2. In contrast with Orthodoxy, committed Conservative Jews may come to their practice for more secular or ethnic reasons. In contrast with Reform, Reconstructionist, or non-denominational Jews, Conservative Jews often practice select Jewish rituals. Those who may be defined as “secular Jewish maximalists,” (deeply committed Jews whose commitment does not put primary emphasis on traditional conceptions of God and Jewish law), lack a serious Jewish secular movement in the United States. Jews of this sort often gravitate to the Conservative movement. Young Judaeans may well constitute outstanding representatives of this phenomenon.

The pattern of moderate to high rates of observance seen in the home among Young Judaea alumni extends to the synagogue. More Young Judaea alumni than comparable American Jews belong to synagogues (79% versus 43%) and they attend worship services far more frequently. Those who report attending services monthly amount to 58% of the Young Judaea alumni versus just 21% of other American Jews with similar socio-demographic characteristics.

**TABLE 3:
Young Judaea Alumni Identify Primarily as Conservative Jews**

	Young Judaea Alumni	1997 NSAJ (Adjusted)	Young Judaea Difference
Orthodox	8%	6%	2%
Conservative	58%	35%	23%
Reform or Reconstructionist	15%	34%	-19%
Other	19%	25%	-6%

CHART 4:
Young Judaea Alumni are More Active in Synagogues



Community Involvement/Philanthropy

We examined several indicators of organized Jewish involvement, an outcome directly related to Young Judaea’s educational emphasis on Jewish leadership development. In this sphere as well, the gaps between Young Judaea alumni and others are truly impres-

sive. Young Judaea alumni are twice as likely as comparable American Jews to join a Jewish organization (63% versus 31%). They are three times as likely to serve on the boards of these organizations (50% versus 17%). Alumni of Young Judaea programs are more likely to have donated to the UJA (59% versus 40%). They are more than twice as likely as comparable American Jews to engage in regular Jewish learning (61% versus 27%).

TABLE 4:
Young Judaea Alumni are More Active in Jewish Organizations

	Young Judaea Alumni	1997 NSAJ (Adjusted)	Young Judaea Difference
Are members of Jewish organization(s)	63%	31%	32%
Serve on the boards of Jewish organizations	50%	17%	33%
Donate to the UJA	59%	40%	19%
Engage in regular Jewish learning	61%	27%	34%
Use a Jewish Community Center	55%	30%	25%

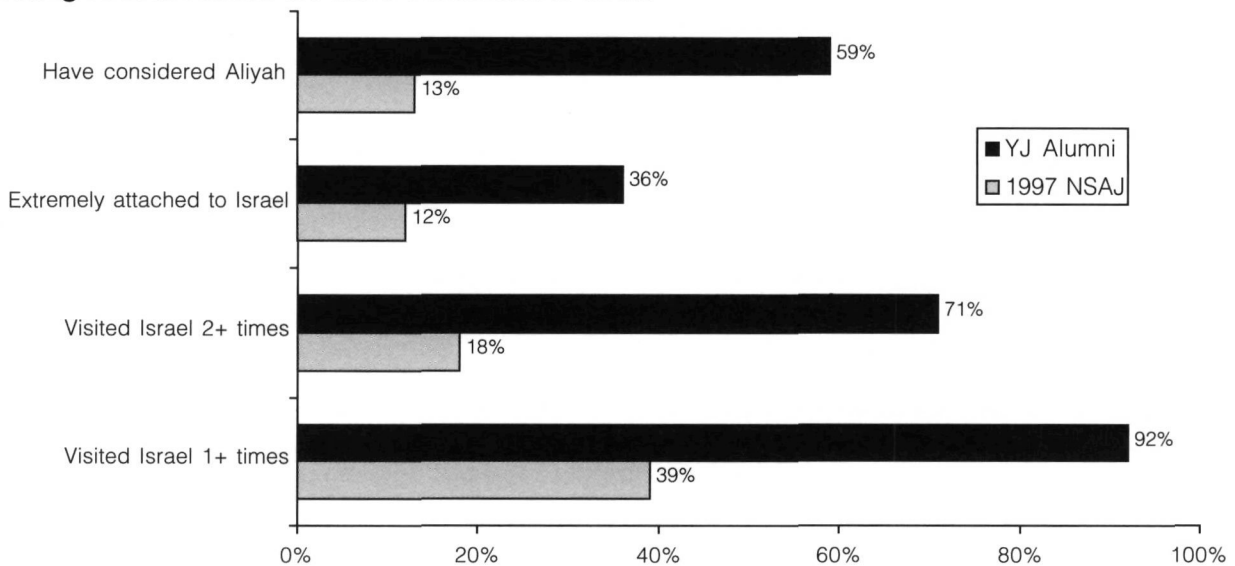
Participation in Young Judaea appealed to youngsters who felt comfortable in organized group activities. It, undoubtedly, further socialized them to such activity in a Jewish context, resulting in the high levels of participation in organized Jewish life years later.

