Abstract
Study of Learning Communities and Batei Midrash
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Over the last decade, diverse educational settings have developed with the aim of introducing the Jewish population of Israel to its religious and cultural heritage. During these years, the organizations engaged in this area have come to number in the dozens. This evaluation study examines the influence of 12 organizations on those participating in their activities.

The **principal goal** of this study was to examine the breadth and depth of the long-term influences of participation in these organizations' programs. The study looked at two types of programs run by these organizations: "learning communities" and "batei midrash." Batei midrash are more intensive by their nature; sometimes their programs last for an entire day or two days per week; participation in them represents more of a commitment. By contrast, the learning communities are more autonomous in the selection of material and are based on the active initiative and involvement of the members of the "community"; sometimes this autonomy works to the detriment of a learning community's stable operation. Some of the organizations run only one of these two types of activities; others run both. Because the study sought to examine the long-term influences of participation, it focused on veteran participants who could testify about achieving the goals from a perspective going back from three to five years.

The **secondary goal** of the study was to look at the organizations' declared goals and investigate whether they are achieving them and influencing participants' lives. This was accompanied by an attempt to study whether some patterns of activity are more effective than others. This goal yields questions about the link between the organizations and the participants: Do the latter want to learn what the organizations are trying to teach them? Do the organizations that have set themselves the goal of producing broad normative social change in Israel have the ability to attract a target group that is interested in this goal?

Structure of the report: The report begins with a summary description of the course of the research, from its inception until July 2005. After that, the report is organized in a series of seven questions and answers based on the findings of the qualitative and quantitative research. Because the length of this executive summary had to be limited, some of the findings appear only in the full version. Nevertheless, the organization of the full report corresponds precisely to that of the present document. Consequently, those who are interested in the details behind the condensed answers that appear here are invited to refer to the corresponding section of the full report.

The Course of the Research

- Stage 1 (July–August 2004): The executives of the 12 organizations were interviewed and information was collected about participants during the last five years. After that, 20 facilitators from the various organizations were interviewed. These 32 interviews made it possible to classify the organizations' goals and provided the basis for drawing up the questionnaires.
- Stage 2 (August–December 2004): The sample was built and lists of participants prepared.
- Stage 3 (September–October 2004): Pilot interviews were conducted with 10 participants from different organizations. The goal of these interviews was to discover possible influences of the activity on their lives.

- Stage 4 (October–December 2004): An open questionnaire for the in-depth interviews was written and interviews were conducted with a sample of 60 participants.
- Stage 5 (October 2004–March 2005): In parallel with the interviews, a questionnaire containing 70 statements about influences was designed and mailed to the participants, in three batches.
- Stage 6 (January–March 2005): The full mail questionnaires were encoded and analyzed, along with the findings of the interviews.
- Stage 7 (April–June 2005): The mail-out of the third wave of questionnaires continued. As of the closing date of this report, it had been answered by 436 participants (details of the sampling process and verification of the data appear in the full report).

1. What are the organizations' objectives with regard to their influence?

To provide an answer to the extent of each organization's influence, we first had to clarify the objectives their staffs had set themselves. We found that all the organizations had a common declared goal: to make Judaism more relevant to participants' lives, to renew Israelis' Jewish identity in a pluralistic vein and to make them feel at home with their cultural and religious heritage. Beyond this common goal there were diverse subsidiary goals. The interviews with the directors and facilitators uncovered six of these. Following a description of the goals, Table 1 presents a profile of the organizations based on their particular goals.

1. **Literacy:** Expand the knowledge base and develop autonomous students who have mastery of Jewish texts;
2. **Encounter:** Promote encounters between secular and religious Jews in order to narrow the divisions in Israeli society and focus on social solidarity;
3. **Self-examination:** Foster a dynamic engagement with the psychological aspects of identity and self-examination;
4. **Social contribution:** Focus on social action and contributions to the community, based on Jewish values;
5. **Life-cycle ceremonies and the Jewish calendar:** Focus on life-cycle ceremonies and events on the Jewish calendar;
6. **Spirituality:** Develop spiritual and religious awareness.

Table 1
The Organizations' Goals as indicated in Interviews with their Staffs

Organization	Literacy	Encounter	Self-examination	Social action	Life-cycle ceremonies and the Jewish calendar	Spirituality
1	++	++	+	-	+	-
2	+	++	+	+	++	-
3	++	++	+	++	+	-
4	+	+	-	++	+	-
5	+	-	++	-	+	++
6	++	++	-	-	-	-
7	++	+	-	-	+	-
8	+	++	++	+	+	-
9	++	++	+	+	+	-
10	+	++	+	-	++	-
11	++	-	+	-	+	-
12	+	++	+	++	+	-

Legend: ++ = Main objective; + = secondary objective; - = not an objective

An analysis of the organizations' goals makes it possible to create an analytical typology of three types of organizations: organizations that place the emphasis on identity (1, 2, 5, 8, and 10), organizations that emphasize literacy (6, 7, and 11), and organizations that focus on social action (3, 4, and 12). It is important to note that in practice, as the table shows, most of the organizations have several parallel objectives (Organization 1, for example, places a strong emphasis on both identity and literacy, while in the learning communities, e.g., Organization 9, the range of emphases is even broader).

