

Hillel's Journey

Distinctively Jewish
Universally Human



Hillel's Vision

Every Jewish student is inspired to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life.

Hillel's Mission

To enrich the lives of Jewish undergraduate and graduate students
so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world.

Hillel's Values

Hillel is committed to:

- Creating a pluralistic, welcoming and inclusive environment;
- Fostering student growth and the balance in being
distinctively Jewish and universally human;
- Advancing social justice, Jewish learning and spirituality;
- Embracing Israel and global Jewish peoplehood;
- Delivering excellence, innovation, accountability and results.



HILLEL'S JOURNEY: DISTINCTIVELY JEWISH, UNIVERSALLY HUMAN

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Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life



Author's Note

Although it has been my privilege to bring this monograph into being, it reflects the hard work, wisdom and commitment of numerous colleagues and stakeholders within the Hillel movement. This work was constructed on the foundation laid by Hillel's Strategic Planning Committee and, particularly, by the labors of Wayne L. Firestone, Danny Greene, Graham Hoffman, Amy Morgenstern, Julian Sandler and Kinney Zalesne. Numerous colleagues in the Charles and Lynn Schusterman International Center and in the field shared insights and writings that inspired this work, and reviewed this book prior to publication. I would like to recognize my colleague Clare Goldwater, Hillel vice president for Jewish experience, for her deep insights into experiential Jewish learning, and Associate Vice President for Communications Jeff Rubin for his editorial expertise and his creativity. I would also like to thank Hillel President Wayne L. Firestone and Board Chairman Julian Sandler for generously sharing their wisdom, time and support in the preparation of this document. It is a pleasure to work in a movement singularly devoted to an inspiring and challenging mission.

Beth Cousens
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*"Go forth, from your native land and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you."
Genesis 12:1*

Abraham and Sarah needed a call, a call to exploration, to action, and with direction.

Bravely, they began a journey toward a vision that they trusted.

They began a Jewish tradition of journeying and of coming home.

That they moved toward a vision is not unimportant.

They began a journey intentionally and so were able to map their journey carefully,

taking purposeful steps toward their end goal.

They teach that journeys can happen accidentally but that journeys with a map,

with a plan, help us move with deliberateness and arrive where we want to be.



Hillel is celebrating its 85th birthday. Throughout these years, new classes of first-year students have arrived annually on college campuses, connecting the people of the book to textbooks and continuing the Jewish commitment to learning. These students, committed to education, have continually been Hillel's core constituency. Their place at the center of Hillel's world has not changed even as students' ideas about the world have changed. In turn, Hillel has continually reimagined its work in efforts to bring Judaism and its riches to increasing numbers of Jewish students. We now enter another phase of Hillel's growth.

As we do so, we draw a map, understanding where we have been and where we want to be, examining who we are and who we want to become. Here, we present our vibrant map, our diagram of our journey. We do so to raise ideas for dialogue, to stimulate conversation and creativity. We do so in order to ground our movement in who we are and want to be. We do so because sketching our expectations of our journey does more than keep us alive: As we draw our future, again and again, we will thrive. We will involve more students in the vibrancy of Jewish life. We will expand those involved in our journey.

OUR ROADMAP: AN OVERVIEW

“People in this age bracket are delaying marriage. They’re delaying having children. They’re delaying permanent employment.”

David Brooks, “The Odyssey Years,”
The New York Times, October 9, 2007

What are they doing, then? If adults in their twenties, particularly in their early twenties, are not doing the same things that their parents did to become adults, what are they doing?

They are looking for meaning, for ideology, for a way to make sense of their lives. They are experimenting with travel and the concept of home, with professional identities, and with sexuality. They are entrenched in a new life stage, in “emerging adulthood.” As part of their journeys they are asking, “In what do I believe? Are all traditions equally valid? Can I be traditional without being dogmatic?”

Today’s adults ages 18 to 26, millennials, ask these questions within a particular context. They are confident in their choices and

content with their lives. They trust their parents and are willing to follow in their parents’ footsteps. At the same time, they exist in a much smaller world than did their parents. They are hypercommunicators, constantly connected by a push of a button to anything about which they are curious. They have inherited from their families multiple religious and ethnic identities. Without religious or ethnic segregation, they can explore any of their friends’ identities as easily as they explore their own.

Jewish emerging adults continue to populate college campuses, as committed to learning as ever. Their Jewish tradition can play a fundamental role in helping them explore their big questions. At the same time, their lives are shifting, the reality in which they live as saturated in 21st century trends as the reality of their peers.

It was in this new reality that Hillel embarked on a robust strategic planning process, spending two years (2004-2006) researching the impact, environment, and potential of Hillels throughout the United States. This document shares our primary findings and

OUR ROAD MAP

relates our refocused direction. In this document, we will recount Hillel's journey.

About Jewish Students

Hillel's strategic planning process included the largest ever student survey of randomly selected Jewish undergraduate and graduate students (conducted by polling expert Penn, Schoen and Berland, Inc.). We learned:

The term "Jewish students" is more diverse than we might think.

We defined "Jewish" students as those who indicated that they are Jewish by "religion" or by "ethnicity." Almost all students – 93% – indicated that they feel ethnically Jewish, but only 71% see themselves as Jewish by religion. Jewish students may also choose additional ethnicities and religions: they are Irish or American Indian, Moslem or Catholic.

Moreover, almost half of students see themselves as having no Jewish denomination; they are "Just Jewish," or "secular/ cultural," or something else.

In total, they see Judaism differently than previous generations. They reject labels and value permeable boundaries.

Jewish students are proud to be Jewish.

They light Chanukah candles (83%), they say that being Jewish is important to them (78%), and they feel proud when a Jew is cited for an accomplishment (74%). Raising Jewish children is important to many of them (67%). They have Jewish objects in their rooms such as *mezuzot*, plaques, or posters (63%).

Jewish students will not separate from their non-Jewish peers.

Many Jewish students will not decry intermarriage (30% claim that inmarriage is not at all important to them). Most (70%) almost never go to prayer services, an event on campus that practically mandates "for Jews only." Only one-third of students believe that having Jewish friends is very important. Most significantly, "welcoming atmosphere for all Jews" and "welcoming atmosphere for everyone" were two of the highest-ranked statements that describe the Hillel that students would want to be part of their lives.

Hillel can be an indispensable partner in strengthening student life, supporting the university's efforts to create rich and fulfilling opportunities for self-exploration outside of the classroom.

Hillel Guideposts: How to Move Forward?

Our product – students’ enduring commitment to Judaism and Jewish life – will not change, even as Hillels must change. We see five pillars of our work moving forward, five ideas to which we are deeply committed as we work with a new generation.

1. Students have power, talent, and passion.

They bring innate value to Jewish life and to their peers.

Key concepts: Organizing, relationship-based engagement, social networks, ownership.

2. Judaism has power, meaning, and value.

Its value is located in meaningful Jewish experiences for their own sake, and not only in its continuity. Transformative and compelling immersive experiences – Taglit – Birthright Israel, alternative breaks, and new immersives we have not yet imagined – are our essential strategy in engrossing students in the beauty and value of Jewish life, our priority and the ultimate in high-impact opportunities.

Key concepts: Meaning, education, growth, experiences, high-impact opportunities.

3. Engagement is continual and Jewish community is not dichotomous.

Students are not “in” or “out.” We must guide students repeatedly into new and compelling Jewish experiences, supporting them in their ongoing journeys.

Key concepts: Opportunities, conversations, relationships, community of communities.

4. Hillel needs high content and low boundaries.

We must become an indispensable partner in building student life.

Key concepts: Open communities, indispensable partner.

5. Hillel must be smarter and more collaborative.

We must learn about our work and ensure that each Hillel learns from another.

Key concepts: Knowledge, metric, learning community.

“Up, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth.”

Genesis 13:16

Here, we explore Hillel’s journey.



INTRODUCTION

Since 1923, Hillel continually has assessed the needs of college students and strived to meet them.

Today, Hillel works with an estimated 250,000 Jewish undergraduate students and thousands of graduate students in the United States as well as students and young adults in Canada, Latin America, Israel and the former Soviet Union. Hillel is proud to support 251 affiliated Foundations, Program Centers and Jewish Student Organizations that work with students at 513 campuses throughout the United States and Canada. For more than 15 years, the organization has undertaken a program of redefinition and rebirth. Hillel's renaissance has become a model of organizational change.

Building on this record, in the fall of 2004 Hillel embarked on an intensive strategic planning process to study students and to chart a new course for its future. The process was undertaken with the supervision and guidance of its Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), and with the assistance of a private strategic planning consultant. Kinney

Zalesne, at the time Hillel's executive vice president for North America, provided essential direction for the project, conceptualized many of its key approaches, and served as staff coordinator. The SPC gathered information from Hillel program providers, participants, non-participants, decision-makers, and informed internal and external stakeholders. In addition, Penn Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc., conducted an online student survey on a pro-bono basis.

This robust undertaking helped Hillel's multiple stakeholders define more accurately the campus landscape in which Hillel operates, to focus attention on the relative strengths and weaknesses of Hillel's current operations, and to provide the leadership and management of the organization with valuable data and insights. Hillel redefined its vision, mission, core values, and goals and composed a strategic plan that reflects the consensus of Hillel's many stakeholders. In May 2006, Hillel's Board of Directors approved the final Five-Year Strategic Plan (an overview of the strategic plan is available at www.hillel.org/future).

INTRODUCTION

This monograph reports the research findings that underlie Hillel's Strategic Plan, emphasizing the national student research conducted by Penn Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc. Through this research, we intended to explore a hypothesized tension between Jewishness and universalism, between students' prospective commitments to their own Jewish heritage and to multiculturalism. We wanted to know what about Judaism that Jewish students care about, if Judaism is important to students, and what students do to be Jewish. We wanted to know where students place red lines between religious and ethnic groups and if and when Jewish students segregate themselves from others.

As we share our findings here, we hope to provide information, raise ideas for conversation, and provoke and challenge the way that we work with American Jewish college students. As we tell Hillel's story anew we speak to everyone interested in American Jewish college students and to friends of Hillel: to Hillel professionals and Board members, to students and parents, to scholars who study students, Americans, and American Jews, to leaders of American Jewish organizations, to teachers of college students – to all those who make Jewish life on campus happen.

Plan of the Monograph

We begin the monograph by sharing the context in which we conducted our research, relating conclusions from recent literature about the religious and ethnic attitudes and behaviors of young adults. We also investigate the role that students' generational outlook plays, recognizing that generation can be a powerful force in facilitating social change. The critical events that shaped this generation helped them to see community and group membership and to make life choices in certain ways that are pivotal to their potential relationship with Hillel and Jewish life.

After framing our conclusions, we share our observations in two key ways:

- We communicate portraits of hypothetical students, intertwining their characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes into pictures of students' Jewishness.
- We describe ten key findings that relate in greater detail students' characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, and their relationship with Hillel and Jewish life on campus.

We wanted to know what about Judaism that Jewish students care about, if Judaism is important to students, and what students do to be Jewish.

As we tell Hillel's story anew we speak to everyone interested in American Jewish college students.

As we demonstrate, students have more significantly diverse backgrounds than ever. Their identities are fluid; they understand themselves as having multiple identities, and they develop their identities as they move among social networks comprised of individuals from varied ethnic and religious backgrounds. They celebrate threads of their own varied identities simultaneously and also demand that when they celebrate their identities, they can do so without segregating themselves from their friends. They all want to be comfortable together in any ethnic or religious environment.

Even while they celebrate multiple aspects of their identities, students value their Jewishness. Many of them, though, do not know how to express their commitment, or do not choose to express their Jewish

connection in normative ways. They seem to see religion in its traditional sense as separating them, and so they observe few rituals and participate in prayer services infrequently. Yet, they are proud of being Jewish; many want Jewish children and many have Jewish friends, even while they downplay the importance of marrying other Jews and claim that having Jewish friends is not important to them. Their Jewishness reflects a tension, concurrent universalism and particularism, pride without isolation. What pulls them to Jewishness, finally, is not guilt, fear, or inherent obligation but Jewish meaning and the opportunity to celebrate that meaning with their Jewish and non-Jewish friends. Hillel's challenge becomes how to work with students in ways that coincide with their life outlooks and also help them to grow Jewishly.