Very Strong Connection to Israel

Of course, an appreciation of Zionism and a commitment to Israel lie at the heart of the Young Judaea educational mission. Therefore, it is not surprising that the largest gaps between Young Judaea alumni and their American Jewish counterparts emerge with respect to items pertaining to Israel.

three times as likely to view themselves as extremely attached emotionally to Israel, and they were more than four times as likely as their counterparts to claim to have considered *aliyah*.

CHART 5:
Young Judaea Alumni are More Committed to Israel



In fact, nearly every Young Judaea alumni (92%) has been to Israel, more than double the rate among the demographically similar American Jews in the control sample (39%). Even more impressive is the gap with respect to the number who have been to Israel at least twice, a clear sign of commitment to the Jewish State. Among American Jews in the control sample, just 18% have visited Israel twice or more. Among the Young Judaea alumni, four times as many (71%) have been to Israel as often. Young Judaea alumni were

Attachment to the Jewish People

We also find marked differences between Young Judaea alumni and other American Jews with respect to a variety of Jewish identity attitudes. Rather than relying on external criteria to determine who is more Jewishly involved, we may also turn to the respondents themselves. When asked to evaluate the importance of being Jewish to them, 49% of the control sample said it was very important, but 80% of the Young Judaea alumni claimed

this to be the case. We find large gaps with respect to other attitudes as well. One that is especially significant related to feeling a special responsibility to Jews in need. For this item, the Young Judaea alumni outscored the others by a 2-to-1 margin: 93% versus 45%.

Indeed, the theme of closeness to Jews emerges as a critical distinction between the Young Judaea alumni and the control group. The alumni are more likely to have mostly Jewish close friends (64% versus 46%). The differences with respect to their feelings of closeness are even more pronounced. We asked the respondents to assess the extent to which they felt close to American Jews, Israeli Jews, and American non-Jews. A substantial majority of Young Judaea alumni (70%) felt close to American Jews to “a great extent,” almost double the number in the control sample (38%). With respect to how close they felt to Israelis, the Young Judaea alumni outscored the control group as well, 38% to 10%. With respect to non-Jews, hardly any Young Judaea alumni reported great closeness (2%) as opposed to a larger, though still small number in the control sample (16%).

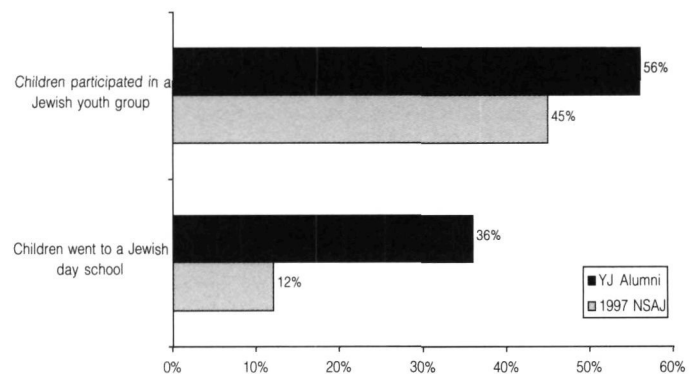
TABLE 5:
Young Judaea Alumni Express Strong Connections to Other Jews

	Young Judaea Alumni	1997 NSAJ (Adjusted)	Young Judaea Difference
Have mostly Jewish friends	64%	46%	18%
Feel close to American Jews	70%	38%	32%
Feel close to Israelis	38%	10%	28%
Feel close to American non-Jews	2%	16%	-14%

Commitment to Children’s Jewish Education

We have limited information on how Young Judaea alumni are raising their children, but here too, the results point in the same direction. Over a third have sent their children to day schools, amounting to triple the number among the control group of demographically comparable American Jews (36% versus 12%). To a lesser extent, the children of Young Judaea alumni are also more active in Jewish youth groups (56% versus 45%).

CHART 6:
Young Judaea Alumni are More Committed to their Children’s Jewish Education



A Methodological Comment on Assessing Causality

From a rigorous scientific point of view, we cannot be sure that the Young Judaea experience brought about the large differences in Jewish identity measures reported above. We can say, with absolute certainty that Young Judaea alumni are far more Jewishly involved than other American Jews with similar distributions of age, sex, region of residence, Jewish schooling, education, income, and family status.

THE YOUNG JUDAEA EXPERIENCE

In addition to examining the Jewish identity of the Young Judaea alumni, we also asked them to evaluate their experience as Young Judaea participants. This included an assessment of their overall experience, an evaluation of specific programs, and an appraisal of specific features or characteristics of the Young Judaea program. In general, we find that the alumni are very satisfied with their Young Judaea experiences.