2. What is the influence of participation in batei midrash and learning communities?

The influence of participation in the organizations' activities was analyzed on the basis of replies to the mail questionnaire, which contained 70 items to measure these influences, on a scale ranging from 1 (slight) to 7 (substantial). The value 4 was the middle of the scale. It is important to note that the mean values of the variables—which range between 3.0 and 4.5—indicate a rather moderate influence. Nevertheless, by its nature the average conceals the variation that is revealed by the standard deviation, which is rather large (±2.0). This means that a significant share of the respondents reported that they were strongly influenced by the activity, but that by the same token there were many who said that they were not influenced at all. We used factor analysis to reduce the questionnaire items to a manageable number of products for use in constructing the influence variables. These variables are statistically significant and make it possible to answer the research questions in a way that is immune to random fluctuations. Although the organizations had six goals, the findings from the respondents themselves disclosed seven areas of influence, some of which overlap the organizations' goals.

1. **Jewish literacy:** This variable measures the capacity to deal with and interpret Jewish texts and the sense of empowerment that accompanies this ability. It also measures the students' feeling that their knowledge has been expanded and that they can now make daily use of the concepts and ideas they learned.
2. **Developing a pluralistic stance:** This variable measures several aspects of pluralism—familiarity with diverse approaches to and interpretations of Jewish texts and the degree of legitimacy that participants extend to the multiplicity of voices in the different Jewish sectors.
3. **Spiritual and ethical enrichment:** This variable relates to the development of a spiritual identity (e.g., whether their study led them to deal with questions of faith) and also measures the extent to which participation engendered a change in their ethical worldview (interpersonal relationships and the like).
4. **Jewish identity:** This variable measures the sense of belonging to the Jewish world, the extent to which Judaism occupies an important place in their lives in the wake of the program, and the extent to which it has become relevant to their lives.
5. **Social relationships:** This variable measures the influence of participation on social dimensions—whether the students developed new relationships, whether their sense of belonging to the community has been strengthened, and whether they have people with whom they can discuss the material studied.
6. **Social conscience and involvement:** This variable measures the extent of the participants' awareness of diverse social issues in the wake of the program, such as religion and state or socioeconomic gaps. This variable also reflects their actual willingness to contribute to the community or society.
7. **Practical aspects of a change in Jewish identity:** This variable measures behavioral aspects associated with Jewish identity, such as how lifestyle ceremonies are marked, observance of the festivals, and where participants' children go to school.
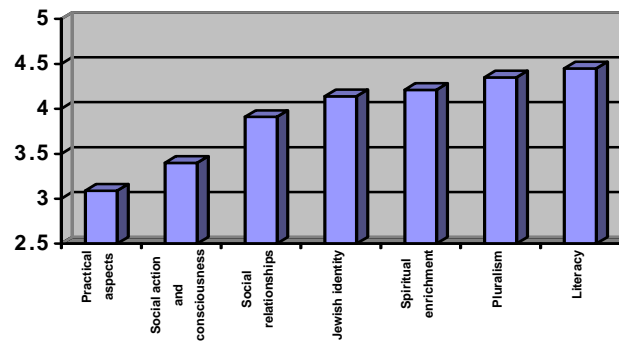
Figure 1: The influence of participation in the batei midrash and learning communities[1] (N = 436)

Figure 1 reveals a difference between two sets of influences: one set includes the indices relevant to the personal domain, which can be referred to as **existential influences** (literacy, pluralism, spiritual enrichment, and Jewish identity). This group corresponds to the individual goals that the organizations set for themselves and attempted to achieve in a relatively uniform fashion. In this sense, the organizations seem to have achieved what they were after; that is, to exert individual and existential influences on participants' lives. The goal achieved to the greatest extent was development of literacy, closely followed by the development of a pluralistic outlook and acceptance of other sectors, and then by spiritual and personal enrichment. We should also note the strengthening of Jewish identity, another individual and existential goal.

By contrast, participants noted that the organizations' behavioral and social influences (social relationships, social action, and various behaviors) did not find real expression in their lives. In fact, the second group of indices—these three, which were ranked lowest—have to do with the practical and social aspect of the organizations' activities. It is evident that in these areas—where participation should have been manifested in outward behavior and extended to others, through an indirect leverage effect—the activity did not have a major influence on the participants' lives. Specifically, the three indices in this group relate to behavioral aspects derived from study, social consciousness and social action, and the development of social relationships that cross sectoral boundaries. As stated, in these areas the organizations' influence on participants was relatively small.

