

**BUILDING A BASE OF REFORM JEWISH LEADERSHIP:
AN IMPACT STUDY OF THREE YOUTH PROGRAMS**

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Executive Summary

Studies have long confirmed that Jewish educational opportunities greatly affect individuals' Jewish identities. Despite a plethora of research on the topic, there are significant gaps in the field with regard to the Reform Movement. The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), through its youth movement NFTY, sponsors three leadership tracks: Kutz Camp, Regional Board, and North American Board. This study asks what impacts these programs have on young adult alumni and what types of leadership roles young alumni assume within the Reform Movement and in the greater Jewish community.

Through interviews and a survey of NFTY alumni, this thesis examines the experiences of Jews in their 20s and 30s who participated in Kutz Camp, Regional Board, and North American Board. It compares their college and current Jewish engagements with those of their peers who were active in NFTY but did not participate in NFTY's top leadership programs. It then offers recommendations for how the Reform Movement can maximize the skills of these young leaders to increase their involvements in Jewish organizations and enhance opportunities for volunteer leadership therein.

When compared with their NFTY counterparts, alumni of Reform Movement leadership programs, for the most part, are no more likely to be involved with Jewish organizations or donate money to Jewish causes. They are, however, more likely than other active NFTY alumni to participate in off-campus college activities, attend a Jewish graduate school program, and work in the Jewish community. Many alumni crave more opportunities for engagement in Jewish life and feel like untapped resources. This study serves as a foundation for the URJ to strengthen both the Reform Movement and the Jewish community by capitalizing on the leadership capabilities of its young alumni.

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Introduction

“NFTY taught me in some ways how to be a partisan for the Reform Movement – like an advocate for Reform Judaism...I drank the kool aid.”

This quotation, from a former participant and national leader in the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY), confirms the powerful effects of NFTY on young people. The Reform Jewish movement has been cultivating young leaders for seven decades through its camps, youth groups, and Israel trips. In particular, NFTY offers three leadership tracks, Kutz Camp, NFTY Regional Board, and NFTY North American Board that provide youth leaders with the Jewish framework, leadership skills, and positive Jewish experiences that they can take back with them to their home communities. In turn, these teens can create opportunities for their peers to have a “strong, meaningful and enjoyable Reform Jewish youth experience” (NFTY’s Thirteen Principles).

How effective are these leadership programs? To what extent are alumni of Kutz Camp, NFTY Regional Board, and NFTY North American Board engaged in Jewish organizations generally and in Jewish institutions affiliated with the Reform Movement specifically? Is the usually elusive population of Jews in their 20s and 30s participating any more than their peers who are not alumni of Reform youth leadership programs? This thesis offers answers to these questions and recommendations for how the Reform Movement can better leverage the vast networks of these leaders to strengthen both the Movement and the Jewish world.

Studies have long confirmed the positive effects that experiential Jewish education has on individuals’ Jewish identities. In both the short term and long term, these opportunities are key influencers in how Jewish young people create circles of

Jewish friends, choose life partners, join synagogues, and participate in Jewish rituals (Cohen, 2007; Cohen and Kotler-Berkowitz, 2004). In combination, Jewish educational experiences reinforce one another; the impact of three experiential Jewish educational opportunities substantially outweighs that of formal Jewish education, even day school. Together, they positively inform the likelihood that alumni will engage in the following behaviors: in-marriage (marrying another Jew); affiliation (becoming members of a synagogue, Jewish Community Center or Jewish organization); and observance of Jewish rituals (attending a Passover seder, lighting Hannukah candles, fasting a whole day on Yom Kippur, lighting Shabbat candles, and/or keeping kosher in the home) (Cohen, 2007).¹ Despite a plethora of research on the topic of the impact of experiential Jewish education programs (see also Levine, 1971, Sales and Saxe, 2004, Cohen, 1991, Cohen and Schor, 2004, and Saxe and Chazan, 2008) the current literature leaves significant gaps related to the programs of the Reform Movement, specifically its youth movement, NFTY.²

This thesis fills those gaps by examining the involvements and leadership of a subset of NFTY alumni, namely North American Board alumni, Regional Board alumni, and Kutz Camp alumni. It then compares these leaders to other NFTY participants who did not go to Kutz Camp or serve on the Regional and North American Boards. In particular, the focus of this project is on young adult alumni, particularly those in their 20s and 30s. The study asks two questions:

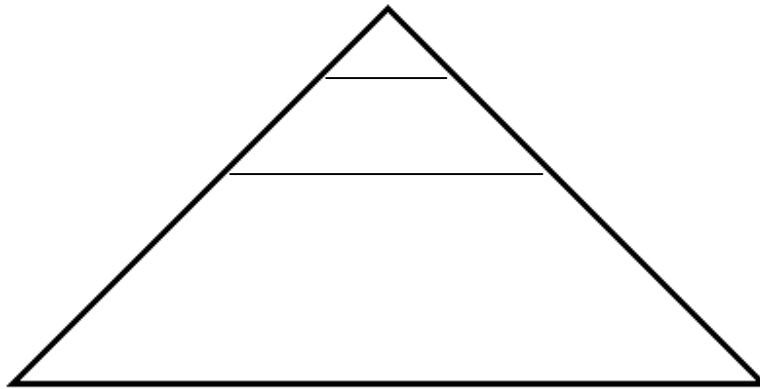
- 1) What impacts do Kutz Camp, NFTY North American Board, and NFTY Regional Board have on young adult alumni?

¹ These behaviors were gleaned from questions in the NJPS 2000-2001 survey.

² See Lorge and Zola (2006) on Reform Jewish camping.

- 2) What types of leadership roles do young alumni of these programs assume within the Reform Movement and in the greater Jewish community?

These populations are especially intriguing in light of an anecdote from a former NFTY Regional and North American Board member and Kutz Camp participant. She remembers that during her first meeting of the National³ Board, the Director of NFTY drew a picture on the chalkboard that looked like this:



Her NFTY Director said that the tip of the pyramid represents the group of 100 to 300 teens every year who are the pinnacle of NFTY leadership, namely the Regional and North American Board members as well as those who attend an “academy,” or session, at Kutz Camp. This group chooses to become the most actively involved in NFTY; they are individuals who positively identify and actively seek connections with Reform institutions. The middle of the pyramid represents the approximately 10,000 teens that are

³ In 1984, NFTY passed a resolution stating that it would change its name from the National Federation of Temple Youth to the North American Federation of Temple Youth. The resolution was meant to recognize that NFTY encompasses not only the United States, but Canada as well. When not using the acronym, however, participants often continued to refer to NFTY using its original name with the “national” adjective.

involved in NFTY. The section of the pyramid symbolizes a larger group of teenagers who positively identify specifically as Reform Jews or at least identify positively as Jewish, and who participate at varying levels in Jewish activities. The bottom of the pyramid represents all other unidentifiable, unquantifiable Reform Jewish teenagers that NFTY does not reach. The group at the bottom of the pyramid might say, “yes we’re Jewish, but I don’t know what it means to me, and I make no time for it or space for it in my life.”

This thesis focuses on the tip and the middle of the pyramid. If the Reform Movement hopes to engage individuals for whom Judaism is nebulous or seemingly unimportant, it serves them well to first think about maximizing the engagement of people who have positive associations with Judaism, and Reform Judaism, in particular. If they cannot engage the population of people who are most likely to respond well to exploring their Jewish culture and identity, how much more challenging will it be to engage people who are more resistant or uncomfortable?

As this project demonstrates, despite their positive experiences in NFTY leadership programs, alumni of Kutz Camp and Regional and North American Board are not involved with Jewish organizations to the extent one might think given their predisposition to participating in institutions as youth, as well as their experience in teen leadership positions. Alumni of Reform Movement youth leadership programs demonstrate increased involvements in off-campus organizations and Jewish professional endeavors such as attending Jewish graduate schools and working for the Jewish community. But when compared to active NFTY alumni in other respects, they do not donate to Jewish causes with any more frequency, nor do they attend or become involved

in formal organizations in a volunteer capacity. In a few instances, active NFTY alumni even surpassed alumni of Reform Movement leadership programs with regard to their levels of involvement. The Reform Movement must better understand where the gaps are in leadership and involvement of its young alumni to capitalize on the talents and skills of the individuals on whom they spent extensive resources.

A History of NFTY and Reform Movement Youth Opportunities

The North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) was founded in 1939 as the youth arm of the Union for Reform Judaism (formerly known as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and herein referred to as the URJ). It was created at the urging of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods in order to provide an outlet for young people to engage in the life of their synagogues through their temple youth groups (TYGs). The TYGs would come together in regional and ultimately national conferences.

As the youth movement grew, NFTY entered the camping movement by purchasing the first Union camp, which would later come to be known as the Olin Sang Ruby Union Institute in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. The URJ has now acquired 12 regional camps plus one on the way, in addition to several camps affiliated with Reform Movement synagogues. NFTY also sponsors regional Mitzvah Corps programs, where NFTYites⁴ live together and participate in social justice projects interspersed with Jewish learning. Lastly, on the international front, NFTY offers Israel trips of various lengths, as well as the Eisendrath International Exchange, a renowned semester-long high school exchange program in Israel.

⁴ NFTYite is a casual way to refer to a NFTY participant.

Within each geographic region of NFTY, a group of high school students is elected to serve as part of a Regional Board, the governing body of the region. Students elected to these positions are empowered to make decisions relating to the operations and policies of the individual regions. Although the particular Board positions vary depending on the region, there is always a President, Social Action Vice President, Religious and Cultural Vice President, plus a few other roles. Together, the Regional Board members make up a NFTY General Board. North American Board members, the highest and most coveted possible level of NFTY leadership, comprise the Executive Committee of this General Board. North American Board members are selected in an elections process whereby each region receives up to four votes based on the number of voting members present at the election and whether or not the region has paid its yearly dues. Outgoing NFTY North American Board members also have a vote.

Once elected, the North American Board members – President, Programming Vice President, Social Action Vice President, Religious and Cultural Vice President, and Membership and Communications Vice President – guide the principles, policies, and programs of NFTY as a whole. Students on the North American Board are usually in their first year of college. The President, due to the elevated nature of his or her position, may choose to defer his or her first year of college. In addition to planning national programs, North American Board members' responsibilities include sitting on one or two URJ committees and visiting regions as a guide, mentor, and fellow programmer.

One of NFTY's long-standing institutions is URJ Kutz Camp. Founded in 1965, Kutz Camp, located in Warwick, New York, became NFTY's national camp. Beginning that summer, Kutz Camp became the site for NFTY's Leadership Institutes, Board

Meetings, and other national programs. It continues to be the headquarters for NFTY Leadership training. Currently, Kutz Camp continues to create an immersive Jewish leadership experience for Reform Jewish teenagers in a holistic residential community.