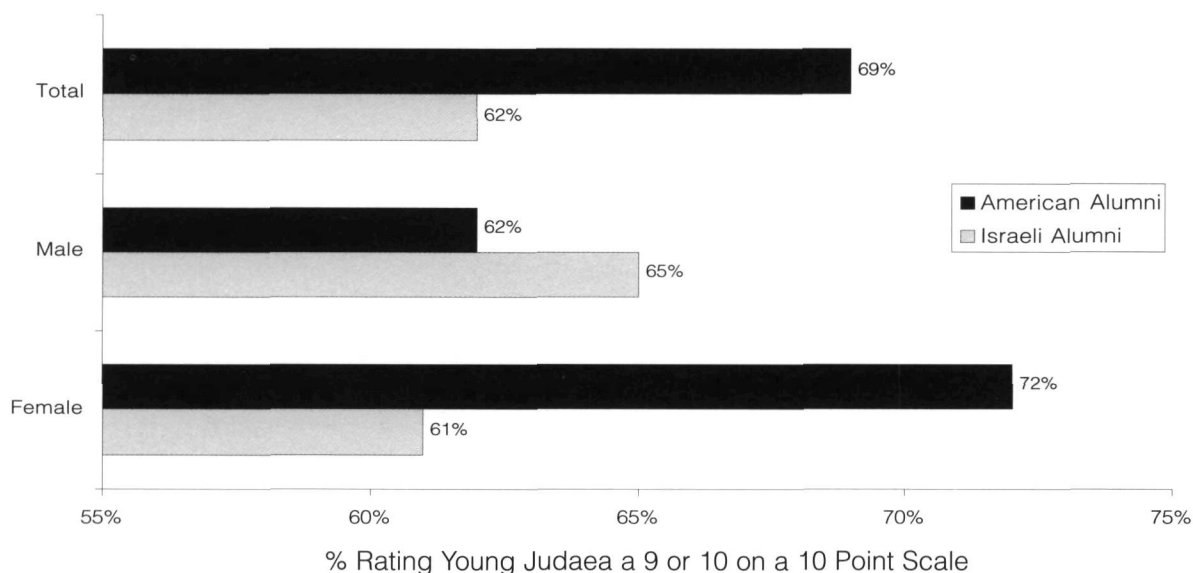
Overall Attitudes About the Young Judaea Experience

The American and Israeli alumni have very positive feelings about their Young Judaea experience. When asked to rate their Young Judaea experience, both sets of alumni gave the organization marks that outdistance “cus-

tomers satisfaction” scores seen for other service related situations. The female alumni living in the United States expressed somewhat higher levels of satisfaction than did their male counterparts, or both men and women living in Israel.

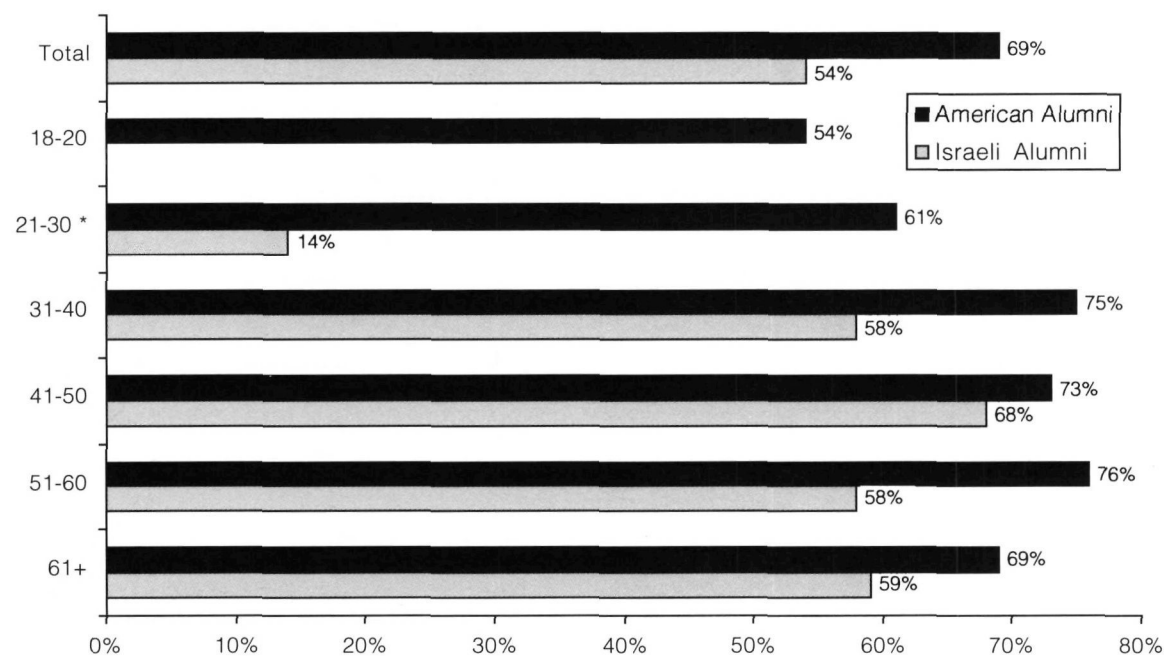
To measure satisfaction, we asked the respondents to rate their Young Judaea experience on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 represented the highest possible rating. Of the American alumni, 69% rated their Young Judaea experience a 9 or 10. In a similar manner, 62% of the Israeli alumni rated their Young Judaea experience with these two highest marks. To put these scores into context, service organizations will generally report “customer satisfaction” scores — i.e., ratings of 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale — in the range of 50% to 60%.

