Jewish Values Education in Reform Religious Schools

By

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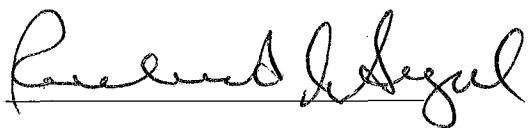

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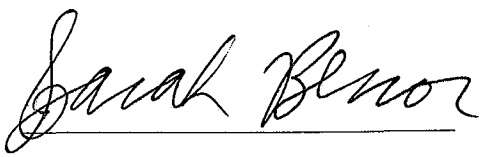

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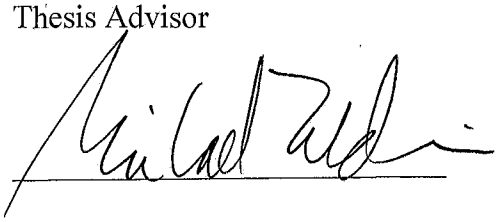

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Abstract

This study examines Jewish values, explores how and in what settings these values are taught, surveys the current curricula used in a select group of religious schools, and determines whether the curricula reflect current ideas regarding Jewish values. The literature review suggests that the issue of pedagogical methods appropriate to teaching Jewish values remains a long-standing unanswered question. The current study attempts to further clarify the current practice of teaching Jewish values. Four religious schools in the Los Angeles area were selected for this study, and current personnel were interviewed. The results of this exploration suggest that although the religious schools studied teach similar values to similar aged students, with a uniform Jewish values curriculum, these curricula fail to consider the students' moral developmental stages. In some cases, religious schools used theoretical texts that were not within the realm of the students' experiences and lacked practical examples that students could apply to their lives. For example, one curriculum used famous people as role modes to demonstrate a particular Jewish value. However, the students were unable to relate to many of these examples because they were not age appropriate or they fell outside the realities of their lives. Further, the current exploration showed differences among the schools with respect to the pedagogy. The information gathered in this study is intended to provide the basis for a developmentally and socially appropriate curriculum guide for teaching Jewish values in a religious school setting.

Introduction

While teaching in a religious school (RS) setting, I was given a 2nd grade values curriculum, which consisted of teaching the Jewish Value of *Baal Tashchit* (do not waste). This lesson required use of a mustard seed to explain the Jewish text that states "do not waste anything larger than a mustard seed" (*Sefer Hasidim*). The lesson involved showing the students the size of a mustard seed, and then asking them, "Is there anything smaller than a mustard seed that you can waste?" Instead of answering the question, the students' interests shifted from the topic to the concrete object, the mustard seed. The focus was lost; the students left the class wanting to know about mustard seeds, not about taking care of the environment. This experience showed a lack of consideration of age appropriate teaching methods for teaching Jewish values to young children.

From this teaching experience, I became interested in the development of values based curriculum geared in both content and process to the age and developmental stage of the students. I decided to create a yearlong Jewish values curriculum for a sixth grade RS class. This curriculum will help identify what Jewish values are and how we can utilize them in our current and daily lives.

The teaching experience also led to a question: was this disconnect between the curriculum's intention and the student's interests a unique experience, or was it a common occurrence in Reform Jewish RSs? If this were a common occurrence, my proposed curriculum significantly contributes to Jewish values education. In order to shape the proposed curriculum guide, it was necessary to gain information about current practices in teaching Jewish values within active Reform RS settings.

I conducted a review of current thought about the teaching of values and moral development. From this review, I compiled a list of Jewish values terms found within the literature and curricula reviewed. To determine current practices, I interviewed and gathered information from four Reform RS directors in Los Angeles. The information obtained from the RS directors included which values they taught, in which grades they taught them, and which curriculum they used. Finally, I synthesized the information and proposed recommendations for a developmentally appropriate Jewish values curriculum.

Literature Review

The following four areas of reviewed research informed the basis of my proposed Jewish Values Curriculum. Initially, the terms (i.e., ethics, values) associated with a values curriculum are defined. The next section incorporates a review of the various options available for Jewish schools to teach Jewish values. This is followed by a review of literature on teaching Jewish values from the Reform perspective. The last section discusses the process of moral development, an important component in the creation of a curriculum on values for children and teens.

Defining Terms

What exactly is a value? Moreover, what makes a value Jewish? A value is "a principle people hold that guides how they live their lives" (www.dictionary.com). Other synonyms for the term *values* are *morals* and *ethics* (Dorff, 2003). By understanding the definitions of morals and ethics, one can better recognize the basis for values (Dorff, 2003). According to Dorff (2003), the word *moral* refers to the "concrete norms of what is good or bad, right or wrong in a given situation" (Dorff, 2003, p. 2). In other words, Dorff suggests that situations influence whether or not a particular behavior is moral. Ethics, however, "is a higher level of moral thinking. Ethics refers to the theory of morals" (Dorff, 2003, p. 2). According to Dorff (2003), a person's character relates to his morals, suggesting that good acts come from people with good character.

