THE LOS ANGELES JEWISH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STUDY

By

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Table of Contents

Abstract

The organized Jewish community in Los Angeles engages in social justice and civic issues but lacks comprehensive data regarding how Jews prefer to participate, how they vote, or what issues concern them most. This study provides survey data from 578 Jews living in Los Angeles County, representing over 100 synagogues across denominations and 53 Jewish and secular nonprofit organizations. The questions focus on civic engagement habits: voting, political affiliation, organizational affiliation, contacting political representatives, views on social matters, and more. Contained within the survey are two open-ended questions regarding personal experiences. The study also includes interviews with area synagogues and nonprofit organizations regarding how they engage with their constituents.

The study reveals what it means to participate civically, what links that participation to Judaism, how members of other minority groups engage civically, and how Jewish organizations are currently involved. Several issues are important to large percentages of respondents but are not currently major areas of activity for Los Angeles Jewish organizations, including the public education system, universal background checks for gun and ammunition purchases, abortion rights, and mitigating climate change. The thesis recommends that organizations join forces to address these issues. Currently, many Los Angeles Jewish organizations work in the realms of civic engagement and social justice, but their collaborations are limited to partnerships on individual events or campaigns. I recommend the creation of The Partnership for Jewish Civic Engagement, which would facilitate resource sharing and collaboration on local campaigns. Based on the finding that individuals who participated in social justice fellowships and seminars had a significantly higher rate of civic engagement, I recommend productive methods of strengthening these offerings, as well as other ways of increasing civic education in the Jewish

community. Finally, I propose a continuing effort to establish a decennial Los Angeles Jewish demographic study in order to better understand the community Jewish organizations wish to serve.

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Introduction

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better. It's not."
— Dr. Seuss, The Lorax

When I was growing up, the Jewish community was very clear in teaching me the importance of giving tzedakah every week at religious school, donating food to SOVA on Yom Kippur, participating in Mitzvah Day, and planting trees on Tu B'Shevat. What the Jewish community was not very clear in teaching me was the importance of voting, signing petitions, writing letters to my representatives, and debating social issues through a Jewish lens.

I got my political interest from my libertarian parents who religiously watched Sunday news shows, ran for public office, and (when I got old enough) debated vigorously with me over social issues. These interactions forced me to articulate my liberal beliefs, beliefs I had translated through my involvement with the Jewish community – we take care of one another, the collective is greater than the self, and it is our responsibility to help make the world a better place for everyone.

It was not until I went to work for Jewish World Watch, an anti-genocide organization in Los Angeles, that I saw those values expressed in the Jewish community. I learned how to engage people in advocacy and the importance of learning activism skills. As I entered graduate school and began learning more about other social justice organizations, the field seemed disjointed. I wanted to study how Jews in Los Angeles County engaged with these organizations, if they looked outside Jewish institutions to take action, what issues they cared about, how they took action, and if they utilized the synagogue to engage in civic issues. I created and administered a survey to help answer those questions. I was also interested in studying how Jewish social justice organizations worked together on issues and how synagogues engaged their constituency, and I did so through interviews with representatives of these organizations. Finally,

I reviewed existing literature to examine how people engage in civil society, why Jews engage in social justice work, how Jews have engaged in the past, how other minority groups engage, and the current landscape of work being done in Los Angeles.

Based on this research, I am recommending that individuals and synagogues find ways to involve themselves in the issues they are passionate about, that institutions begin to focus more on local issues with strategic achievable goals, that there be a concerted effort to conduct a Jewish demographic study in Los Angeles, and that organizations work together through the creation of a new initiative – The Partnership for Jewish Civic Engagement – to help bring individuals, organizations, and synagogues together. These recommendations are being made based on the observation of the current disconnectedness of the Jewish social justice sector, the focus on national and international issues, the lack of work being done at the local level, the multitude of issues being worked on, the lack of a collective Jewish voice on any given issue, the benefit of shared relationships, and the past successes these kind of partnerships have created.

What Is Civic Engagement?

Traditionally, civic engagement is defined as "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern" (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Another definition can be found in Webster's dictionary, where the term civic engagement is broken down; civic, meaning "of or relating to a city or town or the people who live there" and engagement, meaning "emotional involvement or commitment." Thomas Ehrlich (2000) defines civic engagement as "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference" (p. iv). Cliff Zukin adds that civic engagement behavior "is defined as organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others" (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Carpini, 2006, pp. 7-54). In all of these definitions, the underlining premise is the idea of addressing a social issue out of concern for helping others and making a difference.

With these definitions in mind, for the purpose of this study, civic engagement activities include signing petitions, either online or in-person, participating in public demonstrations, meeting with political representatives, requesting action from the representative on a particular social issue, sending a letter or e-mail to political representatives, voting, volunteering for a political campaign, being knowledgeable about current world events, donating to political campaigns, or being active in a social justice nonprofit organization. The Civic Engagement Index (CEI) created for this study scores each respondent's level of engagement based on the frequency of these activities (see scoring rubric in Appendix A). The term most commonly used in the Jewish community that reflects these types of activities is 'social justice' work. For the purpose of this study, these terms are interchangeable.

The Jewish community frequently uses the terms 'tikkun olam' (meaning to repair the world), 'social action,' 'mitzvah' (meaning a commandment or good deed), or 'service learning' to describe ways that people engage with the community. These types of activities include volunteering at a soup kitchen, making blankets for animal shelters, collecting items to be donated, planting trees, making lunches for the homeless, etc. Many synagogue communities participate in yearly Mitzvah Day programs, collect food for food banks on Yom Kippur, encourage their children to do a mitzvah project as a part of their b'nai mitzvah preparations, or have a social action committee as a part of their board of directors. Doing local community service activities, going on service learning trips to volunteer in different communities, and making donations to nonprofit organizations are all noble efforts to engage in civil society. For the purpose of this study, only political civic engagement is considered, also referred to as 'social justice'. This is in order to focus not on the efforts to help mitigate the effects of social issues but rather the efforts to solve a root cause, which created the problem in the first place.

There is an old fable where a man is walking alongside a river. He sees a screaming baby floating down the river and jumps in to save it. He takes the baby to his village where they find a good home for the orphan. The next day, the man goes back to the river and notices that there is another baby floating down the river. The man jumps into the river again to save the baby and takes it back to his village. This continues for a few weeks until a young boy notices the man's behavior and asks, "how did that baby get in the river?" The man then begins to walk up the river where he notices an ogre who is stealing babies from a nearby village and throwing them into the river. He returns to his home and organizes his village to stop the ogre. That night the village defeats the ogre. To this day, babies are no longer stolen from their homes and thrown in the river.

The noble cause of saving babies from drowning in a river is necessary, but it is only when the man looked for the source of the problem that a lasting solution could be found. There are many needs in this world, and meeting those needs is of great value to society. Micro loans, food banks, and shelters help to limit the suffering in the absence of systematic change, and the continuation of these services is vitally important. But these actions are similar to rescuing babies, rather than defeating the ogre. Social action alone is insufficient in helping to make lasting change to dominant social problems. Many nonprofit organizations say that their mission is to go out of business, the hope that one day their services will no longer be needed in society. It is only when service and charitable giving is done in conjunction with political action and the creation of new legislation that social trends will begin to shift. Change is slow and requires a high level of commitment. Understanding how the Jewish community engages is important to continuing this work as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Declining Political Participation and Direct Democracy

People choose to engage in their communities for various reasons. For some, their parents encouraged them to stay informed about world events and to participate in political or advocacy campaigns. For others, an experience in their formative years pushed them to be involved. For others, a particular issue impacted them personally, influencing them to take action.

Susan A. Ostrander and Kent E. Portney (2007) explore how civic engagement has changed in America over the past fifty years. Beginning in the 1980s and early 1990s, theologians began to speculate why trends were "showing a long-term secular decline in the propensity of Americans to be or become engaged in society. Whether the participation is in politics and elections, or in civic and voluntary organizations, Americans seem at first glance to be more disengaged today than ever before" (pp. 1-2). This sentiment can be seen as early as 1984 when Benjamin Barbar first theorized that the reliance on tenets of classical liberal political thought, emphasizing individual rights over public concerns and social responsibilities, had contributed to the decline in civic engagement. These trends may be linked to the invention of the personal computer that appeared on the market in the middle to late 1970s. For Barber, this 'thin democracy,' or individualized and privatized orientation, led to individuals having no form of citizenship other than the self-interested bargain. Around the same time, Robert Bellah came to similar conclusions, stating that "individualism had become cancerous," which resulted in clear consequences for the practice and value of civic engagement. Ten years later, around 1994, Robert Putnam was the first to put forth evidence, through the declining prevalence of member organizations, that civic engagement was on the decline, resulting in the erosion of essential bonds of social trust and connection, which are vital to democracy (p. 2). Putman observed that people were less engaged in electoral politics, membership organizations, and face-to-face

associative behavior. These observations are magnified by the perception that government views people's active involvement as neither needed nor valued. Due to the ability to collect data en masse, political elites hire marketing firms to view citizens as the "audience," specifically targeted with pre-set agendas for public relations "impression management." This is not how citizens ought to be viewed; they should be seen as potential participants in democratic action, helping to create the very agenda politicians should be running on (pp. 3-5). This shift in the way politicians view their constituents has an effect on how people choose to engage in civics.

Voter turnout rates have been dropping both locally and statewide. The Pew Charitable Trust recently released their 2014 Elections Performance Index, which ranks California as the third worst in terms of overall election "performance": twenty-nine percent (29%) of mail-in ballots were not returned, and overall election turnout in California is only fifty-six percent (56%). Despite eighty percent (80%) of residents being registered voters, the actual voter turnout ranks California 42 out of 51 (Bosh, 2014). Locally, in the 2001 Los Angeles runoff mayoral election between James Hahn and Antonio Villaraigosa, Hahn won with 304,791 votes and a thirty-four percent (34%) voter turnout rate. In the 2005 runoff between Hahn and Villaraigosa, Villaraigosa won with 289,116 votes and a turnout rate of thirty-four percent (34%). In 2009, Mayor Villaraigosa won re-election with 152,613 votes and an eighteen percent (18%) voter turnout rate (Los Angeles Times, 2013). Recently, in the 2013 mayoral race, despite the $19 million dollars in campaign spending, the most expensive on record, and some 40 debates among the top five candidates, only twenty-one percent (21%) of the 1.8 million registered voters participated in the election, the lowest rate for a primary without an incumbent since 1978 (Medina, 2013). Eric Garcetti won the mayoral race with only 222,300 votes or twelve percent (12%) of the city's registered voters (Welsh, 2013). Many cite Los Angeles's wide-spread

geography or culture of individualism as reasons for generally low voter turnout in local elections. However, New York City's 2013 mayoral election saw a similar voter turnout rate of only twenty-four percent (24%) (Roberts, 2013).

Cliff Zukin and colleagues explain this low voter turnout rate as due to a history of political scandals, decades of war, eroded public trust in government, relevance of government to solve social problems, and the fact that participation in civic life has gone beyond elections and voting (Zukin et al., 2006, pp. 3-15). Recent Supreme Court decisions, such as Citizens United in 2010 and McCutcheon in 2014, have further deteriorated individuals' interest in being civically engaged. These decisions held that the First Amendment prohibits the government from restricting political independent expenditures by corporations, associations, or labor unions and invalidated aggregate contribution limits by individuals. These decisions allow for large amounts of money by less than a thousand individuals to support numerous political candidates. In the dissent argument of the McCutcheon decision, Justice Stephen Breyer writes:

> Corruption breaks the constitutionally necessary "chain of communication" between the people and their representatives. It derails the essential speech-to-government-action tie. Where enough money calls the tune, the general public will not be heard. Insofar as corruption cuts the link between political thought and political action, a free marketplace of political ideas loses its point…The 'appearance of corruption' can make matters worse. It can lead the public to believe that its efforts to communicate with its representatives or to help sway public opinion have little purpose. And a cynical public can lose interest in political participation altogether (Moyers, 2014).

In 2014, three California law makers, Senator Leland Yee, Senator Ron Calderon, and Senator Rod Wright, were indicted on criminal charges of federal corruption and fraud. Despite being suspended from their positions, each Senator continued to receive their annual salaries of $95,291 dollars (Thompson, 2014). These incidents leave many citizens skeptical about the trustworthiness of their elected officials to carry out the will of the people, despite the monetary demands in order to run for office and responsibility once an office has been won.

In an attempt to better understand this decline and how different generations engage, Zukin and colleagues formulated four behavioral and cognitive indicators of citizen engagement for a generational study: political engagement, civic engagement, cognitive engagement, and public voice. Political engagement is "activity aimed at influencing government policy or affecting the selection of public officials," civic engagement is defined as "organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others," cognitive engagement is "paying attention to politics and public affairs," and public voice is "the ways citizens give expression to their views on public issues." Using these indicators, Zukin studied four different groups in order to link civic involvement with generational shifts, the "DotNets," born between 1991 and 1977, the "GenXers," born between 1976 and 1965, the "Baby Boomers," born between 1964 and 1946, and the "Dutifuls," born before 1946 (Zukin et al., 2006, pp. 7-54).