INTRODUCTION

In this monograph, we provide a picture of Jewish college students today, the Jewish cohort of the so-called “millennials.”

We relate information, raise ideas for conversation, and provoke and challenge the way that we work with American Jewish college students.

We conclude by putting forward implications of these data for Hillel and for Jewish life on campus, telling Hillel's new story.

We suggest that with their entrepreneurial training and sophisticated life view, students must be seen as having inherent value and skills that they can bring to Jewish life. Students' talents set loose on the richness of the Jewish tradition will produce dynamic Jewish communities at colleges and universities; Hillels' challenge should be to unlock students' talents, to help students apply their creativity to their Jewishness.

As we work with students, we must recognize that students' identities are fluid, putting to rest the idea that they are either “in” or “out” of a firm Jewish community with tight boundaries.

We suggest that Jewish life that is seamlessly integrated into student life will maximally connect to Jewish students and to all students. We can challenge any student with the big ideas that Judaism brings to students' search for themselves during college, connecting Jewish students to their heritage as we do so.

And if we are the smartest organization possible, with each Hillel learning from another as we work, we will take advantage of what we know about excellence in working with Jewish college students, maximizing our potential and expanding our impact on student life beyond that which we have ever known.

How can we reach out to all students, helping them to imagine and actualize their Jewish selves? Our task is to help them identify, develop, and pursue their talents and interests while infusing their journeys with the Jewish tradition.

Five Guideposts of Hillel's Journey.

We see five guideposts of our work moving forward, five ideas to which we are deeply committed as we work with a new generation.

1. Students have power, talent, and passion.

They bring innate value to Jewish life and to their peers.

2. Judaism has power, meaning, and value.

Its value is located in meaningful Jewish experiences for their own sake, and not only in its continuity. Transformative and compelling immersive experiences – Taglit – Birthright Israel, alternative breaks, and new immersives we have not yet imagined – are our essential strategy in engrossing students in the beauty and value of Jewish life, our priority and the ultimate in high-impact opportunities.

3. Engagement is continual and Jewish community is not dichotomous.

Students are not “in” or “out.” We must guide students repeatedly into new and compelling Jewish experiences, supporting them in their ongoing journeys.

4. Hillel needs high content and low boundaries.

We must become an indispensable partner in building student life.

5. Hillel must be smarter and more collaborative.

We must learn about our work and ensure that each Hillel learns from another.





HILLEL'S RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

What we know about Jewish college students.

In recent years, a variety of American Jewish organizations have applied their scholarly interests to college students. The 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) collected data about students of college age through its quantitative survey and through focus groups. In 2002, Hillel commissioned analysis of the Higher Education Research Institute's data about the behavior of American college students, asking that data about Jewish students be separated and compared to that of general students. The AVI CHAI Foundation commissioned the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies to conduct a qualitative study of Jewish life on 20 campuses and a quantitative study of thousands of students. Most recently, the American Jewish Committee surveyed American Jewish young adults ages 18 – 39, integrating their focus groups into related research for a meta-analysis of research on Jewish young adults. Of greatest magnitude are the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies' reports on the influence of Taglit - Birthright Israel on thousands of participants over time, reports

that relate the questions of and potential influences on Jewish college students today. Experts estimate that over 90% of American Jews between the ages of 18 and 29 are currently working toward their BA or graduate degrees. Who are these students? They:

- Are more likely than non-Jews to attend residential colleges, even while all Jewish students do not leave home to attend school.
- Are four times more likely than their non-Jewish peers to apply to eight or more colleges.
- Come to college with a wide variety of interests and expressions; they expect Hillel to be more than a religious institution.
- Have fewer concerns than their peers about paying for school but are not unconcerned about it.
- Have slightly higher average high school grades than their non-Jewish peers.
- Are disproportionately involved in the Greek system.
- Are high achievers and joiners.

HILLEL'S RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

Research about the Jewishness of students widely suggests that students have weaker connections to the Jewish people than did previous generations. Moreover, as the American Jewish Committee observes: Young people are creating their own identities and patterns of association, leading to what we could call “quasi-communities” built around common interests and shared experiences rather than around institutions and organizations. Quasi-communities have porous boundaries, are fluid and dynamic.

Or in other words, as Anna Greenberg writes, Jewish students are designing their own Jewishness, ordering a “Grande Soy Vanilla Latte with Cinnamon, No Foam...” from among infinite ethno-religious possibilities. They will not put firm boundaries around their Jewish identities, instead mingling their Jewishness with their multiple ethnic, religious, and other attachments.

In addition to needing to understand research related to the Jewishness of students, we sought to review ideas about the general attitudes and ideas of today's students as a generation. Today's young adults, the “millennial” generation, were born from the early 1980s through the new millennium. They have reacted to the slacker Generation X and rebellious Baby Boom generations before them by being obedient and conventional, high-achieving, and confident. In *Millennials Rising*, Neil Howe and William Strauss share the words of millennials

themselves, words that capture students' attitudes:

The Class of 2000 has been bestowed, upon birth, the honorable task of leading the world into the new millennium.

Chris McGrath, 17

The older generation seems amazed every time we break the mold assigned to us.

Elizabeth Romberg, 18

My life is great. Everybody around me contributed to my happiness.

Bobby Greenhalgh, 17

I think that already we are above the level academically that our parents and other generations were at our age.

Sarah Boone, 17

We work together, probably a lot more than adults do.

Lauren, 16

Nobody is plain white, or plain black, or plain anything. Eventually I'm hoping that every place will be like this.

Liz Short, 16

Douglas Coupland coined the term “Generation X” to describe the emptiness that he and his peers felt. About millennials he said: “The kids have got their own thing going. Good. The edge is over.”

Indeed, the edge is long gone. This generation were the children behind the little yellow signs in cars' back windows proclaiming, be careful: "Baby on Board." As a result, they are content with their lives and feel confident enough to "break the mold" that they are handed. They are eager to participate in the civic process and when the process does not satisfy them, they are motivated to create a grassroots civic organization to make change in their community. Social entrepreneurship is second nature to them, with those who create innovative, bold solutions to the world's social problems in the news continually and honored frequently. This generation does not know a world without computers or without the ability to communicate easily with peers around the world. In their world, "Buy American" was never their only option. In total, Baby Boomers' hope and rebellion and Generation Xers' irony and apathy have given way to the quiet acceptance that Millennials have of their situation and the simultaneous drive that they have to make their own personal lives – and often the world – better.

What is this drive? This homework generation – those who listened to Mozart in the womb – has learned never to waste a moment when they could be building their resumes. They demand that their extra-curricular activities move them toward their next step in life. Millennials were plentiful, having been part of the baby boomlet, and so they feel acutely competitive with each other. They rarely slow down for fear that a peer will receive their spot in college or at a firm after college. They were raised working in teams, but they advocate for themselves. When they do go above and beyond to repair their world, they often do so in order to make a name for themselves and to get ahead, and to please the parents who have taken care of them so well. As Howe and Strauss observed: "Kids in uniforms, doing good deeds in public buildings: that's how today's adults want to see millennials, many of whom, given the chance, willingly oblige." If in 1984, teenagers were most concerned with violent crime, in 1999, their two foremost concerns were grades and admission to college. They feel pressured to achieve; more than that, they want to achieve.



Hillel's challenge becomes how to work with students in ways that coincide with their life outlooks and also help them to grow Jewishly.

HILLEL'S RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

Moreover, with the global exposure that millennials have received and the increase in sheer numbers of immigrants and diversity of immigrants' birthplaces, Millennials see race and religion as an important part of what makes them each unique – and all the same. “Multiculturalism” was woven into university life in the early 1990s as part of the curricula and extra-curriculars. It both reflected and trickled into general youth culture, establishing that all should respect the culture of the other, and that all had their own culture to respect.

As millennial Liz Short described (page 18), no one is “plain anything.” Everyone has multiple labels, as intercultural marriages and the claiming of genealogically-distant ethnic identities have become not only accepted but also trendy. Specifically, students can use Judaism to find meaning in the world, emphasizing their Jewish identity in a world that values ethnicity. But they may also easily minimize their Jewishness in favor of other ethnic attachments in their family, or they may easily value at the same level any other aspects of their identity, ethnic or otherwise.

Sociologist Sherry Turkle framed their identity this way: “For contemporary college students, identity is multiple and distributed like a set of ‘windows’ on a computer screen, and being Jewish is just one among many self identities.”

Turkle precisely captures the way that millennials perceive identity: they do not favor any aspect of their identity over another, and their identity is so fluid that they

access multiple identity windows in rapid succession and even simultaneously.

Findings

In fact, this concept of identity windows infuses our findings about Jewish college students. Their Jewishness is important to students, but not so important that they want to minimize their other identity windows.

We share our findings in two ways. First, we relate imagined portraits of college students that integrate different kinds of Jewish attitudes and behaviors, each portrait depicting a student with a particular way of interacting with their Jewishness. Second, we extract from these portraits the universal conclusions that we can draw about Jewish college students.

To understand students' interaction with Jewishness, we used a statistical index to merge survey variables, blending responses together. Through this index, we created a profile of a type of respondent, of a student's Jewishness. We ranked students' aggregated Jewish behavior and ideas, the extent to which Judaism is important to them and what they do to be Jewish. Once each respondent had a total score, we created three equal categories of students, students who scored at High, Middle, and Low levels of the index. Ultimately, 28% of students scored at the High level of the index. Approximately one-third, or 32%, of students scored at the Middle level. A plurality of students, 40%, scored at the low level. Tables A, B, and C provide a statistical description of

the Jewish ideas and behaviors of high-, middle-, and low- scoring respondents. Who is a student that scored at the high level? What does his Jewish expression look like? Similarly, who are the middle- and low-scoring students?

Moreover, are there other students' profiles that can be compiled? Are there other "types" of Jewish students?

The following imagined portraits of students' expressions of their Jewishness explore these questions.

High-Scoring Student: Maggie Einhorn

Maggie Einhorn (a high-scoring student, 28% of students) was raised in a Conservative-movement affiliated Jewish home. Every day, she proudly wears a gold Jewish star around her neck that she bought in Israel as a high school junior, on a trip with her childhood summer camp. She studied French in high school but remembered little of it, and so when her college language requirement offered the opportunity to study another language, she chose to study Hebrew. She participates about monthly in religious

services on her campus with some friends from her dorm her first year, women who have become her closest friends at school. They came to know each other because they were observing kashrut at school, eating as vegetarians when kosher meat was not available, and so they found themselves always sitting together near the salad bar in the cafeteria. In addition to participating in religious services together, they enrolled together in a sociology class this semester called "American Jewish Life," and they participate in a monthly Rosh Chodesh group that their school's Hillel offers. This past semester, they also took part in a project on campus that raised funds for the American Jewish World Service, an organization that Maggie sees as expressing her ideas about a Jew's responsibility to better the world around her. Being Jewish is very important to Maggie. She is certain that she will marry a Jew and raise Jewish children just as she was raised. She hopes also that when she graduates from college, she is able to become involved in different Jewish organizations, fighting anti-Semitism, supporting Jews and non-Jews around the world, and expressing the identity that has become so important to her.

Most students have created Jewish connections for themselves through their friends, connections that likely give students mini-communities and help them to celebrate their Jewish identities, their feelings of comfort when around Jews.