Teutsch (2011) echoes Dorff, emphasizing that people's character, *midot*, is as important as their actions. In an effort to understand midot, Teutsch, discusses the movement behind midot. *Musar* is a movement within the Jewish religion committed to moral renewal through a focus on daily ethical practice (Teutsch, 2011, pp. 78-79). Positive habits and virtues in action are critical to value based decisions (Teutsch, 2011, p.81).

Teutsch (2011) describes a list of general values common to both American and Jewish values: Democracy; Humility (*Anava*); Health and Wellness (*B'riyut*); Avoiding waste (*Bal Tash'hit*); Truth and integrity (*Emet*); Fidelity; Caring (*Hesed*); Gratitude (*Hodaya*); and Intention (*Kavana*) (Teutsch, 2011, pp. 565-578). According to Teutsch (2003), "values are not necessarily one or the other, American OR Jewish; both societal and Jewish values are similar" (Teutsch, p.15). The Torah's 613 *mitzvot* describe the framework for a Jewish approach to life, from which we created a value system (Teutsch, 2011, p. 579). Each sect within the Jewish religion has selected from this framework a path for living life (Teutsch, 2011, p. 580). Some of the list is specifically Jewish in nature (e.g., maintaining laws of *Kashrut*, observing Shabbat) (Teutsch, 2003, p. 26). However, some of the 613 *mitzvot* (value system for life) finds a parallel virtue in societal expectations and mores (Teutsch, 2011, p.79).

Morality as Character

Development of a moral compass is important to Jewish identity (Isaacs, 1996, p. 77). He emphasizes, "the Jewish ideal is not only to behave ethically, but to have ethical character" (Isaacs, 1996, p. 77). Both Dorff and Isaacs conclude that it takes a good or ethical person to do good acts. The following exemplifies the difference between a good act and being a person with ethical character. One leaves a restaurant after dinner with a doggy bag to take home. While waiting for the car, a homeless person asks for food. A person, who gives the food, even though he *wants* to eat it tomorrow, is an ethical person doing a good act. The person who gives the doggy bag because he *does not want* the food is merely doing a good act because it suits him.

Teaching Values

There appears to be two questions related to the teaching of Jewish values. *Should* we teach Jewish values, and if so, **how** should we do this? Several sources address these questions.

Chazan (1980) reviewed six curricula programs that relate to teaching Jewish values in an attempt to answer, "How does the modern Jewish school deal with the relationship between study and moral action?" (p. 307). The six programs he explored were: A Conservative Religious School curriculum; a teenage religious education program; the Melton approach; the Fryer Foundation Middos curriculum; Jewish values clarification program; and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations Curriculum. In summary, Chazan (1980) concluded that there are three major approaches to the relationship between study and moral action. One approach focuses on the study of classical texts, suggesting that such study leads to moral action (p. 308). Another approach involves teaching moral action without referring to classical texts (p. 308). Lastly, Chazan (1980), suggests that the goal of Jewish education is to encourage a sense of socialization and belonging to the Jewish community, rather than text study or direct teaching of Jewish moral values (p. 308).

In a later article, "Should we teach Jewish values" Chazan (1992) suggests that teaching Jewish values in schools is important. However, he states that teaching Jewish values is not an easy task, and teaching Jewish values leads to further exploration and questioning (p. 72). Before teaching Jewish values, one needs to answer the following: What are values; are they social or individual; are they principles or practices; how should they be taught; who should teach them; and what materials should be used. The pluralistic nature of Judaism makes it difficult to generalize about teaching specific values and specific moral behavior (Chazan, 1992, p.72). For example, should all Jews observe the laws of *kashrut*? Should all Jews observe twenty-six hours of Shabbat and its restrictions (as well as joys!)? Given the modern educational institutional structure, questions often arise, such as who determines how we define values and how they should be taught. In the latter article Chazan (1992), suggests the following is necessary for

values education: classical texts should be used to teach; people can choose from the "bag of virtues," the 613 *mitzvot* rather than all adhering to an agreed upon set of virtues; belief in the child and how the child learns and is taught; the importance of dialectic questioning; knowledgeable teachers who model value laden behavior; and the teachings must be relevant both in and out of the classroom, a *kehilat kodesh* (p. 80).

Resnick (1992) in *From ought to is: On the relationship of Jewish Values education to Jewish life,* describes the continuing battle of non-Orthodox educational institutions to make Jewish values relevant for life in the modern world (p.47). He suggests that it is important to have consistency between what is being learned, the "*ought*," and what is taking place within the Jewish community, the "*is*." Additionally, the teaching of Jewish values needs to focus on the reality of Jewish life within the institution's community; there needs to be a link between what one should be doing and what one is actually doing (p. 47).