Of the four generational cohorts studied, the "Dot-Net" generation was the most ambivalent about political engagement, such as voting and cognitive engagement. On the other hand, this generation indicated the same level of voluntary activity focusing on problem solving (civic engagement) and giving expression to their views on public issues (public voice) as the older generations. Due to the large amount of previous and ongoing political corruption, the youngest generation of citizens is disillusioned with traditional politics, which may indicate a

shift in how those individuals choose to engage: "we may be witnessing a subtle but important shift in citizenship, away from a focus on government and elections as the mechanisms for determining the public good toward alternative avenues such as the private sector and the non-governmental public sector" (pp. 86-87). Voting, volunteering for campaigns, and giving money to politicians, no longer appeal to many new adults in American society, leaving them to find other ways to be involved with civic life. Alternatively, with the appearance of an appealing, trustworthy candidate, like Barak Obama, many younger generations do turn out to support that candidate. In the 2008 Presidential election, 51% of registered voters between the ages of 18-29 voted, 66% for Barak Obama. In 2012 there was a 45% turnout rate among this age group, 60% for Barak Obama (Fact Sheet, 2013). Being politically engaged is no longer a duty for the "DotNets" and "GenXers"; it is a right reserved for those whom they deem worth their effort.

One possible solution to the low levels of political participation, especially in elections, may be the recent rise of direct democracy. Direct democracy refers to the initiative process (the proposal of a new law or constitutional amendment that is placed on the ballot by petition) or the referendum process (a proposal to repeal a law that was previously enacted by the legislature, and that is placed on the ballot by citizen petition), where citizens are able to write, publish, and put legislation up for a vote by the citizens. This process is used to either introduce policy initiatives or to veto or affirm legislative behavior or policymaking. Each state chooses which type of system to employ. Twenty-three states have an initiative and referendum process (including California); four states have only a popular referendum system; two states only allow for initiative constitutional amendments; twenty-one states have neither an initiative nor popular referendum process; and every state allows the legislature to place a measure on the ballot (Initiative & Referendum Institute, 2014). Kara Lindaman (2011) states that direct democracy

serves as a means of circumventing entrenched career politicians and corrupt elected officials by giving the public a mechanism to vote directly on specific legislation and policy (p. 1).

This form of civic engagement has its pros and cons. On the one hand, it allows citizens to be the ones in charge of the legislative process; on the other hand, voting citizens are not always well informed. There is a significant financial aspect to the process (sometimes giving an unfair advantage to the wealthy). The outcome may or may not reflect public will. And, the legislation could have unforeseen negative consequence which are difficult for law-makers to reverse. With all its flaws, research has found that states using initiatives and referendums have higher voter turnout, particularly in midterm elections (pp. 1-9, 115).

Frederick J. Boehmke and R. Michael Alvarez (2014) set out to test whether or not the initiative signature gathering process had any influence on political participation. They noted that the "founders of the initiative process were interested in the creation of institutions that would give citizens the ability to be more directly involved in the affairs of government" (p. 179). For this system to be successful, they made the assumption that citizens desired to be involved with public policy decisions, become informed through public debates, and participate in elections when ballot measures were put to a vote. Their data, gathered over eight initiatives and four different elections, concluded that the initiative process leads to a higher rate of political engagement and a more informed citizenry. Other studies concluded that a higher number of initiatives on a ballot leads to greater voter turnout. Their findings indicate that "the process of gathering signatures to qualify initiatives may itself lead to greater participation... that by exposing citizens to information about initiatives, the signature-gathering process acts not just as a hurdle to access, but also as a repeated reminder of elections and opportunities for political participation" (pp. 179-180). A significant number of individuals will have the experience of a

person asking them to sign a petition at least once in their lives. For those who stop and listen to what the initiative is, the process of engagement has occurred. This is what the founders of direct democracy were hoping to encourage: greater participation in any form. Just the fact that the initiative process exists in Los Angeles leads to greater awareness of what political issues are being discussed and the actions proposed to rectify them.

Direct democracy as a solution to low participation in local and statewide elections can have positive and negative outcomes. For many, the minimal effort it takes for an individual person to sign a petition, sometimes with little or no knowledge of what they are signing, and the fact that petition gatherers are paid per signature leads to disinterest in being involved in the process. It can also be an expensive process, lending itself to wealthy individuals utilizing the system more than the general population. Political organizing groups may find it more advantageous to partner with legislators to support the bills they favor. Additionally, with already low voter turnout rates, ballot measures can become law with very small percentages of the voting population approving, sometimes resulting in harmful legislation that is difficult to reverse. The potential for creating lasting change is embedded in the direct democracy system and, when utilized correctly, could result in positive pieces of legislation that would have not otherwise been adopted by political representatives.

Why Jews Should Be Civically Involved

Having explored why people may be hesitant to engage civically, there are a variety of reasons why someone who identifies with the Jewish religion might be engaged despite the obstacles.

There are many basic themes that circulate through Jewish culture which compel Jews to engage in civic activism in the pursuit of making a positive difference. There are a few biblical verses that Jews focus on as the reason to engage in social justice work. One of the first verses in the Hebrew Bible exclaims, "And God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). Later in Genesis, this idea is repeated, "on the day that God created man, in the likeness of God He created him" (Genesis 5:1). Based on the simple idea that God created man (or humans) in his own image and that God is a single entity, it is concluded that all people come from a singular source. This basic idea is the foundation of social justice work in that it teaches that every person deserves the same rights, privileges, opportunities, and treatment. We are all the same: all made in the image of God.

Jewish tradition takes this idea one step further with the biblical verse "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) and "you shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19). It is not enough to only see every person as if they were made in the image of God. The Jewish tradition teaches that one must love every other person because they are made in the image of God. This is the root of empathy that drives social justice work among Jews. When Jews see the suffering of another person, they see themselves in that person and are encouraged to show love and compassion toward that person.

The Jewish tradition teaches not merely that every person is made in the image of God, not only should you love your neighbor and the stranger, but that you are obligated to help those

in our society who are the most vulnerable. The Hebrew Bible cautions us regarding our behavior toward the stranger no less than 36 times; the most repeated injunction in the Hebrew Bible is the commandment to "help the poor, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow" (Leviticus 19:9-10, 33-34; Deuteronomy 15:4-18, 24:17-22). The Jewish tradition *obligates* Jews to do social action and service work. Rabbi Elliot N. Dorff and Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg (2010) explain, "The Rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud expanded on this, demanding that every community provide a charity fund and a soup kitchen for its less fortunate members, and they spelled out the obligations of both individual Jews and Jewish communities to help not only the poor, but also the sick" (p. ix). Jewish communities have a long history of social action work, providing for the neediest.

Simply providing for the needs of the poor, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow does not encompass all Jewish tradition. This five-word verse – "justice, justice, shall you pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20) – is the cornerstone of why Jews engage in social justice work and the motivation Jewish organizations use in galvanizing supporters. It is not enough to love; it is not enough to provide; one must actively pursue a just solution to social conflicts. Dorff and Ruttenberg continue to explain that "taking action to help even strangers is not, in any way, 'optional.' We must act justly toward others, as well as protect others from injustice" (p. ix). Additionally, the Mishnah emphasizes the obligation to include oneself in acts of justice, stating that "it is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to absolve yourself from it" (Pirkei Avot 2:16).

Rabbi Sidney Schwarz (2006) describes two different types of consciousness Jews have as a result of the stories/shared experiences of the Hebrew Bible. These two types of consciousness guide the political and social justice work the Jewish community engages in. The

Exodus consciousness is the idea that the Jewish people were redeemed from slavery in Egypt, causing "Jews to identify with each other regardless of the fact that they might be living thousands of miles apart, under different political regimes, speaking different languages, and developing variations on Judaism that often synthesized elements of traditional Jewish practice with the specific gentile culture in which they lived" (p. 18). This connection all Jews have to each other lends itself to the intense amount of advocacy and support Jews in Israel receive from Jews in America. There is an intrinsic connection and desire to build Jewish community and support Jewish communities wherever they emerge. This consciousness explains the intrinsic motivation to care for one another within the Jewish community. However, "if the Exodus gave the collection of slaves that left Egypt a sense of a common past and a shared destiny, the experience at Sinai made it abundantly clear that the people Israel were expected to live out a higher calling" (p. 19).

The other consciousness Schwarz describes is the Sinai consciousness, the result of the laws given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai:

> It conveyed to Jews throughout the generations that their task was to replicate, in the temporal world, the kingdom of heaven... Jews combined it with a rich body of core values that guided their behavior in this world. Jews became a people of compassion... guided both by their history of persecution and their understanding of the revelation at Sinai to lend their hands and their hearts to the most vulnerable members of society, both Jewish and non-Jewish (pp. 19-20).

As Schwarz explains, it is the scripture at the core of Jewish practice that compels Jews to engage in social justice work. The Sinai-consciousness is the source of motivation for Jews to live in a way that positively affects the world, living the passage from Isaiah 42:6-7, "I called

you with righteousness and I will strengthen your hand; and I formed you, and I made you for a people's covenant for a light onto nations. To open blind eyes, to bring prisoners out of a dungeon, those who sit in darkness out of a prison." The desire to make the world a better place stems from these two types on consciousness. The question lies in how these consciousness play themselves out in modern society, how they translate into action, and – if they translate into action – what does that action look like?

Many modern-day activists draw on these verses and theories in discussing their Jewish purpose for doing social justice work. Margie Klein (2008) describes the Jewish connection to the organization work she engages in: "Like the ancient Israelites, who each brought personalized donations to the Mishkan (Tabernacle), we must create communities of action in which every person is valued and given an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the cause" (p. 36). These are her Jewish values in action, as she is mindful about how she chooses to go about creating communities of action in order to purse justice. Many times passions drive social justice work, which can be misdirected. When one is mindful and strategic about social justice it becomes effective. She continues by stating, "when we cultivate a vision, share it with others, and use our collective power to compel decision-makers to make the right choices, we ennoble ourselves- and we really can win" (p. 37). In her fight to bring her community together into action, Margie draws from Jewish tradition in order to ensure she is able to lead her community into achieving the justice they pursue.

Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz (2010) reflects on these passages, concluding the various ways individuals can fulfill these commandments. "[They] emphasize methods of social action that effect the most change, while also promoting multiple approaches in order to make use of the diverse talents and positions held by individuals within the Jewish community. Some people

choose to serve as great philanthropists; some as community organizers and lobbyists, while others are social workers or clergy" (p. 17). What Yanklowitz understands is that there are many factors involved in moving toward a more just society and that the Hebrew Bible was explicit in giving instructions which teach that every type of person can fulfill the commandments and help move the world to a more just and righteous place.

Rabbi Jill Jacobs (2009) expands on these ideas: "I would argue that the most important clues toward a Jewish vision of justice emerge from the laws given to the Jewish people as they prepare to enter the land of Israel and to establish an autonomous society there" (p. 10). Jacobs focuses on the Messianic vision of Judaism, the idea that Jews should be working toward a better world for when the Messiah emerges:

> Deuteronomy 15 lays out both a vision of economic justice and the beginning of a program for achieving this vision (of a perfected world)... Human beings are expected to work toward the creation of this eventual messianic state by caring for the poor within our communities, always with an eye toward ending poverty as a whole (p. 21).

For Jacobs, this is the obligation for the Jewish people, to devote time and energy toward the ideal world without suffering, in anticipation of the Messiah. Jacobs goes on to outline her vision of the principles that underline all Jewish economic law:

> The world, and everything in it, belongs to God; human beings come upon wealth only by chance and do not necessarily 'deserve' the wealth in their possession. The fates of the wealthy and the poor are inextricably linked... The responsibility for poverty relief is an obligation, not a choice (p. 22).

All of these notions stem from the basic Hebrew verses discussed earlier. These are the underlying principles that drive the Jewish people to be involved with civic issues in their city, their nation, and the world.

For those who do not think political work falls under the category of working toward the eventual Messiah, Jacobs responds with the words of Solomon Schechter, one of the foremost Jewish scholars and theologians of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century: "If the disappearance of poverty and suffering is a condition of the kingdom of the Messiah, or, in other words, of the kingdom of God, all wise social legislation in this respect must help toward its speedy advent" (pp. 24-25).

Rabbi Michael Lerner (2008) echoes Rabbi Jacobs' sentiments as he draws from the teachings of Abraham Joshua Heschel:

> For the Hebrew prophets and for Heschel... God, the creator of heaven and earth, has a stake in human life; that the separation of politics from spirit is a distortion of Jewish teachings; and that the murder that we politely call 'war' and the oppression we politely call 'inequality' are violations of the spirit of God embodied in every single person, and a wild misunderstanding of the nature of reality (p. 39).

No matter where injustice is happening or what it is called, the Jewish tradition obligates Jews to involve themselves in seeking justice. The political process is one of the most influential avenues for effecting social change, and that cannot be separated from the Jewish obligation to pursue justice.

Beyond biblical and rabbinic teachings, simply drawing on past struggles as a people should compel Jews toward action. Gideon Aronoff (2011) gives an overview of why Jews should engage in civil society's issues. His article focuses on the issue of immigration and why

the Jewish community should involve itself. Beginning with specific Jewish religious and ethical teachings, compelling Jews to be welcoming, have love for, and protect the stranger, Aronoff highlights the Jewish history of being a people without a home. Immigration is an issue that extends to the Jewish community, with about fifteen percent (15%) of the American Jewish community being foreign born. Aronoff concludes that the Jewish community is well equipped to be strong advocates for comprehensive immigration reform and that we care, not because another is Jewish, but because we are Jewish (p. 17). The Jewish people share a complex history of living in small, poor communities, as an oppressed minority, in this country and elsewhere. This empathetic history extends beyond just the issue of immigration and into other social issues facing the residents of the city they live in.