HILLEL'S RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

Middle-Scoring Student: Zeke Hirsch

Zeke Hirsch (a middle-scoring student, 32% of students) was raised in a Reconstructionist-affiliated household. He joined AEPi the second semester of his first year of school, wanting to make some Jewish friends after leaving his solidly Jewish neighborhood to come to college. That obvious statement of his identity and his fraternity affiliation are the primary ways that he connects to Judaism, although he does attend an occasional Hillel event aimed at fraternity and sorority members (he sees these as a great way to meet Jewish women, with whom is most comfortable).

Through his fraternity, he has become connected to Judaism in other ways during college; for example, he successfully advocated this year that the fraternity support an Israel-related organization as a philanthropic project.

Also, he joined his brothers when they got together with some sorority members in their dorm to light candles for *Chanukah*; he similarly joined them for a *seder* on campus last year when he did not return to his parents' home for Passover. At a friend's

suggestion, he is also planning to go on Taglit-Birthright Israel at his next opportunity, probably with Hillel. Being Jewish is important to him, although he does see it as one of many identities that he proclaims – he is male, a basketball player, a part of student government, and Jewish, and he is proud of each of these aspects of his self-conception.

Low-Scoring Student: Sam Morrison

Sam Morrison (a low-scoring student, 40% of students) was raised in a home that affiliated with a Reform synagogue, a Conservative synagogue and then no synagogue; he now feels that he is Jewish by ethnicity and is not sure that he would call himself Jewish by religion. But he wears his grandfather's Jewish star on a thin gold chain, often tucking the star underneath his t-shirt. On campus, he has explored Judaism to some extent, reading *Goodbye, Columbus* at a TA's recommendation, once lighting Chanukah candles with others in the lobby of his dorm, and attending a Holocaust commemoration event this year and last. He feels positive about being Jewish and feels proud when he hears of a Jew accomplishing something important – but he continues to be unsure why or what Judaism truly means to him.

Students feel pride in their association with Jews and Judaism when a Jew accomplishes something. They exercise that pride and show their association by wearing a Jewish symbol.

Many more students see themselves as Jewish by ethnicity than by religion; Judaism as ethnicity is more meaningful to more students than is Judaism as religion.

Low-Scoring Student: Peri Jacobs

Peri Jacobs (a low-scoring student, 40% of students) was raised without synagogue or religion or church. She has one Jewish parent who was raised similarly without synagogue. Occasionally, she feels pride in her Jewishness, like when Joe Lieberman was nominated for the vice-presidency and when Madonna discusses kabbalah on MTV. Equally occasionally, she feels ashamed of or confused by her Jewishness, like when Mel Gibson ranted drunkenly about Jews or when a professor gives an exam on Yom Kippur. She participated once in a campus Chanukah event that was in the center of campus; some friends invited her along and it seemed so easy and non-threatening, she went with them. Otherwise, religion is not a part of her life.

Interfaith Student: Nathan Becker

Nathan Becker ("Interfaith" student) is almost a majority in this study. His Jewish father and non-Jewish mother divorced when Nathan was young. His father again married a non-Jewish woman while his mother remained single. Nathan is equally attached to both sides of his family and spent similar amounts

of time with both families during his childhood. With his father, he celebrated Judaism occasionally, his father bringing him to Sunday school during their weekends together only sporadically. Similarly, Judaism was almost absent from his life with his mother. As a child he considered himself to be an Interfaith Jew. Today, he does not consider himself such, and he involves himself little in Jewish life. He rarely participates in a Jewish event on campus, not even High Holy Day services. He occasionally reads a book with Jewish content or finds himself on a Jewish site on the Internet; usually these explorations result from a question he has, and they mimic his similar cultural or historical explorations. He is curious about many things. He sees Judaism as an aspect of his identity, though a small one. As a result, despite the Jewish connection that he feels, he has little interest in building his own Jewish family in the future.

Universalist Student: Joseph Cook

Joseph Cook ("universalist" student) was raised as a Conservative Jew and now considers himself to be a Reform Jew. His parents observed kashrut in their home but he does not, seeing the practice as left over from a time when Jews had to make

HILLEL'S RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

themselves distinct in order to survive. Similarly, he has intentionally sought out activities on campus that help him create varied communities. He has a number of Jewish friends, but through his work on the yearbook and the university's sexual wellness program he has also connected to many other types of students (his school is now only just over 50% white). He has traveled to Israel, but supporting the Israeli government is difficult for him; similarly, supporting Jewish organizations or communities does not take priority over supporting other such organizations or communities around the world. He wants to have Jewish children just as he wants to have children who share his other values – but he does not restrict his dating to only Jews. Similarly, he participates in Jewish events on campus when he can go with any of his friends. Worship services do not attract him, but educational and cultural events that do not require membership or Jewish knowledge interest him. He brings his friends to these events just as they bring him to their cultural events. In total, Joseph engages in no Jewish behaviors that separate him from his university community. At the same time, he connects to Jewish life when it enhances his own life and gives him unique character within his entire university community.

Reflections

In total, most Jewish college students are aware of their Jewishness. At the least, it feels for many like an old winter coat or a pair of sneakers that they store at the back of their closet, never worn but never disposed of either. Some – these low-scoring students – call themselves Jewish, but do little to act Jewish.

At the other end of the spectrum are the Maggies on campus, high-scoring students whose Jewishness shapes many of their group activities and life choices. The vast majority of them wear Jewish stars around their necks or t-shirts with Jewish words or slogans, they feel positively about being Jewish and want to raise Jewish children, they are members of Jewish organizations, and they lit Chanukah candles and participated in High Holy Day worship services during the past year. These are the distinguishing behaviors of 28% of American Jewish college students, high-scoring students who feel strongly Jewish and enact a few select behaviors to reflect their feeling. In the middle are the rest, those who display these similar behaviors but in far fewer numbers and sometimes according to certain patterns. Being Jewish is important to these

Students who come from various backgrounds, who identify with all kinds of ethnicities and religions, are also proud of and interested in their connection to Judaism. Such is the core tension of Hillel: How to respect each of students' heritages while stimulating their interest in their Jewish heritage as well.

middle-scoring students, to many interfaith and to universalist students, and their Jewishness guides their actions far less often than those at the higher end of the spectrum. They display their Jewishness publicly, light Chanukah candles, and participate in High Holy Day services. On their own, they study and explore Judaism little. They feel more strongly about being Jewish than do low-scoring students, but they do less to be Jewish than do high-scoring students.

Interfaith Students

Like Nathan, interfaith students in this study are not disengaged from Judaism entirely.

- First, they are not necessarily interfaith; most students who considered themselves “interfaith” as children no longer do so as college students.
- Significantly, almost one-third consider being Jewish to be “very important” or “important” to them.
- Half of them never involve themselves in Jewish life on campus but 40% participate “sometimes” or “rarely.”
- A few often explore Judaism intellectually through the Internet, books, or university classes.
- Half see a connection to Israel as “somewhat” or “important.”
- Almost one-third see having Jewish friends as “important” or “very important.”
- For a few (7%), marrying a Jew is “very important.”

In sum, a childhood spent with just one or fewer Jewish parents does not lead to total disengagement from Jewish life. Conversely, it is important to one-third of them. As college students, the children of Jewish and non-Jewish parents explore Judaism on their own, and some have strong and positive feelings about it.

As demonstrated earlier, students of parents with multiple religions and ethnicities express multiple religions and ethnicities as adults. They have loyalties to Jewish and non-Jewish communities. It makes sense that they would not, then, restrict themselves to just being part of the Jewish community. Many of the data shared here suggest this universalist allegiance. The profile of Joseph Cook describes how this commitment to universalism manifests itself. The universalist student emphasizes the most unique ideas in the study of American Jewish college students. Joseph behaves as almost a high-scoring student, engaging in many behaviors typically understood as Jewish. Yet, for example, even while he has traveled to Israel he cannot support its government; similarly, he cannot prioritize his connection to Jewish community over his connection to other communities, even while his Jewish friends are important to him. He uses all of his identity windows, rarely prioritizing his Jewishness over others, yet spending time with Jewish communities under the right circumstances.

What it all means?

With these students in mind, we can provide more specific data that communicates ten significant conclusions about Jewish college students.

1. Only 53% of students have two Jewish parents.

Or, in other words, slightly less than half of students report that fewer than two of their parents are Jewish. Almost half of students on campus come from these mixed ethnic and religious backgrounds.

The parents of Jewish college students today married during the 1980s, a time when more than 50 percent of Jews married non-Jews. In the early 1990s, this data about inter-marriage sparked a tremendous controversy, a collective outcry from American Jewish organizations about the American Jewish future. Were these intermarriages, in fact, remaining intermarriages – were households being led by both Jews and non-Jews? Moreover, could interfaith or interethnic households create Jewish children? Our data confirms that many interfaith marriages in the 1980s did, in fact, remain interfaith marriages; that is, non-Jews did not convert. Many students were raised with non-Jewish parents.

But, our data illustrate, their interfaith backgrounds do not suggest that Judaism is not important to students. As we will see, students who come from various backgrounds, who identify with all kinds of ethnicities and religions, are also proud of and interested in their connection to Judaism. Such is the core tension of Hillel: How to respect each of students’ heritages while stimulating their interest in their Jewish heritage as well.

●●● For conversation and exploration:

- How does this data demand that we rethink our language and assumptions about who Jewish students are and where they come from?
- What does it mean to educate toward in-marriage when the parents of almost half our students made a different choice? Should we even be aspiring toward this goal?
- How can we challenge and what can we teach others in the Jewish community about how students with only one Jewish parent can, and often want to, be involved in inclusive forms of Jewish life?

Table 1: Students’ Religious Identification			
Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself? You may answer more than one.			
Jewish	71%	Mormon	2%
Agnostic / Atheist	14%	Muslim / Islam	1%
Non-affiliated	8%	Greek Orthodox	1%
Protestant	5%	Other	8%
Catholic	5%	None of the above	4%
Buddhist	3%	Don’t know	8%

2. We found that 93% of students identify ethnically as Jews, and 71% of students identify religiously as Jews.

Simply, many more students see themselves as Jewish by ethnicity than by religion; Judaism as ethnicity is more meaningful to more students than is Judaism as religion. Moreover, many students see themselves as one or the other, but not both, and more students see themselves as ethnic Jews rather than religious Jews. Judaism is for students a sense of comfort and attachment, a tribal identity. In their identifications as ethnic Jews, students suggest that they connect more through behaviors of attachment than of worship and more through Jewish feelings than through Jewish behaviors.

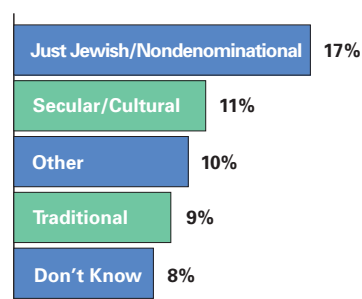
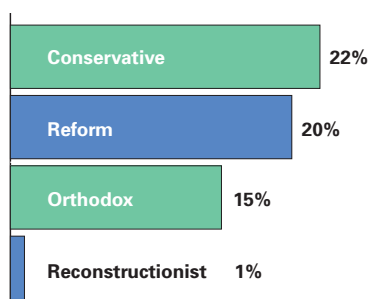
Notably, students also identify as other ethnicities and religions in addition to Judaism (Table 1). Some identified as Jewish by ethnicity but religiously as Buddhists (3%) or religions not named (8%). After "Jewish," a plurality of respondents identified themselves as "Agnostic/ Atheist." They are ethnically Jewish but lack or reject religion. Ethnically-identified Jewish agnostics or non-

religionists are not new; rather, they join a longstanding tradition of committed Jewish non-believers, an American tradition established in part by Philip Roth and Woody Allen. But what about students who are Jewish and American Indian, or Jewish and Latino? Jewish and African American, or Jewish and Indian? Students' reporting of these mixed heritages confirms a new dimension to the college campus and to American Jewish life in general: that of the ethnic Jew who prays in a church, or, as this survey suggests, even in a mosque, in ways that utterly contradict normative Jewish ideas of religion (Table 4).