Rosenak (2004), in *Teaching Mitzvot*, describes the learning of *mitzvot* as being based on "perfection of the body" and "perfection of the soul" (p. 13). One initially learns about *mitzvot* by belonging to a community and doing as others do. He states that, "....the future of *mitzvah* education, then, depends very much on a dual discernment: that communities and communal allegiances are important and enhancing, and that the modes of Jewish expression that constitute mitzvot express a specific moral ideal and are channels to a particular kind of insight, understanding, and 'enlightenment" (Rosenak, 2004, p.13). He further suggests that Judaism offers a model for "linking the social, moral, and existential dimensions of life" (p. 13) by "distinguishing among action (obligatory, permissible, and forbidden)." Commitment to both (soul and body) promotes decency among human relationships (Rosenak, 2004, p. 13). He concludes by implying that education of such values and actions cannot be taught by rote

(Rosenak, 2004, p.13). All who are in the position of teaching youngsters value-based thought and behavior must exemplify that, "It's (*mitzvoth*) ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace (Etz Chayim Prayer)" (Rosenak, 2004, p. 13).

Powell (2006), in *Ethics in Jewish School*, appears to echo Rosenak by reinforcing the idea that values should not only be taught in the abstract, but also be modeled by all involved in rearing and/or educating children and adolescents. He states that, "Ethics and moral behavior are learned within the powerful forces of context and culture" (p. 16). All people involved in an educational institution must be on board with the current value system being taught. This buy-in is demonstrated by not only behaving in certain ways, but also by using the same vocabulary to communicate with each other and the students, which creates a culture of living the values taught (Powell, 2006, p. 20).

Reform Judaism

Since this study reflects what is taking place in Reform RS, it is important to understand Reform Judaism's view on values. Borowitz and Patz (1985) suggest that "Reform Judaism proposes behavioral choice is based on knowledge, rather than blindly following a set of rules and traditions, because past generations have followed, exactly, for thousands of years" (Borowitz & Patz, 1985, p. 112). Jews should study and learn about the different practices and levels of observance and make an informed choice for their practices. In order to make an informed choice, knowledge of our tradition is needed (Borowitz & Patz, 1985, p. 112). Through education and knowledge, Reform Jews base practices and observance on personal choice (Borowitz & Patz, 1985, p. 112). Borowitz and Patz (1985) include in their book a list of Jewish obligations developed by "the Reform Rabbis' Organization" (p. 120). Of primary importance, and first on the list is *ethical obligations*. "Our first duty is to be just and decent to every human

being in our own family, in school, in the community, in business and wherever else we have dealings with people. In everything we do, all our lives, we must strive to do what is right " (Borowitz & Patz, 1985, p. 120).

The thought of doing the right thing comes from the study of the prophets, also known as "Prophetic Judaism" (Borowitz & Patz, 1985, p. 112). During early Reform Judaism, studying the prophets helped Jews understand their responsibility to other people and to society as a whole. The prophets helped establish a moral tradition of speaking out against corruption and immoral behavior. Teaching values and ethical behavior is a cornerstone of Reform Judaism (Borowitz & Patz, 1985, 120).

Development of Morality

In order to understand how children learn values, we must understand how they develop moral thinking. Lawrence Kohlberg (1958) explored the development of morality. He interviewed 72 boys ages 10, 13, and 16. He presented vignettes in which someone acts in a questionable behavior that can be thought of as unethical. For example, one vignette talked about a man who broke into a pharmacy to obtain a drug for his dying wife; he did not have enough money to buy the drugs, and the pharmacist would not sell the drug for the amount the husband had. Kohlberg asked the boys whether they thought the husband should have done that, and more importantly, why (Kohlberg, 1958, pp 2-3). Kohlberg was more interested in the subject's reasoning rather than a yes or no answer. From the data collected, Kohlberg postulated that children progress through six developmental stages, clustered into three hierarchical levels. The level Pre-Conventional Morality consists of two stages: Obedience and Punishment Orientation, and Individualism and Exchange. In the former stage, the children are concerned with following the rules, because if one does not follow them, one will surely be punished. In the latter stage, the

children realize there are viewpoints other than their own in this world and people are free to pursue individual interests. In addition, punishment changes from an absolute to simply taking a risk for which they may or not be punished (Kohlberg, 1958, pp. 3-4).

The next level is Conventional Morality, which consists of two stages: Good Interpersonal Relationship and Maintaining Social Order. The first stage of this level usually occurs during the teen years. Teenagers begin behaving in moral ways and realize their actions affect other people. Teens are concerned with the expectations of others in their lives (i.e. parents, teachers, and society); teens want to meet the expectations of others and behave accordingly. During the second stage in this level, teens become concerned with society as a whole; the emphasis of decision-making changes from thoughts about the individual to the larger society (Kohlberg, 1958, pp 4-5).