This difference between the two types of influence appeared clearly in the in-depth interviews as well. In line with the statistical findings, the subjects candidly stated the programs' **individual and existential influences** in remarks such as the following: "Studying gave me the ability to interpret on my own. It gave me a freedom I did not have before and honed my skills for dealing with texts." "The beit midrash restored my belief in my ability to learn." "I had a place to re-create my connection with Judaism." "I understood that one need not accept Judaism as a monolith." "I am more aware of things that I missed when I abandoned Jewish life." "I learned a lot from listening to my secular colleagues' interpretations." On a more analytic level, the participants' reports varied from enrichment—"I came to listen, to learn. I leave the class knowing new things about my Judaism"—through the experience of an encounter with the text and with other students—"speaking with the text stimulates me, helps me move away from the banal. You get close to people and everyone brings their own physical and emotional gestures"—to a deep and spiritual sense of personal change—"I experienced a substantial internal change. You can't see anything on the outside, nor do I want to change anyone else, but something very important has happened to me that is hard to explain in words."

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[1] The range is between 2.5 and 5, the values that lie at the empirical extremes of the distribution. Some people responded with lower or higher values, but they are swallowed up by the averages, which tend toward the center of the measurement scale.

The last interviewee, who found it difficult to explain the magnitude of the program's influence on him, enunciated what many participants, according to their descriptions, felt about the expectation of some of the organizations that participants would undergo an **external, practical and social, change.** The interviews revealed that a large majority of the participants felt that the practical aspect was contrived. Most of the influence reported, even by those involved with organizations with a social orientation, was nevertheless exclusively internal. One woman, a social worker by profession, who enjoyed the classes at the organization, had this reaction to the practical side of the program: "It's frustrating that they are always nagging us to do something already. I think that the study program is significant even if we don't do anything that can be measured at the end. Participating changed me so much as a person—who needs anything more?" A participant from another organization said that "whether we contribute to the poor or not—that's a load of malarkey. The main thing is that people changed their attitude about secular and religious people, at a level that a hundred workshops somewhere else would not have managed to open them up this way to others."

From the perspective of the average participant, the attempt to combine study and identity work with some form of social action is quite unnecessary. On the contrary, many participants were repelled by questions that sought to find out whether the program had any practical influence on their lives (not only with regard to social action, but also about a change in lifestyle, ceremonies, festivals, and so on). In fact, the programs were found to have a significant practical influence only on the professional level, among those participants who reported that, in the wake of their participation, they changed their behavior at work. One participant, a nurse, put it this way: "An Ultraorthodox fellow came for treatment and started talking to me about his terminal disease by referencing a Jewish text. Were it not for the study program I would not have been able to understand him or know what to answer."

3. Are there significant differences between the influences of the batei midrash and of the learning communities?

This was one of the key questions of the study of the organizations' influence on participants' lives. Although not all the organizations ran both types of programs—which means that the comparison may be somewhat problematic—we nevertheless expected to find some difference between the two formats, because batei midrash are more formal and are based on a longer period of learning. A clarification with the organizations of how they see the difference between batei midrash and learning communities revealed the following points:

The size of the groups participating in the two types of programs (188 respondents for batei midrash and 164 respondents for learning communities) makes it possible to estimate the difference between them in a statistically reliable and rigorous fashion. The analysis found no difference between the two types of programs, with one exception: when it came to creating new social networks, the learning communities showed a slight advantage over the batei midrash. No significant difference between the two was found in any of the other six indices of influence. What this finding means is that the different activity strategies did not produce a difference in the extent of the organizations' influence on participants (except in the domain of social relationships, as stated).

This is a surprising finding in light of the difference in the intensity of the two kinds of activity. There are several ways to explain the lack of difference and it is not possible to determine which of them is correct. Nevertheless, because many participants spoke about their involvement in terms of "an identity experience" rather than "an intellectual experience," the model of cumulative education (more learning = more influence), characteristic of teaching organizations, does not seem to be appropriate in the present context. The organizations' modest influence seems to depend on the quality of the program and the participants' motivation more than on the technical amount of time allotted to the activity. In other words, the organizations do not have to stick to one particular