For conversation and exploration:

- What are the compelling models of ethnic, rather than religious, Jewish life and commitment that we want to offer to students? Do they exist or how can we develop them?
- How can we foster the positive elements of tribal belonging while staying away from the chauvinism that students dislike?

Table 2: Students and Childhood Jewish Affiliation
Which of the following best describes your family growing up?



3. Just under half of students do not identify with a Jewish movement: most students identify as “Just Jewish,” “Secular/ Cultural,” as something else, or they do not know how they identify.

Not surprisingly, most students were raised with a connection to a Jewish movement. Yet in college, that number shifts.

Almost 60% of students were raised with a connection to a Jewish movement: to Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, or Orthodox Judaism (Table 2).

In college, that number changes to just over 50%.

Moreover, 63% of students identify outside of the typical American-Jewish movements, as “Just Jewish/nondenominational,” “Secular/ Cultural,” “Traditional,” “Don’t Know,” and “Other” (Table 3).*

In total, it is only a slight majority of students who identify with the Jewish movements once in college. The trend in college seems to be one of rejecting labels, of living in a gray area or with blurry lines.

Table 3: Students’ Jewish Affiliation Today Which of the following do you consider yourself?	
Just Jewish	23%
Reform	20%
Conservative	16%
Orthodox	13%
Don’t know	12%
Other	11%
Secular / Cultural	10%
Traditional	7%
Reconstructionist	2%

*Because respondents could choose more than one religion or ethnicity with which they identify, the totals here add to more than 100%

For conversation and exploration:

- What should we do with denominational labels? Should we aspire to Jewish communities on campus with strong denominational presence, focused on a post-college reality that is organized by denomination and movement, or should we educate toward a post-denominational plurality of religious options, even if it leaves students without an obvious denominational home when they graduate?
- How do we create inclusive spaces for the significant minority for whom the denominational labels are meaningless and alienating?
- What can we do to develop creative partnerships with the synagogue movements with whom we share values and goals?

Table 4: Students’ Ethnic Identification
Which of the following do you consider your descent or ethnicity?
You may answer more than one.

Jewish	93%
Eastern European	26%
German	17%
Irish	14%
Italian	9%
Native American	7%
Arab/Middle Eastern	4%
Latino	4%
Nordic	4%
Asian	3%
Indian	3%
African American/African	2%
Don’t know	10%

4. Judaism is important to most students – and they are proud of being Jewish.

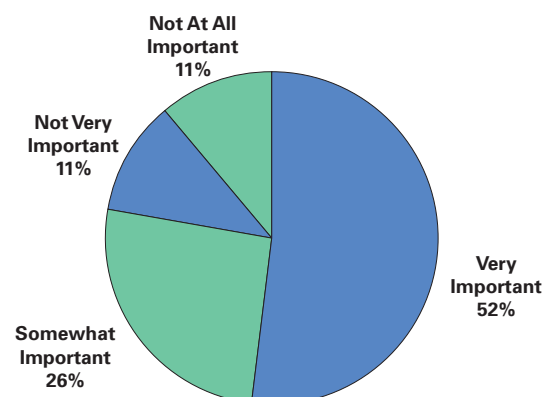
In total, 78% of respondents feel that just being Jewish – their fundamental identity as a Jew – is important to them (Figure 1).

- Slightly over half (52%) of respondents reported that “Being Jewish” is important to them.
- Another 26% consider it somewhat important.
- Only 11% do not consider being Jewish important to them at all.
- Overall, then, students have a strong attachment to their Jewish identity.
- In addition, almost three-quarters, or 74%, felt pride at least once in the past three years when they heard of a fellow Jew commended publicly.

A similarly high number – 63% – have expressed their Judaism openly in their dorm room or by physically wearing a Jewish T-shirt or piece of jewelry. Students feel pride in their association with Jews and Judaism when a Jew accomplishes something. They exercise that pride when they show their association by wearing a Jewish symbol.

In total, then, students value their identity in some ways. Being Jewish means something to them.

Figure 1: Judaism is important to most students – and they are proud of being Jewish.



For conversation and exploration:

- What might students' pride in their Jewishness signify? How can we harness that feeling as part of a stepping stone to deeper Jewish involvement?
- What is, or could be, the relationship between Jewish pride and Jewish behaviors, from wearing a T-shirt with Hebrew to taking a Hebrew class?
- Why do we think Judaism should be important to students on campus today? What do Jewish life and values have to offer a member of the millennial generation?

5. Raising Jewish children is important to most students – even though in-marriage is less important.

In considering the ethnic and religious identity of their potential partners, students drift toward the extremes (Figure 2).

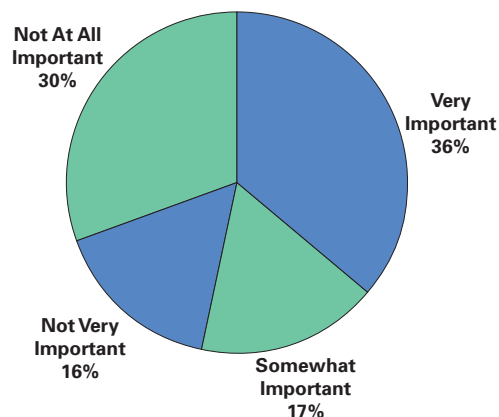
“Marrying Someone Jewish” is not at all important to 30% of respondents ...

And is very important to 36% of respondents.

Almost one-third of students do not prioritize in-marriage, perhaps reflecting a deeply ingrained desire to view anyone in an equivalent way, to potentially marry or partner with anyone despite their identity because, they believe, all identities are equally valid and rich. Whatever their current celebration of Judaism, some students seem to suggest, they care that their life partner has the same essential identity that they have.

Interestingly, 48% of students – one third again more than those who value in-marriage – suggested that raising Jewish children is very important to them. Only 20% – many fewer than those who do not prioritize in-marriage – suggested that raising Jewish children is not at all important to them. Students can separate raising Jewish children from marrying a Jew. This dichotomy that they create between Jewish marriage and Jewish children points to a tension in

Figure 2: How Important to You is Raising Jewish Children?



respondents' Jewishness: even while they want to accept anyone as a possible romantic partner, many want to replicate for their children their own Jewish childhoods, likely continuing family traditions and giving their children the strong Jewish memories that they have from their lives. They balance their dual loyalties to all identities and to their own Jewishness by prioritizing raising Jewish children while accepting intermarriage.

For conversation and exploration:

- What implications do students' desire, or lack of desire, to find a Jewish partner have for creating Jewish life on campus?
- What is the right message (or messages) to send to a Jewish student with a non-Jewish partner?
- What are the available and accessible models for a compelling Jewish family and life that students find and learn from? Can we offer them more?

6. Students have Jewish friends.

For almost a vast majority of students (81%), most or some of their friends are Jewish.

Only 19% of respondents answered that they have almost no Jewish friends.

Most students have created Jewish connections for themselves through their friends, connections that likely give students mini-communities and help them to celebrate their Jewish identities, their feelings of comfort when around Jews.

●●● For conversation and exploration:

- What role do students' peer groups, especially Jewish peer groups, play in their connections to their Jewishness? What can we do to maximize the potential here?
- When and why do students need Hillel for Jewish fellowship? Given that most students can find Jewish friends easily without Hillel, what should be our role in facilitating Jewish communities and peer networks?



7. Jewish students engage infrequently in behaviors typically or traditionally seen as “Jewish.” Moreover, they do not want to separate themselves as Jews.

Not surprisingly, respondents observe some classic American-Jewish rituals:

68% of respondents report participation in High Holy Day services.

83% light Chanukah candles.

American Jews almost universally observe these Jewish rituals. Of all Jewish holidays and observances, they fit neatly into American patterns of religion. Chanukah’s proximity to Christmas makes it a logical way for Jews to connect to the Christmas season and to feel like a typical American during that time of year. High Holy Day services have

become almost the Jewish Christmas, the basic means by which American Jews observe Judaism and call themselves Jews without doing anything more. Just like their parents, students focus on these holidays as the fundamental components of their participation in the Jewish religion.

Yet:

- Other than on the High Holy Days, 70% of respondents participate rarely or never in Jewish worship services.
- Almost half of respondents, or 41%, consider observing *kashrut* to be not at all important. Just one in four consider it to be very important.

Students have a strong general Jewish connection but participate infrequently in these historic Jewish behaviors.

Table 5: Students’ Jewish Activity: Jewish Ritual / Worship Behaviors
Please indicate whether or not in the past three years you have done
or been involved with the following (percent answering “Yes”):

Lit Chanukah candles	83%
Participated in High Holy Day services	68%
Participated in a <i>seder</i> on campus	27%

Please indicate how often you performed the following while in college:
(percent answering “Very Often/Often”)

Attended Jewish worship services other than on the High Holy Days	30%
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Moreover, students feel dispassionately about other historical Jewish commitments:

- Despite the Jewishness of their kinship groups, just 30% of respondents believe that having Jewish friends is very important.
- Only 28% of respondents consider contributing financially to Jewish organizations to be very important.
- Approximately 30% of respondents consider connecting to Israel and to Jewish people around the world to be very important.

Most of these attitudes and behaviors relate to the importance the Jewish tradition places on exercising connection to and responsibility for community: Jews contribute to Jewish organizations out of a

sense of caring for fellow Jews, Jews often observe *kashrut* in order to demonstrate a connection to a larger people, and frequently, Jews observe rituals because rituals bind them together. With more than two-thirds of students considering these behaviors to be only somewhat or not at all important, students seem to downplay the importance of participating in Jewish community in these traditional ways. Support for, and simply making connections with, other Jews simply because they are Jews are not significant ways that respondents express their Jewishness.

Kashrut, in particular, seems to be a low or even non-priority for many students, something not worth considering as a means of connecting to Judaism or as a religious obligation. The Jewish practice of *kashrut* separates Jews from non-Jews. It asks that its adherents sacrifice great American

Table 6: Students' Jewish Activity: Communal Membership Behaviors
Please indicate whether or not in the past three years you have done
or been involved with the following (percent answering "Yes"):

Felt a sense of pride when someone Jewish is cited publicly for a significant accomplishment	74%
Displayed any Jewish objects in your room at school, such as ritual objects like a mezuzah or menorah, posters, works of art	63%
Wore a Jewish star, chai, Jewish T-shirts, or other sign that you are Jewish	63%
Felt that you experienced anti-Semitism	51%
Participated in a Holocaust memorial event	49%
Been a member of a Jewish community organization	48%
Been part of Jewish cultural or other affinity groups, including a Jewish fraternity or sorority	29%

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traditions such as enjoying seafood in New England or a Philadelphia cheese-steak. Kashrut makes Jews distinct among Americans. Few students prioritize it.

Yet, some choose participation in Jewish organizations:

- 29% are or have been members of Jewish cultural or affinity groups, including Jewish fraternities and sororities, during the past three years.
- 48% are or have been members of Jewish communal organizations during the past three years.

We do not know to what Jewish communal organizations students are referring, and their membership could have been during high school and not college. However, these percentages are not insignificant. Sometimes, students choose participation in Jewish communities, particularly when their participation is low-barrier. That is, they choose membership over ritual observance, belonging over contributing financial resources or time.

In total, students’ ideas about Judaism demonstrate a tension between valuing their very association with Judaism and not wanting their Jewish identity to separate them from others. They have a positive association with Jewishness, an association that alludes to a pride in being who they are, but not to a desire to separate or distinguish themselves from others.

Respondents make intellectual and cultural Jewish connections, although somewhat infrequently:

- 33% of respondents explore Judaism on the Internet “very often” or “often.”
- 30% of respondents study Jewish texts “very often” or “often.”
- 29% of respondents read a Jewish book for pleasure “very often” or “often.”
- 24% of respondents took an academic class in Jewish studies or a Jewish topic “very often” or “often.”