When the Jewish tradition is examined for traces of why Jews should engage in social justice and civic engagement work, the answer is not always obvious. Moses never said "people of Israel, go to your regional Egyptian representative and plead to be released. Bring these post cards we all signed, with some signs and mega phones, demanding freedom. And if that doesn't work, just call their phone number over and over again!" The impulse to engage civically comes from the teachings of the Hebrew Bible which instruct us to see others as we see ourselves, to love the stranger and care for their needs, to remember that we were once (maybe twice, three, or many times) oppressed and that, even though we personally might not have been enslaved, it is our ethos to be empathetic with the plight of others. It is only when one engages in social justice work that suffering can truly be lifted off the backs of the oppressed; that injustices can be fixed; and that the world can be a better place for the future, not just for now.

How the Jewish Community Has Been Involved

With a clear background of why Jews would engage in social justice, it is imperative to highlight how the Jewish community has involved itself in civic life, not just locally, but nationally. The way Jews have identified with the communities around them has evolved over time, first as assimilating immigrants and then dispersing into suburban areas. One way the Jewish community's civic involvement has been tracked is through the Jewish professionals whose prime objective was to build relationships with the non-Jewish community.

The Association of Jewish Community Relations Workers' (AJCRW) stated purpose at its founding in 1950 was "to provide opportunities for exchange of views, to stimulate analysis of ideas and skills, to encourage cooperation with other communal workers, and to encourage understanding and application of Jewish values" (Lurie, 1982, p. 284). Prior to the creation of the AJCRW, the Community Relations Conference began in 1940 with local Jewish Community Relations Councils, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council in 1944, and the National Association of Intergroup Relations Officials in 1948 (p. 285). At the time, the creation of these organizations was vital to the survival of the Jewish people in America. By promoting internal development as well as dialogue and interaction with other communities, Jewish communities were able to help lessen anti-Semitic sentiments and work on mutually beneficial social issues. Participation in these organizations began to dwindle in the late 1980s, as Jewish Community Relations positions were no longer a priority for Jewish organizations. In 2008, the Jewish Public Affairs Committee released their membership of 152 Jewish Community Relations Councils (JCRC) in 38 states. Of those, 81 were contacts in a Jewish Federation, 69 were contacts of councils or committees that operate out of a Jewish Federation, and one was an independent organization in San Francisco (Jewish Community Relations Council Members).

The work of building relationships with non-Jewish communities is almost fully within the confines of the federated system, and it is difficult to gauge how active these Federations or committees are in community engagement. The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles closed its JCRC office in early 2000s, opting for an apolitical community engagement department. In general, communal relations work has been downsized to either a single position (or part of a position) in a Federation or a committee of lay leaders within a Federation. The fact that there is only one non-Federation affiliated JCRC in the United States suggests the lack of a robust and involved cohort of workers dedicated to enhancing civic relations.

In 2001, Steven Cohen and Leonard Fein conducted the largest study of Jewish attitudes toward social justice engagement. They asked many questions about how American Jews feel about engaging civically, prior to September 11th and the subsequent wars. Their publication focused on how Jews feel about the connection between their Judaism and their social justice obligations; their connection to the collective Jewish history of engagement; and how they feel they should engage civically as Jews. The study's main conclusions were that an overwhelming majority of Jews, ninety percent (90%), felt that they had a responsibility to work on behalf of the poor, oppressed, and minority groups or of Jews who are needy or oppressed; that it made them proud to be a Jew when Jewish organizations engaged in social justice work; that Jews' involvement in social justice causes is one good way to strengthen ties with other groups in society; and that American Jews have an impressive history of social justice involvement (p. 1).

While the study found an overwhelming positive connection between being Jewish and participating in social justice work, it also found that a low percentage of participants preferred to do social justice work with other Jews or preferred to engage in social justice causes with a Jewish organization rather than a non-Jewish organization (p. 3). These sentiments either reflect

the lack of opportunities for people to engage with Jewish organizations or the lack of interest in doing social justice work from within the Jewish community. This shows a vast opportunity for partnerships between organizations or entities that are secular and Jewish organizations in order to create the critical mass needed for influence. Partnerships like these may also entice a person who identifies as Jewish but is not currently engaged to get involved with Jewish organizations.

Additionally, Cohen and Fein found that "knowledge about social justice and Judaism and interest in social justice work do not automatically yield ongoing and active volunteer involvement... positive and widely held attitudes [do] not always translate into Jewish social justice activity... to know the good does not always lead to doing the good" (p. 4). Cohen and Fein touch on many struggles to engage individuals in social justice work at the turn of the century. How might the events of the last 13 years, since that study, have influenced how Jews feel about civic engagement and social justice? Although this study does not ask specifically about how one views the connection between being Jewish and doing social justice work, it does touch upon whether or not people are engaging with Jewish social justice organizations or in civic engagement habits outside of the Jewish community.

Engagement changes in the social justice sector may be an indication of greater Jewish community engagement. Steven Windmueller (2006) studied the changes over time in how Jews engage with community. Windmueller lists the emerging models of community building that focus primarily on individualistic forms of engagement, de-emphasizing broader commitment to collective responsibility. Engagement is driven by innovation and experimentation with a specific focus on locally based interests and activities (p. 13). With the changing of the way Jews, or more broadly people, engage with the community around them, especially with the popularity of individual technology, the field of social justice had to change. By partnering with

local organizations, Jewish organizations can create innovative experiences with a local focus, in order to attract those otherwise uninterested. One way organizations have attempted to compete with the changing attitudes toward community is by utilizing online petitions and social media to engage people, a trend we see continue to this day.

History of Jewish Engagement in Los Angeles

The history of how the Jewish community in Los Angeles has engaged has relied significantly on coalition building with other minorities. Raphael J. Sonenshein (2004) explains that when Jews first began to immigrate to Los Angeles in the late 19th century, it was a new and growing city with a diversity in political representation made up of new migrants. However, by the early 20th century, migrants from Midwestern states began to dominate the political landscape, creating a very rigid system that made advancing human rights challenging. In that era, migrants were perceived as "outsiders" to the conservative civic leadership, and the Jewish community interacted well with other minority communities: African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans (p. 3).

During this time, "Jews were extremely active in the labor movement, and organized some of the most successful unions in the garment industry" (p. 3). The Jewish community was able to organize in such a way because a large number of Jews were working-class, progressive individuals. Over the next few decades, the Jewish community overwhelmingly voted in favor of fair employment practices and against housing discrimination. By the 1950's the Jewish community in Los Angeles had grown to be the second largest in the world, and Jews began to move into the Fairfax area and the San Fernando Valley from the downtown Boyle Heights area, dividing the Jewish community (p. 4).

In 1953, the first Jewish officeholder in 50 years was elected, Rosalind Weiner, leading to a string of Jewish coalitions active in the political landscape. With Latino and Jewish support, Edward Roybal, a Hispanic man, was elected to the city council in 1949, strengthening the scope and influence of minorities in Los Angeles civic leadership. This change was most evident in the election of Councilman Tom Bradley. With a strong Jewish-African American coalition in search of minority representation, Tom Bradley was able to get elected mayor in 1973. This in turn expanded opportunities for minorities in all areas of Los Angeles's civic leadership and brought about much needed change (p. 5).

Once Bradley left office in 1993, these coalitions began to fracture. Many Jews began to support Republican Richard Riordan, creating division that continues to this day. Additionally, as the community became more affluent, they moved away from open-handed stances to an inward-looking vision. Today, the Jewish community is situated between being a minority group and being a powerful white community. This experience distinctly allows for bridge building opportunities, allowing the community's influence to span many different issues and groups of people (pp. 6-7).

Other Minority Communities

With the history of involvement, it is important to examine the experiences of other minorities with civic engagement. Regardless of financial or voting power, the Jewish people remain a minority, with about eight percent (8%) of the Los Angeles population (Sheskin, 2013, p. 7) and about two percent (2%) of the overall US population (Pew Research Center, 2013b). It is important to look at how other minority communities have adapted and continue to adapt to the American democratic system in order to put the Jewish minority status in proper context against their level of civic engagement habits.

The term "Asian American" comes with a variety of different connotations. For one, "Asian" refers to anyone from the continent of Asia, and while that classification includes Russia and the Middle East, it mostly refers to those whose ethnic background is from East Asia, including Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Taiwanese, Cambodian and many more. With such inherent diversity, the political activity and clout of this group can be complicated. Pei-Te Lien (2001) looks at trends among Asian Americans' participation in American civic life and compares political attitudes across different Asian groups. Some Chinese people "hope to downplay whatever inter-ethnic differences exist between Chinese and other Asian American groups when it comes to participation in American politics …in an effort to create unity" (p. 184). When thinking about the amount of clout to be had in American politics, it is clear to Chinese Americans that they are stronger together than apart from other Asian groups when engaging civically. In an attempt to create stronger unity, Asian American groups began organizing a national, nonpartisan political action called the 80-20 Initiative. This initiative wished to get eighty percent (80%) of Chinese Americans and all other Asian Americans to "vote for the same political party candidates…the assumption was that if

Asian Americans... could unite behind candidates in either one of the major political parties at an eight to two ratio, the community would be accorded with a political clout... size does not matter, lack of unity does" (pp. 170-171).

This issue is the biggest struggle for the Asian American community: how to put cultural differences aside in order to be influential in the political sphere as a unified group. Similarly, Jews have many different factions with sometimes polar opposite political ideology. Although an overwhelming majority of Jews consider themselves liberal and are registered Democrats, it can be difficult for large institutions to take political stances for the fear of alienating parts of the community (Pew Research Center, 2013a, p. 96).

Cultural differences among the Asian American population can translate into how members of a particular ethnic group see their role in political engagement; "being Japanese or Filipino may be associated with greater [voter] turnout, but being Korean may signify less turnout" (Lien, 2001, p. 182). Overall, there is a sense that "incongruence in racial positions of Asians being at once super achievers in the socioeconomic sphere, underachievers in political participation, and perpetual outsiders to the mainstream culture illustrated the ambivalent nature of being Asian in U.S. racial order and politics" (p. 184). These stereotypes are evident in how Asian Americans are perceived, affecting how they engage civically, despite the desire to change social issues. Given these barriers, "the disintegration of urban economy, deterioration in race relations, and the rise of anti-Asian violence and political scrutiny in recent years have spurred the formation of new pan-Asian oriented organizations and the transformation of existing ones" (pp. 172-186). Overcoming cultural norm differences and creating unity in order to influence public policy is difficult among the Asian American community, however there are emerging entities helping to unify this group in hopes of increasing political participation.

One Asian American group with a significant representation in Los Angeles is the 80,000-person Thai community. For his dissertation, Chulalak Nutgirasuwan (2010) chose to focus on this community, specifically the characteristics of local businesses and civic engagement perspectives. He reported that this population is mostly poorer immigrants. Three in four families have an income of less than $20,000 per year and live in "Thai Town." Due to lack of voting rights, limited English proficiency, and the lack of mainstream visibility and influence, turnout rate of public participation is significantly low. In part, this is due to the culture from which these immigrants come, and "the idea of public participation and [government] decentralization was not introduced [in Thailand] until late 1997" (pp. 1-42). When Jews immigrated en masse to America, they were coming from equally oppressive regimes. After decades of assimilation, the oppression previous generations felt no longer keeps Jews from participating in civic life. New immigrants from Israel are coming from a very active political culture. Many other Jewish immigrants come from areas of the world where participation is not as common, which may make it difficult for them to understand the democratic system or have a desire to be involved. Jewish organizations today, like 30 Years After, help new immigrants integrate into the American political system.

Through individual and business interviews, Nutgirasuwan was able to get a better idea of how the Thai community feels about community development and civic engagement. When businesses were asked what the challenges are to development in Thai town, fifty-eight percent (58%) answered "participation/unity." This is a similar sentiment Lien indicated in his examination of the larger Asian American culture, that the lack of unity keeps the Asian American community from being involved civically. Individual stakeholders observed that, "most of Thai residents have a mindset of staying only temporarily in the United States, that

someday they will return to their homeland. This means there is no motivation to invest, engage, or participate in any activities" (Nutgirasuwan, 2010, pp. 92-113). These are the barriers this community faces in attempting to organize around social causes, whether they personally affect the Thai community or not. Although there is no data regarding how Jews feel about their permanence in Los Angeles or the United States, the land of Israel is perceived as the Jewish homeland. Small percentages of Los Angeles Jews may feel compelled to eventually move to Israel, resulting in their disconnection from American civic life.

Another minority group worth examining is the African American population. The history of oppression experienced by African Americas has led to the current situation of long-term exposure of many African Americans to poverty, violence, joblessness, substance abuse, and social marginalization. These variables threaten some forms of civic life and community well-being in African American urban neighborhoods. The psycho-social fabric which helps to form communities of care, collective and individual well-being, and purpose can be ruptured through these forms of oppression, diminishing an individual's capacity for hope, which then significantly threatens civic engagement activities (Ginwright, 2011, pp. 34-39). These struggles are unique to the African American community in how the history of oppression has manifested in unhealthy generational cycles of violence and disempowerment.

Some community organizations have found ways to combat these ingrained norms and expectations of African American youth, using healing, hope, and care in developing young people's understanding that community conditions are not permanent, and that the first step in making change is to imagine new possibilities. When African American youth are empowered with hope, they are able to help create strong and vibrant communities around them. "By rebuilding collective identities (racial, gendered, youth), exposing youth to critical thinking about

social conditions, and building activism, black youth are able to heal; they remove self-blame and act to confront pressing school and community problems" (p. 37). These new skills help lead African American youth to use civic engagement tactics to help improve their communities.