The last level, Post Conventional Morality, consists of the final two stages: Social Contract and Individual Rights and Universal Principles. At these stages, one expands the areas of moral thought and behavior to include the abstract theoretical concepts of morality within an ever-expanding universe (e.g., concern for civil rights of others, justice, laws which protect everyone). The content and process of the proposed Religious School curriculum guide will reflect Kohlberg's theory of moral development. The values chosen for the curriculum guide will align with the students' age-appropriate social concerns. The examples and values situations presented to the children will reflect the same (Kohlberg, 1958, pp. 5–7).

Summary of literature review

The method by which Jewish values are taught is not a new area of concern; it has been a source of discussion for several decades. The two approaches appear to be the intentional teaching of values versus the learning of values from natural occurrences. Of interest is the

apparent lack of focus on the stages of moral development as the stages relate to the teaching of values.

Methodology

In an effort to gather information about current educational practices in teaching Jewish values in Southern California, I obtained a list of local Reform RS and chose four well-known ones. Additionally, I chose the four RS directors, one male, and three female, because either I worked with them or they were graduates of the same education masters program I am currently attending. Each agreed to participate in an hour-long interview regarding the teaching of Jewish values in their schools.

Each RS Director was initially contacted by email with a follow-up phone call. All four Directors were enthusiastic about meeting and helping me in any way possible. Based on the director's availability, meetings were scheduled over a period of approximately two months. Three of the four meetings took place at the RS in the Director's office; one director invited me to meet over breakfast at a local restaurant. I asked each of the directors a group of questions from an Interview Guide developed for this study. The questions attempted to obtain information related to the following: values education, if any, being taught, and in what grades; curriculum implemented; time spent on specific topics; vision and mission statements organizing decision-making. Additionally, the RS Directors shared copies of any curriculum materials in use. The information was synthesized into a summary, which will inform the content and delivery of the curriculum guide I am developing.

Results

Textbooks

The following textbooks are used at the Religious schools I interviewed. When a textbook mentions a specific value in Hebrew, the English translation follows in parentheses, the Hebrew.

Eizehu Gibor (Torah Aura Productions, 2009) explores living Jewish values through the lives of modern-day heroes. Some of the values within the book can be considered ethics and morality – *Shmirat Ha Teva* (care for the environment), *T'Shuvah* (repentance) – while other values appear to be more components of Jewish living – *Tzionut* (Zionism) and *Zikaron* (remembrance). The book explores each value through two modern-day personalities whose lives represent the value under discussion. For example, Natalie Portman (*tzedakah*-charity), Golda Meir (*tzionut*- Zionism), Debbie Friedman (*shiru l'adonai*- sing unto God), and Robert and Myra Kraft (*kol Yisrael, arevim zeh ba-zeh*- Israel is responsible for one another). The conclusion of each section presents an activity to engage the students in the value as it relates to their lives. All four RSs use this curriculum in their 6th grade classes.

The values within *Eizehu Gibor* are: *Talmud Torah* (study of Torah), *Tikkun Olam* (care for the world), *Shmirat Ha-guf* (care of the body), *Zikaron* (remembrance), *Tzionut* (Zionism), *Ometz Lev* (courage), *T'shuvah* (repentance), *Anavah* (humility), *Kiddush HaShem* (making God's name holy), *Emunah* (faith), *Brit* (covenant), *G'milut Hasadim* (acts of loving kindness), *Derekh Eretz*, (treating people with respect), *Havdallah* (separation), *Viku'ah*, (argument), *Z'mirot* (songs), *Hehsbon Ha-Nefesh* (taking care of the soul), *Teva* (nature), *Yisrael*, (Israel), *Kavod* (honor), *Lashon Ha-ra* (gossip), *Mitzvot* (good deeds), *Neshama* (soul), *Siddur* (prayer),

Aseret Ha-dibrot (10 commandments), *Pikuah Nefesh* (choosing life), *Tzedakah* (justice), *Rodef Shalom* (making peace), *Shabbat* (observance of Shabbat), and *Simcha* (joy) (pp. 3-4).

Jewish Values Alef to Tav (Grishaver, 2005) assigns each letter of the Hebrew alphabet to a Jewish value beginning with the same letter. For example, the letter *Daled* is paired with *Derekh Eretz* (treating people with respect). An explanation of the value begins each chapter. Following the explanation is a story that explains the value. The chapter ends with questions "to think about," which can lead to a class discussion.