Even while they do not study Judaism formally or informally in large numbers, they

Table 7: Students’ Jewish Activity: Intellectual/Cultural Behaviors
Please indicate how often you performed the following while in college
(percent Answering “Very Often/Often”):

Visited Jewish or Israel sites on the Internet	33%
Studied Jewish texts	30%
Read a book with Jewish content for pleasure	29%
Took college courses specifically focusing on Jewish subjects such as Jewish history, the Holocaust and/or Hebrew	24%
Went to a Jewish film or other cultural event on campus focused on a Jewish topic or personality	17%

have visited Israel and they speak or study Hebrew almost as often as American Jews of other ages. More students study or speak Hebrew than participate in prayer services (Table 8).

- 29% of respondents have visited Israel in the past three years.
- 37% of respondents have studied or spoken Hebrew in a group forum.

Opportunities to connect to Israel and Hebrew are plentiful in college: Taglit – Birthright Israel makes a free trip available to many, and college students have time and opportunity to study. College may be an opportune time to begin a relationship with Israel and with Hebrew. In addition to connecting to Judaism through Israel and Hebrew, many students feel a connection to anti-Semitism and to the Holocaust.

- 51% have felt anti-Semitism during the past three years.
- 49% have participated in a Holocaust commemoration event during the past three years.

Interestingly, anti-Semitism seems to still be salient for students; their feeling hated or discriminated against because of their Jewishness may contribute to their connection to the Holocaust. At the same time, they do not prefer having Jewish friends; they do not segregate themselves deliberately because of a fear of anti-Semitism. Despite their having felt discriminated against, they continue to desire integration into general society.

In total, then, Jewishness and Judaism are important to students but their most frequent means of identification with or celebration of Judaism are those without barriers or much responsibility. More than half and sometimes even more than three-quarters of students involve themselves in Judaism in ways that do not require that they make significant effort. Many simply feel Jewish, and that is the essence of their Jewish behavior.

At the same time, it should be remembered that one-third of students do participate in Jewish religious, intellectual, and cultural behaviors and even in Jewish organizations frequently. A portion of the student community involves itself in typical

Table 8: Students’ Jewish Activity: Behaviors Related to Israel / Hebrew
Please indicate whether or not in the past three years you have done
or been involved with the following (percent answering “Yes”):

Participated in forums or classes where you read or speak Hebrew	37%
Visited Israel	29%
Been part of an Israel advocacy group	21%

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expressions of Judaism. Moreover, a higher percentage of students than of all American Jews have explored Israel and Hebrew. University seems a time when Jewish connection does happen and – remember the portrait of Maggie – Jewish exploration occurs for some in force.

In their study of Jewish life on campus, scholars Amy L. Sales and Leonard Saxe argued: “The zeitgeist on the campuses we studied was one of low religious involvement. The Jewish students fall in line, with the plurality of them becoming less observant while at school.” Yet, we found that some students’ engagement with Jewish life rises during college. More specifically:

- 24% of students are *more* involved as students in Jewish life than they were during their childhoods.
- 28% of respondents are *less* involved as students in Jewish life than they were during their childhoods.
- Almost half of students have not changed the frequency or nature of their connections to Judaism.

Therefore, a plurality may become less religiously “observant,” as Sales and Saxe claim, but a plurality of students also maintains their total level of Jewish engagement. Moreover, while there is a net loss to activity in Jewish life, some students do raise their engagement.

Interestingly, an almost comparable number of students are more *and* less involved in

Jewish life; an almost equal number of students come to college and either become attracted to or disinterested in the possibilities that Judaism on campus (and in general) offers.

Additionally, of high-, middle-, and low-scoring students, more middle-scoring students than those in the other categories are less involved as students than they were during high school. Middle-scoring students may feel strongly connected to Judaism but not be involved because of Jewish communal fatigue; they may have been strongly engaged in Jewish life in high school and may be tired of this kind of communal engagement. They are taking a break in college but continue to feel a strong attachment to Judaism.

Ultimately, though, a full quarter of students become more engaged in Jewish life in college. Something – their own need for exploration, their college social network, the attractiveness of the various Jewish teachers and mentors on their campus, the availability of engaging Jewish opportunities at their school, their escape from their parents and childhood community – pulls them into Jewish life in a more intensive way than when they were in high school.

●●● For conversation and exploration:

- How can or should we capitalize on those behaviors, lighting Chanukah candles for example, that are done in large numbers?
- What are the ramifications of this data for the way that Hillel has traditionally functioned and the way that we have measured Jewishness?
- If students are not behaving in ways that are traditionally identified as "Jewish", are we missing or ignoring others that actually are "Jewish" but that are not what we would normally look for? Can we develop new ways of understanding Jewish behaviors?
- Which Jewish behaviors offer us the most potential in terms of long-term commitment to Jewish life? How do we model or educate towards the most powerful?

Students have a positive association with Jewishness, an association that alludes to a pride in being who they are, but not to a desire to separate or distinguish themselves from others.



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8. Students have heard of and value Hillel...

Students are knowledgeable, at least superficially, about the Jewish options available to them.

- 76% of respondents have heard of Hillel.
- 64% of respondents have heard of Taglit – Birthright Israel.

For the most part, Jewish life is part of students' consciousness. If they do not participate, it is not because they do not know their options.

Moreover, a total of 90% consider it very important or important to have a Hillel or Jewish student organization on campus.

They widely believe in the concept of a local Jewish organization.

●●● For conversation and exploration:

- Where does, or should, information about Hillel come from? What are the key things we want students to know about Hillel and/or Jewish life on campus?

9. ...But most students rarely participate in "Hillel events."

At the same time:

- 34% of respondents participate "often" or "sometimes" in Hillel opportunities.
- Only 15% of respondents considered it "very likely" that they would participate in a Hillel event in the next month.

And, remember that one-quarter of students are less involved in Jewish life in college than they were in high school, and half of students have the same involvement, which could have been – and still be – very little.

So, why not Hillel? As we have seen, students' Jewishness revolves around being "just Jewish" rather than identifying with a Jewish movement, holidays and not ritual, community – Jewish and not, and, to some extent, Israel.

Hillel has changed radically in recent years, and this is reflected in the 24% of students

In total, most Jewish college students are aware of their Jewishness. At the least, it feels for many like an old winter coat or a pair of sneakers that they store at the back of their closet, never worn but never disposed of either...

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who have more involvement in Jewish life in college than they did in high school. But Hillel continues to be seen by too many students as being only about *Shabbat* or ritual observance or Jews. In too many schools, Hillel is still seen by students (despite what actually happens through Hillel) as “very religious” (16%) and “cliquey” (15%). Almost one-quarter of students (24%) believe that they “do not relate to the people that go there;” others suggest that it is “not personalized enough” to what they care about and that “people there only seem to have one viewpoint.” Students appreciate the dedication, creativity, and enthusiasm of Hillel’s staff but its reputation, and sometimes, its offerings, do not meet students’ approval or interests.

●●● For conversation and exploration:

➔ How can we expand “Hillel events” into a broader approach focused on “Jewish life on campus?” What are the ramifications of this approach for all of our stakeholders?

Something – their own need for exploration, their college social network, the attractiveness of the various Jewish teachers and mentors on their campus, the availability of engaging Jewish opportunities at their school, their escape from their parents and childhood community – pulls them into Jewish life in a more intensive way than when they were in high school.



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10. What do students want most from Hillel?

Students described the Hillel that they want to see:

- A full 88% of respondents ranked as important *"A welcoming atmosphere for all Jews, regardless of background or identification."*
- 86% ranked *"A welcoming atmosphere for everyone, Jewish or non-Jewish"* as important.
- 88% ranked *"A warm and caring staff"* as important.
- 86% ranked *"openness to new ideas"* as important.

They also described the kinds of opportunities to connect to Jewish life that they would want to see as part of Hillel:

- 43% of respondents explained that they are very likely to celebrate Jewish holidays with Hillel.

- 30% and 29% of respondents are very likely to participate in "leadership training" and "job-placement services" with Hillel.
- Almost a plurality of students, 30%, demonstrated interest in building their resumes through Hillel.
- 24% of respondents suggested that they are very likely to participate in "kosher dining services."
- 26% of respondents see a "great facility" to "hang out" with other Jews as important.
- 26% of respondents thought that they would seize opportunities to meet Jews with whom they could go out.
- 28% are very likely to participate in events commemorating the Holocaust.
- 22% are interested in study in Israel.



Students of parents with multiple religions and ethnicities express multiple religions and ethnicities as adults. They have loyalties to Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Almost one-quarter would participate in “educational programs” and one-fifth in “discussions about Jewish issues on campus” and workshops on spirituality.

When “very likely” and “likely” responses are combined, respondents rank these interests foremost:

- “Resume-building activities through leadership experience” (67%);
- Job placement services (60%);
- Local community service (60%).

Universal student interests, then, are likely catalysts for expanded student engagement.

When asked about topics that they might like to study, students reported the greatest interest in learning about the Holocaust and Jewish history, comparative religion, and kabbalah. These topics that intrigue them have little to do with ritual: they are dictated by students’ historical connection to Judaism, by their curiosity about how Jews differ from non-Jews, and by a popular interest in Jewish mysticism. Students are not interested in Torah study per se, but Jewish study and conversations of different kinds attract them.

Students also ranked “positioning” statements, considering descriptions of what Hillel could be, and indicating a preference for one or more of these descriptions. More than two-thirds of respondents chose this statement as their top description:

“The Cool Place to Be (Jewish). With its interesting programs ranging from music to sports to holiday celebrations to debate, and the range of students it attracts, including many who are not so intense about their Judaism, Hillel has become one of the places to be on campus. It's a place even your non-Jewish friends will enjoy going.”

In this statement, students indicate their attitudes toward Judaism and Hillel: they have an attachment to Judaism but do not want to express it in the “intense” way that students at Hillel have traditionally expressed their Jewishness. Moreover, they want anyone to be comfortable with or at Hillel, Jewish and not Jewish. They want it not only to be a “cool place to be Jewish,” but one of “the places to be on campus,” not distinctive as a part of Jewish life, but distinctive as a part of general student life.

In aggregate, only one-quarter of students seem eager to create a Jewish network for themselves. Others seem not to want to be only with Jews, not valuing Hillel as a great place to spend time with or meet other Jews. Students do see value in Jewish community beyond making friends. Many seem to want to use their Jewish connection to others to help them move ahead in their careers. Those who do not observe Jewish ritual traditions were particularly interested in these opportunities. For many students, Jewishness is an advantage, a series of networks that can be used to achieve the American dream and to move ahead in a society built on who one knows and what one has accomplished.

HILLEL'S RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

Holidays seem to continue to hold strong meaning and attraction for students. Perhaps they bring to mind potent childhood memories for participants, positive family and community interactions. Perhaps they represent the essence of Judaism to students. Perhaps they offer Jewish involvement without deep commitment, a way to attend a one-time event without separating oneself from one's friends by religious practice or obligating oneself to onerous religious responsibility. Or, perhaps they offer opportunities to celebrate Judaism with students' non-Jewish friends; given the trendiness of ethnic exploration, perhaps students appreciate that they can enjoy Jewish holidays with any of their friends, Jewish and non-Jewish. That students indicate an interest in holidays without prayer participation or other ritual participation is challenging. They want holiday commemorations that help them celebrate Judaism without segregating themselves.

The picture of students provided here indicates that they are ready for a new mode of engaging with Judaism, one that almost has not been invented yet, one that allows them to explore and celebrate Judaism without segregating themselves into a monolithic Jewish community. They are seeking new, meaningful journeys.

●●● For conversation and exploration:

- How can Hillel create authentically Jewish opportunities that are also welcoming to and exciting for all students?
- How can we think about, and develop, the connection between Hillel's core values, and the things that the students in the survey said they wanted? What might an exemplary Hillel look like, in this scenario?