Unlike the Asian American communities, unity is not the hurdle to greater civic engagement for African Americans; it is the lack of self-empowerment, the sense of power and hope that change in their communities is possible. While various ethnic groups have diverse histories of oppression and socioeconomic integration into American society, each group has its own efforts at increasing community-based civic engagement. Jews are no exception.

While ethnic affiliations are one way of analyzing civic engagement, religious affiliation also bares a significant influence on how individuals choose to engage. Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina (1999) discuss how people engage civically through their religious affiliations. They ascertain that religious institutions have many different priorities, and organizing their congregations into action on a particular issue is not necessarily at the forefront of their agenda. Many religions resist outside influence on their teachings and doctrine, which makes it difficult to engage in civic issues, especially if they go against their religious beliefs. At times, members of a particular religious sect might organize outside of the church around issues they feel passionate about due to their religious beliefs. For example, during the 1980s, "many evangelical Protestants became interested in political issues, especially in response to Roe v. Wade and earlier court rulings concerning school prayer" (p. 338).

Churches were not where people went to politically organize, they went to affirm their beliefs. Individuals would then translate those beliefs and values into action outside of the church through their civic, not religious, lives. Protestant, Catholic, and Evangelical groups tend to turn to various social agencies rather than churches for their engagement efforts. Organizing through

religious institutions can be quite controversial when members of the congregation have very different opinions regarding how they interpret religious text: "For some observers, religion is simply too divided to provide a strong basis for social cohesion in the wider society... [Although] church is one of the most important places in which people learn transferable civic skills" (pp. 332-357). Regardless of its teachings, the church is still not seen as a place for those civic skills to be practiced. There are synagogues in Los Angeles that have a reputation for being civically minded, for embedding the value of social justice into the culture of the synagogue. There are many more that wish to keep civic engagement activities very separate from the religious work of the synagogue. Those that are committed to the value of social justice tend to find that aspect of their culture unifying, while those that choose to separate synagogue activities from civic engagement might find civic issues in the synagogue divisive.

The Jewish community can learn from the experiences of other minority groups. Just as Asian Americans struggle with political unity, there are countless ways to be "Jewish," and there is no issue with homogenous support or disapproval. Like Asian Americans, Jews can strive to aim for 80% support for Democratic candidates and particular issues. Although Jews' experiences with discrimination and poverty are mostly in the past and African Americans continue to struggle with these issues, Jews can learn from African Americans' community organizing activities, especially among young people. Synagogues can also learn from churches. While civic engagement is a central organizing activity in some synagogues, it may be divisive in synagogues with more diversity of political opinion. The latter group can take a cue from many churches and keep religion and politics separate, offering referrals to Jewish social justice and political organizations for those who wish to get involved.

Current Landscape of Jewish Civic Engagement in Los Angeles

After examining how Jews have engaged in the past and how other minorities have engaged, we now turn to the current civic engagement landscape in Los Angeles. Shifra Bronznick and Didi Goldenhar (2008) looked at civic engagement throughout the Jewish community. This study scrutinized the growing field of social justice work, its challenges, and strategies for moving forward. Although the field of social justice work is broader than civic engagement, encompassing community service, service learning, and fellowships, there are insights to be gleaned to strengthen Jewish civic engagement in Los Angeles (pp. 13-15).

One of the key findings of Bronznick and Goldenhar's study was the notion that the fields of social justice work in the Jewish community are growing. The study highlights the growth of American Jewish World Service, Jewish Funds for Justice, Progressive Jewish Alliance, and AVODAH as signs of an expanding sector (p. 20). Since this article was written, Jewish Funds for Justice and Progressive Jewish Alliance have merged into Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice. AJWS and AVODAH continue to be leaders in the social justice field and new organizations such as Just Congregations and Repair the World have emerged. Other positive trends identified in the study are growing numbers of participants, increased influence, impact, visibility, availability of funding and resources, and the prevalence of Congregation Based Organizing (p. 25). The norm of social justice work is becoming an integral part of Jewish identity. Evidence of this growth is apparent through the Jewish Funders Network's new half million-dollar Social Change Matching Fund, supporting 17 organizations that do social justice work with another round of funding planned for the future (E-Jewish Philanthropy, 2014).

From Bronznick and Goldenhar's conclusions, we turn to the Slingshot guide, which offers a yearly snapshot of 50 organizations doing innovative work in the Jewish communal field. The publication highlights 10 standard-bearer organizations that are continually at the forefront of innovative work. The previous three guides, spanning from 2011 – 2014, explain the way these organizations engage their constituents and several trends they have used to be successful, as observed by Slingshot Executive Director Will Schneider. Of the 30 standard-bearers listed in the latest editions of Slingshot, there was only one organization from Los Angeles, the social justice based synagogue IKAR. Mentioned for their unique mode of worship, they are also cited for their attention to social justice issues and their ability to mobilize their community. The only other Los Angeles based organization mentioned in all three editions is a website that features several versions of Haggadot and thousands of additional readings for Passover (Haggadot.com). New to the 2013-2014 edition was the inclusion of the Los Angeles based organization NewGround: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change. Their group brings Muslim and Jewish fellows together in dialogue to promote understanding and acceptance (Schneider, 2012 & 2013).

The Slingshot publications suggest that the Jewish community in Los Angeles is not creating innovative organizations or programs. Several social justice-oriented organizations have been mentioned in at least one edition, including AJC's ACCESS, AVODAH, Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice, BBYO PANIM Institute and Stand Up programs, Jewish Community Action, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, Jews United for Justice, JOIN for Justice, Keshet, Or Tzedek: Teen Institute for Social Justice, Rabbis for Human Rights, and Uri L'Tzedek. These innovative organizations are doing advocacy work, and although two have offices in Los Angeles (AJC ACCESS and Bend the Arc), none are based in Los Angeles

(Schneider, 2012 & 2013). When asked why Los Angeles was not considered when programs were expanding, top leaders of AVODAH said that Los Angeles is too geographically expansive for their program and lacks easily accessible public transportation (personal communication, 2013).

If these are the organizations on the forefront of innovation in the Jewish community, what conclusions can be drawn about the Los Angeles community's lack of representation? Is IKAR the only standard bearer of Jewish social justice in Los Angeles? Does the organized Jewish community not know about Slingshot or have they decided not to give much weight to its conclusions? Would programs like the ones in Slingshot be successful in Los Angeles? Or does the community have different needs that only a new organization could fill? In order to better understand the Los Angeles Jewish community's engagement, we need to understand what specific issues organizations and synagogues have chosen to work on and how.

The Jewish organizations that perform some level of civic engagement work in Los Angeles are 30 Years After, the American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC), American Jewish Committee (AJC), American Jewish World Service (AJWS), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Bend the Arc Southern California, J Street, the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, Jewish World Watch (JWW), Jewish Labor Committee, JPAC California, Just Congregations, Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger, the National Council of Jewish Women/ Los Angeles (NCJWLA), and Workmen's Circle. There are also non-Jewish civic engagement organizations that engage Jews through their synagogues: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), LA Voice/PICO, and OneLA.

Some of these organizations focus on international issues, including AIPAC, which works to inform political representatives about issues related to Israel; the AJC, which advances

international diplomatic relations; AJWS, which focuses on global hunger and foreign assistance; J Street, which advocates for open dialogue about Israel and a two state solution; and JWW, which focuses on conflict regions experiencing genocide and other mass atrocities.

Other organizations focus on national issues, like Bend the Arc, which advocates for voting rights, and Mazon, which works to support food banks and alleviate hunger. State-wide issues are a focus of JPAC California, which organizes lobbying trips to Sacramento around various issues; Just Congregations, which engages on immigration issues through their campaign Reform California; and the National Council of Jewish Women, which is currently focused on human trafficking and gun violence prevention.

Although these organizations bring together Jews who live in Los Angeles County for these purposes, few organizations work on local issues in Los Angeles. The Jewish Federation works to build relationships with non-Jewish organizations as well as political representatives in Los Angeles. While they encourage Jews to be politically active, they do not advocate a position on any particular issue. 30 Years After has a similar mission in helping Iranian Americans become more politically active and currently takes a stand against Iran obtaining nuclear capabilities. The Workmen's Circle focuses on labor issues in Los Angeles. The AJC does local work on the issue of immigration, and the Anti-Defamation League works with local law enforcement to combat hate crimes.

These organizations engage their constituents in several ways, including through fellowships, lobbying trips, and conferences. Bend the Arc has two fellowships: The Jeremiah Fellowship, which teaches young Jewish adults the fundamentals of community organizing and encourages them to get involved with one of their campaigns, and the Selah Leadership Program, which trains Jewish and secular leaders in effective change making strategies. The Jewish

Federation runs a fellowship called the New Leaders Project, which exposes young Jewish adults to civic life in Los Angeles, having them meet with local representatives and organizations. Mazon engages college students with their Hunger Fellowship program where participants organize hunger events on their local campus.

Another popular way to engage the Jewish community is organizing lobbying trips to Sacramento and Washington DC. Jewish World Watch, the National Council of Jewish Women, JPAC California, AJC, and Just Congregations all utilize this model to create opportunities to meet with political representatives hoping to gain support for the issues the organization considers important. National conferences are an effective way to bring communities together to support an organization's issue. J Street, AIPAC, and 30 Years After all hold national conferences with the goal of energizing their regional participants to continue the work of the organization. AJWS holds a conference for rabbis and rabbinic students called the Global Justice Conference.

Many of these organizations utilize synagogues to advertise their work and encourage participation. Mazon considers any synagogue that raises funds for their organization a 'partner,' regardless of the degree of participation. Similarly, synagogues pay dues, based on number of members, to become an official member of Jewish World Watch. Unique to Jewish World Watch is their Walk to End Genocide, which draws over 2,000 participants, many of whom belong to JWW Member Synagogues in Los Angeles.

Often, synagogues partner with social justice organizations in order to host a social justice themed event, have a political representative come to speak, or hold a debate. Some synagogues carve out a specific time in the month where any organization is welcome to come

address their congregants about the organization's issue. Although not common, synagogues also partner with each other to co-sponsor an event or collaborate on an issue.

Los Angeles synagogues vary in the way they choose to engage civically. For some, it is important to do civic engagement work *outside* the Jewish community, while others do their work *for* the Jewish community, and the remaining are attempting to find a balance between the two. For example, IKAR is a progressive, egalitarian synagogue of 550 members. One of its central pillars is the commitment to social justice, and some congregants are actively organizing around issues, including homelessness and gun violence, in cooperation with elected officials. Shomrei Torah, a Conservative synagogue of 540 members, focuses mostly on building a strong relationship with Israel and helping their own community members. They do maintain a good relationship with their political representative, Brad Sherman, and participate in Jewish World Watch programs. Temple Aliyah, a Reform synagogue of 950 members, is equally committed to Israel and is taking steps to begin working on local issues like homelessness and hunger in partnership with other local organizations.

The non-Jewish civic engagement organizations include: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), which currently organizes around issues of labor rights and fair wages; LA Voice/PICO, which works on issues of economic inequality; and OneLA, which works with communities to organize themselves around issues they care about, using the Congregation Based Community Organizing (CBCO) model to engage Jews and others in civic activism. CBCO is defined as "work[ing] through local synagogues, churches, and mosques as the primary institutional sponsors of this work. Common characteristics: faith-based, broad-based, locally-constituted, multi-issue, and professionally staffed" (Jacobsen, 2001, p. 30). Strategies implemented by CBCO include listening campaigns – meeting with various stake

holders to discuss which issues most need attention – holding house meetings to discuss the issues, and conducting a relationship-building campaign to strengthen the ties among congregation members.

One study found "that attending church [or synagogue] has the capacity to bolster political participation, depending on the way in which the church [or synagogue] related to politics" (Brown and Brown, quoted in Oxendine, Sullivan, Borgida, Riedel, Jackson, & Dial, 2007, p. 34). Rabbi David Saperstein (2008) emphasized the importance of rabbis organizing for social justice work:

> I want to focus, however, on an indispensable player in American Jewish engagement with social justice: the rabbi, particularly the congregational rabbi... Because of the distinct role of the American congregational clergy in public affairs, rabbis have played, and will continue to play, a leading role in shaping, leading, and maintaining this dynamic (p. 45).

Rabbi Saperstein speaks about how important the rabbinate is in engaging people in social justice issues and reflects on the lack of training for rabbinic students:

> As we look toward this new century, it should be clear that if the Judaism we offer our community and our young does not speak to the great moral issues of their lives, their country, and their world, it will fail to capture their imagination or loyalty- and will fail to capture the authentic meaning of Judaism for our lives. The American rabbinate has helped shape such a rich Judaism in the past century; if in the next, Judaism will indeed thrive as a light to the nations, it will be in large measure due to the creativity and inspiration emanating from a skilled and prepared rabbinate able to enhance the Jewish people's commitment to *tikkun olam* (p. 52).

It is very clear to Rabbi Saperstein that the highest spiritual leaders of Judaism can have a significant impact on how the Jewish community engages in social justice work. The theory is that, if a social justice organization can engage the rabbi, the congregation will follow. However, unless the synagogue has a deep culture of social justice work, the engagement begins and ends with the rabbi. Just Congregations and J Street both utilize rabbis to help organize their constituents with Rabbinic Councils and the CBCO model.