The values discussed within *Alef to Tav* are: *Emunah* (faith), *Brit* (covenant), *G'milut Hasadim* (acts of loving kindness), *Derekh Eretz* (treating people with respect), *Havdallah* (separation), *Viku'ah* (argument), *Z'mirot* (songs), *Hesbon Ha-Nefesh* (taking care of the soul), *Teva* (nature), *Yisrael* (Israel), *Kavod* (honor), *Lashon Ha-ra* (gossip), *Mitzvot* (good deeds), *Neshama* (soul), *Siddur* (prayer), *Aseret Ha-debrot* (10 commandments), *Pikuah Nefesh* (choosing life), *Tzedakah* (justice), *Rodef Shalom* (making peace), *Shabbat* (observance of Shabbat), *Simcha* (joy), *Talmud Torah* (study of Torah), and *Tikkun Olam* (care for the world) (pp. 6-7) .

Prophets Speaking out for Justice (Gevirtz, 2010) focuses on the contribution made to Judaism by several Prophets: Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jonah. Each chapter includes a dramatic vignette depicting the prophet's first encounter with God. Incorporated into the text is background information on the prophet, including quotes from the prophetic book. Historical maps are included to show cities and countries mentioned in the stories. Connections are highlighted between the teachings of the prophet and liturgy. Finally, a modern-day personality, whose actions reflect the values taught by the prophet, is described. For example, in the chapter regarding Amos, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is

presented as a person who "follows in the footsteps of the prophets." Amos talked about justice and concern for people in need. Justice Ginsburg has stated that she uses her Judaism as a guide to impart justice to all people: "I am a judge born, raised, and proud of being a Jew; the demand for justice runs through the entirety of the Jewish tradition."

The content for *The Prophets: Speaking Out for Justice* includes the following areas: comfort, compassion, confidence, confronting, courage, determination, ethical leadership, forgiveness, holiness, hope, humility, justice, loyalty to God, mercy, peace, responsibility, social justice, speaking from the heart, repentance, gratitude, and truth (p. 94).

A Kids Mensch Handbook (Blumenthal, 2004) describes what it means to be a *mensch.* The book appears appropriate for the third and fourth grades. Rather than discussing values, the book talks about common situations and "*menschy*" actions. For example, there is a chapter called *Choices*, within which the example given concerns a new student joining an already existing class. A group of students, eating lunch in the cafeteria, are commenting on the "new kid" who is sitting alone at the next table. The question presented is, "Do you ask the new student to join your table, or do you ignore him?" The situation is further explored by asking the students to relate to their own feelings in similar situations. The choice of what to do is ultimately up to each child. However, some choices lead to becoming a "gold medal" *mensch*, and others do not. The book engages students in activities, quizzes, surveys, narrative, and Jewish wisdom.

The values within *A Kids Mensch Handbook* include the following: *Lashon Ha-ra* (gossip), *Shalom Bayit* (peace in the home), *Dibbuk Haverim* (attachment to friends), *Lev Tov* (generosity), *B'tzelem Elohim* (created in God's image), *Klal Yisrael* (Jewish community), *V'ahavta L'Reacha Kamocha* (love your neighbor as yourself), *Mench* (good person), *Middot*

(values), *Mitzvah* (good deed), *K'vod Habriyot* (respect for all people), *Tzedakah* (justice), *Sh'mirat Habriyut* (respect for health) (p. 5).

You Be the Judge a Collection of Ethical Cases and Jewish Answers (Grishaver, 2000) is a three-volume book that contains ethical dilemmas that the reader needs to solve in a Jewish way. Each dilemma has a story regarding ethics and asks, "What would you do?" Included with each dilemma are answers using Jewish texts or thought to help answer. The teacher can read the dilemma and then facilitate a discussion. The three volumes contain a variety of situations from modern day issues dealing with technology, discussing bioethics, to the age-old dilemma of fasting. This series does not contain formal instruction and can be used to supplement other curriculum.

Synagogue A

Synagogue A is a mid-sized Reform congregation on the Westside of Los Angeles, California. The current director of RS education has been in this position for two years. Currently, synagogue A specifically teaches values education to grades two, six, and seven, and provides two family programs a year focused on values. For kindergarten and grades one, three, four, and five, values are taught indirectly through other curriculum.

The family program, developed by the RS Director, meets twice yearly, specifically geared towards creating a holy community and becoming familiar with the synagogue. Within the program, there are two enduring understandings. First, Jewish values derived from the experiences of our ancestors in the Torah, and other stories from our tradition, provide a framework of a holy community. A holy community, or *kehillah kedosha*, can be enacted through living out values in our daily lives and through incorporating Shabbat into our lives. Secondly, this program teaches students and families about Jewish values (e.g., *Tikkun Olam*,

Hachnasat Orchim, *Nedivut* [generosity]) and how to live these values. By the end of the two meetings, the families should be able to identify Jewish values and identify ways to live them in their lives.