The camp strives to organize its daily schedule like a college. It offers majors and minor electives in which campers choose to participate based on a variety of Jewish and secular topics that are both fun and challenging. Many classes focus in some capacity on leadership. In addition, campers participate in daily *tefillah* (prayer), song sessions, and informal dialogue with rabbis, educators, and resident advisors (staff). There is a special Regional Board track that, while not required, is an opportunity for Regional Board members to get a head start on their positions by learning group-leading and organizational management skills. North American Board members, according to the NFTY constitution, are required to be at camp in a quasi-staff role. They are not RAs, but they teach certain programs within the majors, begin to implement their yearlong projects, and build relationships with Regional Board members and NFTYites at large.

In its seventh decade, NFTY encompasses over 750 TYGs in 19 NFTY Regions throughout the United States and Canada. It holds over 150 Regional Events each year, serves several hundred NFTYites at its various regional camps, and has sent tens of thousands of young people to Israel. Since the beginning of NFTY, there have been approximately 180 North American Board Members. Kutz Camp has served just fewer than 10,000 campers in its 45-year lifetime. NFTY has served hundreds of thousands more. Similarly, each year, approximately 10,000 high students affiliate themselves with North American Federation of Temple Youth through paid membership (NFTYology: Past, Present and Future). In fact, its website boasts:

In the more than sixty years of its existence, NFTY has touched the lives of thousands of young American Jews through the programs it runs and the relationships it fosters. NFTY has influenced both the Jewish community and the world as it has let its voice be heard on the issues that confront us as Jews and as human beings. NFTY alumni, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, have taken their places in the leadership of the Reform and general Jewish community, both in North America and in Israel. Graduates of NFTY programs are prominent in the creative arts, communal, political, and Reform Jewish spheres. These alumni agree that NFTY has helped its participants grow as people, as artists, as leaders, and as Reform Jews. (NFTY's History)

While this quotation may be true in some respects, NFTY has yet to maximize the involvements and leadership capabilities of its young alumni. By understanding where and how alumni are and are not involved in Jewish organizations, NFTY and the Reform Movement can enhance its impact on young people, and in turn, young alumni can continue to make contributions to the Reform Movement and to Jewish life more broadly.

Toward a Better Understanding of Jews in their 20s and 30s

To understand Reform alumni in their 20s and 30s, we must gain insights into this generation of Jews more generally. In what activities are they involved and with whom do they share their Jewish experiences? Cohen and Kelman (2006) demonstrate that many young people engage in Jewish cultural consumption through books, music, and movies. The young people they observed in New York primarily attended concerts and other cultural events. For those who are highly affiliated with the Jewish community, this type of engagement is but one of many. For those who are unaffiliated, however, this may be the only type of engagement with Jewish life. These experiences foster “a sense of generationally based belonging without group membership” (8). Episodic Jewish cultural engagement, rather than organizational membership, becomes a means of building and sustaining community. This type of engagement draws unaffiliated or under-affiliated

Jews because the events offer the possibility of crossing boundaries between Jews and non-Jews, Jewish space and non-Jewish space, Jewish culture and secular culture, and Jews of varying denominations (6).

Cohen and Kelman's findings confirm the trends of research on Jewish young people more broadly. Greenberg (2006) demonstrates that young Jews shy away from the organized Jewish community; they rather prefer to engage with Judaism in informal contexts: in coffee shops, book clubs, social gatherings with friends, or informal Shabbat dinners and holiday celebrations. In order to further explore this question, several works explain how Jews understand their religious identities. Cohen and Eisen in *The Jew Within* (2000) and Bethamie Horowitz in her study entitled *Connections and Journeys* (2000) discuss the fact that in the post-modern world, the self is the authority on Jewish life.⁵ Meaning is derived from personal experiences. They argue that Jewish identity is fluid; there is not only one answer. With regard to Jewish denominational affiliation specifically, many of the Jews they interviewed feel no sense of obligation to identify themselves as "Reform" or "Conservative," no matter what sort of upbringing they experienced. In a constant search for Jewish meaning that eschews a formal sense of authority in a higher power or person, the organizations, institutions, commitments, and norms that constitute Jewish life for many older Jews therefore become less compelling for young Jews on their personal Jewish journeys.

As these studies demonstrate, joining a Jewish institution, particularly among those who are unaffiliated, unmarried, or intermarried, is seen as "parochial" or "stifling"

⁵ Cohen and Eisen's book focuses on middle-aged Jews, and Horowitz's study looks at Jews between the ages of 22-52. While the age ranges of these studies do not exactly match the one studied here, the lessons that can be gleaned from them are nonetheless applicable.

(Cohen and Kelman, 2006). Many young Jews harbor a certain feeling that Jewish organizations are “not for them” at this point in their lives. Some young people are simply indifferent to Jewish institutions because they have different priorities. Or they voice cynical attitudes about the purpose of Jewish organizations. Some view the groups as solely concerned with their own growth and stability, looking only to cultivate future donors. Others cannot justify getting involved with organizations that cater to small, elite groups of people who may have political goals that they do not personally support. Still others, primarily those who come from intermarried families, have had negative experiences with the people involved in Jewish organizations, who they feel have judged them for “not being Jewish enough.” Greenberg emphasizes:

This is a generation that wants to make their own choices and wants those choices validated as part of their personal growth and development. To these young people, there is nothing more abhorrent than ‘being judged,’ particularly when they are growing up in a world in which the Jewish experience is so diverse. (2006, 24)⁶

Despite their hesitations or reservations, many young Jews can still see themselves volunteering for Jewish organizations in the future as long as these nonprofits are working toward goals with which they agree, and involvement is easy and convenient. It is important to recognize that some Jews in Greenberg’s study are hesitant to “discriminate” by getting involved in an organization that serves only Jewish interests. These Jews believe that social justice is a priority. Community service should help all people, regardless of religion or culture, and people should be motivated to help others because it is the right thing to do, not because they are Jewish.

⁶ See also Greenberg (2005) for a more in-depth look at Generation Y, the generation born between 1981 and 1996. It includes a survey of religious views of Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

Taking into account these considerations, there are various Jewish congregations working to meet the needs of young people in their 20s and 30s. Two such congregations are Kehilat Hadar, an independent *minyan* on New York's Upper West Side, and IKAR, a spiritual community in West Los Angeles. Elie Kaunfer and Ethan Tucker, among others, founded Kehilat Hadar in 2001, to "create a vibrant, intensive, egalitarian prayer community that could draw people from across the denominational spectrum" (Mechon Hadar & Kehilat Hadar).⁷ Kehilat Hadar meets Saturday mornings, is lay-led, and abides by *halacha*, or Jewish law. In its first year, it attracted hundreds of people. As the *minyan* grew, it added additional programs and opportunities for leadership. Soon, Kehilat Hadar expanded and founded Mechon Hadar as a separate but related institution. Mechon Hadar houses a text immersion program called Yeshivat Hadar as well as The Minyan Project, a program that aims to educate and consult with growing independent prayer communities.

IKAR is a spiritual community committed to social justice, learning, prayer and observance. Rabbi Sharon Brous founded it in 2004 as an alternative to the conventional synagogue (Cohen and Kelman, 2007, 10). Currently housed in the Westside JCC, IKAR has grown immensely. It has hired several staff members, consistently draws hundreds of people to its services and events, and tends to "generate envy, excitement, skepticism, and even a healthy dose of fear among some segments of the Los Angeles Jewish community" (11).

Kehilat Hadar and IKAR are just two examples of Jewish congregations that are founded by and succeeding in reaching young Jews. There are several other *minyanim* in cities all over the United States including Florida, Virginia, and Connecticut (Cohen et

⁷ Kaunfer and Tucker both went on to become rabbis.

al., 2007, 3). In the interviews for this project, Reform Jewish leaders had different responses to the rise of prayer communities outside of the synagogue structure and outside of denominations. With regard to how it relates to the Reform Movement in particular, one Reform rabbi argues that *minyanim* are:

the Conservative movement's problem, not really my movement's problem because the leadership from those *minyanim* are overwhelmingly the most successful products of USY and Ramah, and have no interest in Conservative institutional life, but are very confident Jews...[they are] happy to use their energy to sort of build those organizations.

Indeed, as Steven Cohen argues in a 2006 article in *Sh'ma* about the rise in independent, traditional-egalitarian *minyanim* led by highly trained Conservative young adults who are alumni of the movement's schools and camps:

Rather than providing these committed and educated young adults with ongoing opportunities for movement involvement (retreats or reunions of fellow alumni of the movement's great educational system), and thereby grounding them in an alternate source of Jewish social networking, the movement has chosen to let escape many of its "best and brightest" youngsters. (Cohen, 2006, 6)

Precisely because of this challenge, another Reform rabbi interviewed feels that the *minyanim* are the Reform Movement's problem. "These independent *minyanim* are... attractive... spirited... engaging, and... exciting...we can learn from that and we need to learn from that." He believes that "if you go to those *minyanim*...you are going to find a significant number of NFTY and URJ camp people there" because of how enticing the *minyanim* are. It is important to highlight, as this rabbi does, that this discussion is not meant to disparage the good work of independent *minyanim*. Jewish denominational movements can, however, learn from them to enhance their offerings for alumni of their youth programs.

Several Reform synagogues are already experimenting with different models to

attract young people that match the characteristics of the individuals studied here. For instance, Steven S. Wise Temple, a large wealthy synagogue in Los Angeles, runs the “W Group,” a group that attracts between 30-40 people to its programs (Belzer and Miller, 2007, 4). The website states that the group has “800 individual members and is growing daily” (The ‘W’ Group 20s and 30s). Instead of prayer, the emphasis of the group is on socializing and community building. In a typical month, the W Group offers three types of events: a cocktail party at a fashionable bar, an opportunity to volunteer, and an educational program (Belzer and Miller, 2007, 5). Fearful of gaining a reputation as a singles group, the event chairs invite both single and married people to all programs. Young adults take on leadership roles in the group through its board and committee structure. They feel empowered to assert their ideas and make them come to fruition, like when they designed a learning series called “Everything You Never Learned at Hebrew School,” and found a teacher for the course (5).

University Synagogue, also in Los Angeles, takes a different approach in its strategy to draw in young people. Like Steven S. Wise Temple, it hosts social and educational events as well as volunteer opportunities and holiday celebrations for young people. Volunteers on a Steering Committee help coordinate the functions. Where University Synagogue’s program differs, however, is that its focus is on helping Jews in their 20s and 30s fulfill their *spiritual* and *religious* needs.⁸ The goal is to create an alternative to the independent *minyanim* in Los Angeles, many of which require a working knowledge of Hebrew and the traditional prayer service in order to participate – skills that many young Reform Jews do not have or want. While the Jewish Federation of

⁸ Emphasis is the author’s.

Greater Los Angeles or other Jewish organizations might be a good fit for young Reform Jews to fulfill some of their needs, they are not necessarily comprehensive in sustaining individuals' spirituality and religiosity. Hence, University Synagogue hosts a separate series of High Holiday Services for 20s and 30s that for the past few years have drawn hundreds of worshippers. The synagogue is also working on expanding its offerings.