One of the pitfalls of CBCO is the relatively low participation of Jews in organized synagogue life. A synagogue member can be described as an individual, a couple, or a family. Of the estimated 600,000 Jews living in Los Angeles, this study determined that there are approximately 28,000 synagogue members in the largest 54 Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox synagogues (see Appendix B). Steven Cohen (2012) focused on those people, mostly of a younger generation, who do not engage with synagogues. Cohen defines the "unaffiliated" as those who are lost, temporarily or permanently, from the Jewish community (p. 1). This type of person, who self-identifies as Jewish but is in no way connected to the Jewish community, are the target audience for many Jewish synagogues and organizations as potential new members or participants.

The article cites a study done by the Workmen's Circle, which found deep-seated cultural changes in the Jewish community, leading to a declining attraction to civic engagement, undermining the normal methods of organizing the Jewish community. The study concluded that eighteen percent (18%) of their sample population fall in the category of Jewishly engaged and unaffiliated, while fifty percent (50%) are unengaged and unaffiliated (p. 8). For many who engage civically outside of synagogues, some may be inclined to become members if they felt social justice was getting the full attention of the synagogue. IKAR, Leo Baeck, Temple

Emanuel of Beverly Hills, Temple Isaiah, and Temple Judea and are examples of synagogues that have engrained social justice ethics and work into their culture, bringing in many new members anxious to engage civically though a Jewish lens. Finding a way to be a civically engaged synagogue can help create a sense of unity and shared goals among constituents.

Methodology

Much of the section above is based on information gathered through Internet searches and interviews with staff members of Jewish organizations in Los Angeles and elsewhere. The centerpiece of this study is an online survey of Jews in Los Angeles, focusing on civic engagement (see complete survey in Appendix C). The survey was designed by myself, edited by five community leaders and scholars, and pre-tested with 12 participants whose feedback was incorporated. Once finalized, the survey was distributed through e-mail to 65 Jewish nonprofit organizations and over 100 Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal, and alternative synagogue communities throughout Los Angeles County. The link was posted to 15 Jewish-themed Facebook groups and pages as well as promoted through a Facebook advertisement for two weeks. Additionally, the survey was highlighted in E-Jewish Philanthropy, a daily newsletter on various topics in Jewish life. The data collection began on Monday, July 1st and concluded on Sunday, November 3rd for a total of about 18 weeks or 125 days.

There have been national studies looking at how Jews feel about social justice work, and those types of questions were purposefully not included in this study in order to focus on how Jews engage civically, not why they engage civically. The first section of the survey asked how respondents have civically engaged: signing online and in-person petitions, attending demonstrations, contacting their representatives, contacting any representative, and what issues these actions were regarding. The second section focused on how the respondents engaged Jewishly: attending civic programs at their synagogue, participating in a Jewish social justice fellowship, conference, seminar or lobbying trip, the organizations they are active in, their view

on the influence of various minority groups, and if they are more likely to vote for a candidate given various factors.

Next, the survey gave a series of statements for participants to strongly agree, agree, be neutral, disagree, strongly disagree with or state that they did not know. The issues covered in this section referred to marriage equality, the tax system, abortion rights, government budgets, climate change, the death penalty, the Keystone Pipeline, the public school system, Medicare, social security, the Affordable Care Act, the Dream Act, gun rights, marijuana legalization, and Israel's security. Respondents also indicated what the most pressing problem facing Los Angeles was. From there, the survey asked about the respondent's political affiliation, campaign contributions and volunteering, voting habits, and news sources they utilize. The final two sections asked demographic questions and open-ended questions. The demographic questions included where they heard about the survey, their age, gender, zip code, employment status, if they have children living at home, their religious affiliation, and their ancestry. The open-ended questions were to describe an instance where they engaged civically and if there was anything they would like to say about civic engagement.

The reaction to outreach efforts were mixed. Various organizations sent the survey directly to their members or posted the link on their Facebook page and Twitter feeds, while others only sent the survey to personal networks or circulated the survey among staff and board members. Many synagogues and organizations were uncomfortable promoting an external survey to their community as an institutionalized policy or preference. These communities are sensitive to the fact that the people who make up their community can be vastly different, and the professional staff or lay leadership are weary of anything which might create conflict among its constituents.

The survey data was analyzed to determine how Jews engaged in social justice efforts and which issues they care most about. Also, using the survey data, a civic engagement index was created in order to score individuals' level of engagement: actively engaged, moderately engaged, or minimally engaged.

The last stage of the research was to investigate how Jewish organizations and synagogues do civic engagement work. The largest 20 synagogues in Los Angeles County and 16 organizations were contacted. These interviews gave a larger picture of how synagogues and organizations engage their constituents and informed the recommendations. Additionally, research was conducted to determine membership data for the largest synagogues in Los Angeles, excluding Orthodox institutions (see Appendix B).

The Sample

In total, the survey yielded 578 responses, representing about .1% of Jews in Los Angeles County. All questions in the survey were optional, resulting in a variation of responses for each question ranging from 570 responses to 481 responses with the average question having 515 responses. Because this is not a random sample, the data presented here does not represent the Jewish population as a whole. People connected with synagogues and other Jewish organizations are disproportionately represented, as are women and Reform Jews. Even so, the survey yields important data about opinions and civic engagement patterns of a selection of Jews in Los Angeles County.

Equally, those who are already civically engaged would have been more likely to take a survey of this kind due to their interest in the topic, resulting in a sample who are more engaged than the Los Angeles Jewish community on the whole. The survey was sent to 65 Jewish nonprofit organizations/groups and over 100 Jewish synagogues; it was at their discretion whether or not to advertise or distribute the survey. This also skewed the sample toward greater engagement; institutions willing to publicize the study might already have a culture indicative of civic engagement work.

The demographics of the survey respondents are as follows:

88% are Ashkenazi

71% are female

70% do not have children living at home

70% are members of a synagogue

56% consider themselves Reform or Conservative Jews

54% are age 21 – 50

51% are full-time 40+ hours per week employees

Geographically, 377 respondents, sixty-five percent (65%), live south of the 118, north of the 10 freeway, and west of the 5 freeway. This area is generally where Jews are thought to live in Los Angeles. However, there were several responses from Torrance, El Monte, Norwalk, Santa Clarita, and Pasadena, indicative of the pattern of Jews moving out of these centralized areas.

Below are the nonprofit organizations and synagogues that either agreed to distribute the survey or respondents indicated hearing about the survey from these sources.

Synagogues Represented in the Study

Adas Torah
Adat Ari El
Adat Chaverim
Aish HaTorah
B'nai David-Judea
B'nai Horin
Beis Medrash Or Simcha
Beit Mitzvah
Beit T'Shuva
Beth Ami Valencia
Beth Hillel
Beth Jacob Congregation
Beth Shir Shalom
Beverly Hills Temple of the Arts
Chabbad
Congregation Beth Shalom
Congregation Kol Ami
Congregation Lubavitch of Long Beach
Congregation Ner Tamid
Congregation Or Ami
Congregation Shir Ami
Congregation Shir Chadash
Congregation Tikkun Olam
Congregation Tikvat Jacob
IKAR
Kahal Joseph Congregation
Kehillat Israel
Kol Tikvah
Leo Baeck
Malibu Jewish Center and Synagogue
Mishkon Tephilo
Nachshon Minyan
Nashuva
Nessah Israel
Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center
Sha'arei Am
Shaarey Zedek
Sharei Tefila
Shomrei Torah
Shomrei Torah Synagogue
Shtibl Minyan
Sinai Temple
Stephen S. Wise
Temple Ahavat Shalom
Temple Ahavat Torah
Temple Akiba of Culver City
Temple Aliyah
Temple Beth Am
Temple Beth David
Temple Beth El in San Pedro
Temple Beth Emet

Temple Beth Israel of Highland Park and Eagle Rock
Temple Beth Israel of Pomona
Temple Beth Shalom
Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills
Temple Isaiah
Temple Israel of Hollywood
Temple Israel of Long Beach
Temple Judea
Temple Menorah
Temple Sinai of Glendale
Torat Hayim
University Synagogue
Valley Beth Shalom
Valley Jewish Community Center
Valley Outreach
Wilshire Boulevard Temple
Yavneh
Yeshivat Yavneh
Young Israel of Century City

Jewish Nonprofit Organizations Represented in the Study

30 Years After
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish University
American Jewish World Service
Anti-Defamation League
BBYO- Pacific Western Region
Bend the Arc
Beit T'Shuvah
Bet Tzedek
Birthright Israel Next
BJE: Builders of Jewish Education
California State University, Northridge- Jewish Studies Department
Civic Care
E-Jewish Philanthropy
Hadassah
Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
Hillel 818
HUC DeLeT
JEWCER
J Street
Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters
Jewish Communal Professionals of Southern California
Jewish Family Service
Jewish Free Loan
Jewish Journal
Jewish Jumpstart
Jewish Vocational Service
Jewish World Watch
Jews for Judaism
JQ International
Just Congregations
Los Angeles Jewish Home
Mazon
Moishe House
NA'AMAT USA
National Council of Jewish Women
Netiya
New Ground
Shalom Institute
Six Points Fellowship
Skirball
The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles
The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, Valley Alliance
UCLA Hillel
Union for Reform Judaism
Uri L'Tzedek
USC Hillel
Westside Jewish Community Center
Workmen's Circle
Young Adults of Los Angeles

Non-Jewish Nonprofit Organizations Represented in the Study
Liberty Hill Foundation
OneLA
The Edmund G. "Pat" Brown Institute of Public Affairs

Notable Findings

Political Leanings

Congruent with national statistics, a majority of survey participants are registered Democrats whose political ideology is liberal. When organizations consider which issues to focus on, the fact that a large percentage of Jews in Los Angeles are liberal Democrats, they can feel confident in choosing traditional liberal issues and know that they will get a certain level of support.

Party affiliation:

78% Democrats

10% Republicans

7% as Independent

5% Other

Consider themselves:

20% Very Liberal

41% Liberal

32% Moderate

6% Conservative

1% Very Conservative

Compared to the national Pew study, which found that seventy percent (70%) of Jews identified as Democrats and forty-nine percent (49%) identified as Liberal, the survey respondents identified as registered Democrats and Liberals more often (Pew Research Center, 2013a).

Top Issues Taken Action On

The top five issues people took action on (signed a petition, attended a demonstration, or contacted political representatives) were:

43% Israel

39% Marriage Equality

38% Abortion Rights

31% Gun Restrictions

30% Health Care

For those respondents who identified as Haredi, Ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, or Conservadox seventy-seven percent (77%) indicated they had taken action on Israel related issues. For those respondents who identified as Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, post-Denominational, and Just Jewish, the issue of Israel was the third at thirty-eight percent (38%), behind Marriage Equality at forty-one percent (41%), and Abortion Rights at thirty-nine percent (39%). Twenty-one percent (21%) more women than men indicated taking action on Abortion Rights, and fourteen percent (14%) more men than women indicated taking action on Israel.

In California, same-sex marriage is legal, there are full abortion rights, Covered California is fully implementing the Affordable Care Act as well as Medicare expansions, and California has some of the strictest gun purchasing laws. The actions taken by survey participants were potentially to influence other parts of the country who have different laws, or these actions could have influenced the legislation passed in California. Israel is a very important topic for the Jewish community. However, there are many different issues and perspectives when it comes to Israel so there is no way to tell what specific issues the respondents took action on.

The Issues

Respondents were asked to give their support on a Likert scale to seventeen statements. Below are the issues where a majority of responses were on the same side of the scale.

Strongly Agree or Agree

94% Public schools in Los Angeles need to be improved (structurally, the curricula, the professional staff, etc.).

90% Universal background checks are essential to keeping guns out of dangerous people's hands.

80% I support the Dream Act, providing permanent citizenship for individuals of good moral character who were brought to the country as minors.

73% Reversing climate change should be a top priority of the US government.

66% The Affordable Health Care for America Act of 2009 was a positive piece of legislation.

55% Marijuana should be a legal drug available for recreational use.

52% The current tax system in California favors the wealthy.

Strongly Disagree or Disagree

94% Abortion should be illegal.

88% Abortion should only be legal in the case of rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger.

85% Marriage should only be between a man and a woman.

67% Social Security should be privatized.

65% Israel's security is more important than any US national issue.

63% Medicare should be privatized.

56% The 2nd Amendment should be protected at all cost.

When asked what the most pressing issues in Los Angeles is, respondents report:

32% Public School System

15% Poverty

15% Transportation

12% Other

9% Homeless Population

6% Immigration

4% Not Business Friendly

4% Gang Violence

3% Taxes Too High

The public school system is viewed as the most pressing problem facing Los Angeles by survey respondents, with high taxes and gang violence as less pressing. Regardless of age or political ideology, each sub-set of the sample has similar responses.

However, differences can be found in a few questions. The following statements yielded over 10% difference between respondents over the age of 50 and those 50 and younger.

Strongly Agree or Agree

60% > 50 The Affordable Health Care for America Act of 2009 was a positive piece

76% ≤ 50 of legislation.

67% > 50 Reversing climate change should be a top priority of the US government.

81% ≤ 50

Strongly Disagree or Disagree

53% > 50 Medicare should be privatized.

76% ≤ 50

58% > 50 Social Security should be privatized.

77% ≤ 50

Liberals, Moderates, and Conservatives on the Issues

The following statements yielded majority agreement between those who identified themselves as liberal (very liberal, liberal), moderate, or conservative (very conservative, conservative).

Strongly Agree or Agree

96% Liberals
93% Moderates
81% Conservatives
Public schools in Los Angeles need to be improved (structurally, the curricula, the professional staff, etc.).