The following curricula are used:

Jewish Values Alef to Tav (2010) in the second grade

The Prophets: Speaking out for Justice (2000) in the sixth grade

Eizehu Gibor: Living Jewish Values (2009) in the seventh grade

The RS Director of Synagogue A is pleased with the curricula the school is currently using. Future goals include the introduction of Jewish values to the entire school via monthly programs, and having the values form the basis of school rules. The RS Director is aware that the students and parents want to learn about Jewish values, and they want to get to know one another on an intimate level. Participating in values based discussion and activities, increases community intimacy, and helps them incorporate values into their daily lives.

Synagogue B

Synagogue B is a large Reform congregation also located on the Westside of Los Angeles. The RS Director has served in this capacity for two years. Values education had been implemented in all grades prior to the director's hiring. When the RS director was hired, major changes were made in the curricula used in the classrooms. The Director switched the environment within which learning of values shifts from the classroom to the playground. This change enabled the students to experience situations within which values actions occur naturally. For example, while engaged in playground activities, opportunities arise to teach values such as how to interact with people by sharing, taking turns, and including them in the group. When schools teach values formally (frontally in a classroom), the director proposes that the students

experience values as inauthentic; this method does not teach students how to live within a value-based community but merely explains intellectually what they are.

While reviewing the curricula and the methods of teaching of Jewish Values, the RS director discovered that time is another issue. The curriculum includes Hebrew and Judaica, which is a large topic including holidays, history, and Jewish values. The director had to reduce the explicit teaching of values, because there was not enough time to teach history and holidays.

Synagogue B is using the same curriculum, *Eizehu Gibor* (2009), to teach values to the 6th graders. In addition to encouraging teachers to use the playground as a hands-on opportunity to model values, each grade has a set of books called *You Be the Judge* (2000). This set of books contains scenarios that incorporate values. For each scenario, the students need to determine the best action to take. Each class engages in this type of learning for 10 minutes each week.
The RS Director emphasized that the teacher is a crucial ingredient in teaching values informally. The teacher's character is important, but teachers should also have some professional development specific to the teaching of values, the RS Director said. The synagogue does not provide this. The credentials for RS teaching and the professional development provided to teachers by the synagogues is a separate concern.

Synagogue C

Synagogue C is a mid-sized Reform congregation located also on the Westside of Los Angeles. The current RS Director has been in this position for three years. This educator considers values important and feels they should always be a part of any curricula. She states that "values are a part of how we function; values connect moments with being a Jewish person." (Synagogue C, personal communication, 2012)

When the current RS Director assumed the position, she made many curricular changes. Currently only the 6th grade uses a values curriculum. Similar to the other two Synagogues, this Synagogue is also using *Eizehu Gibor* (2009). The third grade is learning about Genesis, and through this book of the Torah, they are exploring values. The teacher selects the values he/she will teach in class based on what the teacher deems appropriate to the dynamics of the class. This, of course, varies from teacher to teacher and from class to class. This school uses project based learning, which is a product developed at the end of each year that demonstrates their learning. The projects change from year to year. For example, the 6th grade developed a newsletter that focused on Jewish heroes and Jewish identity and how these topics relate to the students and their learning. In addition, the RS Director is striving to develop consistent language when it comes to values. For values to have a long-lasting impact, the vocabulary should be understood and used consistently throughout the school community.

Synagogue D

Synagogue D is a mid-sized Reform congregation located near the South Bay area in Southern California. The current RS Director has been in the position for seven years. Currently three grades, 2nd, 4th and 6th, engage in value-based curricula. The 2nd is using the book *Jewish Values Alef to Tav* (2010). The 4th grade uses *The Kids Mensch Handbook* (2004). Like the other three congregations, the 6th grade uses *Eizehu Gibor* (2009).

Comparison

Values in Mission/Vision Statements

Table 1: Similarities and Differences among the RS's Values Terms

	Synagogue A	Synagogue B	Synagogue C	Synagogue D
Identity	X	X	X	X
Hebrew	X		X	
Values		X		X
Community		X	X	X
Learning Environment				X
Life Long Learning		X	X	
Prayer	X		X	
Israel	X		X	
Holidays	X			
Customs	X		X	

All the mission or vision statements focus on Jewish Identity. In fact, that appears to be the only factor in common to all four schools. A sense of building and belonging to a community is common to three of the four statements. The remainder of the terms are common in two of the four schools, including the word *values.* However, they are not necessarily the same two schools. For example, life-long learning is common to Schools B and C, while prayer is common to Schools A and C. Given that the RSs all belong to the same movement, it is interesting to note their differences in mission, vision, and approach to the teaching of Jewish values.

Each RS has a mission or vision statement, a document that guides the RS. All four RS Directors gave me printed copies of these documents. These statements indicate that these four RSs use values not only as curriculum but also as guiding principles for their institutions. Table 1 describes the similarities and differences among the RSs' values terms specific to each of their mission or vision statements.

Table 2 presents a comparison of the four synagogues and their Jewish values education.