A final example, Congregation Beth Elohim, a Reform synagogue in Brooklyn, New York, hosts its own project for Jews in their 20s and 30s called Brooklyn Jews. Under the guidance of Rabbi Andy Bachman, participants in Brooklyn Jews take the lead in social programming, Shabbat celebration, social action projects, and Jewish learning. Founded in 2003, the tenets of Brooklyn Jews are as follows:

We want a positive connection to Jewish life; we want a life of meaning and celebration; we want a way to do good and to change the world rooted in the particular ways of Jewish life and the universal values of American culture; we want to learn the basic texts of Jewish life: Bible, Prayer, and Rabbinic literature; we want Hebrew school for kids to be a source of pride and knowledge for the whole family; we want to understand Israel, its history, the current situation, and the prospects for peace; and finally, no matter how old, we want to recapture the kind of Jewish community we once may have felt in summer camp, or youth group, or semesters abroad—when Judaism and Jewish identity was real, relevant and alive. (Brooklyn Jews: About Us)

Brooklyn Jews is a separate nonprofit organization affiliated with Congregation Beth Elohim.⁹ In addition to its social, educational, and social action activities, the synagogue hosts an independent *minyan* called Altshul. In addition, it offers a Brooklyn Jews service once a month, plus a Shabbat in-the-Neighborhoods program that hopes to help “young, unaffiliated Jews build robust Jewish experiences based on what THEY want” (Brooklyn Jews: Indie Minyans). Thus, Congregation Beth Elohim adapts the

⁹ While other synagogues may use a model of hosting various *minyanim* within their walls, they do not necessarily incorporate one or some of the *minyanim* as a separate 501(c)(3).

paradigm of the independent *minyan* since it is not entirely separate from the traditional synagogue structure.

Given these innovative means to engage with Jewish life, the obstacles for many longstanding Jewish organizations to entice attendance, involvement, and leadership among this age cohort appear quite large. But, by gaining a better grasp of the intricacies of a small subset of the elusive Jewish 20s and 30s, namely active NFTY alumni and alumni of Reform Movement youth leadership programs, the Reform Movement can work to enhance its programmatic opportunities and better meet the needs of “the lowest hanging fruit.”

Methodologies

There are three primary ways to study the impact of Jewish experiential education today upon adult Jewish identity and involvement. The first is a longitudinal study, which would require a decades-long approach to find definitive conclusions. A second possibility is to examine the impact of Jewish education today in the short term. But then we would explore only the attitudes, knowledge, and behavior of today's youth with no guarantee that current patterns of Jewish identity will be reflected in their adulthood. A third alternative, which I use in my research, is to study young Jewish adults who participated in Jewish educational experiences in the past (Cohen and Kotler-Berkowitz, 2004). Certainly, Jewish adults experienced their childhood Jewish education earlier in time, and the educational opportunities offered today do not entirely replicate those from long ago. Jews, Jewish identity, and Jewish education have all changed considerably in the last few decades. Nevertheless, as Cohen and Kotler-Berkowitz note, "knowing how different sorts of Jewish schools and informal Jewish educational experiences influence the Jewish identity of today's adults can help us understand the effectiveness of Jewish education in contemporary times" (2004, 3).

To implement my study, I used a mixed-method approach, which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. I created a survey as my primary data collection tool, but to create the survey I first conducted qualitative research. Additional qualitative research complemented my survey results. I had preliminary conversations with eight Jewish professionals with connections to the Reform Movement. These included local Reform rabbis as well as the senior staff at Kutz Camp, the Director of NFTY, and the NFTY North American Coordinator. From these conversations, I created an interview

guide and obtained the names of possible interviewees.¹⁰ I was looking to speak with NFTY alumni who attended Kutz Camp and participated in the various levels of NFTY leadership programs. I wanted to hear firsthand how individuals remember their NFTY and Kutz Camp experiences. I also wanted to gain a better understanding of how interviewees connect their Jewish youth experiences to their current involvements, or lack thereof, in Jewish organizations. I found interviewees through my initial Reform contacts as well as through my own social networks. I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with three males and five females ranging in age from 25-39. Most of the interviews were conducted over the phone, and they lasted 20 to 90 minutes. To protect their identities, I do not use interviewees' names in this paper.

Each interviewee had a slightly different history of involvement and leadership with regard to the three leadership programs in question, plus other youth programs affiliated with the URJ. All interviewees report being involved in their local youth groups and in NFTY generally. Three interviewees had participated in Kutz Camp, and also served on both the NFTY Regional and North American Boards. Of these, one person also attended the URJ's Eisendrath International Exchange program, and another attended URJ Camps Swig and Newman. One interviewee did not attend Kutz Camp or serve on NFTY North American Board, but did serve on NFTY Regional Board and attended Camp Swig. Another person also attended URJ Myron S. Goldman Union Camp - Institute (GUCI). One interviewee was only active in his local youth group and attended a few NFTY events throughout high school.

¹⁰ The interview guide appears in Appendix A.

About half of the people I interviewed were my friends or acquaintances, and this can be seen as both a positive and a negative aspect of my research. On the one hand, because my interviewees and I had a special rapport, they felt more comfortable with me; they were able to open up and share their feelings with ease. On the other hand, my personal relationship with them may have colored their responses, in that they might have been too comfortable with me. Another issue emerges in the fact that my interviews allow participants to look back at their experiences in NFTY retrospectively. Therefore, interviewees may romanticize or slightly change their experiences, due in part to the laidback interview setting and by our personal connection.

Based on the interview findings, I created an online survey¹¹ to compare alumni of Reform Movement leadership programs (alumni of Kutz Camp, NFTY Regional Board and NFTY North American Board) with alumni of NFTY who were active in their regions. I compared these groups using a series of AVONA and chi-square tests to understand whether or not alumni of Reform leadership programs – those at the tip of the Reform Jewish teen identity pyramid – were more likely to take on volunteer or professional roles in the Jewish community than NFTY alumni in the middle of the pyramid who did not. Understanding the differences or similarities between the tip and the middle will affect how the URJ chooses to target alumni groups to maximize involvement and leadership.

A good deal of research seeks to determine the net impact of Jewish education in childhood on adult Jewish identity (e.g., Cohen, 2007). Cohen describes the three essential components of the “social scientific quantitative research tradition on Jews”:

¹¹ The survey (Appendix B) was administered on SurveyMonkey.com and analyzed using SPSS.

1. Current adult Jewish identity, measured along a variety of dimensions including communal affiliation and ritual observance
2. Educational experiences, including kinds of programs and how often participants attended
3. Possible confounding factors including Jewish upbringing, parents' identities, and demographic characteristics

Due to the scope of my research, I capture some, but not all, of these components; I ascertain the extent of educational experiences, and some measures of current adult Jewish identity including current organizational and denominational affiliations, volunteer positions, and philanthropic decisions. I do not include questions about parents' identities or Jewish upbringing, confounding factors that might artificially exaggerate estimates of the impact of Jewish education.

I used a variety of sources to publicize and promote my survey. Primarily, I utilized my own social networks and the networks of my friends and my interviewees through Facebook, Twitter, and email. I posted the survey to my Facebook status, the NFTY Alumni group page, the Kutz Camp Alumni group page, and the group pages of all nine NFTY regions' alumni sites that are on Facebook. In addition, I encouraged those who took my survey to forward it on to their friends and post it as their statuses. I sent out emails to eight friends who are alumni from various NFTY regions, and sent it to all of my interviewees and to some of those individuals with whom I had preliminary conversations. I also sent an email to a friend who works at the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism (RAC),¹² also a NFTY alumna, to forward to her colleagues and

¹² The Religious Action Center is the social justice arm of the Reform Jewish Movement.

friends. Another friend posted the survey to his Twitter account; the RAC, NFTY, Kutz Camp, and NFTY in Israel all re-tweeted the survey from this friend's tweet. Lastly, I advertised my survey through a flyer at the URJ Biennial in Toronto held from November 4-8, 2009, at a table reserved for Kutz Camp and also at an alumni event hosted by Kutz Camp and NFTY.

This sample is not random. Respondents who returned my survey are disproportionately involved within the Jewish community, both personally and professionally, now and as teenagers. They overwhelmingly have positive memories of their experiences in NFTY. They recall most fondly their experiences in Jewish youth group and can pinpoint that these opportunities particularly influenced their adult Jewish identities and Jewish leadership paths. To try to minimize some of this bias I broadened the pool of respondents by sending the survey out to the Director of Jewish Milestones, an organization in the Bay Area that does outreach to interfaith families to forward to individuals involved there. I also sent it out to one of the listservs I am on that includes Jewish professionals and professionals-in-training across the country. I asked them to forward the survey on to appropriate populations within their social networks.

The survey sample consists of 228 respondents between the ages of 22 and 39 who were active in NFTY. 444 respondents initially filled out my survey; however, for the purposes of my study, I filtered out individuals who were not within my desired population, post-college 20s and 30s. I also filtered out individuals who were not active in NFTY. In my survey, I included a question regarding NFTY involvement. To the question "Were you active in your NFTY region," respondents could check:

- I never attended NFTY events

- I attended 1 or 2 events during high school
- I attended 1 or 2 events per year
- I attended 3 or more events per year

Most NFTY regions hold approximately 4 to 6 events per year. In this survey, a person who checked “I attended 3 or more events per year” was deemed “active,” meaning he or she attended the majority of possible regional events each year.

Of the 228 active NFTY alumni, 123 respondents attended Kutz Camp, 111 served on Regional Board, and 14 served on North American Board. Because many respondents did two or more of these leadership experiences, it was impossible to compare each group individually. Therefore, this paper offers three separate comparative analyses: Kutz Camp alumni (54% of the sample) vs. active NFTY alumni who did not attend Kutz Camp (46%), Regional Board alumni (49%) vs. active NFTY alumni who did not serve on Regional Board (51%), and North American Board alumni (6%) vs. active NFTY alumni who did not serve on North American Board (94%) Within the sample, about 70% of respondents were women. A little less than half of respondents were affiliated with NFTY regions in the Northeast, indicating that at least for high school, they resided there. Almost all respondents identified with the Reform Movement in high school, and a little more than 75% currently identify with the Reform Movement.

Interpretive Framework

This thesis has both personal and professional relevance for me. First, I am an alumna of NFTY who traces my positive Jewish identity back to my experiences in youth group. Although I did not participate in Kutz Camp or NFTY's Regional or North American Board, many of my friends did, and I think it is important for me to help ensure that Reform youth programs are as effective as possible in creating Reform Jewish leaders. Second, I have prior experience working in Hillel and have witnessed the leadership journeys of alumni from these various Jewish identity-building opportunities. I was curious to see what factors influence alumni to become involved in Jewish organizations.

Third, as a Jewish communal professional, I wonder if and how these programs have influenced volunteers and my colleagues in the fields of Jewish Education, Jewish Communal Service, and the Rabbinate and Cantorate. Fourth and perhaps most important, I am particularly interested in the issue of young leadership (individuals in their 20s and 30s) in the Jewish community. I believe that investing in young leaders will shape the Jewish organizations and synagogues of the future. I acknowledge these three aspects of my experience as the interpretive framework for my thesis.

Results

“I do not think that there has been a single greater influence on my life than my involvement with NFTY...and this goes... for regional, national, going to Kutz.”