**Table 9: The Importance of Jewish Opportunities to Respondents
Percentage of Undergraduate Students Who Are "Very Likely/Likely"
to Participate in Jewish Opportunities**

Jewish holiday celebrations.....	43	Hillel membership that provides other advantages, like discounts at local shops.....	23
High Holy Day services and Passover Seders	40	Community service opportunities in the local area	23
Trips to Israel	34	Study in Israel.....	22
Chances to build my resume with real leadership experience.....	30	Opportunities to interact informally with Jewish professors on campus.....	22
Exercise room.....	30	Discussions about Jewish issues on campus	21
Sabbath services and dinners.....	30	Community service opportunities abroad	20
Job placement services	29	Workshops on Jewish spirituality, personal growth	20
Opportunities to connect to Jewish life after college.....	29	Opportunities to participate in pro-Israel advocacy	19
Opportunities to meet Jews you might want to go out with	28	Leadership training.....	19
Holocaust remembrance activities	28	Organized sports.....	18
A great building or facility for Jewish and other students to gather and hang out	26	Interfaith or intercultural events	17
Opportunities to meet Jewish community or business leaders.....	25	Counseling and personal support.....	16
Cultural events focused on Jewish movies, music, or art.....	25	National student conferences on Jewish issues	16
Kosher dining services.....	24	Opportunities to prepare for and have an adult Bar or Bat Mitzvah	13
Educational programs on Jewish topics (religion, culture, Israel, ethics, etc.).....	24		
International travel involving Jews from all over	24		



EXPLORING AND LIVING: A NEW JOURNEY

This data has great implications for Hillel. As we grow into maturity and simultaneously into our ninth decade, we must grapple with these implications, shift, and begin our new journey.

In this new journey, our destination will not change; we will continue to inspire students' enduring commitment to Judaism and Jewish life.

But Hillels must change. Our central points of pride – our provision of kosher food on campus, our beautiful buildings, the lounges in those buildings that are filled with students – cannot be our greatest accomplishments. Many, many students do not want these anymore, and they divert our attention from the thousands of students who are intrigued by Judaism but do not have opportunity to explore that intrigue. And, the students who have wanted kashrut and comfortable Jewish spaces now want other things, leadership training and chances for self-exploration. How can we reach out to

all students, helping them to imagine and actualize their Jewish selves?

We should note here, before we examine the shifting principles of our work, that Hillel has changed before. At the development of Taglit – Birthright Israel, Hillel recognized the value of adopting this project as a long-term strategy and also a source of partnership and creative productivity. The philosophies described here demand the same dramatic shift in our approach and strategy, calling for new, enduring paradigm shifts and new partners.

Principle One: Students Have Power

Principle: Students have power, talent, and passion. They bring innate value to Jewish life and to their peers.

Today's students are more sophisticated than ever. They are exposed to global ideas of business and service long before they come to college. The paradigm of social change

EXPLORING AND LIVING

If we intend to help students develop a bank of rich Jewish memories on which to build their Jewish lives, we must help them have experience after experience. We must engage them not once, but repeatedly.

with which they are most comfortable is one of social entrepreneurship, where individuals channel and make the most of the resources available to them in order to engineer social transformation.

With this background, students are prepared to take their own natural skills and innate curiosities and apply them to both the building and exploration of Judaism and Jewish life. They do not want to be served; they are not in need of something. They have inherent creativity, value, and dreams. **Our task is to help them identify, develop, and pursue their talents and interests while infusing their journeys with the Jewish tradition.**

The notion that we could recognize and develop students' power evokes the conventional (and perhaps forgotten) characteristic of Jewish communal life of **community organizing**. Organizing implies that individuals can help those without power identify and use their inner strength and skills in order to create social change. This happens foremost by pursuing **relationships** with individuals, by getting to know who they are and what they care about and then guiding them to pursue their

deepest desires and passions. The key tool of community organizing is the one-on-one meeting between the organizer and the potential member, in which the task of the organizer is to develop a deep understanding of what is important to the potential member and, if possible, link the individual with others in the community who share the same values. This **relationship-based engagement** is a task in which Hillel's staff members must engage. To work with millennials, we need to engage students on their terms. Rather than "reach" out to them and bring them to where we think they should be, we can find out who they are and help them pursue the Jewish life that they want. We can help *them* create Jewish life on *their* terms, based on where they live and how they already interact with others and the world. We have long assumed that we understand students' interests. We have created programs for students, filling calendars with these programs that, no matter how innovative, have not responded directly to their interests. Rather than fitting students into programs that we think they want, we can get to know them personally and design opportunities with them directly in response to their talents and interests.

Students can do the same for each other. The idea of “leader” in Hillel has long meant that students plan programs that they want to see and hope that other students participate. Often, the program ideas that these students develop reflect the wishes and personalities of those whom these students know, and they only know students exactly like themselves. Many Hillel student leaders forget that leading suggests that we inspire others to get to know themselves and to find themselves, and that we create social change that extends beyond ourselves and our own interests. Rather than create programs that exist only for a small group of students, the new Hillel student activist can learn to participate in relationship-based engagement similar to staff members. From within her diverse **social networks**, her connections with other students from all kinds of backgrounds and with all kinds of interests, she can expand those who connect to Judaism beyond the typical small Jewish community. She can lead her peers toward Jewish connections that they find personally meaningful.

Through relationships, students and staff alike can help students find the tools they need to lead their own Jewish journeys. Students from all backgrounds can come to

write their own Jewish stories, to identify and pursue their own questions. They can **own** their interaction with Judaism and be able to motivate themselves throughout their lives to find ways to express their attachment to their Jewishness.

Principle Two: Judaism Has Power

Principle: Judaism has power, meaning, and value. Its value is located in meaningful Jewish experiences for their own sake, and not only in its continuity.

Students will be interested in celebrating Jewish life if it gives them something of value and meaning, ideas and challenges that can compete with and even triumph over the complex ideas that they encounter in the other spheres of their lives. Fortunately, such value and meaning lie at the heart of Judaism.

We can help students access this meaning, helping them experience not Jewish programs but to have a Jewish **education**, not one-time interactions with staged events but an ongoing and authentic immersion into the Jewish narrative, into what it means to

Ultimately, then, there is no clear line between something called involvement and something called uninvolved. Only a very small number of students are completely indifferent toward and unengaged in Jewish life.



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be Jewish. We can bring sophisticated intellectual Jewish content to students and demonstrate to them that the questions they ask about their lives, they can explore using Jewish resources.

In American Judaism – in America – the image of education evokes time in the classroom with students sitting quietly and meekly. And informal education calls to mind social opportunities and anemic intellectual content. On the college campus, with students exploring their senses of themselves and challenging their boundaries, Hillel has an opportunity and even a responsibility to guide students in their Jewish growth. And Hillel can use **growth** as a framework for education, conceiving of education not as transferring knowledge top-down from teachers to students but of helping students' ideas of themselves to change and expand. We can challenge students to think about themselves in different ways.

If Hillel understands education not as the transfer of knowledge but as personal growth and development, it seems natural that **experiences** would be our primary means of educating. We are not informal educators; rather, we are **experiential educators**. We help students learn through their doing. More than that, we help students consider why something is important to them when we help them **reflect** on what they do and why they do it. Experiential education is not complete at the end of an activity. It includes a component of thinking and talking about the meaning and implications of our experiences. We can guide students through **High-Impact** experiences, maximizing the

potential of these experiences by identifying, reflecting on, and considering their impact afterward.

Ultimately, each opportunity that students have to experience an aspect of Jewish life, each conversation that they have in which they realize something important about themselves, will become a foundation of experience, a sort of bank of rich memories that have shaped not only students' Jewishness, but also their very senses of themselves. This foundation of memories will give students a way of interacting with the world and a frame through which to envision a Jewish adulthood for themselves. Their mental models of their lives will shift so that they imagine their futures in tandem with the Jewish people and its narrative.

With educating – promoting students' growth – as our goal, and helping students to have Jewish experiences as our methodology, several additional implications emerge:

- **We must help students make their own world.** Steeped in the Jewish world of previous generations, we – the educators – cannot imagine without difficulty the Jewish world that students create for themselves. Our methodology – the experience of *Shabbat* dinner, for example – is a worthwhile product, but it is also a worthwhile process. That is, *Shabbat* dinner is an end in and of itself, but it is also a means to an end, a way to help students develop Jewish memories. To help them have a Jewish experience on their terms, they must be able to define the experience – *Shabbat* dinner – as they would like. Moreover, we should

Experimenting with Community at the University of Chicago

The Newberger Hillel Center at the University of Chicago believes that in order to become truly transformed through a Jewish experience, a student must first understand that a primary interest – humor or law, for example – can be intertwined with Jewishness. It is helping students to create small groups that share similar passions to provide a community of peers and an ongoing group project that will enable them to grow Jewishly and to express their Jewishness meaningfully. Experiential educators with strong Jewish backgrounds and talent in the interest area will support the work of the small group, ensuring that the group members are challenged with the richness of Judaism.

Imagine winding around the buildings of a college or university, wandering through its libraries, peeking into its coffee shops and bookstores. Imagine seeing groups of students at every turn: one group arguing

passionately on the steps of the English building, another in the library crowded around a computer, a third at a coffee shop with their half-filled mugs surrounded by art supplies. Imagine that these groups are fervently working with some aspect of Jewish tradition: the first is studying (and debating) the treatment of homosexuality in Jewish law, the second is looking at different modern compositions of Jewish music, and the third is working on the backdrop for a play that they will put on in several weeks. Each of these small groups meets regularly and works toward a shared goal: that of understanding the historical treatment of gay and lesbian people in Judaism, that of becoming familiar with and then writing their own Jewish music, and that of creating their own theatrical piece with or motivated by Jewish content.

These small groups are built member by member, student by student, as Hillel staff members develop

relationships with students, discover what their interests are, and help students create communities around their interest areas. "Hillel" itself – or, rather, Jewish life on campus – consists significantly of these small groups that can provide deep and meaningful relationships for students. Students are motivated to participate by these relationships. Moreover, leaders are those who maintain the work of the small groups and connect new members to their work. They inspire others to lead the groups after they move on, and they themselves will be ready for their next transformative Jewish experience. They own their Jewishness and are able to connect for themselves their various interests to Jewish life.

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employ every tool at our disposal to do this, including Jewish studies classes, Chabad and other outreach organizations, other ethnic and religious programs, and Jewish community institutions.

- **Our goal, then, is not to connect students to Hillel but to Jewish life.**

We mean to help students have Jewish experiences, dozens and dozens of High-Impact, Jewish experiences that transform their lives, in order to create Jewish memories. We will measure our impact not by how many students know Hillel, but by how many students understand that Judaism has power, meaning, and value.

- **We will build Jewish life around High-Impact, immersive experiences and ensure that these trips are not the sum, but an integral part, of our larger educational agenda.** Taglit-Birthright Israel has transformed Hillel, making an Israel experience a central part of a Jewish student's college experience, giving the Israel experience a primary role in the life of a Hillel, and revitalizing Jewish life on campus in its entirety. Alternative Breaks offer Hillel a similar opportunity: to create enough Alternative Breaks and enough different kinds of these national and global service opportunities so as to facilitate every Jewish student's participation in at least

one Break during his or her time in college. These experiences represent the ultimate in High-Impact experiences and the supreme opportunity for Jewish growth. Hillel will continue to focus intently on maximizing both the experiences themselves and also – and more importantly – students' experience of Jewish life that surrounds their time away from school.

- **Experiential educators are a critical component in Hillel's effort to inspire students to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life.** With their training as formal and informal Jewish educators, their passion for Israel and contemporary Jewish life, and their well-developed interpersonal skills, Hillel's developing cohort of experiential educators will find compelling ways to bring to life for students the richness and personal relevance of Jewish civilization. Experiential educators will function as key change agents, accessible to students of all backgrounds, for infusing meaning and facilitating informed Jewish discussions for Jewish students who are currently not involved in or less connected to Jewish life. Over time, these experiential educators will have an enduring impact on the campus community and on the Jewish educational field as a whole.

