Project Background

National YSO Study Stakeholders

Funders:

- Michael Shire, PhD, Hebrew College
- Debbie Findling, EdD, Lisa & Douglas Goldman Fund
- Jeff Kress, PhD, The Jewish Theological Seminary

Advisory Group:

- Michael Shire, PhD, Hebrew College
- Debbie Findling, EdD, Lisa & Douglas Goldman Fund
- Jeff Kress, PhD, The Jewish Theological Seminary
What are the central questions of adolescence? How can our work help teens thrive?

Who am I?
- Jewish teens have a stronger sense of self.
- Jewish teens feel a sense of pride about being Jewish.
- Jewish teens have experiences of knowing that has been both challenging and valuable.
- Jewish teens have learned things that enable them to be more active participants in Jewish communities.

To whom and what am I connected?
- Jewish teens learn about and positively experience Jewish holidays and Shabbat.
- Jewish teens establish strong friendships.
- Jewish teens develop strong and healthy relationships with their families.
- Jewish teens develop significant relationships with mentors, role models, and educators.
- Jewish teens are able to express their values and ethics in relation to Jewish principles and wisdom.
- Jewish teens develop the capacity, skills, and language to grapple with and express their spiritual journeys.

To whom and for what am I responsible in this world?
- Jewish teens feel connected to their Jewish communities.
- Jewish teens develop the desire and commitment to be part of the Jewish people now and in the future.
- Jewish teens develop a positive relationship to the land, people, and State of Israel.

How can I make a difference in this world?
- Jewish teens are inspired and empowered to make a positive difference in various communities and world in which they live.

TJLES Development

- Research and Report (2016)
- Literature Review + Expert Consultation
- Cognitive Testing and Piloting
- Psychometric Assessment

Participating YSOs

Study Components

- Survey
  - Demographics
  - Background
  - Current Engagement
- 22 TJLES Items
- 3-5 YSO-specific Items

30 Interviews with Teens
Survey Distribution

- Total emails: 88,766
- Unknown number of anonymous links shared: 37,767

OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS: JEWISH COMMUNITY-CONNECTED TEENS

Jewish Educational Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Experiences</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only Supplementary School</td>
<td>2,120</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only Camp</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only Day School</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary School + Camp</td>
<td>6,148</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day School + Camp</td>
<td>3,357</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day School + Supplementary School</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day School + Supplementary School + Camp</td>
<td>3,573</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Findings and Implications
Involvement in a YSO Matters

Teens Get More from More YSO’s

Jewish Content Lifts all Boats
Diversity of Teens Involved in YSO's

- 56% identified as "Gender Fluid / Non-Binary"
- 0.3% identified as "Gender Fluid / Non-Binary"
- 0.2% of respondents chose "Something Else"

N=17,447

Participation as a Teen Matters

GenNow Outcome Mean by Jewish Involvement

- 3.54: Never Involved
- 3.34: Involved Only Prior to HS
- 3.75: Involved Only As Teens
- 3.99: Always Involved

Note: All outcome differences are significant at p < .05

Jewish Teens Like their Parents

Teens Are Less Likely to Fight With Their Parents

Adapted from Twenge (2013) from her online appendix p14 Figure B10. Percentage of 12th graders who have gotten into six or more fights with their parents over the last year. Monitoring the Future, 1976-2013.
Being Jewish is Often About Family

**TJLES Item**

**Strongly Agree**
- 56%

**I like spending time with my family around the Jewish holidays.**

**21%**

**I ask my parents questions about Jewish life.**

Connected and Proud

What Jewish Community-Connected Teens Think About Being Jewish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Connected and Proud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relig-ish – Belief in God

**TJLES Item**

I believe in God or a universal spirit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relig-ish? – Celebrating Jewish Culture

GenZ Now Teen Responses by Jewish Identity Option

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Option</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m Jewish</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m Jewish culturally, but not religious</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I think of myself as Jewish, sometimes not</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s complicated</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m Jewish and something else</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not Jewish</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teen Well-Being

Top 5 Responses

- Managing anxiety or depression: 69%
- Coping with academic pressure: 64%
- Self-esteem issues: 51%
- Dealing with failure, setbacks, and disappointments: 50%
- Learning how to speak to others face-to-face: 51%

Largest Gender Disparity

- Self-esteem issues: Female 68%, Male 51%
- Body image/eating disorders: Female 52%, Male 48%

N = 3017

Percent of college freshmen who reported that they were “frequently overwhelmed” senior year of high school

Data from Freshman Survey, Cooperative Institutional Research Program of UCLA

Positives and Negatives of Social Media

School Type
- Middle School
- High School
- Post-High School

Gender
- Male
- Female

antisemitism and the American Jewish Teen
Open to Israel

Strongly Agree

I feel a strong sense of connection to Israel

38%

I know about Israel's achievements and challenges

31%

TJLES Item

Travel to Israel is a Teen Peak Experience

Participation in Organized Group Trip to Israel by GenNow Outcomes Mean

Note: Difference is significant at p < .05

Travel to Israel is a Teen Peak Experience

Note: There is a significant positive relationship between years in camp and years in Jewish day school (before high school) and teens' connection to Israel, p < .001; there is a significant negative relationship between years of attending supplementary school (before HS), p < .001.
Implications for Practice and Questions for Consideration

1. From Surviving to Thriving
2. Becoming Teen Focused, Not Organization Focused
3. Offering Teens a Full Spectrum of Jewish Ideas and Expression
4. Designing for More Kinds of Thriving
5. Reimagining the Role of Parents and Family
6. Teens Seeking Support from Trusted Adults
7. Using Social Media: For Good and Bad
8. Israel Education Spaces Allowing Every Question
9. Enabling Travel to Israel for More Teens
10. Investing in Youth Serving Organizations

https://www.jewishedproject.org/genznow