In a single sentence, this interviewee captures the most positive outcome that NFTY generally, but also Kutz Camp, Regional and North American Boards, can have on young adult alumni. Several alumni believe that their current involvement in Jewish life and leadership was influenced by their participation in Kutz Camp and Regional and North American Boards. While the qualitative data overwhelmingly support the positive effects these Reform Movement leadership programs have on young alumni, the quantitative data are more nuanced.

This section explores the different ways that young adult alumni of NFTY recall their high school experiences, college activities, and current Jewish interactions. Within each subsection of quantitative data, I present my results by first describing general information about the sample then highlighting comparisons between groups. The results demonstrate that on the whole, young adult alumni choose not to interact with Jewish organizations and synagogues, or make donations to Jewish causes. Where they do, however, leadership alumni (participants in Kutz Camp, and NFTY Regional and North American Boards) are selectively more involved in Jewish and Reform life than NFTY Alumni who did not participate in Kutz Camp, and NFTY Regional and North American Boards. This is especially true with regard to participation in off-campus college activities and in choosing professional paths. But it is important to note that for certain measures of college and current involvements and philanthropy choices, alumni of Kutz Camp and Regional and North American Boards participate less frequently than their active NFTY counterparts.

Memories of Kutz Camp, Regional Board, and North American Board

On the whole, interviewees maintain positive memories of their experiences at Kutz Camp. They recall feeling “cool” there and that the desire to access Jewish education was normative, “not weird or nerdy or stupid.” One interviewee remembers in particular the leadership opportunities Kutz Camp presented for her, as well as the sense of empowerment she felt while at camp. Not only did she get to focus intensely on leadership areas of interest, but she also got to choose what those were. She presents her experience as like living in a mini-city:

The people who ran the city were the campers, whereas at my previous Jewish camp, the people who ran the city were the counselors, and we were just the little ants, like the little citizens. At Kutz, we were the governor, we were the editor...we felt like we owned our experience.

Interviewees’ memories of Regional and North American Board were more mixed. For those who served solely on Regional Board, they recall loving their regions, the work it took to build up their regions, and the programming they were able to create. For those who served on both Regional and North American Board, however, the story was a bit more complex. Three North American Board members recall feeling disempowered by their experiences at this highest level of leadership. They report that they were merely “figureheads...all important decisions were made by adults and mostly had been preset long before and that we were supposed to sort of stand outside and wave – that we were window dressings on national programming...or activities.” In other words, they recognized that the youth did not have as much power as they once thought because there were adults managing the overall structure of the youth movement.

One interviewee remembers a more positive experience sitting on a URJ committee, “which was a great window in the Union and the Reform Movement and the

national organization.” She “felt like oh, I really am the voice for youth on the outreach committee.” Yet, at the same time, she and other interviewees felt frustrated because they had very little access to money for programming. Despite running on a platform where she advocated for nationwide programmatic changes, there were neither the resources nor the coordinated staff time to see these changes come to fruition when she was ultimately elected.

Moreover, during their required summer at Kutz Camp, North American Board Members often felt under-utilized. One interviewee explains:

we weren’t...maintenance staff, but we weren’t program staff, we were sort of this weird in between where they still needed us to do the maintenance-type things sometimes, [but] we probably should have been used more for programming...specific leadership tasks and activities and planning for the year.

Added to this strange role was the fact that for many North American Board members, this was their first summer at Kutz Camp, so they were unfamiliar with the culture of the camp, and therefore felt distant or uncomfortable in this new setting.

As a result of these challenges of being on North American Board, the respondents who also served on Regional Board thought that they had more responsibility on the regional level and more opportunities to exercise leadership by implementing policy and maintaining control and flexibility over the strategy and programming of the region. Regardless of these frustrations, current alumni report that all three experiences – Kutz Camp, Regional Board, and North American Board – had extremely positive effects on them. Yet, many alumni nonetheless chose to disassociate with formal Jewish opportunities in college.

Lack of Desire for Alumni to be Involved Post-High School

In an ideal world, one might expect that NFTYites would seamlessly move into college excited about their Jewish experiences, proud of their Jewish identities and eager to be involved in Jewish life post-high school. Opportunities for engaging with Judaism abound on the college level, and many of these opportunities are affiliated specifically with the Reform Movement. Students can attend events and plan programs with Hillel or Kesher, the Reform Movement's college arm; they can teach Hebrew school, become Bar Mitzvah tutors, or take on positions of temple youth group advisors at Reform synagogues; they can choose to work as counselors at Reform summer camps or camps with other Jewish affiliations; or they can travel to Israel either through study abroad programs or through Taglit: Birthright Israel. The Reform Movement even offers a Birthright trip. Plus, with the rise of Jewish Studies departments on college campuses, alumni can express their Jewish identities by taking Jewish studies courses.

Alumni of the Reform Movement leadership programs, however, often choose to opt out of campus experiences citing burn out. One interviewee states:

I definitely made a conscious decision [not to participate in Jewish activities]. I was burnt out from my high school experiences... I just felt that there must be more to me than Jewish, so when I was in college, I tried to figure out what more to me there was.

A former Regional and North American Board member says, "...to be completely honest, I was so burnt out after being on board my freshman year that...I really had no desire to be involved in anything Jewish on campus at all, in any way, shape or form."

Despite the relative lack of campus college involvements among alumni of Kutz Camp and NFTY Regional and North American Boards, interviewees noted that their

involvements in these high school programs greatly affected their leadership capabilities to this day. One interviewee explains:

The leadership skills that I had in youth group and CRAFTY have definitely helped as I've sat on the Boards of Directors for other organizations, and you know, how to organize my time and all of that...I was on the Board for 4 years for the Casting Society Of America, which is for Casting Directors and I just couldn't believe how poorly run the meetings were. There was no agenda, there was no structure, and I thought...in temple youth group and NFTY we were just so much more organized than these people.

Other interviewees report that they learned the art of public speaking, the skill of working with and mediating between diverse group of people, as well as the ability to run a group discussion, create an agenda, and establish buy-in from peers. One states that her NFTY experiences helped her learn "how to run a big fractious meeting [by] setting up the room before you get there, so talking to people ahead of time to make sure...that we're on the same page, so I know where the debate is gonna go...before it happens." All of the interviewees acknowledge that the skills they learned in these programs help them in their current volunteer and professional lives. In fact, another interviewee thinks that because of her Board experiences:

I can just go to work and I know exactly what I have to do every day. I know sort of my to-do list because there were so many details when I was planning all of these events and these programs...a lot of people can't really put all of those details into play, and I really could.

The quantitative data supports aspects of the qualitative data. Although the numbers are low for campus college involvement, off-campus college involvement was greater. Moreover, despite low levels of organizational involvement, volunteer leadership, and philanthropy, alumni of Reform Movement leadership programs stand out with regard to their desire to work for the Jewish and Reform communities and attend the Reform Movement's seminary in various capacities.

College Involvements

To test for college involvements and leadership from the survey responses, I asked respondents to rate their involvement in Jewish college organizations in which NFTY alumni might have participated. Alumni rated their involvement on a scale. For each organization (Aish HaTorah, AIPAC, Chabad, Hamagshimim/YJ Impact, Hillel, Jewish Fraternity/Sorority, Kesher, Koach, Orthodox Student Group, Union of Progressive Zionists/J Street U, and Other Jewish organization), respondents received one point if they were involved but took no leadership role; two points if they served on a committee; three points if they planned an event; four points if they sat on the Student Board; five points if they served as President of the Student Board; and six points if they served as a founding member of the organization on their campus. For each organization, alumni could earn up to 21 points. The highest response that anyone in the sample received was 16, with a quarter of respondents reporting no involvement, and about 35% reporting involvement in one, two or three organizations.

A) Kesher

Of particular significance to this thesis is alumni involvement in Kesher, the Reform Movement's college campus program. Two thirds of respondents in the sample report being involved in the organization with no leadership role. The distribution of involvements along the scale for the other third was quite diverse. 6% of respondents sat on the Kesher Student Board, and multiple people had more than one leadership role within the organization, as indicated by a score of between 7 and 21. 3 respondents even scored 18, 20, and 21 respectively. These data corroborate an interviewee's description of

her first days at university. Wanting to be involved in Jewish life, this former Regional and North American Board member went to her Hillel Director who told her there was no Reform *minyan* on campus. She was eager to start such a *minyan*. “And so he played guitar and I led services... and we organized events, and we started what became the strongest *minyan*. It was the sort of skills I learned in NFTY.”

But despite this story, alumni of Kutz Camp were no more likely to participate in Keshet than NFTY alumni who did not attend Kutz Camp. The average score on the scale of involvement for alumni of Kutz Camp was 2.99; the score of non-alumni of Kutz Camp was 2.77. The scores are almost identical, and the difference is not statistically significant according to an ANOVA test. Although more Kutz Camp alumni served on the Keshet Student Board and as founding members of Keshet on campus, equal numbers of those who attended Kutz Camp and those who did not served as President of the Keshet Student Board.

Among alumni of Regional and North American Boards, there was also no statistical difference between them and non-alumni. Because only 14 people responded for NFTY North American Board within the age and NFTY involvement filters, it is difficult to draw many comparisons between alumni and non-alumni. Of special significance, though, almost 75% of alumni of Regional Board reported being involved in Keshet without taking a leadership role. The average score for involvement in Keshet was slightly higher among Regional Board alumni than non-alumni (3.31 versus 2.49), but the difference was not statistically significant. In fact, the distribution of various involvements across the possible 21 points was relatively similar, as Table A indicates. In

some instances, non-alumni even scored higher for leadership involvement in Keshet than Regional Board alumni.

Table A

Involvement in Keshet of Regional Board Alumni vs. Non-Alumni: Percentage of people who received each score		
Score	Participation in Regional Board	
	No	Yes
0	2.6	3.6
1	72.5	63.6
2-5	13.3	11.8
6-10	7.9	10.9
11-14	2.6	8.2
18-21	0.9	1.8
Total	99.8*	99.9*
* Due to rounding, total percentages do not equal 100%		

B) Hillel

Within the entire sample, respondents were more likely to be involved in Hillel generally than in Keshet specifically. Half of the respondents took on leadership positions in Hillel, and approximately 20% of those who participated in leadership activities in high school sat on the Hillel Student Board or served as President of the Hillel Student Board. 15% of respondents served in multiple leadership capacities in their campus Hillels.

Kutz Camp alumni were slightly more likely than NFTY alumni to serve on the Hillel Student Board and serve as President of the Hillel Student Board, but when we look at the scale of Hillel involvement more generally there was no significant difference. For alumni of Regional Board, the average difference between alumni and non-alumni was a bit greater. Perhaps not surprisingly given the qualitative data that shows the lack of interest among alumni of Reform leadership programs in formal involvement in Jewish

college activities, a few more non-alumni of Regional Board planned Hillel events and served as President of the Hillel Student Board. That being said, according to an ANOVA test, Regional Board alumni were more likely to have multiple leadership involvements and were more likely than non-alumni to participate in Hillel generally ($p = .016$). Half of North American Board alumni took on leadership positions in Hillel. But there was no difference between alumni and non-alumni regarding their leadership involvement in Hillel.