Table 2: Comparison of Synagogues' Jewish Values Education

	Synagogue A	Synagogue B	Synagogue C	Synagogue D
Years as RS Director	Two	Two	Three	Seven
Emphasis on direct (frontal) instruction vs. informal non classroom instruction	Direct	Direct and Informal on the playground	Direct	Direct
Grades of direct instruction	2nd, 6th, 7th grades	6th grade	6th grade	2nd, 4th, 6th grades
Curriculum used	• *Jewish Values Alef to Tav* • *The Prophets: Speaking out for Justice.* • *Eizehu Gibor*	*Eizehu Gibor* *You Be the Judge*	*Eizehu Gibor*	• *Jewish Values Alef to Tav* • *Kids Mentsch Handbook* • *Eizehu Gibor*
Family Values Education	Two programs per year	N/A	N/A	N/A
The term "values" mentioned in mission and/or vision statement	None	"We imagine a Jewish future for our children in which Jewish living, Jewish values, and Jewish tradition imbue their lives with meaning."	None	"Deepening an understanding of Jewish values"

All four schools teach values formally in the 6th grade with the same curriculum, *Eizehu Gibor* (2009). Synagogues A and D teach Jewish values formally in two additional grades. While

all of the schools teach Jewish Values formally in a classroom setting to at least one grade, all of the schools are interested in teaching Jewish values informally, and one already does so. Two of the four schools, Synagogues B and D, include the terms "Jewish Values" in their vision statement, which appears to indicate the importance of Jewish Values to these schools.

All of the schools use textbooks as the basis for teaching Jewish values. Each textbook used includes a teacher's guide. The text and the guide are the only *content* materials and guidance given to the teachers. The teachers receive a "pacing guide" which informs teachers on which dates specific topics are taught.

The following chart is a comparison of values taught in each Synagogue interviewed.

Values	Synagogue A	Synagogue B	Synagogue C	Synagogue D
Emunah	X	X	X	X
G'milut Hasadim	X	X	X	X
Derekh Eretz	X	X	X	X
Havdallah	X	X	X	X
Viku'ah	X			X
Z'mirot	X	X	X	X
Heshbon Ha-Nefesh	X	X	X	X
Teva	X	X	X	X
Yisrael	X	X	X	X
Kavod	X	X	X	X
Lashon Ha-ra	X	X	X	X
Mitzvot	X	X	X	X
Neshama	X	X	X	X
Siddur	X	X	X	X
Aseret Ha-debrot	X	X	X	X

Pikuah Nefesh	X	X	X	X
Tzedakah	X	X	X	X
Rodef Shalom	X	X	X	X
Shabbat	X	X	X	X
Simcha	X	X	X	X
Talmud Torah	X	X	X	X
Tikkun Olam	X	X	X	X
Shalom Bayit				X
Dibbuk Haverim				X
B'tzelem Elohim				X
V'ahavta L'reacha Kamocha				X
Mensch				X
Middot				X
Sh'mirat Habriyut				X
Shmirat Haguf	X	X	X	X
Zikaron	X	X	X	X
Anavah	X	X	X	X
Kiddush Hashem	X	X	X	X
Comfort	X			
Compassion	X			
Confidence	X			
Confronting	X			
Courage	X			
Determination	X			
Ethical Leadership	X			

Forgiveness	X			
Holiness	X			
Hope	X			
Loyalty to God	X			
Mercy	X			
Peace	X			
Responsibility	X			
Speaking from the heart	X			
Repentance	X			
Gratitude	X			
Truth	X			

Discussion

There does not appear to be a theoretical consensus about best practices in Religious School education regarding the teaching of values. Different schools of thought make their cases: i.e., text study vs. modern day learning experiences; formal learning vs. naturally occurring learning situations. RS are purchasing content based curriculum and using it where thought appropriate. Teachers are not trained in developmentally appropriate moral theory. The directors and faculty of the schools visited did not address theories of child development, moral or otherwise, in their pedagogical decision-making. The following discussion and proposed solution is based on the author's synthesis of data collected and a developmental bias in the content and process of values education in Religious Schools.

VALUES REALISTIC TO THE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

There seems to be a gap between what is being taught and its relevance to everyday life (Chazan, 1992; Resnick, 1992; Rosennak, 2004). For example, the textbook *Eizehu Gibor* (2009), used by all four schools, uses contemporary famous people to explain and teach about values. Some of the people in this book include the Kraft family and Natalie Portman, both examples of wealthy people who are financially generous. While this teaches students to follow the modeled value of generosity, the students do not have lives like the people mentioned in the book. It is a rather easy concept to accept that, if you have a great deal of money, some of it should be given to those in need. Another example is Pope Paul II, with respect to the value of *T'shuvah.* He encouraged the healing of the Jewish-Catholic relationship, given the events of the Holocaust and the Catholic Church's silence during this time. All of the people in *Eizehu Gibor* can be viewed as role models, just as modern-day role models are idolized and revered. However, the emulation of heroes may not be realistic to most of the students. If role models are

used, there must be a simple way in which the students can connect to the model via similarities in the contextual elements of life stories, struggles, and deeds. Although the Pope's actions and a student's actions may stem from similar underlying values, the differences in the lives of the two make it almost impossible to have mutual identification. Given the reality of the world in which most of the students live, the situations are different from the lives of famous people.