CHART 7:
High Satisfaction with the Young Judaea Experience



Concerning gender and age variations we see American females and older alumni giving Young Judaea higher marks than American males and younger alumni respectively.

CHART 8:
Older Alumni are Generally More Positive about their Young Judaea Experience



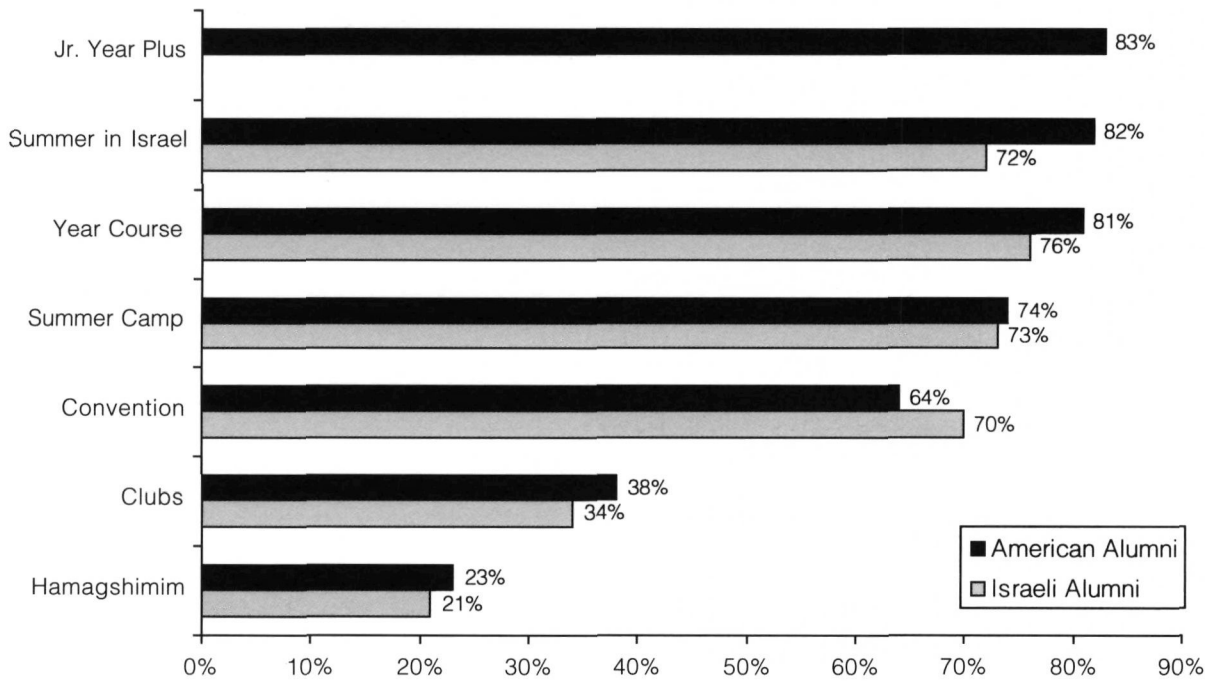
* Very small base for the Israeli sample in this age group.

Satisfaction with Specific Young Judaea Programs

We asked the alumni to evaluate their experiences with the various Young Judaea programs in which they participated. For both the American and Israeli alumni, the programs that took place away from home garnered the greatest level of satisfaction. Specifically, Sharsheret (Junior Year Plus), Summer in Israel, Year Course, Summer Camp

and Conventions received high marks (ratings of 9 or 10) from more than 6 out of 10 of the alumni. In contrast, Clubs captured a 9 or 10 rating from less than 4 out of 10. Furthermore, Hamagshimim garnered a relatively low satisfaction score. The Israeli and American alumni patterns of responses hardly differed from one another.