C) Off-Campus Involvements

I also looked at Jewish involvements off-campus. This included: Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor, religious school teacher at a Reform synagogue, religious school teacher at another type of synagogue, songleader, study abroad in Israel, Taglit: Birthright Israel, working at Kutz Camp, working at another Reform Jewish summer camp other than Kutz camp, working at a Jewish summer camp with another affiliation, youth group advisor, and Other. Here, respondents received one point for each activity with which they were involved. The total possible points alumni could earn were 11 points. As Table B below illustrates, approximately three-quarters of all respondents were involved in one, two, or three activities. A high percentage was even involved in four activities.

Table B

College Activities Among Sample	
Number of off-campus Jewish activities during college	Percent
0	.5
1	21.7
2	26.1
3	22.2
4	18.8
5	6.8
6	2.9
7	1.0
Total	100

On several measures, Kutz Camp and NFTY Regional and North American Board alumni showed statistically significant higher levels of involvement overall than NFTY alumni. Not surprisingly, Kutz Camp alumni were statistically more likely than their active NFTY counterparts to return to Kutz Camp to work (34.2% vs. 6.3%, $p = .000$). And, they were more likely to become songleaders (23.4% vs. 12.5%, $p = .032$). Yet unexpectedly, non-alumni were marginally more likely than Kutz Camp alumni to work at a Reform Jewish summer camp other than Kutz Camp (69.8% vs. 57.7%, $p = .048$).

As for alumni of NFTY's Regional and North American Boards compared to active NFTY alumni, there are also statistically significant differences. Alumni of NFTY Regional Board were statistically more likely than active NFTY alumni to work at Kutz

Camp (27.6% vs. 14.7%, $p = .017$). They were also more likely to work at a Reform Jewish summer camp other than Kutz Camp (74.3% vs. 52.0%, $p = .001$) and become youth group advisors (37.1% vs. 23.5%, $p = .024$). Similarly, alumni of North American Board were statistically more likely to work at Kutz Camp than other NFTY alumni (85.7% vs. 16.1%, $p = .000$). This is probably because they were required to spend a college summer working at Kutz Camp during their tenure on Board, although some may have worked additional summers there as well. While these results support the impact of NFTY leadership programs, the involvement of leadership program alumni does not carry over post-college.

Current Involvements

To test the involvement and leadership of young NFTY alumni, I created two indices, one for attendance and the second for leadership.

A) Attendance

1) Multiple programs

This first index examines how often alumni have attended events sponsored by specific Jewish organizations or types of Jewish organizations and the total number of organizations they attended. The institutions included on the survey are: Birthright NEXT, an Israel organization (including AIPAC, ARZA, JStreet, and New Israel Fund), the JCC, a Jewish educational organization, the Jewish Federation, and a Jewish social justice organization. Respondents could also write in other organizations with which they are involved.

Respondents received one point if they attended an organization's events once or a few times; two points if they attended an organization's events a few times a year; three points if they attended an organization's events about once a month; and four points if they attended an organization's events more than once a month. Then, the individual organizational attendance sums were added together. Respondents could receive a total of 28 points on this scale. The highest score anyone received was 15. About a quarter of respondents received a total of zero points, meaning they did not attend any organization's event even once. Almost half of the respondents attended one organization's event at least once. Fewer than 30% of respondents scored between 5 and 15, meaning that they attended multiple organizations' events on multiple occasions.

Alumni of Reform leadership programs were no more likely than NFTY alumni generally to participate in multiple programs, with the exception of North American Board Members whose mean score was slightly higher. Table C lists their relative means and demonstrates the lack of statistical significance between the groups. As Table C indicates, for Kutz Camp and Regional Board alumni, the average level of involvement was attending one organization's programs about once a month, a score of 3. For Regional Board alumni, the mean for attending events was higher among those who did not serve on Board but this difference was not significant. For North American Board alumni, the average involvement was a bit higher than 4, a difference that is marginally significant at the $p = .05$ level. In short, alumni of Reform Movement leadership programs were for the most part no more likely than active NFTY alumni to attend events sponsored by Jewish organizations.

Table C

Mean of Current Involvements for NFTY alumni and Kutz Camp alumni			
Did you attend Kutz Camp?	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance Between Groups
No	3.15	2.668	.759
Yes	3.02	3.253	
Mean of Current Involvements for NFTY alumni and NFTY Regional Board alumni			
Did you serve on NFTY Regional Board?	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance Between Groups
No	3.37	3.375	.140
Yes	2.78	2.522	
Mean of Current Involvements for NFTY alumni and NFTY North American Board alumni			
Did you serve on NFTY North American Board?	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance Between Groups
No	2.96	3.005	0.050
Yes	4.57	2.209	

II) Types of Organizations

With regard to specific organizations, relatively few of the former NFTYites surveyed have attended any particular type of organization at least once in the past three years. Only about half have attended an event by a social justice organization at least once; the same goes for JCCs. The other types of organizations attract even fewer former NFTYites. Israel and educational organizations only attracted about 30% of alumni to at least one event in the past three years. Jewish Federations attracted about 45% of alumni to an event or program at least in the past three years. This number is surprisingly high, given the changing attitudes toward Federations found by previous research and summed up by one interviewee: “I don’t think my generation has any attachment to the

Federations.” Lastly, less than 20% have attended a Birthright Next event in the past three years, but one reason for that may be because those over the age of 32 were not eligible to go on Birthright. Moreover, NFTY alumni between 22 and 32 may have attended Israel trips that rendered them ineligible for Birthright in college, making them less likely to attend Birthright Next events, even though non-Birthright alumni are often welcome.

For only three types of organizations, alumni of Kutz Camp, and Regional and North American Boards indicate statistically significant differences. North American Board alumni were more likely than other active NFTY alumni to have attended at least one event in the past three years sponsored by the Jewish Federation (78.6% vs. 42.0%, $p = .008$) and the JCC (78.6% vs. 49.0%, $p = .029$). Again though, it is important to remember that the number of North American Board members who responded was not particularly high, so the statistical differences might be overstated. But even more interesting, active NFTY alumni who did not participate in Reform Movement leadership programs were statistically more likely to attend events sponsored by a Jewish educational organization (33.3% vs. 20.8%, $p = .027$). Further research will help determine why this unexpected result occurred.

B) Volunteer Leadership

The second index of current involvements tested the frequency and level of volunteer leadership among the sample. For the same types of organizations used in the first scale, a respondent could receive one point for being involved in an organization without taking a leadership role; two points for serving on a committee; three points for

planning an event; four points for serving on the board; five points for serving as the President of the Board; and six points for serving as a founding member of the Board. In total, one could receive up to 21 points for each organization or type of organization with which he or she had a volunteer role. For the most part, as reflected in their overall lack of attendance at events sponsored by the various Jewish institutions, a vast majority of the sample reported having no involvement. In fact, each type of organization reflected between 80% and 90% respondents' non-involvement. On the whole, where respondents did report involvement in an organization, they did not participate in a leadership capacity. Table D lists the scores that respondents received for the various organizations.

Table D

Volunteer Roles of Respondents: Percentage of Survey Respondents that Received Each Score							
	Birthright NEXT	Israel organization	JCC	Jewish Educational organization	Jewish Federation	Jewish Social Justice organization	Other organization
0	0.9	0.9	0.9	3.5	1.9	1.4	10.2
1	98.1	97.7	96.3	92.3	94.9	91.2	78.6
2-5	.9	0.5	2.9	3.2	2.9	5.6	7.4
6-10	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.9	0.5	1.9	1.9
10-15	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Clearly, these numbers are extremely troubling. Only 10 people, or about 5% of respondents in the sample, took on multiple leadership roles in the Jewish organizations or organizational types listed in the survey.

Almost across the board, Kutz Camp, NFTY Regional Board, and NFTY North American Board members were no more likely than NFTY alumni to volunteer for leadership opportunities in the aforementioned institutions. The two exceptions for that are for NFTY North American Board alumni involvement in Israel organizations ($p = .000$) and JCCs ($p = .012$). Here, alumni were significantly more likely to volunteer for

leadership roles. Nonetheless, on the whole, the leadership qualities that Kutz Camp, Regional Board and North American Board alumni exemplified by participating more actively than NFTY alumni in college activities tapers off significantly after graduation.

Jewish Congregational Involvements

One of the ways that NFTY leadership programs enhanced individuals' Jewish identities is through the opportunity for campers to experiment with worship practices and spirituality. As one interviewee recalled, "I think both camp and NFTY...exposed me to different forms of worship and prayer, [and] to Israel...I really got a sense of just Judaism as a culture, Judaism as a people, Judaism as a civilization, and Judaism as a religion, and that only grew my excitement." One might assume, then, that religious exploration would be carried over into adulthood with participation of some sort in synagogue life.

A) Synagogue Attendance and Membership

Despite their religious growth in youth group, the majority of respondents within the sample are not currently members of a synagogue, independent *minyan*, or other Jewish congregation. Approximately 35% of respondents attend services or events at Reform synagogues on average a few times a year, but a similar number attend less frequently, only on High Holidays or special occasions. Furthermore, despite the rise in popularity of the independent *minyan* as an alternative to "traditional" synagogue life, survey respondents on the whole did not attend services or events sponsored by an independent *minyan* on a regular basis. The same goes for services and events sponsored

by synagogues of other denominations. When comparing between the groups, there is no statistical difference between Kutz Camp alumni, or former members of NFTY Regional or North American Board, and other active NFTY alumni for any of these measures except for attendance at Orthodox synagogues. Regional Board alumni were statistically more likely to attend services or events sponsored by an Orthodox synagogue ($p = .031$). Otherwise, a person's participation in a NFTY leadership program does not make him or her more likely to be a member of a synagogue, frequent Reform synagogues on a regular basis, or attend services and events at an independent *minyan*, or synagogue of another denominational affiliation.

B) Volunteer Leadership in Jewish Congregations

In addition to testing how often alumni attend synagogues, independent *minyanim*, or other Jewish congregations, the survey also tested the frequency with which alumni took on volunteer leadership roles at these institutions. Similar to the question about current involvements, I created a scale of volunteer leadership, whereby a respondents could receive one point for being involved in a synagogue without taking a leadership role; two points for serving on a committee; three points for planning an event; four points for serving on the Board; five points for serving as the President of the Board; and six points for serving as a founding member of the Board. In total, one could receive up to 21 points for each type of congregation in which he or she participated.

For Reform synagogues, the majority of alumni, almost 60%, are uninvolved. Approximately 20% of respondents reported being “involved but took no leadership role.” About 5% served on a committee, planned an event, and reported having more than

one volunteer leadership role. A slightly smaller set within the sample, about 4%, reported serving as President of the Board. The highest number of points on the scale anyone received was 11. Again, I compared respondents' leadership within Reform synagogues to leadership in independent *minyanim* and synagogues with other denominational affiliations. For independent *minyanim*, only about 13% of respondents reported having any type of involvement. Approximately 9% of respondents indicated that they were involved but took no leadership role. The highest possible score anyone received was only 9. And only about 5% of the sample that answered the question received any points over 1. For Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist synagogues, over 90% reported being involved without taking on leadership roles. Clearly, the data demonstrate that alumni are not taking on volunteer leadership roles within Reform synagogues, independent *minyanim* and synagogues of other denominations.