94% Liberals
91% Moderates
56% Conservatives
Universal background checks are essential to keeping guns out of dangerous people's hands.

58% Liberals
64% Moderates
74% Conservatives
A balanced budget should be a top priority of the US government.

The following statements yielded disagreement between those who identify as very liberal, liberal, or moderate and those who identify as very conservative or conservative.

Strongly Agree of Agree

2% Liberals	Marriage should only be between a man and a woman.
8% Moderates	
75% Conservatives	

2% Liberals	Social Security should be privatized.
13% Moderates	
47% Conservatives	

4% Liberals	Abortions should only be legal in the case of rape, incest, or when a
10% Moderates	woman's life is in danger.
44% Conservatives	

The following statements yielded more stratified responses: those who identified as very liberal or liberal were at one end of the spectrum, moderates were in the middle, and those who identified as very conservative or conservative were at the other end of the spectrum.

94% Liberals	I support the Dream Act, providing permanent citizenship for
71% Moderates	individuals of good moral character who were brought to the US as
34% Conservatives	minors.

90% Liberals	Reversing climate change should be a top priority of the US
59% Moderates	government.
38% Conservatives	

Top Organizations

Respondents report being involved with many different organizations – Jewish and not. The top ten organizations respondents reported personally engaging with (attended an event, subscribed to their newsletter, volunteered for, donated money to, etc.), were:

40% SOVA

39% Jewish World Watch

38% National Council of Jewish Women

35% Jewish Family Service

32% Mazon

30% American Israel Public Affairs Committee

27% American Jewish World Service

26% Democratic National Committee

25% AIDS Walk

25% Anti-Defamation League

Of these top ten organizations, six are Jewish social justice organizations, two are Jewish social service organizations, and two are not Jewish. Of these organizations, only the National Council of Jewish Women and American Jewish World Service distributed the survey to their constituents. Jewish World Watch's annual Walk to End Genocide may be the reason for the high level of indicated engagement.

Participation

In the past year, respondents reporting taking these actions at least once:

69% signed an online petition

56% donated money to political campaigns

55% sent post cards, letters, e-mails or made phone calls to their representatives

54% contacted any political representative

36% signed in-person petitions

35% attended a public demonstration

19% volunteered for a political campaign

The most popular representative people contact is the LA City Council, then the President, the US Congress, and the California Assembly in a close 4th place.

Social Justice Fellowships

Twelve percent (12%) of respondents indicated having participated in a social justice fellowship. The fellowships indicated were the New Jewish Agenda (closed in 1992), the Jeremiah Fellowship, American Jewish World Service's Global Justice Fellowship, Join for Justice Jewish Organizing Fellowship, One LA, AIPAC Fellows Program, The Selah Leadership Program, the AVODAH Fellowship, Uri L'Tzedek's AMOS Fellowship, Repaid the World's Community Fellowship, the New Ground Fellowship, the Otzma Israel Fellowship, the New Leaders Project, the Jewish Joint Distribution Entwine Global Jewish Service Corps, a fellowship through Hillel, and the Community Organizing Fellowship through Hebrew Union College.

Of those, in the last year:

100% voted in the 2012 Presidential election

82% signed an online petition

80% participated in social justice conferences, seminars, lobbying or service learning trips

76% contacted a political representative

68% contacted their political representative

67% participated in a public demonstration

56% signed in-person petitions

51% took action on Marriage Equality

Whether it is an indication of the kind of people who participate in social justice fellowships or the effect going through a social justice fellowship has on an individual's level of civic engagement, it is clear that social justice fellowships are linked to a higher than average level of civic engagement.

Synagogue Engagement

Seventy percent (70%) of respondents indicated that they were members of a synagogue, and fifty-one percent (51%) of those were over the age of 51. When asked if they engage in civic issues (events, petitions, meetings, etc.) through their synagogue, they responded:

15% Frequently

56% Sometimes

23% Never

7% They do not offer the opportunity

Forty-five percent (45%) of synagogue members indicated personally engaging with Jewish World Watch, the most popular response.

Voting

Voting is one of the most popular forms of civic engagement among the survey respondents. The 2012 Presidential election was more popular than the local Los Angeles Mayoral elections. Fifty-nine percent (59%) voted in the mayoral primary election, fifty-seven percent (57%) voted in the mayoral run-off election, and ninety-six percent (96%) voted in the 2012 presidential election. In-person was the most popular way for respondents to vote in all elections.

2013 Los Angeles Mayoral Primary Election:

36% Voted – In Person

22% Voted – Absentee

16% Did Not Vote – Did Not Live in the City of Los Angeles

11% Did Not Vote – Other Reason

9% Did Not Vote – Did Not Have Time

3% Did Not Vote – Was Ineligible

2% Did Not Vote – Did Not Know There Was an Election

2012 Presidential Election:

62% Voted – In Person

34% Voted – Absentee

2% Did Not Vote – Other Reason

1% Did Not Vote – Was Ineligible

1% Did Not Vote – Did Not Have Time

0% Did Not Vote – Did Not Know There Was an Election

Top News Sources

The top five news sources respondents rely upon are:

55% The Los Angeles Times

43% National Public Radio (NPR)

40% The New York Times

40% CNN

32% The Jewish Journal

While those over and under 50 utilize NPR to similar degrees, the Los Angeles Times is more popular among those over 50 (66% vs. 42%).

When considering what news outlets to utilize in reaching out to the Jewish community, it may be advantageous to contact the Los Angeles Times, NPR local stations (KCLU AM 1340, KCRW FM 89.9, KPCC FM 89.3, and KVCR FM 91.9), and the Jewish Journal for advertising events, activist campaigns, promoting successes, and participating in interviews.

The People Behind the Data

When conducting research, the idea is to examine overall trends and be able to identify interesting findings or anomalies. Although important, it is equally necessary to attempt to look at the data and see the individual behind the respondents. What are indications when a person is actively engaged? What is important to know about the people who are not engaged at all? To answer these questions, below are three profiles of individual respondents. We do not know their names but from their survey responses, we can get a clear image of how these individuals see civic engagement.

The Civic Engagement Index (CEI) was created to better categorize an individual's level of engagement. By identifying people in all three categories and profiling them, we are able to paint a picture of how these types of engagement look. Each of the respondents was scored in consideration of frequency of various civic actions: signing petitions, attending demonstrations, political communication, donations, volunteering, and voting. Also considered were the number of issues an individual took action on, how many organizations they were personally engaged with, and if they participated in civic issues through their synagogue. Consideration was taken to not penalize a respondent if they did not belong to a synagogue or was not eligible to vote in a given election. The scoring rubric can be found in Appendix A: The Civic Engagement Index (CEI). Respondents were categorized as actively engaged, moderately engaged, or minimally engaged.

Actively Engaged: CEI Score of 88 – 50

#68 – CEI Score of 66

Number 68 is a male between the ages of 51 – 60, registered Democrat and considers his political ideology to be very liberal. He gets his news from Haaretz, the Los Angeles Times, NPR, and the New York Times. A full-time employee, Number 68 has children under 21 living at home, identifies as a Conservative Jew and belongs to a congregation where he sometimes engages in civil issues.

He is personally engaged with 19 organizations, 14 of which are Jewish, and 13 are social justice focused. He contributed $20 - $100 to and volunteered for a political campaign in the last year, as well as having voted in-person for all mentioned elections. He signed online petitions and contacted his congressional representative 16+ times in the last year. Although he does not often sign in-person petitions (1-5), he regularly attends public demonstrations, 11-15 in the last year. He has taken these actions in regards to 17 different issues. For him, the most pressing problem in Los Angeles is homelessness. When asked about a personal experience, he shared that he was "arrested for civil disobedience in support of hotel workers" at age 53.

Moderately Engaged: CEI Score of 49 – 25

#366 – CEI Score of 35

Number 366 is a woman between the ages of 31-40, registered Democrat and considers her political ideology to be liberal. She gets her news from CNN, Google News, the Jewish Journal, and NPR. A full-time employee, Number 366 has no children living at home, identifies as a Reform Jew, and did not indicate belonging to a synagogue.

She is personally engaged with 12 organizations, 9 of which are Jewish, and 6 are social justice focused. She contributed under $20 to a political campaign in the last year and volunteer

for a campaign over 5 years ago, as well as having voted in-person for all mentioned elections. She signed 6-10 online petitions and did not sign in-person petitions, attend a public demonstration, or contact her congressional representative in the last year. She has taken action on health care and abortion rights issues. For her, the most pressing problem in Los Angeles is the economy in general.

When asked about a personal experience, she shared- "[I] called Congressman Wexler re[garding]: support for Affordable Care Act & Pro-choice bills, signed Planned Parenthood petitions and sent them to family to be signed. In general I'd like to be more engaged w/ the Jewish community but lack of time and resources (and inherent shyness) stops me."

Minimally Engaged: CEI Score of 24 – 0

#403 – CEI Score of 14

Number 403 is a female between the ages of 21-30, registered Democrat and considers her political ideology to be moderate. She gets her news from Google News, the Jewish Journal, and NPR. A full-time employee, she has no children living at home, identifies as Just Jewish, and did not indicate belonging to a synagogue.

She is personally engaged with 2 organizations, AIPAC and Hillel 818. She did not contribute to or volunteer for a political campaign in the last year and voted absentee in all mentioned elections. She did not sign any online petitions, in-person petitions, attend public demonstrations, or communicate with her or any other political representative in the last year. For her, the most pressing problem in Los Angeles is transportation.

When asked if there is anything she would like us to know about her civic engagement, she responded- "I wish I had more opportunities to engage...as a young 20-something year old

Jew. Too many of the available groups provide the same activity: drinking/parties/fancy parties/fundraisers."

Each of these respondent's profile reveals aspects of the type of people who fall into these categories. The actively engaged Number 68 fights for civil issues on a regular basis, to the extent of being arrested with children at home, and he does so in a Jewish context. The minimally engaged Number 403 wishes to be more engaged but may either not be aware of opportunities or have them available. A similar response was given by Number 366, moderately engaged civically but hesitant to engage within the Jewish community.

Other respondents shared the sentiment that the Jewish community is not the first place they go to engage civically or that it is difficult to get involved:

"I am unaware of any social justice or political organizations in the Jewish community in LA. I have never been recruited or contacted by any organizations" (#82 – CEI Score of 54: Actively Engaged).

"I did not have time (to vote). I did not know there was an election. Jewish organizations make your involvement extremely difficult. I called a few of them asking if they needed volunteers. They all said they would have someone call me back and speak to me about it but nobody did. Since I was asking if they needed my FREE services I was not going to call several times to follow up. I gave up :(" (#10 – CEI Score of 4: Minimally Engaged).

Indicative of the trends previously explored, some feel their involvement could not make a difference, so they do not get involved:

"Unfortunately, I don't think we will impact decision makers who are inept and politically motivated in their activities" (#110 – CEI Score of 12: Minimally Engaged).

"I don't feel like my vote would have made much of a difference. I did not care to vote (sad, I know). I only engaged by writing a letter to my senator concerning abolishing soft drinks in high school vending machines. I was 21 at the time and only did it because it was part of a school assignment" (#41 – CEI Score 2: Minimally Engaged).

Several respondents mentioned the influence of their childhood activities, including the model presented by their parents. Clearly these experiences influenced respondents to be more civically involved as adults:

"My parents were always active in local politics focusing on public education. We marched, raised funds, and as a child, I sat under the table at countless school board and school bond meetings" (#298 – CEI Score of 35: Moderately Engaged).

"I wrote and carried my first petition when I was in the third grade and a friend was punished unjustly and excessively. My family instilled in me the responsibility to work for justice wherever and whenever I could and I still feel the need to work in any and every way I can to secure a more just and inclusive society" (#25 – CEI Score of 53: Actively Engaged).

Lastly, having an internal sense of obligation leads to increased civic engagement. Some engage because of secular values and some mention their Jewishness as a motivating factor:

"I believe that civic engagement is crucial for all citizens to maintain a democratic nation" (#33 – CEI Score of 27: Moderately Engaged).

"I engaged both within and outside of the Jewish community on domestic issues mostly and some on international. Both ways of engaging are very important to me. I do them as a Jew, as an American and a human being" (#546 – CEI Score of 64: Actively Engaged).

Recommendations

Based on the collected data and subsequent interviews, the following recommendations are aimed at individuals, synagogues, and organizations that either already engage in social issues or wish to begin engaging.

Get Involved

Find an issue you are passionate about and find activities that work for you and your community. For individuals, there are several different Jewish organizations working on a variety of issues in many different ways. Begin by subscribing to their newsletters to get a better idea about the work they do. Ask friends and family what they think of the organization to get a sense of their reputation. Contact a staff member of the organization and ask how you can get involved, then attend or volunteer for a specific event. If it feels like a good fit, continue to be involved. If you find a non-Jewish organization that fits your needs, reach out to Jewish organizations and synagogues to get involved with the work you are doing.

Know who your political representatives are and meet with them. Every area has a city council member and representatives in the state assembly, state senate, and United States House of Representatives. Many of these representatives will make time to meet with you, even if there is no specific agenda. Get some neighbors together for the visit, go with your partner and children, or go alone. This face-to-face interaction not only helps you understand the person who makes decisions for the area where you live, but it allows the representative to better understand their constituents. If you do choose to engage in advocacy, the representative now has a face to connect with the individual or organizational name.