CHART 9:
Israel and Camp Programs Foster the Most Satisfaction



Influential Aspects of the Young Judaea Experience

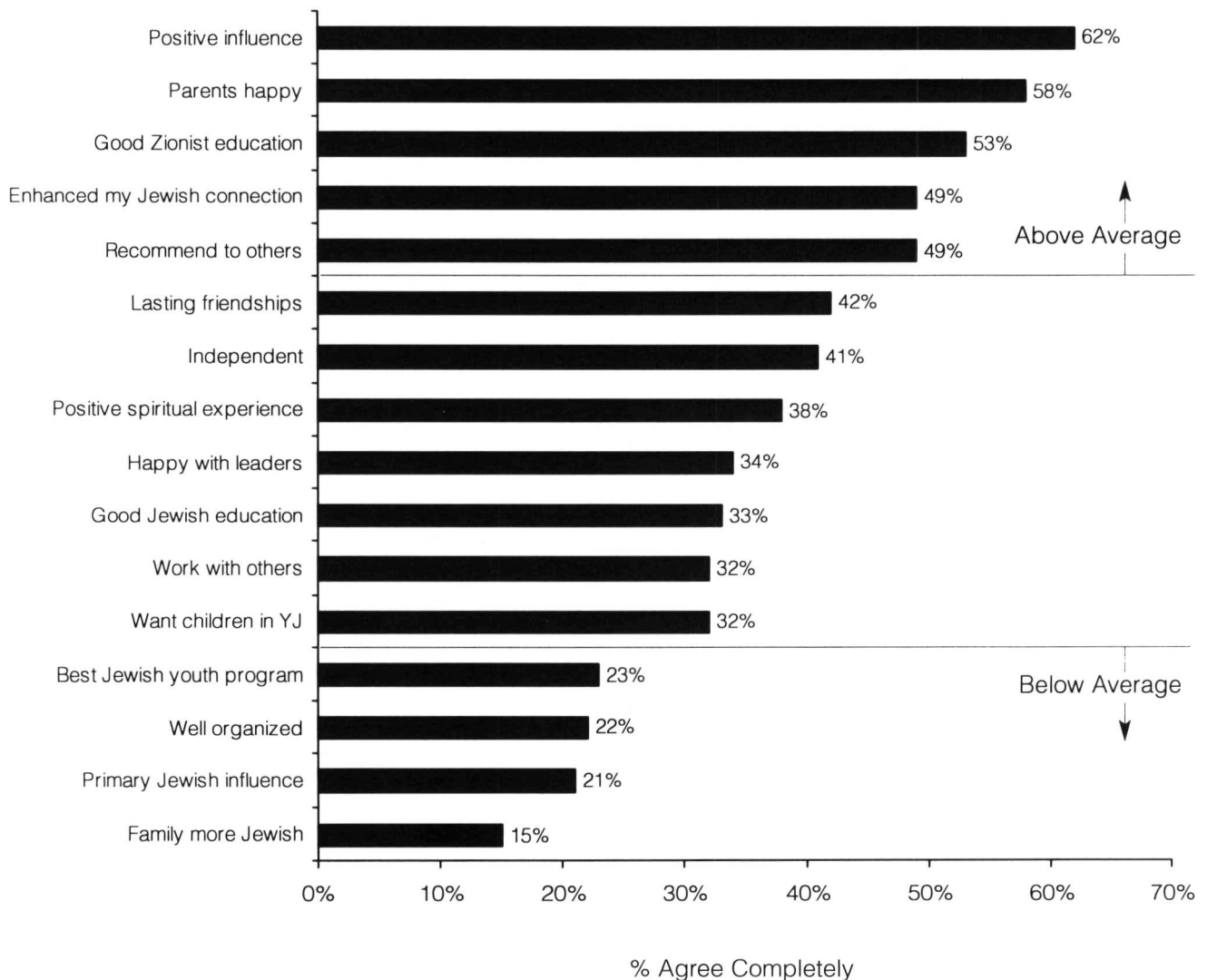
We asked the alumni to characterize their Young Judaea experience(s) in terms of sixteen agree-disagree statements. The extent to which they concurred with these items follows, presented in terms of descending order of agreement:

- ◆ Provided “a positive influence in my life”
- ◆ Parents were happy “that I was involved in Young Judaea”
- ◆ Provided “a good Zionist education”
- ◆ Enhanced “my connection to Judaism”
- ◆ “I would recommend Young Judaea” to others
- ◆ “I formed lasting friendships”
- ◆ Gave “me the chance to be independent”
- ◆ “Provided me with a positive spiritual experience”
- ◆ Was happy “with the Young Judaea leaders”
- ◆ Provided “a good Jewish education”
- ◆ “Taught me how to work effectively with others”
- ◆ “Want my children to be involved with Young Judaea”
- ◆ “Young Judaea is the best Jewish youth program available”
- ◆ Programs were “well organized”
- ◆ “Was the primary Jewish influence in my life”
- ◆ “Helped my family become” more Jewish

The single characteristic that comes to the top of the priority list is the belief that Young Judaea has been a positive influence on the lives of the alumni. Further, the alumni, as a group, strongly indicate that their Young Judaea experience has enhanced their connection to Judaism. On the other hand, several items elicited far lower levels of agree-

ment, falling well below the average for the sixteen items and are therefore seen to have been weaker elements of the Young Judaea program. Of significance is the small number who agreed that, "Young Judaea programs are well organized." Only 22% of the alumni concurred with this characterization.