Whether or not someone attended Kutz Camp or served on Regional or North American Boards does not seem to matter either. Again, there is one curious exception: Kutz Camp alumni were more likely than non-alumni to take on a leadership role in an Orthodox synagogue ($p = .031$). Save for this exception, one could argue that the trends here reflect the fact that young people tend not to be involved in synagogues; they do not join or participate in synagogue life until they settle down and start families.

Philanthropic Tendencies

Because they are not well-established, constantly moving, and on the whole, uninterested in formal organizational membership or leadership, one might expect that

young alumni would not place a large emphasis on philanthropy at this point in their lives – even to Jewish organizations with which they have positive associations. To test this hypothesis and examine philanthropic tendencies among young alumni, I asked respondents to report their average donations in the past three years. The 14 organizations or organization types were: ARZA, another Israel organization, Hillel, a Jewish educational organization, the Jewish Federation, a Jewish social justice organization, a Reform Jewish day school, a Jewish day school with another affiliation, a Reform Jewish summer camp, a Jewish summer camp with another affiliation, the Religious Action Center, a Reform synagogue, Other synagogue, congregation or independent *minyan*, and Other Jewish organization.

About 30% of the sample donated to 2 or 3 organizations, with a little more than 10% donating to 4 or 5 organizations. The greatest number of organizations to which a respondent contributed was 9. About 40% of the sample made no donations at all, but that still means a sizeable majority contributed in some way financially to an organization in the past three years.

Because this sample represents active NFTY alumni, it is worthwhile to see whether or not they made donations specifically to Reform Jewish institutions. Only about 2% of respondents donated to Reform Jewish day schools – this is not surprising given the age of respondents and the dearth of Reform Jewish day schools.

Approximately 8% of respondents who answered the question donated to the RAC, 10% of respondents donated to ARZA, 21% donated to a Reform Jewish summer camp, and 25% made a donation to a Reform synagogue. Although only a quarter of the sample contributed at least a minimum percentage of their annual incomes to Reform Movement

camps and synagogues in the past three years, the opportunities are ripe for them to continue and perhaps increase their donations.

Alumni from Kutz Camp, and Regional and North American Boards are no more likely than their non-alumni counterparts to donate to any particular type of organization. What is more surprising, other NFTY alumni were statistically more likely than Regional Board alumni to donate to Reform synagogues (32.1% vs. 18.1%, $p = .014$). This finding is very troubling. One might expect alumni of these leadership programs to donate significantly more not only to Reform synagogues but also to camps, ARZA, and the RAC. Why is this not the case? NFTY leadership programs would be well served to teach about philanthropy and the importance of making meaningful contributions to Jewish organizations to increase the likelihood that alumni donate to one or several causes, including their own organization.

Professional Involvements

If young alumni from NFTY, Kutz Camp, Regional Board, and North American Board tend not to participate in Jewish organizations in a volunteer capacity and do not frequently make donations to Jewish causes, the question naturally arises as to their professional paths. Perhaps here is where alumni act on the leadership skills they learned in NFTY. Two areas are of special interest: whether or not they attend degree programs that further their Jewish education (both those affiliated with the Reform Movement and those that are not) and, similarly, whether or not they work for Jewish organizations, both generally and for the Reform Movement specifically.

A) Graduate School Choices

Alumni of Reform Jewish youth leadership programs seem like prime targets to attend the various program of Hebrew Union College (HUC) due to their positive associations with Reform Jewish institutions growing up. The HUC School of Jewish Communal Service, and the Day School Leadership Through Teaching program are unique in the sense that they are non-denominational; they might not be as attractive to alumni of these programs.¹³ On the whole, only a handful of respondents in the sample are considering attending, currently attend, or graduated from these schools, as well as the School of Sacred Music at HUC. But for the Education and Rabbinical Schools, the numbers are higher. A little less than 20% of the sample is considering, currently attends, or graduated from HUC's Schools of Education. Similarly, about a quarter of the sample is considering, currently attends, or graduated from HUC's Rabbinical School. Despite these relatively high numbers, alumni of Regional Board are no more likely than other alumni to attend these graduate programs. But Kutz Camp alumni are more likely to attend HUC's Schools of Education (22.0% vs. 11.6%, $p = .033$), and North American Board alumni are more likely than other NFTY alumni to attend HUC's Rabbinical School (61.5% vs. 23.1%, $p = .005$).

B) Professional Choices

Regardless of whether or not young alumni attend Hebrew Union College, they may nonetheless work for a Jewish organization. Again, because of their positive

¹³ Other schools such as Brandeis University's Hornstein Jewish Professional Program NYU's Program in Nonprofit Management and Jewish Studies offer similar graduate training as HUC's School of Jewish Communal Service. The survey did ask about whether or not alumni currently attend or graduate from these programs.

associations with Reform Jewish youth experiences, it seems likely that Jewish organizations would heavily recruit NFTY alumni to work for them. Indeed, one interviewee said,

I actually went to D.C. because it was at a time where I didn't know if I wanted to go to graduate school...there were a lot of positions for young, energetic, enthusiastic, motivated Jews out of school to work in a lot of different Jewish organizations. And so I figured I would do that and it would help me kind of decide...did I want to go to public policy graduate school? Did I want to go to Rabbinical School?

In Washington, D.C., this interviewee worked at a Jewish lobbying organization prior to attending HUC's Rabbinical School. Opportunities abound for young alumni to work in the Jewish community in entry-level fellowships at organizations like the RAC, or work-study programs like the BBYO Professional Development Institute. But how does participation in Kutz Camp or NFTY Regional and North American Board impact the professional choices of young alumni?

Table E

Alumni Professional Involvements		
	Jewish organization or synagogue	Jewish organization or synagogue affiliated with the Reform Jewish Movement
I never considered it.	11.5%	11.1%
I considered but decided against it.	3.7%	6.9%
Not yet, but possibly in the future.	6.0%	9.2%
Not yet, but definitely in the future.	3.7%	4.1%
Yes, in the past, but not now	32.7%	37.8%
Yes, now.	42.7%	30.9%
Total	100%	100%

Table E above describes the sample's professional involvements, both with regard to Jewish organizations affiliated with the Reform Movement and those in the broader Jewish community. Those who have a definite desire to work in the Jewish community, have worked for Jewish organizations in the past, or currently work for Jewish organizations comprise about 80% of the sample. With respect to the same factors for Reform Jewish institutions specifically, that figure is approximately 73%. These figures are extremely high and they obviously contrast starkly with the low levels of involvement and leadership that alumni take on in volunteer capacities. Perhaps the contrast sheds light on the fact that for alumni, working for the Jewish community might be their primary connection to Jewish life. They do not need other types of involvements to further explore their Jewish identities. It also might be related to the sampling strategy, which may have overrepresented Jewish professionals.

Among alumni of Reform Jewish leadership programs, there is no statistical difference between Kutz Camp alumni and their non-alumni counterparts. NFTY Regional Board alumni, however, are more likely than active NFTY alumni to work for the general Jewish community (87.7% vs. 70.3%, $p = .001$) and the Reform community (80.2% vs. 65.8%, $p = .012$). Moreover, National Board alumni are more likely than other NFTY alumni to work for the general Jewish community (100.0% vs. 77.2% vs. $p = .031$). Clearly, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that Reform Movement leadership programs impact many alumni regarding their choice to become Jewish professionals. While this result is quite positive, the Reform Movement must consider how it can maximize involvements and leadership among alumni of these programs in a similar way

for other volunteer capacities, especially given the fact that the Reform Movement fails to engage young alumni in a significant manner.

The Reform Movement's Lack of Engagement of Young Alumni

On March 28, 2008, alumni from NFTY's Garden Empire Region (GER) got together for a reunion. The event, held in New York City, included dinner and services, which attracted 80 alumni, followed by a bar night, which attracted approximately 200 alumni. The goal of the reunion, according to one of its attendees was "not only to relive old times, but [to] foster Jewish involvement among the elusive 20-something set." One of the coordinators of the evening, Dee Ross, commented to the New Jersey Jewish

News:

I had such great experiences in NFTY and we made so many close friends... But it can be hard to maintain these friendships when people go to different colleges and then pursue careers all over the country. And NFTY does not have an alumni department. A big void had opened up, and that's what made us realize that we had to try and bring the group back together. (Alumnae Organize Reform Youth Reunion)

Another interviewee who attended the reunion said it was an "awesome event" in that it brought together old friends to reconnect in a safe space with no other supposed agenda like a singles event meant to pair up single Jews for dating and marriage purposes. She noted, however, that despite the great success of the reunion, there did not seem to be extensive buy-in from the URJ. According to an interview I conducted, the coordinators were not asking for money, but rather for mechanisms to process checks as well as web space and access to a listserv. Yet, whether because of the extensive restructuring of the organization, or some other reason, the coordinators did not receive full support.

Alumni outreach and engagement has recently emerged as a new interest of the URJ, particularly at Kutz Camp. Under the direction of the Manager of Alumni Relations and Development, Kutz Camp has recently started an effort to gather alumni on Facebook and LinkedIn. The staff also sent out an alumni survey and is in the process of marking the 45th Anniversary of Kutz Camp, which will occur in the summer of 2010 with an alumni celebration. At the URJ's most recent Biennial conference, Kutz Camp hosted a get-together for their alumni as well as NFTY alumni. But despite these efforts, which, to be fair, are just getting off the ground, most alumni interviewed did not realize that Kutz was engaged in any alumni engagement at all. When prompted, some remember joining one or two alumni Facebook groups, but most interviewees cannot readily recall receiving information about any alumni activities or networks. More important, they are disappointed by what they perceive to be a lack of outreach by Kutz Camp and NFTY.

Recommendations

As the data demonstrate, although Kutz Camp alumni and Regional and North American Board alumni reflect positively on their experiences in NFTY, they only selectively show greater disposition to be involved in the Jewish community and in Reform institutions when it comes to off-campus college activities, enrolling in Jewish graduate programs, and working for the Jewish community. For all other measures, they are no more likely to be involved than their NFTY alumni peers who did not participate in these leadership programs. And in some cases, active NFTY alumni are even more involved than Reform leadership program alumni. In addition, alumni of NFTY are largely absent from Jewish communal life in a volunteer capacity. These findings corroborate much of the general research on Jews in their 20s and 30s, which indicate that young Jews are uninterested in attending and joining formal membership organizations.

Some alumni nonetheless articulate a desire for more opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals in a formal capacity. Even if alumni do not express a strong interest, they acknowledge particular leadership techniques that their experiences in Reform youth leadership programs taught them. These skills make them extremely well suited to actively participate in Jewish life broadly, and in the Reform Movement more specifically. There are two primary ways that the Reform Movement can capitalize on the interests and talents of alumni to engage them in Jewish life.

Recommendation 1: Create a stronger network of alumni programming for NFTY Board and Kutz Camp Alumni

The URJ and NFTY would be well served if they put additional resources into providing programming or networking by and for NFTY Board and Kutz alumni. True, the NFTY-GER reunion mentioned earlier was targeted at an alumni population that encompasses, but is broader than, the scope of those discussed in this thesis. Nonetheless, alumni of leadership programs are positioned to create buy-in from their peers regarding the benefits of participating in alumni networking opportunities.