For synagogues, do the same. Talk to your synagogue members and discover what issue they are passionate about. Be careful to find an issue that is unifying, not divisive, and connect

with the organizations working on that issue. If there are no Jewish organizations currently working on the issues your community is interested in, connect with Jewish organizations that work on similar issues and ask what support they could offer. Reach out to other synagogues that might also be interested in working on the same issue. Meet the political representatives in your area and let them know what your community cares about. Set strategic goals for what your synagogue would like to accomplish and set out to accomplish it. Equally, it is important to have deep ongoing engagement on a single issue to help strengthen the impact and knowledge congregants will have on that particular topic while still having flexibility to work on other issues.

Focus on Local Issues

The most popular issue survey respondents took action on was Israel. International and national issues are very important and require a significant amount of support. These issues can take many years to affect, and often the results of individual efforts are limited. By working on local issues, improving the place where you live, the Jewish community can have significant impact in a shorter time frame.

When asked what they consider the most pressing problem facing Los Angeles, the most popular response was the public school system. Ninety-four percent (94%) of respondents agreed that the public school education system needs to be improved. In spite of this overwhelming interest, there are no Jewish organizations doing work to improve education policy in Los Angeles. There are Jewish organizations that read to kids, open libraries, provide tutoring, or donate school supplies, but none of them work on legislation or with political representatives to help find solutions. Public education issues affect a large percentage of the Jewish community who send their children to public schools. Even those who choose to send their children to

private or charter schools, the policies for public education can affect those institutions as well. Equally, a stronger education system can translate to a better educated work force, increase residential property value, and make Los Angeles more economically competitive on the whole (Weiss, 2004, p.7).

Likewise, ninety percent (90%) of respondents agreed that universal background checks are essential to keeping guns out of dangerous people's hands. While the National Council of Jewish Women is collecting petitions to help pass state-wide background check legislation for ammunition purchases, these statistics suggest an opportunity for other organizations to get involved with this issue.

When the Jewish community comes together on local issues, they are able to effect positive change in the city in which they live. Recently, LA Voice PICO partnered with an area synagogue to help change unfair towing laws which targeted undocumented immigrants, and they were successful in making this small but meaningful policy change.

There is a great opportunity for the Jewish community to strategically target social issues in Los Angeles County with achievable goals- homelessness, gun violence, transportation, food insecurity, and public school education. It is when Jewish organizations and synagogues come together that these types of changes are possible.

The Creation of The Partnership for Jewish Civic Engagement Initiative

There are many partnerships developing between Jewish social justice organizations, synagogues, and non-Jewish organizations. These partnerships, however, are often limited to one-time events. Each separate organization and synagogue brings its unique perspective, constituency, and methods to effect change. By deepening the connections between Jewish social

justice organizations and synagogues, the Jewish community could be more effective in helping influence positive social change.

The creation of a new initiative, The Partnership for Jewish Civic Engagement or "The Partnership," could assist and advise the Jewish social justice sector, as well as support their work throughout Los Angeles County.

This proposed new initiative would run an annual conference for the leaders of Jewish social justice organizations and synagogues: an opportunity to share past accomplishments and current priorities, create partnerships, and improve engagement with the community. Based on this conference, an annual report could highlight the social justice work happening in the Los Angeles Jewish community. Another annual conference could bring together the entire Jewish community to learn about and discuss the important social issues facing the county, state, or nation. The Partnership might spearhead research efforts and make recommendations regarding which issues need the most attention or which approaches would be the most advantageous.

Collaborations on specific issues impacting Los Angeles County would be an important aspect of The Partnership. There would be specific issue trusts, e.g., the immigration trust or the homelessness trust, where organizations and synagogues interested in working on those issues would come together to develop strategies on how to approach the issue for maximum effectiveness. Once an initial planning meeting takes place, follow-up meetings could adjust the strategy as necessary.

The Partnership would also bring Los Angeles area rabbis and social justice committee members together to share best practices and participate in training, in order to be more effective in organizing their religious community.

Another important aspect of The Partnership might be curriculum development for religious schools, Jewish day schools, Jewish summer camps, synagogue youth groups, and Hillels – helping to teach civics through a Jewish lens. This program would facilitate visits with political representatives, meetings with Los Angeles social justice organizations, and participation in an active campaign.

The Partnership could help match individuals with organizations that are working on specific issues, helping to support their involvement. This might include a community calendar, scholarships for individuals to attend conferences, and a list of what issues are being worked on through which organizations.

Several successful models of organizational collaboration can be found in other sectors of the Los Angeles Jewish community, including BJE: Builders of Jewish Education, the Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Communal Professionals of Southern California, and the Community Complementary Education Initiative. On a national level, there are several other collaborative initiatives, including the Foundation for Jewish Camps, the National Association of Temple Educators, and – in the sector of civic engagement – the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable. All of these groups are excellent at bringing organizations and individuals in the Jewish community together to support each other in their work.

Commit to a Decennial Los Angeles Jewish Demographic Study

The objective of this study was to gather data about the civic engagement habits among Jews in Los Angeles County. Individual organizations often will do their own research within their constituency in order to plan their programs and goals. Unfortunately, this is the only data about the Jewish community in Los Angeles that they have to work with, as the last Jewish demographic study done in Los Angeles was in 1997. When working on social issues, it is

important to know where Jews live, how they engage in the broader community, how they give their money to charity, their levels of education, and more. This type of information would be invaluable to any social justice organization's work, including The Partnership. A study of this kind is traditionally done by the Jewish Federation. Although the CEO has publicly mentioned the importance of conducting such a survey, no efforts have made toward this goal (Fax, 2012). It is recommended that a decennial Los Angeles Jewish demographic study be a top priority of Jewish institutions, whether it be an independent effort or an effort of the Jewish Federation.

Conclusion

When I began this study, I knew there were many dedicated organizations and people engaged in social justice issues. What I set out to test was how Jews in Los Angeles connected with those efforts and where there might be gaps for improvement. What I found was a diversity of opinions and levels of engagement within the Jewish community.

Each Jewish social justice organization and synagogue chooses which issue to focus on and how they are going to engage their constituents, mostly independent of each other. There is a significant amount of partnering when it comes to co-sponsoring single events, but beyond educational events, few organizations strategically work together to accomplish a goal.

There is great potential for the Jewish community to have significant impact on the social issues facing Los Angeles. When they work together, leveraging individual organizations' strengths toward a common purpose, the possibilities are endless.

Jewish tradition gives individual Jews, synagogues, and Jewish organizations a wealth of knowledge in regards to our obligation to repair the world. Our social status gives us the means and our collective history gives us the empathy to be effective. It is when we leverage our resources to work together that we can achieve legislative accomplishments.

Because, as Dr. Seuss reminds us, "unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

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Appendix A: Civic Engagement Index (CEI)

Online Petitions	**Points**
None	0
1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16+	4
In-Person Petitions	
None	0
1-5	2
6-10	4
11-15	6
16+	8
Public Demonstrations	
None	0
1-5	3
6-10	6
11-15	9
16+	12
Contacting YOUR representative	
I do not know my congressional representative	0
None	0
1-5	2
6-10	4
11-15	6
16+	8
Contacting ANY representative	
None	0
1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16+	4
# of Issues Taken Action On	
0	0
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6+	6
Synagogue Engagement	
I am not a member of a synagogue	2*
Frequently	4
Sometimes	2
Never	0

They do not offer the opportunity	2*
Social Justice Fellowship	
Yes	4
No	0
Social Justice Conference	
Yes	2
No	0
# of Organizations Involved With	
0	0
1	2
2	4
3	6
4	8
5	10
6+	12
Volunteered for Campaign	
Yes- in the past year	10
Yes – 1-5 years ago	6
Yes – over 5 years ago	4
No	0
Voted in LA Primary	
Yes – in-person	4
Yes – absentee	4
No – I did not have time	0
No – I did not know there was an election	0
No – I am not eligible to vote	2*
No – I do not live in the city of Los Angeles	4*
No – other reason	1*
Voted in LA General Election	
Yes – in-person	4
Yes – absentee	4
No – I did not have time	0
No – I did not know there was an election	0
No – I am not eligible to vote	2*
No – I do not live in the city of Los Angeles	4*
No – other reason	1*
Voted in Presidential Election	
Yes – in-person	2
Yes – absentee	2
No – I did not have time	0
No – I did not know there was an election	0
No – I am not eligible to vote	1
No – other reason	1

Score-

88 – 50	Actively Engaged
49 – 25	Moderately Engaged
24 – 0	Minimally Engaged

* Points for these categories are to avoid take points away from someone for situations they are not responsible for (not being eligible to vote in Los Angeles or not belonging to a synagogue).

Appendix B: Synagogue Membership in Los Angeles County

Adat Ari El – 700
Adat Shalom – 200
Beth Chayim Chadashim – 200
Beth Jacob Congregation – 700
Beth Shir Sholom – 200
B'nai David-Judea – 300
B'nai Hayim – 60
B'nai Horin – 125
Burbank Temple Emanu El – 150
Congregation Beth Meier – 100
Congregation Or Ami – 350
Congregation Shir Ami – 80
Congregation Tikvat Jacob – 370
IKAR – 550
Kehillat Israel – 1000
Kehillat Ma'arav – 300
Kol Ami – 225
Kol Tikvah – 250
Leo Baeck – 600
Malibu Jewish Center & Synagogue – 250
Mishkon Tephilo – 140
Ohr HaTorah – 250
Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center –450
Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel – 500
Shaarey Zedek – 300
Shomrei Torah – 540
Sinai Temple – 1860
Stephen S. Wise Temple – 2800
Temple Ahavat Shalom – 520
Temple Akiba – 320
Temple Aliyah – 950
Temple Ami Shalom – 75
Temple Beth Am – 1000
Temple Beth Emet – 170
Temple Beth Hillel – 500
Temple Beth Israel of Highland Park and Eagle Rock – 136
Temple Emanuel – 800
Temple Isaiah – 1000
Temple Israel of Hollywood – 950
Temple Judea – 1000
Temple Knesset Israel – 120
Temple Menorah – 300
Temple Ramat Zion – 340
Temple Shalom of the South Bay-Hermosa – 65
Temple Sinai of Glendale – 220
The New Shul of the Conejo – 120
The Santa Monica Synagogue-Sha'arei Am – 300
University Synagogue – 500
Valley Beth Israel- Sun Valley – 90
Valley Beth Shalom – 1500
Valley Outreach Synagogue – 600
Wilshire Boulevard Temple – 2300
Young Israel of Century City – 492
Total – 27918

Appendix C: The Survey with Overall Response Data

Page 1 – How Do You Engage

1. How many online petitions have you signed in the last year?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	31.2%	178
1-5	43.9%	250
6-10	12.1%	69
11-15	4.0%	23
16+	8.8%	50
	answered question	570

2. How many in-person petitions (at your door, in front of the grocery store, at the farmer's market, on the street, etc.) have you signed in the last year?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	64.2%	366
1-5	33.0%	188
6-10	1.6%	9
11-15	1.1%	6
16+	0.2%	1
	answered question	570

3. How many public demonstrations (rallies, marches, walks, pickets, gatherings) have you participated in over the last year?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	65.0%	369
1-5	31.7%	180
6-10	2.1%	12
11-15	0.4%	2
16+	0.9%	5
	answered question	568

4. How many post cards, letters, e-mails, or phone calls have you sent YOUR congressional representative (US House) in the last year?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I do not know who my congressional representative is	7.2%	41
None	38.4%	219
1-5	40.0%	228

6-10	8.1%	46
11-15	2.6%	15
16+	3.7%	21
	answered question	570

5. How many times have you contacted ANY other political representative (City Council, Assembly Member, Mayor, State Senator, UN Ambassador, or President) in the last year?

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Never	46.3%	261
1-5	38.8%	219
6-10	7.6%	43
11-15	2.3%	13
16+	5.0%	28
	answered question	564

5a. If so, which type of representative?