CHART 10:
Prioritized Listing of Young Judaea Characteristics



HADASSAH MEMBERSHIP

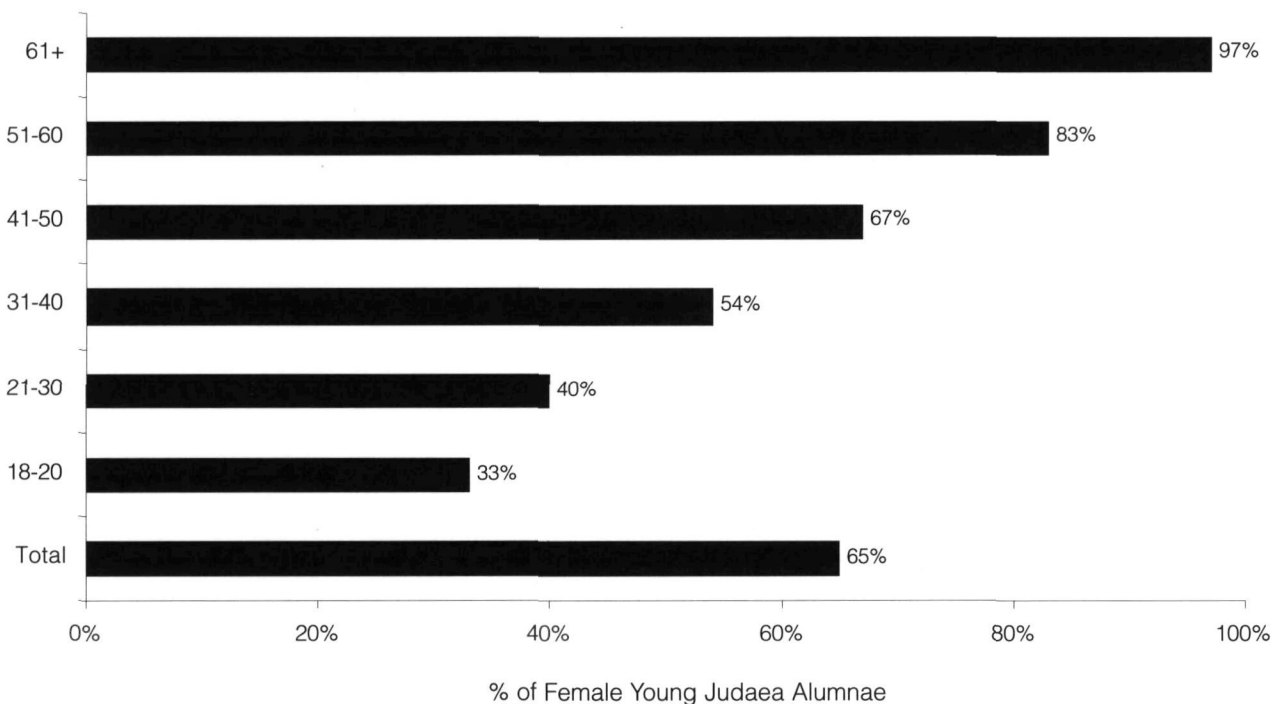
Hadassah Membership Among Young Judaea Alumni

Some Hadassah leaders, we have been told, have long believed that only small proportions of female Young Judaea alumnae become members of Hadassah. The findings demonstrate that quite the opposite is the case. Sixty-five percent of the female respondents reported that they were Hadassah members. (This analysis of Hadassah membership is restricted to female members of the American sample.)

Hadassah members are more numerous among the older age brackets. In line with this

pattern, membership rates among Young Judaea alumnae increase with age. One out of three 18-20 year old Young Judaea alumnae are members of Hadassah. This rate of membership increases steadily up to those who are 61 years and older where Hadassah membership is nearly universal (97%). But even among female Young Judaea alumni now in their 30s, a majority have joined Hadassah. Quite possibly, those who have not joined may well be willing to do so if approached, especially in light of the fact that so many of their friends from their days in Young Judaea are Hadassah members today.

CHART 11:
Most Female Young Judaea Alumni are Hadassah Members



Barriers to Joining Hadassah

Why do some Young Judaea alumnae fail to join their former youth movement's parent organization? To understand the barriers to joining Hadassah, we asked those Young Judaea alumnae who are not Hadassah members to rate the relevance of a range of reasons for not joining the organization.