The economic downturn that began in the fall of 2008 has accelerated recent changes at the Union for Reform Judaism, which has meant a severe reduction of staff as well as a restructuring of its regions and departments. Given these circumstances, suggesting a NFTY Alumni Department or Alumni Relations Director is currently unrealistic. Yet, there is still great importance for the URJ to cultivate alumni relationships and it is possible to do even with limited resources because of the professional training many alumni of Reform Movement youth leadership programs received.

By creating alumni networks in New York, Washington D.C., Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and other cities to get alumni together for social and cultural activities, the Reform Movement could better position itself to involve young people in their 20s and 30s in their institutions by co-sponsoring events. For a demographic that moves around frequently because individuals want to pursue career opportunities or graduate school, NFTY and Kutz can be a constant commonality. If transient alumni were looking for community and Jewish connections, the Reform

Movement would potentially notice a major return on the investment of offering them specifically Reform opportunities. As one interviewee put it, if alumni have a choice of “going to a random Jewish event or it’s going to a NFTY alumni event where hey, I have something in common with these people,” they might be more likely to attend a NFTY alumni event.

Furthermore, alumni networks can be leveraged to financially support NFTY and its programs. A few people I interviewed discussed how they felt that after serving on Regional Board, North American Board and going to Kutz Camp, it was very strange that NFTY has never asked them for any money. One alumna exclaims, “That was like my whole identity. And there’s so many people like me, and they lose us after college, or they lose us after high school. And it’s like...that’s totally nuts.” The same alumna, who happened to attend the NFTY-GER alumni reunion, likened the group to a college alumni network. She explains:

Part of the reasons why alumni networks in colleges get together for social activities...to fundraise for their colleges is they just don’t ask them for money, they also have a reason for them to reminisce and get together..., [which] fosters other activities.

Using the alumni gatherings as an opportunity to pursue shared interests and values, volunteers could then solicit alumni for contributions towards scholarships, infrastructure grants, or other types of support. There would be some initial costs in getting such a project off the ground. But, the efforts could be entirely volunteer-led, with staff support. Furthermore, in the long run, these costs would pay off, because the URJ would be sustaining the involvement and leadership in Movement-related activities, not only of NFTY Board and Kutz Camp alumni, but also of NFTY alumni generally. It would also

create a sustainable culture of giving among alumni, which could be used to support NFTY's current activities.

Recommendation 2: Enhance Reform synagogue communities to maximize involvement and leadership of NFTY Board and Kutz alumni

As mentioned above, some synagogues, in addition to independent *minyanim*, are quite successful in creating opportunities for young people to engage in Jewish life that meet their needs and make the idea of religious affiliation more palatable. Alumni from Kutz Camp, Regional Board, and North American Board are primary targets to participate in and co-lead these experiences. As one Kutz Camp alumni states in reference to the Reform Movement:

I think that's really where the untapped potential lies. Because if other alumni are like me, they are getting involved in other organizations, and they are exerting their leadership in a variety of ways... but I think that the Reform Movement, and synagogues who are affiliated with the Reform Movement could really stand to gain by turning to alumni, and saying you grew up with this Movement and you know us inside and out, we need you to be this, that, or the other leadership position at our Temple.

Although there is no set formula for success, communities in cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles are, in their own ways, drawing in young Jews like the alumni discussed above to engage with spirituality, social justice, and religious exploration.

How can Reform Movement synagogues maximize the involvement and leadership of NFTY and Kutz alumni in their worship, social events, social justice work, and educational opportunities? Because of the nuances of geography, size, and culture between various Reform congregations, it seems challenging to propose suggestions that other Reform synagogues can use to maximize the participation of NFTY Board and

Kutz Camp alumni in their activities. The Synagogue 3000 Project, however, has some valuable proposals that are transferable for other Reform synagogues.

First, young adults want to feel that their presence is valued. Belzer and Miller (2007) write:

Those who are interested in congregational life are aware that they are exceptional – they know that the majority of young adults are not interested in religious affiliation. As such, those who participate want to be acknowledged for their unusual commitment and interest” (8).

In their study, young congregants expressed the value of having both a physical space within the synagogue for their programs (even if they did not use it) and designated funding for their events. Belzer and Miller also found that young adults want a sense of ownership in their congregations. They value opportunities to assume leadership roles both within their peer group and welcome chances to move into leadership roles in the larger congregation. There is one catch, though. One of my interviewees told me that even if Reform Movement institutions could create leadership opportunities geared specifically toward individuals in their 20s and 30s, the challenge does not stop there; the organizations must make certain that young Jews do not feel like “fish out of water” because there are so few of them involved. In order for synagogues to utilize this strategy, it needs to be as seamless as possible. The synagogues must find appropriate roles for young people within the larger congregation that capitalize on their skills and interests and at the same time ensure that they are not filling some sort of quota.

One interviewee reported a particularly good experience she had when she joined her local Reform synagogue and served as the co-chair of the Caring Committee. She explained that “it was a fairly involved committee because some people needed rides to synagogue pretty frequently and food baskets.” Once she took on that leadership role

within the synagogue, she also started working with the clergy on how to attract more young people to the synagogue. She organized an event with the cantor to have younger members of the synagogue gather informally. When Reform synagogues provide leadership opportunities like this interviewee had, they recognize the particular drive and talents of NFTY Board and Kutz alumni. In turn, the synagogues build a more welcoming environment for alumni and other young adult leaders, as well.

Second, young adults' interest in religion is multi-faceted. Congregations that want to attract Jews in their 20s and 30s can offer multiple points of entry and organize affinity groups so that young congregants can find like-minded peers. In doing so, Belzer and Miller argue, synagogues create numerous arenas for young congregants to reflect upon and articulate their own religious identities (9). One interviewee shared her positive experiences at Kavod House, a Moishe House cooperative living environment focused on the intersections of social justice, community building, and Jewish vitality in Boston. She explains:

Kavod House to me was a logical place to go because it was a social justice, spiritual place, which was kind of how I pictured NFTY and Kutz, a social justice, spiritual place. And it was the right fit...going to Kavod House, you see other kids who went to NFTY, so it feels very comfortable and at home. And I think that at the end of the day that's what you're looking for in life and in friends, and a partner whatever- you're looking for somebody who's similar. And if that's...social justice and Jewish, then perfect.

Although Kavod House is not a synagogue, there is nonetheless an important lesson to be learned here. Not only did this former NFTY Board member and Kutz Camp alumna connect with an organization that tapped into her passion for social justice, as well as her desire to find a sense of Jewish spirituality, but she also found a community of peers who were similar to her, either because they were also NFTY alumni, or because they shared a

set of values with her. This ideal can be transferred into a synagogue setting by organizing events, programs, and affinity groups for young adults (of which former NFTYites would be a target market group) based on their similar interests – not necessarily in the synagogue’s physical space, but certainly under their auspices.

Third, young adults thrive when they are “met where they are.” In practical terms, Belzer and Miller suggest reducing the fee structure so that participation is financially viable (11). Indeed three interviewees reported that a lack of finances was the primary barrier to joining a synagogue. One woman says, “The only thing that’s stopping me from being a member of a synagogue is the cost of membership. I would love to be a member of a synagogue and be very active but I just can’t afford it.” Another woman currently in graduate school states matter-of-factly, “If you’re going to have people that are my age involved, you need to subsidize it. Because we’re in school, we’re on loans, and we have no money, and that’s the problem.”

It is important to note that many congregations are well on their way to meeting the financial needs of younger congregants, whether with scaled membership structure or reduced costs for particular programs, and their generosity has even increased in the economic downturn of the past year and a half. Yet, in bigger cities, the trouble is that even with the reduced fees, the cost of living is so high that the reduced fees are almost moot. Despite the fact that she knows how expensive it is to run a synagogue, one interviewee in Washington D.C. laments:

even within a fair share system... [where] my income looks really high on paper with my husband’s, half of our income goes just to our mortgage, so the fair share... for me to join a synagogue that costs \$3,000 or \$4,000 a year, [is] a huge amount of our money.

Synagogues might be best served by consulting with younger congregants to determine their financial needs. In that way, congregations can determine the most appropriate individualized plans for young people and their families, rather than working within a more rigid, standardized system of financial breaks.

Another challenge, mentioned earlier, is the fact that even with financial breaks, younger people who move around may not want to join a synagogue if they anticipate that their stay in a particular city is not permanent. One interviewee discussed the idea of a low-cost portable membership fee that young Jews in their 20s and 30s could buy that could be transferred to a Reform synagogue wherever they live. This would provide a more mobile option and entice them to join a synagogue when they might not have otherwise. Providing this type of alternative would not only make young people more predisposed to attending events and services at Reform synagogues, but also perhaps, increase membership there.

Finally, as the research on Jews in their 20s and 30s indicates, young adults in general, and NFTY Board and Kutz Camp alumni in particular, want to find a balance in their congregations between the “particular” and the “universal” (Belzer and Miller, 2007, 11). As one interviewee reported, “I like to give Jewishly to things that are not just explicitly Jewish, so AJWS for example, or MAZON.” Reform synagogues might become more attractive to this population if they secure or continue to maintain explicit partnerships with organizations like PJA, AJWS, or MAZON, that explore the question of the “particular” and the “universal” in Jewish identity and culture.

Many Reform synagogues are partner synagogues with MAZON, which means that they mobilize their members “through raising awareness, fostering advocacy and

integrating *tzedakah* for hunger relief into holiday observance, community events and lifecycle celebrations” (Community and Synagogue Involvement). In addition to these commitments, Reform synagogues could strengthen their partnerships by taking groups to MAZON’s beneficiaries on a more regular basis, integrated with learning sessions prior to and following the trips. Similarly, Reform synagogues could create partnerships with AJWS by sending a congregational delegation on a volunteer summer or alternative break project, or by creating a study group using educational materials from AJWS’ expansive website. Partnering with these types of organizations takes few resources and can help attract young Jews into Reform synagogues quite substantially.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, NFTY has greatly influenced Kutz Camp and Regional and North American Board alumni. The interview responses reflect specific ways in which alumni have benefited from the leadership techniques they learned while at camp and on Board: they use what they learned in their everyday lives, at work, and in the communal organizations – both secular and Jewish – of which they are a part. Alumni directly relate these enhanced leadership skills to their NFTY experiences.

Twenty-two measures indicate a statistically significant difference between alumni of Reform youth leadership programs and their active NFTY counterparts. While alumni of these programs are more likely to pursue off-campus college activities and Jewish graduate schools and professional endeavors, these positive experiences do not seem to translate into higher levels of either attendance or leadership in communal organizations, or extensive financial contributions to Jewish institutions. In some cases, alumni are less likely than their non-alumni equivalents to participate in Jewish life. These results corroborate the general data about Jewish 20s and 30s, despite the fact that this small sub-sample might be pre-disposed and trained for additional involvement and leadership.