We can help students create Jewish life on their terms, based on where they live and how they already interact with others and the world.

Experimenting with Meaning at the University of California Los Angeles

At UCLA, students sit in their sorority house living room (they could just as easily sit in a coffee shop, or someone's home, or a room in the Student Union) and are poised to write on an index card. Their educator and group leader asks them to jot down thoughts in response to the question, "What brought me here?" They continue to respond to questions, exploring on paper what brought them to that school, what they hope to accomplish after their experience that night, and what they hope to accomplish from their experience in college.

Students share a little bit, and then their educator continues, reading with them the biblical text of Abraham starting out on his journey (Genesis 11-12). As they read and study the text, with their educator's guidance, they come to realize that their entering college is a kind of a journey. As their educator explains, "You show up as

one person, usually you leave as somebody different." He uses the deeply Jewish theme of journey to help students explore the challenges and opportunities that their own journeys bring. As they explore additional journeys – that of Jonah (Jonah 1) and that of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) – they delve into Jewish tradition in order to consider the nuance of journey, but they also talk about the journeys that they, themselves, are on and what they hope to gain from their journeys in school.

They close with a piece from a modern intellectual, one that challenges the extent to which they, as students, pursue self-fulfillment in school rather than another imperative. Students consider why they truly are at or in school, and the implication of their conversation becomes a challenge to them to do more with their education

than pursue self-actualization.

The goals of this conversation are to help students see their lives in conversation with the story of the Jewish people.

Students show up to the conversation, though, because of the relationship that they have with the educator or because they are interested genuinely in thinking about conversations that have these implications for their lives. Meaning and personal relationship attract them. They grow Jewishly because of the opportunity that they have to discover their own story in the narrative of the Jewish people. They do not sit demurely, nor are they tested on what they learn. But this is true education, Hillel style. They grow as human beings, and they grow as Jews; the two happen simultaneously and are inextricably linked.

Principle Three: Engagement is Continual

Principle: Engagement is continual. Jewish community is not dichotomous. Students are not “in” or “out.”

As discussed earlier, only 11% of students feel that Judaism is not at all important to them. For almost 90% of students, Judaism plays some role in their lives and the ways that they see themselves. Many of these students do not engage frequently in Jewish behaviors; 40% of students scored at the “low” level on our index of Jewish behaviors and attitudes, and 32% scored at the “middle” level. Yet, these low- and middle-scoring students still exhibit some Jewish behaviors and positive attitudes toward Judaism. At the other extreme, even the 28% of high-scoring students who exhibit a multitude of Jewish behaviors fail to explore entire areas of Judaism. Ultimately, then, there is no clear line between something called involvement and something called uninvolved. Only a very small number of students are completely indifferent toward and unengaged in Jewish life, and only a very small number of students motivate themselves to explore more, and more, and more of their tradition.

Moreover, respondents indicate that there is not a continuum of involvement in Jewish life. Meaning, many of those who *were* engaged in high school take a break in college; it is possible – and hopeful – that they will be engaged again. Students’ busy schedules and the many commitments that they explore during their college years

suggest that a student may become involved in a discussion group one year and move on to try something different the next year. A once-connected student may continue to feel his Jewishness strongly but may no longer express it in typical ways; he and his peers may walk in and out of Jewish circles fluidly.

For some time, Hillel has divided students into two categories: those who must be engaged in Jewish life and those who are already Jewishly empowered. This dichotomy was helpful for a time, but it may no longer be salient. If we intend to help students develop a bank of rich Jewish memories on which to build their Jewish lives, we must help them have experience after experience. We must engage them not once, but repeatedly.

If we cannot rely on one-time events to “hook” students:

- We can create not a calendar of programs but a series of **opportunities**, of **conversations** or **interactions** in which students can engage repeatedly in order to build their robust foundation of Jewish experiences. Similarly, we can create a series of immersive experiences, focusing deeply not only on Taglit-Birthright Israel and Alternative Breaks, but also learning from these experiences and offering a course of immersive experiences, plentiful High-Impact opportunities to fortify and deepen students’ commitment to and interest in Jewish life.

Experimenting with Boundaries at the University of Arizona

Experimenting with Boundaries at the University of Arizona Shabbat at Hillel calls to mind a sort of camp-like Friday night: dozens or hundreds of students standing, sometimes swaying, together, singing Shalom Aleichem in a singular voice, acting as one community. At the University of Arizona, Shabbat is happening. But it is happening in hundreds of places across campus, in all kinds of ways, without all students singing together. And it is more vibrant than ever.

The University of Arizona Hillel Foundation sponsors prayer services and dinner for Shabbat twice a month at the Hillel building. In addition, every week, students have the

opportunity to sign up at www.shabbatuncensored.org to receive a Shabbat kit of sorts that includes a Kiddush cup and juice, candles and matches, a challah and challah cover, educational/inspirational information about Shabbat, all in a trendy bag labeled “Shabbat Uncensored.” They use the contents of the bags however they would like: one student hosts her brothers, fellow students, for Shabbat dinner, another quickly lights the candles and makes challah French toast on Saturday morning, and a third creates Shabbat with her sorority sisters, Jewish and not. They turn regular dinners into Shabbat dinners, and those who live at home bring Shabbat home to their families.

With this project, Hillel turned upside down many of our assumptions about Shabbat. Rather than an event primarily for those already comfortable with Judaism, it became something out on campus, integrated into anyone’s life. Rather than build one community and draw boundaries around and for students, this kind of Shabbat celebration helps students build their own communities and acknowledges that everyone feels in and out at different times. Rather than fit all students into one kind of celebration, it inspires students to craft the celebrations that they might want to see. It acknowledges the fluidity of students’ identities.

Our central points of pride — our provision of kosher food on campus, our beautiful buildings, the lounges in those buildings that are filled with students — cannot be our greatest accomplishments. Many, many students do not want these anymore, and they divert our attention from the thousands of students who are intrigued by Judaism but do not have opportunity to explore that intrigue.

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- We can rely on **relationships** much more to work with students, because a student will value a relationship long past the end of a program, and will turn back to that relationship with a question or an idea throughout her time in college. Additionally, relationships allow for students to truly inform the work that Hillel does – instead of using a “build it and they will come” approach to Jewish experiences on campus, relationships ensure that Hillels understand what makes students who they are. It is precisely that information that should inform the types of opportunities Hillel creates, in order to maximize the relevance of Jewish experiences in the lives of more students.
- We can turn an immersive experience into part of a longer process and opportunity. Taglit-Birthright Israel can indicate a change in the way that students interact with Jewish life. Students can begin to discuss and plan for what comes next on campus during their trip. Staff can help by identifying the different opportunities in which students

may become involved. Students may form smaller communities in Israel – groups of friends in twos and threes – that they can continue when they return home. Students, staff, and Board members can greet participants when they return from Israel, waiting with energy and welcoming arms in the airport. A ten-day experience can become part of a larger, planned interaction with Judaism as a whole and not only a trip.

Our goal can be ongoing interactions and conversations, small communities continually coming together and evolving into new communities. Students can move easily among communities, engaging in Jewish life in many different ways, ending a relationship with a community and soon beginning another one. Jewish life can be represented not within one community – in which a student is or is not involved – but within a **community of communities**, diverse groups of students engaging in Judaism in diverse ways. Students with all kinds of interests can find a place for themselves wherever and whenever they choose.



Principle Four: Hillel Needs Low Boundaries

Principle: Hillel needs low boundaries, becoming an indispensable partner in building student life.

Millennials have been raised in an American society in which “nobody is plain anything” (see Liz Short’s words, page 18). They value this existence in which all have varied identities, simultaneous claims to multiple ethnic and religious traditions. They build their “quasi-communities,” as the American Jewish Committee concluded, around interest areas and not around essential commonalities in identity. These communities have few or no hard boundaries, since interests can shift easily.

This emphasis on multiculturalism makes Hillel’s orientation toward building a community of communities even more important. Students want not to attach themselves to one social network that focuses on one interest area or aspect of identity; they want to move in and out of many social networks that validate all aspects of their identities. Moreover, they want to be part of communities that validate multiple parts of their identities simultaneously. If they become part of a community that emphasizes their Jewishness in some way, they also want for that community to welcome their friends from other social networks. Their communities should overlap, each of their friends always welcome anywhere. They do not want to isolate themselves to one aspect

of their identity by involving themselves in a social network with high, impermeable boundaries.

More specifically, in our survey research, students clearly demanded a “warm and welcoming” environment, one that does not create boundaries between Jewish students or between Jewish and non-Jewish students. They gave Hillel a charge to be not a place but a **concept**, a set of **open communities** that are well integrated into student life in every way possible. They asked for a kind of celebration of Judaism that is transparent. They demand Jewishness that is open to those who are educated about Judaism and those who are not. They want Jewishness that is well integrated into its host community; and that often takes place in the open or in non-traditional spaces.

By dissipating boundaries around Jewish experience, Hillel can make connections to Judaism a normative part of student involvement. Jewish exploration can be well integrated into the college campus, the ultimate place of exploration in American society. Hillel can be an **indispensable partner** in strengthening student life, supporting the university’s efforts to create rich and fulfilling opportunities for self-exploration outside of the classroom. With high Jewish content, opportunities through Hillel will be blatantly Jewish. Yet, fully accepted into student life, Jewish students will not differentiate themselves by choosing these opportunities, and these opportunities will be attractive to them because they look like any other.

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Ultimately, Hillel's role as an indispensable partner in building student life brings together the meaning for which students are searching with Hillel's active presence on campus. Hillel can use certain kinds of opportunities deliberately and also create opportunities that are both full of meaning and visible to many students. More specifically:

- **High-Contact** programs — a party for Purim, for example — can help staff and students know other students, connecting them to **High-Impact** opportunities, moments for meaning and transformation.
- Similarly, **High-Visibility** programs — bringing the comedian Sarah Silverman to campus, for example — should help Hillels change all students' image of Jewish life, making it more attractive to be engaged in Jewish life and leading students to additional **High-Impact** experiences. High-Visibility programs can be in the school's public space, open to everyone, or they can integrate Jewish content into private spaces like classes or other general student opportunities, exposing another community to Jewish learning.

The purposes of High-Contact and High-Visibility opportunities can be to drive more students toward High-Impact experiences; they are often means and not ends. And sometimes, they can fulfill multiple purposes, using the university as a setting for meaning and impact.

Principle Five: Hillel Must Be Smarter and Collaborative

Principle: Hillel must be smarter and more collaborative, learning about its work and ensuring that each Hillel learns from another.

The research that Hillel conducted about millennials marks the beginning of a shift in the way we intend to work as an organization. We commit to being a smarter organization, meaning:

- We will work continually to understand our students, our target population, by launching studies of their attitudes and ideas and by being avid consumers of research about millennials and Jewish students.
- We will shape Hillel directly in response to who students are, considering how we must challenge students to grow Jewishly given their developmental needs and attitudes toward the world.
- We will recognize what we know and don't know about our work; we will have an understanding of organizational ideas and practices, how they are created, and how they are related and transferred within our organization.
- We will know each other's best work. We will ask questions of each other, contact each other for help, and recognize our work and our ideas as important assets to be shared and heard.
- We will create multiple, ongoing, private, and public opportunities for cohorts of

peers to share learnings and ideas. We will establish trust and respect within cohorts and throughout the Hillel community.

- We will take risks, enact experiments in Jewish life, gambling more in order to achieve more, learning more from an untried idea than from a known entity. We will study the risks that we take; experiments, after all, are attempted not only in order to achieve results, but also in order to develop new ideas.
- We will be better educators, know ourselves more deeply as Jews, and be stronger counselors and relationship builders.

As we learn from many sources we will read, think, and talk together about what we learn, ultimately becoming the smartest organization.

THE JOURNEY HOME

Hillel is not only a part of the Jewish journey, we are entrusted with the profound responsibility of guiding college students on their own Jewish journeys of self-discovery. In this monograph, we shared our map, our intended route, for the journey forward.