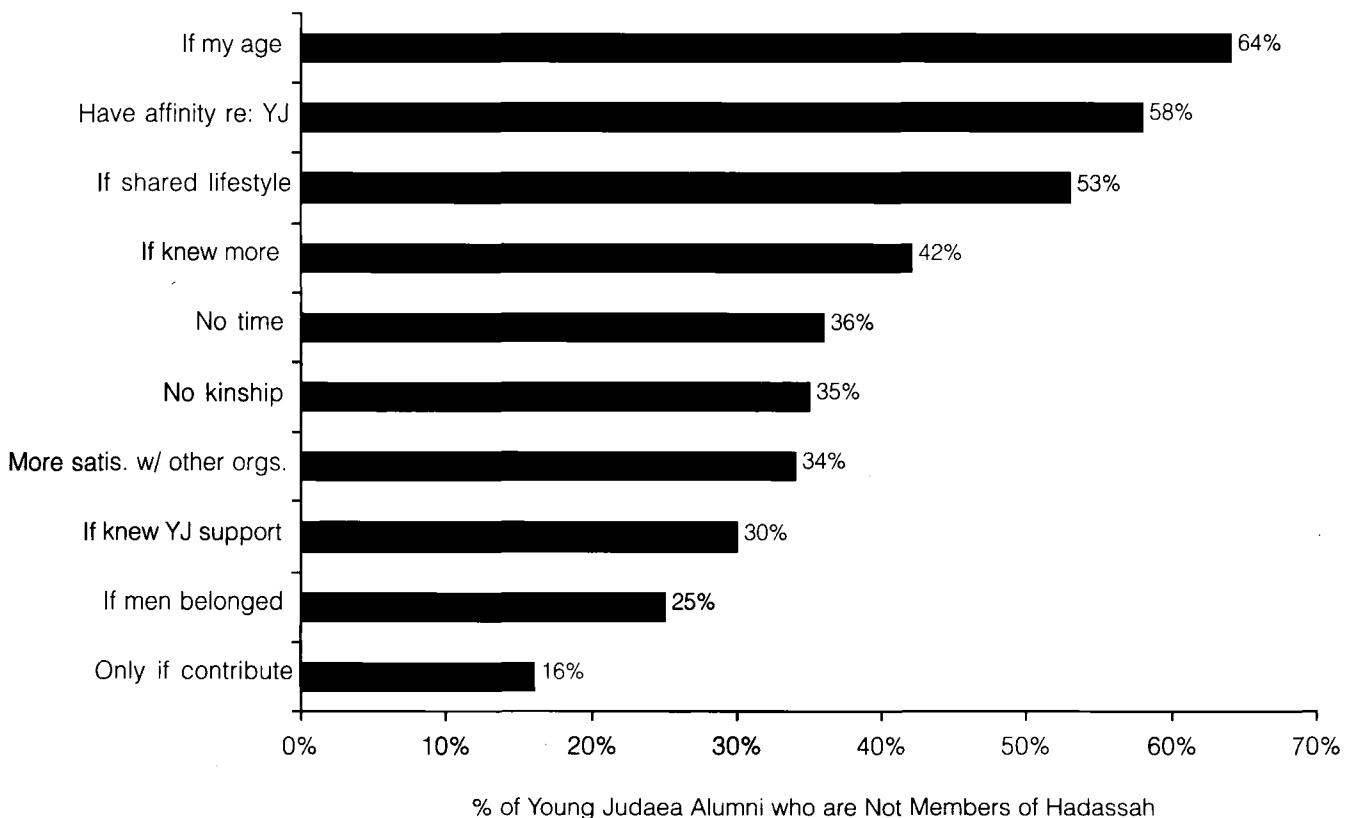
The primary barriers to Hadassah membership among our Young Judaea alumni focus on three factors. The first relates to age; 64% of the female non-members agreed with the statement "I might belong to Hadassah if more members were my age." Related to this sentiment, most respondents also cited differ-

ences in lifestyle. As many as 53% agreed with the statement, "I might join Hadassah if more members shared by lifestyle." A third issue relates to their ignorance of Hadassah's link with Young Judaea. A substantial minority (42%) agreed with the statement, "I might like to join Hadassah if I knew about the support that it gave to Young Judaea."

At the same time, those who knew of the link, spoke positively of Hadassah. As many as 58% agreed, "I have an affinity to Hadassah because I was a member of Young Judaea."

Limitations due to time, absence of men and satisfaction with other organizations have less impact as barriers to joining Hadassah.

CHART 12:
Perceived Lack of Affinity (Age, Lifestyle): A Key Barrier to Joining Hadassah



MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Since 1909, Young Judaea has functioned as a major instrument of Jewish continuity for the thousands of former participants who have moved through its system of programs as youngsters. The findings clearly establish three important consequences of participation in Young Judaea.

- ◆ As adults, Young Judaea alumni score far higher on all Jewish identity measures than do other American Jews with similar background and demographic characteristics.
- ◆ Alumni recall Young Judaea with great affection and satisfaction, seeing it as a positive life experience that has contributed significantly to their Jewish and Zionist identities.
- ◆ The women who once were in Young Judaea join Hadassah in large numbers, further testifying to the ability of Young Judaea to leave a lasting impact on adult Jewish identity, and pointing to considerable institutional benefits for the parent organization.

Young Judaea, like several other select forms of intensive informal Jewish education, has been effective in developing Jewish identity and involvement as an adult. The distinctive features of the Young Judaea program are several. It is a form of Jewish and Zionist education. It constitutes informal (that is, non-classroom) or experiential education. It is secular in the sense that Young Judaea advances a conception of Zionism, Jewish peoplehood, and Jewish ethnicity that embraces the religious dimension, but does not see the reli-

gious conception as primary (as the synagogue movements do). Moreover, Young Judaea offers every variety of informal Jewish youth education. One has to believe that the combination of clubs, camps, conventions, short-term Israel trips, long-term Israel study, and university programs operate interactively to strengthen and reinforce the Young Judaea message.