If the Reform Movement truly wants to attract this population, it can create a strong alumni network with Kutz Camp and NFTY Regional and North American Board members leading the way to build or re-build relationships with former friends, peers, and colleagues. Using the successful 2008 NFTY-GER reunion as a model, and even its facilitators as consultants, NFTY can seize the opportunity to connect with alumni, thereby increasing the possibility of enhanced Jewish communal involvement among

attendees. If cultivated properly, there even lies the potential for alumni to make financial contributions to the organization that influenced their Jewish identities so profoundly.

The Reform Movement could also provide opportunities for alumni to increase their participation and leadership in Reform synagogues by acting on the recommendations provided by Belzer and Miller in their Synagogue 3000 report. In a nutshell, synagogues can:

1. Help young adults feel that their presence is valued and engender a sense of ownership among young volunteers to take on leadership roles
2. Recognize that young people's interest in religion is multi-faceted and find multiple entry points for emerging adults to find connections with the synagogue
3. Meet young people "where they are" intellectually, spiritually, and financially
4. Strike a balance between the "universal" and the "particular"

If synagogues invest in young alumni of Reform leadership programs, certainly the pay-off will be great, increasing membership and involvement of an elusive population and creating a more seamless transition for young alumni, rather than waiting until the alumni marry or have children to re-enter synagogue life, as some may argue should be the "solution" for engaging Jews in their 20s and 30s.

Certainly, the research presented here is only the beginning. The effects of NFTY on alumni of all of its programs warrant additional and expanded research similar to studies on Young Judeaea, Brandeis-Bardin Institute, Jewish camping and Birthright (Cohen and Ganapol, 1998; Levine, 1971; Sales and Saxe, 2004; Cohen, 1991; Cohen and Schor, 2004; and Saxe and Chazan, 2008). The effects of NFTY can be contextualized in the larger scheme of participants' Jewish experiences by determining

“not just the simple association between Jewish education...and Jewish identity in adulthood” but also “the net impact of the former on the latter by testing for controls among the most influential confounding factors of parents’ religiosity and other sociodemographic factors” (Cohen, 2007, 36). In doing so, the eager researcher can truly gauge the effectiveness of the Reform Jewish Movement’s youth programs.

For almost 70 years, the Reform Movement has poured countless resources into training what it considers the future leaders of the denomination and the Jewish world. This thesis demonstrates where the URJ has been successful in creating lasting effects on alumni of its top leadership programs and where the organization can further improve its efforts to engage these individuals throughout their lives. By maximizing its outreach to young adult alumni, the Reform Movement can truly capitalize on the untapped potential of the tip and middle of the Reform Jewish identity pyramid. In doing so, the URJ ensures the greatest possible return on its investments, enriching the lives of Jewish young people. In turn, these leaders can influence the Reform Movement and the entire Jewish community that fostered them.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide for NFTY Alumni, including Kutz Camp Alumni, NFTY Regional Board Alumni and NFTY North American Board Alumni

1. How many summers did you attend Kutz Camp?
2. How long did you serve on Regional or National/North American Board?
3. Why did you decide to participate in these activities?
4. Can you describe the effects these experiences had on you?
5. What kinds of leadership skills did you learn through these experiences? How?
6. How and why did you become involved in Jewish life after high school and beyond?
7. Did you ever consider becoming a Jewish professional?
8. Why did you decide to become a Jewish professional?
9. In what ways, if at all, do you attribute your current position to your experiences in Kutz Camp, NFTY, etc.?
10. Are you involved in any of the alumni activities sponsored by Kutz Camp? Why or why not?
11. How would you define leadership within the Jewish community?

Appendix B: NFTY Alumni Survey

1. Welcome!

Hello! This is a survey related to your participation in NFTY and Kutz Camp. The researcher, Samantha Pohl, wants to learn about the current Jewish involvements among alumni of these programs. Her thesis project is required for a Master Degree in Jewish Communal Service from Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion and a Master in Public Administration from the University of Southern California.

In taking this survey, your identity will remain confidential - no names or other identifying information will be disclosed.

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

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Candidate for Master of Public Administration - University of Southern California ('10)

TIME INVOLVEMENT: The survey will take about 10 minutes of your time.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS: Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Richard Siegel, Director of the HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Service: rsiegel@huc.edu or 3077 University Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90007, or toll-free at 800-899-0925.

By completing this survey, you give permission for your responses to be included in the study and any published results.

2. High School Involvements

1. Were you active in your Temple Youth Group (TYG)?

- ☐ I never attended events.
- ☐ I attended 1 or 2 events during high school.
- ☐ I attended 1 or 2 events per year.
- ☐ I attended 3 or more events per year.

2. Did you serve on your TYG Student Board?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. How many years did you serve on your TYG Student Board?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4

4. Were you active in your NFTY region?

- ☐ I never attended NFTY events.
- ☐ I attended 1 or 2 events during high school.
- ☐ I attended 1 or 2 events per year.
- ☐ I attended 3 or more events per year.

5. With which NFTY region/federation were you affiliated in high school?

NFTY regions have changed quite a bit throughout the years. I've included all of the names that NFTY's regions and federations have had over the last 60 years. Please choose the name for your NFTY region during the time you were in NFTY.

6. Did you serve on a NFTY Regional Board?

- ☐ yes
☐ no

7. How many years did you serve on a NFTY Regional Board?

- ☐ 0
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ I'm not sure.

8. Did you serve on NFTY North American Board?

- ☐ yes
☐ no

9. How many years did you serve on NFTY North American Board?

- ☐ 0
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ I'm not sure.

10. Did you attend Kutz Camp as a participant?

- ☐ yes
☐ no

11. How many summers did you attend Kutz Camp as a participant?

- ☐ 0
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ I'm not sure.

12. When did you...

Last attend Kutz
Camp as a
participant?

Year

Graduate from high
school?

13. With which Jewish denomination did you affiliate when you were in high school?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Humanist
- ☐ Just Jewish
- ☐ Non-denominational
- ☐ Orthodox
- ☐ Post-denominational
- ☐ Reconstructionist
- ☐ Reform
- ☐ Secular
- ☐ Spiritual
- ☐ I'm not sure.
- ☐ I did not affiliate.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. College Involvements

**1. Of the following organizations, rate your involvement during college.
(Check all that apply)**

	Not involved	Involved but took no leadership role	Sat on a committee	Planned an event	Sat on the Student Board	Served as President of the Student Board	Served as a founding member of the organization on my campus
Aish HaTorah	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AIPAC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chabad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hamagshimim/YJ Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hillel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish sorority/fraternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
KESHER/Reform group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
KOACH/Conservative group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Orthodox student group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Union of Progressive Zionists/J Street U	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Jewish organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you checked "other," please specify.

2. Which activities, if any, were you involved with in college? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor
- ☐ Religious school teacher at a Reform synagogue
- ☐ Religious school teacher at another type of synagogue
- ☐ Songleader
- ☐ Studied abroad in Israel
- ☐ Taglit: Birthright-Israel
- ☐ Worked at Kutz Camp
- ☐ Worked at a Reform Jewish summer camp other than Kutz Camp
- ☐ Worked at a Jewish summer camp with another affiliation
- ☐ Youth group advisor
- ☐ Other

4. Current Involvements

1. In the past three years, about how often have you attended events sponsored by the following Jewish organizations?

	Never	Once or a few times	A few times a year	About once a month	More than once a month
Birthright NEXT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Israel organization (AIPAC, ARZA, JStreet, New Israel Fund, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
JCC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewish Educational organization (LimmudNY, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewish Federation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewish Social Justice organization (AJWS, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, PJA, RAC, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Jewish organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you checked "other," please specify. (Do not include synagogues - they will be addressed in the following question)

2. In the past three years, about how often have you attended services or events sponsored by the following Jewish organizations?

	Never, or only on special occasions	Only on High Holidays	A few times a year	About once a month	More than once a month
Conservative synagogue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independent minyan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Orthodox synagogue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reconstructionist synagogue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reform synagogue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Jewish congregation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. With what Jewish organizations have you taken on the following VOLUNTEER leadership roles in the past three years? Check all that apply.

	Not involved	I was involved but took no leadership role	Served on a committee	Planned an event	Served on the Board	Served as President of the Board	Served as a founding member
Birthright NEXT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Israel organization (AIPAC, ARZA, JStreet, New Israel Fund, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JCC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish Educational organization (LimmudNY, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish Federation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish Social Justice organization (AJWS, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, PJA, RAC, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Jewish organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you checked "other," please specify. (Do not include synagogues - they will be addressed in the following question)

4. Again, with what Jewish organizations have you taken on the following VOLUNTEER leadership roles in the past three years? Check all that apply:

[illegible]

5. With which Jewish denomination do you currently affiliate?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Humanist
- ☐ Just Jewish
- ☐ Non-denominational
- ☐ Orthodox
- ☐ Post-denominational
- ☐ Reconstructionist
- ☐ Reform
- ☐ Secular
- ☐ Spiritual
- ☐ I'm not sure.
- ☐ I do not affiliate.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

6. Are you currently a member of a synagogue, independent minyan, or other Jewish congregation?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

7. To which of the following organizations have you made a donation in the past three years? Check all that apply.

	No	Not yet, but I expect to give in the future	Yes, a minimal % of my financial contributions	Yes, a significant % of my financial contributions
ARZA	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Another Israel organization (AIPAC, JStreet, New Israel Fund, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hillel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewish Education organization (LimmudNY, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewish Federation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewish Social Justice organization (AJWS, PJA, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reform Jewish day school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewish day school with another affiliation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reform Jewish summer camp	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewish summer camp with another affiliation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reform synagogue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other synagogue, congregation, or independent minyan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Jewish organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you checked "other," please specify.

5. Professional Choices

1. Are you currently enrolled in, or have you graduated from, any of the following Jewish professional training programs?

	No, and I am not considering it for the future	No, but I am considering it for the future	Yes
Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program at Brandeis University	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HUC Rabbinical School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HUC Education School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HUC School of Jewish Communal Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HUC School of Sacred Music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Day School Leadership Through Teaching (DeLeT)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NYU's Program in Nonprofit Management and Jewish Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Another Rabbinical School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Another Jewish Graduate Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Name of Jewish Graduate Program or Rabbinical School

2. Have you ever worked part time or full time, year-round for a Jewish organization or synagogue?

- ☐ I never considered it.
- ☐ Yes, in the past, but not now.
- ☐ Yes, now.
- ☐ Not yet, but possibly in the future.
- ☐ Not yet, but definitely in the future.
- ☐ I considered but decided against it.

3. Have you ever worked part time or full time, year-round for a Jewish organization or synagogue affiliated with the Reform Jewish Movement?

- ☐ I never considered it.
- ☐ Yes, in the past, but not now.
- ☐ Yes, now.
- ☐ Not yet, but possibly in the future.
- ☐ Not yet, but definitely in the future.
- ☐ I considered but decided against it.

6. Ending Questions

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

2. Thank you very much for completing this survey.

Would you like to
receive a copy of the
results of this survey
when ready?

May the researcher e-
mail you if she has
any follow-up
questions?

If you answered yes to either, please provide your e-mail address (optional)