So, how does a person with limited resources participate in the value *tzedakah*? What are more relevant examples to which students can relate? Perhaps learning to set aside a portion of weekly allowance, or amassing gently used clothing and toys for donation to those in need would be a more relatable example for the students. If the aspects of a curriculum guide are geared towards the specific age, developmental level, and reality of the students' lives, their participation in discussions and, hopefully, subsequent morally based behavior will increase. They can be included in the decision making about where funds or objects get distributed. They can relate to behaviors such as cleaning out a closet or walking with a parent who spontaneously gives money to people who live on the street. The goal of teaching any Jewish value should be the generalization and actualization of content to outside the classroom.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT VERSUS BEHAVIORAL ACTIONS

The research found inconsistent methodology used among the schools. Teachers brought their own experience, knowledge, and teaching style to their classes. Teachers seemed to teach the "theory" of Jewish values (e.g., Jewish people participate in *Tikkun Olam* activities). Based on the feedback from the RS directors, there appeared to be little, if any, consistent teaching and modeling of the "behavior" of Jewish values: *doing Tikkun Olam.* It was reported that teachers conducted discussions about action without any actual participation in activity. However, there are some exceptions to this trend. Some RSs use the playground as a laboratory for naturally

occurring situations in which values are an issue (e.g., sharing, inclusion, caring for the environment by throwing trash away after snack).

MODELING VALUES

Several authors (Chazan, 1992; Resnick, 1992; Rosenak, 2004; Powell, 2006) suggest that in order for the teaching of values to be successful, everyone in the student's life must be on board. Everyone from the principal to the custodian to the parents must use consistent values language (i.e., *tzedekah*) and model related behavior. This application of values language and behavior does not seem evident in the RSs interviewed and observed.

Proposed Solution

Based on the small sample of schools visited and RS Directors interviewed, it is difficult to generalize to the entire population of RSs with respect to the teaching of Jewish values. However, the following proposed guidelines should be applicable to the development of values education curricula used in Reform religious schools. All values curricula should be realistic to the students' experiences and community within which they live, modeled by the people who have interaction with the students (i.e., teachers, parents, school staff, and religious leaders), and viewed not as a theoretical construct, but as behavior. These three proposed components should contribute to a deeper level of the students' engagement with the material and subsequent value laden behavior that will enrich their Jewish lives and the lives of others.

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Appendix A

The following is a glossary of frequently used Jewish values as discussed and translated in the curricula above. The terms below are in Hebrew with English translation. This does not reflect a complete list of all Jewish values.

Ahava- Love

Anava- Humility

Aseret Ha-Debrot- 10 commandments

Avoda- Service

Bal Tash'hit- Avoiding waste

B'tzelem Elohim- Created in God's Image

Brit- Covenant

B'riyut- Health and Wellness

Derech Eretz- Showing Respect

Dibbuk Haverim- Attachment to Friends

Emet- Truth and Integrity

Emunah- Faith

G'milut Chasadim- Act of Love and Kindness

Havdallah- Separation

Hesed- Caring

Heshbon Ha-Nefesh- Taking Care of the Soul

Hodaya- Gratitude

Kavana- Intention

Kavod- Honor

Kehila- Community

Kiddush Hashem- Holiness of God

Kol Yisrael, Arevim Zeh Ba-Zeh- Israel is responsible for one another

K'vod Hab'riyot- Human dignity

Lashon Ha-ra- Gossip

Mensch- Good Person

Middot- Values

Mitzvot- Good Deeds

Neshama- Soul

Pikuah Nefesh- Choosing Life

Rodef Shalom- Making Peace

Shabbat- Sabbath

Shalom Bayit- Peace in the Home

Sh'mirat Haguf – Protecting the Body

Sh'mirat Hatevah- Protecting Nature

Shiru L'adonai- Sing unto God

Siddur- Prayer Book

Simcha- Joy

Talmud Torah- Learning Torah

Teva- Nature

Tikkun olam- Improving the World

Tza'ar Ba'ley Hayim- Taking Care of Animals

Tzedek- Justice

Tzedakah- Act of Justice

V'ahvta L'reacha Komocha- Love your Neighbor as you Love Yourself

Viku'ah-Argument

Yisrael- Israel

Zikaron- Remembrance

Zmirot- Songs