That Young Judaea has proven effective speaks not only to the success of the organization alone. It also speaks to larger questions regarding the American Jewish future. The persistence of ethnic attachment among Young Judaea alumni means that the intergenerational transmission of Jewish commitment in the United States is, at least, a feasible endeavor. This evidence serves to undermine the claim of those who would assert the near-inevitability of massive assimilation of American Jews. It also serves to strengthen the claim of those who believe in the possibility of building Jewish commitment not only outside of Orthodoxy, but also outside of explicitly religious frameworks.

Thus, this examination of Young Judaea should not only serve as a source of satisfaction for the movement's leaders, both professional and volunteer, it should also serve as a source of hope and inspiration for all those devoted to intensive Jewish education, particularly its informal variety, in the United States today.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

The Study Team

Alan Ganapol of marketQUEST, inc. in conjunction with Professor Steven M. Cohen of The Hebrew University, conducted this study.

- ◆ marketQUEST, inc. is a private marketing research and public opinion organization with headquarters in Westchester County New York. The organization does research for a range of clients including IBM, Duracell USA, Hakuodo Advertising, Oxford Health Plans of New Jersey and Friendly Ice Cream.
- ◆ Professor Steven M. Cohen teaches at The Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, The Hebrew University. He is a recognized authority on the study of American Jewish identity and community. He is the co-author of *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences*, as well as *Cosmopolitans and Parochials: Modern Orthodox Jews in America*. His earlier books include *American Modernity & Jewish Identity* and *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?* With Arnie Eisen of Stanford, he is now completing a qualitative study of American Jewish identity entitled, *The Jew Within*.

The Question of Causality

Social scientists regularly balk at assessing or assigning causality. Some argue that the whole enterprise is philosophically impossible and would categorically refuse to conclude, "Young Judaea produced such-and-such an impact on adult Jewish identity." But, putting aside for the moment the philosophical issue, we need to recognize the numerous obstacles to coming to any firm conclusions about the precise size of the impact of the Young Judaea experience upon Jewish identity thirty years or more after the fact.

To be sure, methodological problems plague this study's estimates for the impact of the Young Judaea experience upon the alumni's Jewish identity. In a sense, they are both too high and too low. They are too high in the sense that no quantitative analysis can completely control for confounding factors. In theory, the analysis held constant sex, age, Jewish schooling, and other factors. In reality, one still has to suspect that parents thirty to fifty years ago who encouraged their children to participate in Young Judaea were somehow more Jewishly committed than those who did not. We may make similar assumptions about the youngsters themselves. In the same families (with the same parents, schooling, community, etc.) some siblings participated in Young Judaea and others did not. Presumably, the Young Judaeans had achieved a greater interest in things Jewish even before entering

the ranks of Hadassah's Zionist youth movement.

Moreover, the availability of a Young Judaea program also reflects something about the communities in which they are found, as well as the families who live there. Parents whose children participate in Young Judaea have chosen to live in communities with a sufficient number of Jews interested in supporting an intensive form of informal Jewish and Zionist education. Almost by definition, Young Judaea alumni spent their childhood and teen years in communities and families sympathetic to an intensive Jewish educational and Zionist message, something that no quantitative analysis can accurately factor out.

For these and other reasons, those children who experienced more intensive forms of informal Jewish education (such as Young Judaea) bring with them unmeasured (and possibly unmeasurable) parental and communal Jewish resources lacking in their counterparts. These unmeasured advantages may well explain some unknown fraction of the gaps between Young Judaea alumni and the control sample. In short, even in the best of circumstances, we cannot fully control for antecedent and confounding factors. Consequently, we cannot guarantee a totally level statistical playing field in which to assess the true net impact of Young Judaea on Jewish identity.

At the same time, this analysis may well have under-estimated the impact of Young Judaea, or, perhaps more precisely its potential impact. These results measured only the aver-

age influence of the Young Judaea experience. We had no information on the quality associated with each person's experience. The analysis contained no information on issues related to counselors and other staff, curriculum, parental involvement, resources, community support and numerous other factors that the "school-effects" literature have shown to influence academic achievement. Presumably, these findings extend to the realm of informal Jewish education, although no systematic quantitative studies have related Jewish educational quality to outcome measures. Logically, those Jewish youngsters who attended weaker Young Judaea programs experienced, on average, a less profound impact upon their Jewish identity than did those who went to "better" clubs, camps, Israel trips, conventions, etc., however "better" is defined.

Thus, the true measure of the impact of Young Judaea needs to take into account variations in its quality, a challenge beyond the scope of this study.

Questionnaire

If you would like to receive a copy of the questionnaire used in this study, please contact us:

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