As we remain true to our mission – enriching the lives of Jewish undergraduate and graduate students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world – we may need to alter our route to keep pace with the changing needs of Jewish students. We will experiment with new routes, taking risks but always learning as we go. And with the passion, the commitment, and the support of our many stakeholders, we will continue to pursue our destination: inspiring every Jewish student to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life.

More Guidebooks for the Journey

We highly recommend the following works that help us to understand where Jewish students are, and where they may be going:

- Neil Howe and William Strauss. *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation*, Vintage, 2000.
- Bethamie Horowitz. *Connections and Journeys: Assessing Critical Opportunities for Enhancing Jewish Identity*. New York: UJA-Federation, 2000.
- Martin Buber. *On Judaism*. New York: Schocken, 1967.
- Sharon Daloz Parks. *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Joseph Reimer. "Beyond More Jews Doing Jewish: Clarifying the Goals of Informal Jewish Education." *Journal of Jewish Education*, 73:1, 5 – 23.
- Franz Rosenzweig. *Jewish Learning*. New York: Schocken, 1955.

Experimenting with Student Life at Northwestern University

Fiedler Hillel at Northwestern University aims to make an essential contribution not only to the lives of Jewish students but also to the life of the entire university.

When Adam Simon, Northwestern Hillel's executive director, first met with university president Henry Bienen, he did something unusual: he showed up without a list of favors. "Most people have a list of requests," Bienen explained. "Where's yours?" The director responded, "I don't have a list. I'm just here to say hello and tell you we'd like to support the university however we can. So what can we do for you?"

Since then, Northwestern Hillel has done a great deal for the university. It guides the development office to alumni with whom the university does not yet have contact and jointly solicits these alumni with the university. It sponsors Freshman Fest and Alternative Breaks, both of which are marketed as are any other pre-orientation and travel opportunities; they are not "Hillel programs" but are NU programs. It assists the university in expanding kosher food services. It guides the university in understanding recruitment and Jewish students. Hillel staff members serve as mentors and sounding boards for student leaders of all backgrounds in student

government, the campus senior honors society, and residential life.

Moreover, Hillel has done a great deal for student life. Students involved in Tzedek Hillel worked with the Campus Rabbi to create a mini-conference for other students involved in community service and social justice causes called "Why Do We Do Good?" that facilitated reflection and conversation about their motivations for service activity. Hillel has hosted entertainers Sarah Silverman and Jeremy Piven, with audiences of 1,000 students packing the campus auditorium to hear them. NU Hillel's magazine, *Schmooze*, is read and praised by students of all backgrounds, and its Jewish Theater Ensemble is one of the best on campus. Jewish and non-Jewish students suggest that student life at Northwestern itself would not be the same without Hillel. When students think of their Northwestern experience, they remember Hillel playing a role.

Most significantly, NU Hillel has spread meaningful Jewish life throughout campus, asking essential questions of students that no other organization has asked so publicly – literally. As part of its "AskBigQuestions" Campaign, every week NU Hillel hangs a large banner and posts colorful post-it notes

all over campus, posing Big Questions that all human beings are concerned with:

- Who is the most important person in your life?
- What do you say no to?
- What are you addicted to?
- Who do you belong to?
- What will you do better this year?
(at Rosh Hashanah)
- Where do you feel at home?
(at the semester's end)

And so on. The banners are professionally created, unlike most campus advertising. In their medium and message, they catch attention and raise conversations. Alongside the banners and post-its, NU Hillel continues the conversation online at a Web site created with support from the Hillel-Jewish Outreach Institute partnership, called www.askbigquestions.com. And NU Hillel sponsors a series of coffeehouse chats with popular professors on the question of the week, moderated by the Campus Rabbi.

NU Hillel has created this “AskBig Questions” campaign with several assumptions:

- 1. All human beings are ultimately concerned with a few big questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? Who will I spend my life with? Where will my home be? What will be my legacy?
- 2. Jewish tradition—thought, text, tradition, ritual, history—offers one of

the deepest and richest contexts for exploring those questions.

- 3. Jewish students today are interested in authentic Jewish experiences (and of course they are the sole arbiters of authenticity) that are not tribal or exclusive.
- 4. As a 3,000-year old organism, the Jewish people has always found a way to reproduce itself. By opening up students to these questions and presenting authentic Jewish answers to them, the seeds of Jewish peoplehood will be implanted and take root in Jewish young adults.

Despite the specific Jewish nature of their target audience, NU Hillel has raised these questions in a fully public way. This is the essence of public Judaism. Students do not need to choose one group of friends with whom to spend time over another; the experiences, whether on campus, online, or in the coffee shop, are open to everyone, and become a normative part of campus life. Staff and Campus Entrepreneurs Initiative interns follow up with students engaged through AskBigQuestions, and thus the initiative leads to higher impact encounters with Jewish students. At the same time, they become an indispensable partner to the university, asking questions at the center of life on campus, and doing so in deeply Jewish way.

NOTES

- pg. 1 *"...People in this age bracket..."* David Brooks, "The Odyssey Years," *New York Times* October 9, 2007.
- pg. 1 *"They are entrenched in a new life stage..."* See Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- pg. 5 *"Today Hillel serves the estimated 250,000 Jewish undergraduate and graduate students in the United States..."* Population numbers are estimated based on Leonard Saxe et. al., "Reconsidering the Size and Characteristics of the American Jewish Population: New Estimates of a Larger and More Diverse Community." Massachusetts: Steinhardt Social Research Institute, 2007.
- pg. 5 *"...the organization has undertaken a program of redefinition..."* See Mark I. Rosen, "The Remaking of Hillel: A Case Study on Leadership and Organizational Transformation." Massachusetts: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2006.
- pg. 5 *"The process was undertaken with the supervision and guidance of its Strategic Planning Committee (SPC)..."* In addition to Kinney Zalesne's leadership, Amy Morgenstern, president of Main Stream Enterprises, Inc., served as the lead outside consultant on this project. The full Strategic Planning Committee included:
- | | |
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| Julian Sandler (Chair) , Dix Hills, NY | Joseph Kohane , Ohio State Hillel |
| Adam Bronfman , Paradise Valley, AZ | David E. Levy , Drexel University Hillel |
| Jennifer Chestnut , Kent State Hillel | Bea Mandel , Los Angeles, CA |
| Adina Danzig , Stanford Hillel | Neil Moss , Columbus, OH |
| Jevin Eagle , Needham, MA | Chuck Newman , Ann Arbor, MI |
| Lisa Eisen , Washington, DC | Liz Rutzick , University of Maryland Hillel |
| Wayne L. Firestone , President-Elect | Greg Steinberger , Univ. of Wisconsin Hillel |
| Avraham Infeld , International President | Kinney Zalesne , Washington, DC |
| Randall Kaplan , Greensboro, NC | Staff: Danny Greene, Graham Hoffman |
- pg. 5 *"In addition, Penn Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc., conducted an online student survey on a pro-bono basis."* Hillel is grateful to the research firm Penn, Schoen, & Berland Associates (PSB), which constructed and implemented the survey of Jewish college students from which this monograph's results come. Using e-mail addresses, PSB contacted 500,000 individuals, asking respondents two initial questions about their ethnicity and their religion. Respondents with a threshold Jewish identification, an answer of "Jewish" to either the ethnic or religious identification, continued the survey. Hillel sought a stratified sample, one that included students at larger and smaller schools, commuter and residential schools, and graduate students. The survey included a series of questions about respondents' Jewish attitudes and behaviors, their ideas about Hillel, and the kinds of Jewish opportunities in which they might participate while in school. Ultimately, this survey's sample included:
- 502 undergraduate students and 101 graduate students
 - 62% students at residential campuses with fewer than 10,000 students
 - 54% students commuting to campus
 - 26% students who live with their parents
 - 60% female students

To focus on millennials, students born of a certain time and a certain mindset, this monograph shares only the data gathered on undergraduate students.

- pg. 11 *"Experts estimate that over 85% of American Jews..."* During the past several years, Hillel has asked a variety of social scientists with expertise on the study of American Jews to examine the number of American Jews who attend college. Their estimates range from 85% to over 90%."
- pg. 11 *"The 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) collected data..."* For a summary of the National Jewish Population Survey's data about college students and young adults, see www.jewishdatabank.org, "Young Jewish Adults in the United States Today."
- pg. 11 *"In 2002, Hillel commissioned analysis..."* See Linda J Sax, "America's Jewish Freshmen." Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, 2002.
- pg. 11 *"The AVI CHAI Foundation commissioned the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies..."* Amy L. Sales and Leonard Saxe, "Particularism in the University: Realities and Opportunities for Jewish Life on Campus." New York: AVI CHAI Foundation, 2006.
- pg. 11 *"...the American Jewish Committee surveyed American Jewish young adults ages eighteen to thirty-nine..."* Jacob B. Ukeles, Ron Miller, and Pearl Beck of Ukeles Associates, Inc. "Young Jewish Adults in the United States Today. A Research Report for the American Jewish Committee." New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006.
- pg. 11 *"Are more likely than non-Jews..."* Descriptions of Jewish students are culled from Linda Sax, *America's Jewish Freshmen*.
- pg. 12 *"...as the American Jewish Committee observes..."* Ukeles et al, "Young Jewish Adults," 3.
- pg. 12 *"Or in other words, as Anna Greenberg writes..."* Anna Greenberg and Jennifer Berktoed, "Grande Soy Vanilla Latte with Cinnamon, No Foam: Jewish Identity and Community in a Time of Choice." New York: Greenberg, Quinlan, and Rosner with Reboot, 2006.
- pg. 12-13 The description of millennials in this section comes from a variety of sources, including:

"Digital Kids: Who They Are, How They Learn" <http://www.apple.com/education/digitalkids/>.

Willie Green, "New generation on campus; 'Millennials' replace Gen X," www.freerepublic.com.

Luoluo Hong, "Millennials, Mayhem & Miracles: Navigating the Floods of Change in Higher Education," NASPA IV East Regional Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison, November 2003.

Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation*. New York: Vintage, 2000.

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Cindi Huck, "What is a Millennial Anyways?" IACAC Conference, DePaul University, 2004.

Anna Greenberg, "OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era,"
<http://www.rebooters.net/poll/rebootpoll.pdf>.

Claire Raines, "Managing Millennials." In *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook*
<http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles/millennials.htm>.

The quotations from millennials come from Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*. Page numbers are as follows:

- Chris McGrath, 11
- Elizabeth Romberg, 5
- Bobby Greenhalgh, 24
- Sarah Boone, 22
- Lorena, 147
- Lauren, 213
- Liz Short, 15

- pg. 12 "Douglas Coupland coined the term Generation X..." Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 12.
- pg. 13 "Kids in uniforms, doing good deeds in public buildings..." Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 215.
- pg. 14 "For contemporary college students, identity is multiple..." Sherry Turkle, Turkle, Sherry, "Jewish Life on the American College Campus: Realities and Opportunities." Massachusetts: Brandeis University Study, 2004.
- pg. 20 "...The parents of Jewish college students today married during the 1980s, a time when more than 50 percent of Jews married non-Jews." For a history of recent research and understandings of the role intermarriage in the lives of American Jews, see Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Double or Nothing: Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage*. New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press/ University Press of New England: 2004.
- pg. 20 "In the early 1990s, these data about intermarriage sparked a tremendous controversy..." For conversation about this controversy, see Fishman, *Doubling*, Introduction.
- pg. 26 "...the basic means by which American Jews observe Judaism and call themselves Jews without doing anything more." For a discussion of family religious observance, see Fishman, *Jewish Life and American Culture*, New York: SUNY Press, 2000, particularly Chapters 5 and 6.
- pg. 30 "In their study of Jewish life on campus, scholars Amy L Sales and Leonard Saxe argued..." Sales and Saxe, *Particularism*, 1.



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