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
City Council	19.1%	72
Governor	4.2%	16
Mayor	7.4%	28
President	16.2	61
State Assembly	12.7%	48
State Senate	11.7%	44
UN Ambassador	2.7%	10
US House	13.8%	52
US Senate	12.2%	46
	answered question	377

6. To the best of your recollection, what issues were these petitions, post cards, letters, or demonstrations concerning? (skip if not applicable)

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
3rd World Development	6.6%	27
Abortion Rights	37.7%	155
Animal Rights	10.9%	45
Assisting the Disenfranchised	9.2%	38
Balanced Government Budget	6.1%	25
Border Protection	3.6%	15
Children's Issues	16.3%	67
Civic Engagement	4.9%	20
Clean Water	6.3%	26
Diplomatic Relations	5.1%	21
Domestic Economic	3.4%	14

Development		
Environment	23.6%	97
Food Justice	17.0%	70
Gender Identity	9.2%	38
Genocide	14.8%	61
Gun Rights	6.6%	27
Gun Restrictions	30.9%	127
Health Care	29.7%	122
Homeless	9.7%	40
Hunger	16.3%	67
Immigration	25.8%	106
Income Equality	11.4%	47
Interfaith Relations	4.1%	17
Israel	42.8%	176
Learning Disabilities	5.6%	23
Marriage Equality	38.9%	160
Preservation of Marriage	0.7%	3
Prison System	4.4%	18
Privacy Protection	3.4%	14
Private School Education	1.2%	5
Pro-Life	1.2%	5
Public School Education	12.2%	50
Regulatory Reform	4.1%	17
Tax Reform	5.4%	22
Terrorism	2.7%	11
Transportation	6.6%	27
Senior Care	7.8%	32
Sexual Assault in the Military	9.5%	39
Student Loan Debt	13.1%	54
Women's Issues	28.5%	117
Local Issues	3.2%	13
Other (please specify)	15.1%	62
	answered question	411

Page 2 – Jewish Engagement

7. For those who are involved with a synagogue: I engage in civic issues (events, petitions, meetings, etc.) through my synagogue.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I am not a member of a synagogue	24.5%	129
Frequently	10.3%	54
Sometimes	39.3%	207
Never	15.9%	84
They do not offer the	4.7%	25

opportunity		
	answered question	527

8. Have you ever participated in a Jewish social justice fellowship?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	11.9%	62
No	88.1%	459
If you, which one(s)?		56
	answered question	521

9. Have you ever participated in a Jewish social justice conference, seminar, lobby or service-learning trip?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	34.7%	183
No	65.3%	345
If yes, which one(s)?		141
	answered question	528

10. With which of these organizations have you been personally engaged (attended an event, subscribed to their newsletter, volunteered for, donated money to, etc.)?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
30 Years After	7.6%	39
ACLU	17.8%	91
AIDS Walk	25.2%	129
AIPAC	30.1%	154
American Jewish Committee (AJC)	18.4%	94
American Jewish World Service (AJWS)	27.3%	140
Anti-Defamation League (ADL)	25.0%	128
Bet Tzedek	22.5%	115
Bend the Arc (formerly Progressive Jewish Alliance)	23.0%	118
Civic Care	0.4%	2
CLUE	5.9%	30
Democratic National Committee (DNC)	26.4%	135
Hadassah	21.3%	109
Hazon	7.8%	40

Invisible Children	2.5%	13
J Street	15.4%	79
Jewish Community Relations of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles	18.8%	96
Jewish Family Service (JFS)	35.2%	180
Jewish Labor Committee	3.1%	16
Jewish World Watch (JWW)	38.9	199
Jews for Judaism	7.4%	38
Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)	8.8%	45
Just Congregations	5.1%	26
LAANE	2.9%	15
LA Police Protective League	1.8%	9
Liberty Hill Foundation	6.1%	31
Mazon	32.2%	165
MS Walk	7.8%	40
National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)	37.7%	193
Netiya	8.2%	42
New Ground	10.2%	52
New Israel Fund	15.8%	81
Occupy LA	5.7%	29
One LA	8.2%	42
Peace Now	11.3%	58
Repair the World	6.3%	32
Republican Jewish Coalition	4.1%	21
Republican National Committee (RNC)	3.9%	20
Relief International	0.4%	2
Sierra Club	13.1%	67
SOVA	39.8%	204
Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE)	1.2%	6
The Religious Action Center	12.9%	66
Tree People	21.1%	108
United Way	14.3%	73
Uri L'Tzedek	5.5%	28
I have not engaged with any organizations	3.3%	17
Other (please specify)	19.3%	99
	answered question	512

11. All other things being equal, I am more likely to vote for a candidate who: (select all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Is from your neighborhood	10.2%	49
Is associated with the Democratic Party	75.1%	361
Is associated with the Republican Party	9.4%	45
Has his/her children in public school	14.8%	71
Is a man	3.3%	16
Is a woman	29.9%	144
Is Jewish	54.7%	263
Is not Jewish	0.8%	4
Is religious	5.4%	26
Is from a minority group	10.2%	49
Other (please specify)		59
	answered question	481

12. How much influence do you think each of the following groups have on public policy in Los Angeles (creating and implementing legislation, lobbying, electing representatives, voting power, advocacy, etc.)?

Answer Options	A Lot	Some	A Little	None	Response Count
African Americans	12%	56%	30%	2%	505
Asian Americas	6%	46%	44%	5%	502
Jews	44%	48%	8%	0.5%	512
Latinos/ Hispanics	35%	51%	13%	1%	505
				answered question	512

Page 3 – Where You Stand

13. Marriage should only be between a man and a woman.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	5.2%	1.9%	6.9%	14.3%	71.0%	0.6%	518

14. The current system in California favors the wealthy.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	18.1%	34.3%	15.2%	12.1%	6.9%	13.3%	519

15. Abortion should only be legal in the case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	3.7%	5.6%	2.3%	13.5%	74.6%	0.4%	520

16. Abortion should be illegal.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	1.8%	1.8%	2.0%	9.4%	84.6%	0.6%	512

17. A balanced budget should be a top priority of the US government.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	12.7%	37.2%	20.7%	19.3%	8.0%	2.1%	513

18. Reversing climate change should be a top priority of the US government.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	29.4%	43.7%	15.5%	7.0%	3.5%	1.0%	517

19. The death penalty should be abolished.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	19.1%	26.5%	24.6%	17.4%	8.9%	3.5%	517

20. The Keystone Pipeline (oil sands pipeline from Canada to refineries in Texas) should be allowed to be built.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	7.5%	16.0%	18.9%	19.7%	16.4%	21.6%	519

21. Public schools in Los Angeles need to be improved (structurally, the curricula, the professional staff, etc.).

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	61.8%	32.0%	2.5%	0.6%	0.8%	2.3%	518

22. Medicare should be privatized.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	2.3%	6.6%	13.3%	22.5%	40.8%	14.5%	519

23. Social Security should be privatized.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	2.3%	5.8%	11.8%	22.1%	44.5%	13.5%	517

24. The Affordable Health Care for America Act of 2009 was a positive piece of legislation.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	28.7%	39.0%	11.4%	6.2%	7.0%	7.8%	516

25. I support the Dream Act, providing permanent citizenship for individuals of good moral character who were brought to the country as minors.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	47.0%	32.2%	6.5%	6.5%	3.5%	3.3%	521

26. The 2nd Amendment should be protected at all cost.

	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly	Do Not	Response

	Agree				Disagree	Know	Count
Response Percent	5.3%	13.7%	17.6%	26.1%	29.9%	7.3%	505

27. Universal background checks are essential to keeping guns out of dangerous people's hands.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	55.1%	35.0%	3.1%	2.3%	2.3%	2.1%	517

28. Marijuana should be a legal drug available for recreational use.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	14.6%	40.7%	22.5%	13.1%	7.7%	1.5%	521

29. Israel's security is more important than any US national issue.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Response Count
Response Percent	5.2%	11.6%	17.0%	46.1%	18.7%	1.4%	518

30. The most pressing problem facing Los Angeles is…

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Gang Violence	3.7%	19
Homeless Population	9.4%	28
Immigration	6.1%	31
Transportation	14.7%	75
Not Business Friendly	5.5%	28
Public School System	31.5%	161
Poverty	14.9%	76
Taxes Too High	2.7%	14
Other	11.5%	59
	answered question	511

Page 4 – A Little About Politics

31. I am a registered…

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Republican	9.8%	50

Democrat	77.6%	396
Libertarian	0.4%	2
Green	0.0%	0
Independent	7.5%	38
I am not registered to vote	2.5%	13
Other (please specify)	2.2%	11
	answered question	510

32. Thinking in political terms, would you say that you are very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative, or very conservative?

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Very Liberal	19.6%	100
Liberal	41.5%	212
Moderate	31.5%	161
Conservative	6.5%	33
Very Conservative	1.0%	5
	answered question	511

33. I've contributed to a political campaign in the last year.

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
No	44.3%	226
Yes – under $20	6.1%	31
Yes – between $20 - $100	19.4%	99
Yes – between $101 - $500	17.1%	87
Yes – between $501 - $1,000	6.7%	34
Yes – over $1,000	6.5%	33
	answered question	510

34. I've volunteered for a political campaign.

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Yes - in the past year	18.6%	95
Yes - 1-5 years ago	16.6%	85
Yes - over 5 years ago	11.7%	60
No	53.0%	271
	answered question	511

35. I voted in the LA primary mayoral election in March 2013 (between Eric Garcetti, Wendy Greuel, Kevin James, Jan Perry, and Emanuel Pleitez).

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Yes - in-person	36.4%	186
Yes - absentee	22.3%	114

No - I did not have time	9.2%	47
No - I did not know there was an election	1.6%	8
No - I am not eligible to vote	2.9%	15
No - I do not live in the city of Los Angeles	16.2%	83
No - other reason	11.4%	58
	answered question	511

36. I voted in the LA general run-off mayoral election in May 2013 (between Eric Garcetti and Wendy Greuel).

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Yes - in-person	37.5%	190
Yes - absentee	19.9%	101
No - I did not have time	9.3%	47
No - I did not know there was an election	1.8%	9
No - I am not eligible to vote	3.0%	15
No - I do not live in the city of Los Angeles	16.8%	85
No - other reason	11.8%	60
	answered question	507

37. I voted in the last Presidential election in November 2012 (between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama, including Prop 30 thru 40).

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Yes - in-person	61.8%	316
Yes - absentee	33.9%	173
No - I did not have time	0.8%	4
No - I did not know there was an election	0.0%	0
No - I am not eligible to vote	1.2%	6
No - other reason	2.3%	12
	answered question	511

38. Which news sources do you utilize most? Please choose up to 5.

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Al Jazera	2.1%	11
Associated Press	4.3%	22
BBC News	10.5%	54
CNN	39.5%	203
CSPAN	1.2%	6

Drudge Report	3.7%	19
Forward	4.9%	25
Fox News	9.3%	48
Google News	12.6%	65
Haaretz	8.9%	46
Huffington Post	27.2%	140
Jerusalem Post	7.0%	36
Jewish Journal	32.1%	165
KTLA	8.0%	41
LA Weekly	4.5%	23
Los Angeles Business Journal	3.1%	16
Los Angeles Daily News	4.7%	24
Los Angeles Times	55.3%	284
MSNBC	19.3%	99
NPR	43.0%	221
Other Local News	8.2%	42
Path.com	0.0%	0
Politico	2.7%	14
Reuters	1.9%	10
The Daily Show	22.2%	114
The New York Times	40.1%	206
The Wall Street Journal	10.9%	56
USA Today	2.7%	14
Washington Post	4.5%	23
Yahoo! News	10.1%	52
YNet	1.6%	8
None	0.8%	4
Other (please specify)	14.8%	76
	answered question	514

Page 5 – A Little About You

39. Where did you hear about this survey?

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
A Friend or Relative	27.7%	140
A Nonprofit Organization (please specify in 40 below)	17.5%	89
Facebook	16.9%	86
Jewish Journal	0.4%	2
My Synagogue (please specify in 41 below)	12.0%	61
Other (please specify)	25.9%	132
	answered question	510

40. If applicable, which nonprofit organization did you hear about this survey from?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
6 Points Fellowship	1.2%	2
30 Years After	0.6%	1
American Jewish Committee	3.0%	5
American Jewish World Service	2.4%	4
American Jewish University	0.6%	1
Anti-Defamation League	0.6%	1
BBYO - Pacific Western Region	0.6%	1
Bend the Arc	1.8%	3
Bet Tzedek	0.6%	1
Beit T'Shuvah	0.6%	1
Birthright Israel NEXT	0.6%	1
Builders of Jewish Education	0.6%	1
Civic Care	0.6%	1
CSUN Hillel	1.8%	3
CSUN Jewish Studies Department	0.6%	1
Hadassah	0.6%	1
Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion	23.6%	39
Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters	0.6%	1
Jewish Communal Professionals of Southern California	3.6%	6
Jewish Family Service	1.2%	2
Jewish Federation	1.8%	3
Jewish Free Loan	1.2%	2
Jewish Jumpstart	0.6%	1
Jewish World Watch	1.2%	2
Jewish Vocational Service	8.5%	14
Los Angeles Jewish Home	3.0%	5
Mazon	0.6%	1
Moishe House	4.2%	7
National Council of Jewish Women	26.1%	43
New Ground	0.6%	1
Netiyah	1.2%	2
Next Generation Engagement Initiative (NEI)	0.6%	1
Shalom Institute	0.6%	1

Skirball	0.6%	1
UCLA Hillel	0.6%	1
Union for Reform Judaism	0.6%	1
Westside Jewish Community Center	1.2%	2
Young Adults of Los Angeles (YALA)	0.6%	1
Other (please specify)		28
	answered question	165

41. If applicable, which synagogue do you belong to? If you belong to multiple synagogues, chose one primary synagogue or indicate the one from which you heard about this survey.

Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
I am not a member of a synagogue	16.7%	51
Adat Ari El	5.9%	18
Beit Teshuva	0.3%	1
Beth Jacob Congregation	2.0%	6
Beth Shir Sholom	1.0%	3
B'nai David-Judea	1.3%	4
B'nai Horin	0.7%	2
Congregation Or Ami	3.3%	10
Congregation Shir Ami	0.3%	1
Congregation Tikvat Jacob	0.7%	2
IKAR	11.1%	34
Kehillat Israel	9.5%	29
Kol Tikvah	0.3%	1
Leo Baeck	1.6%	5
Malibu Jewish Center and Synagogue	0.7%	2
Mishkon Tephilo	0.3%	1
Nashuva	0.3%	1
Shaarey Zedek	0.3%	1
Shomrei Torah	0.7%	2
Shtibl Minyan	2.3%	7
Sinai Temple	2.0%	6
Stephen S. Wise Temple	4.2%	13
Temple Ahavat Shalom	1.6%	5
Temple Ahavat Torah	0.3%	1
Temple Akiba	0.7%	2
Temple Aliyah	2.0%	6
Temple Beth Am	4.6%	14
Temple Beth Hillel	0.7%	2
Temple Emanuel	2.3%	7