format in order to achieve influences of the type examined in the quantitative study. They merely need to guarantee that the activity is of the very highest quality, whatever its format.
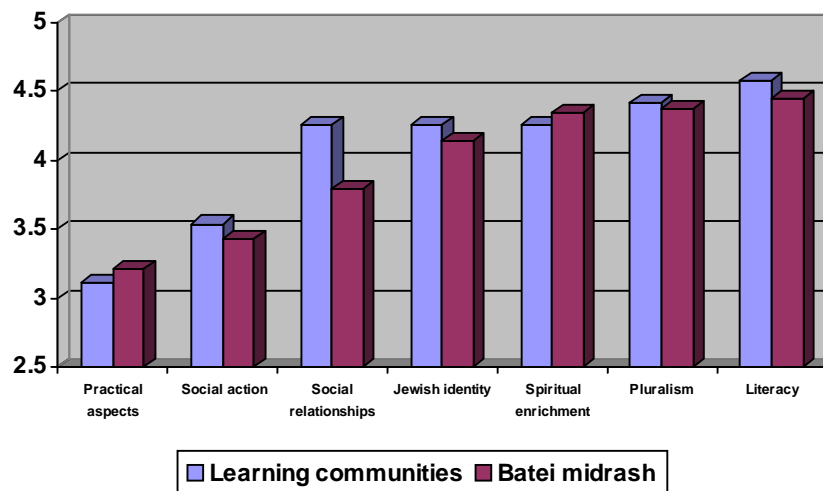

Figure 2: Differences in the influences of batei midrash and learning communities (N = 354)

4. Are there significant differences among the 12 organizations in the extent to which they achieve their goals?

The answer to this question is clear and precise: **"Yes!"** For six of the seven indices there were significant differences among the organizations with regard to their influence on participants' lives. Thus, despite their common roots and the similarity in their modes of operation, the organizations have different goals and differential influence on participants' lives. The only area in which there was no significant difference among the organizations was that of developing Jewish identity. These findings mean that some had a significant influence on participants' lives, while the impact of others was much more moderate. For example, with regard to the development of literacy, Organization 12 achieved the top score of 5.05, whereas Organizations 5 and 11 had scores of 3.79 and 3.87, respectively. This difference is equal to one full standard deviation and is equivalent to a difference between the fiftieth percentile and the eighty-fourth percentile, a magnitude of effect that is defined "as a large gap" in the terms of Cohen's D, a standard measurement in the social sciences. These differences in the magnitude of the effect are found, as noted, in almost every area studied. Figure 3 presents the organizations' average scores for two groups of variables—the personal and existential influences and the practical and social influences.

Figure 3 indicates that all of the organizations are more successful at influencing the personal and existential areas of participants' lives, but less so when it comes to practical and social aspects. Nevertheless, it is evident that, relative to the others, Organizations 4 and 12 manage to achieve both goals. By contrast, Organizations 5, 6, 7, and 11 do not seem to have exerted a significant influence on participants' lives in either area. The two organizations that had a much greater influence on their participants—4 and 12—are also the smallest and conduct their activities in very small groups. Thus small and intimate groups may make it easier to achieve educational goals and influence participants. At the same time, it is also important to understand that the idea of leveraging such a small number of participants to exert broad social influence is unrealistic.
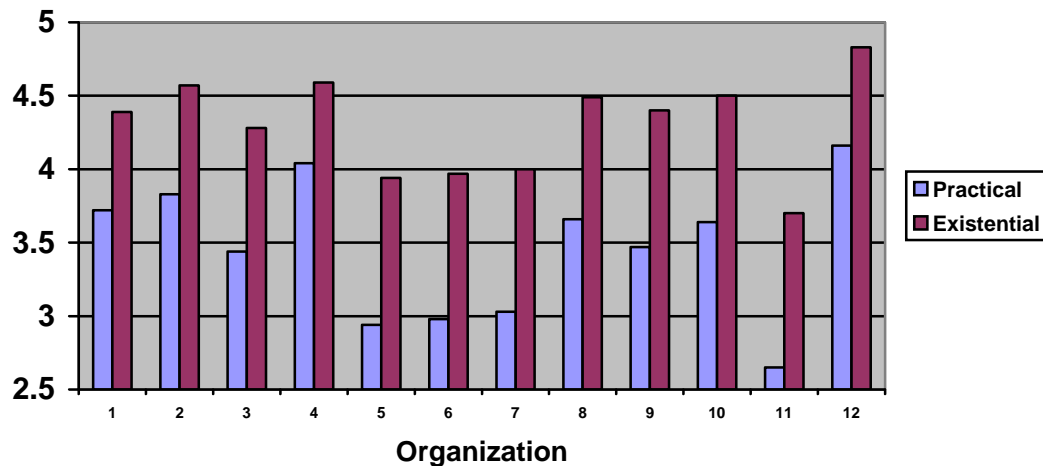
Figure 3: The organizations' practical and existential influences (N = 436)

In light of the above data, we can ask what implications these findings should have for each individual organization? To this we would like to offer two answers. First, it is inappropriate to derive individual decisions that mean the immediate suspension of funding to an organization from an evaluation study of this type. This stems from considerations of trust and its erosion: a study that leads to a cut in individual budgets will naturally lead to a loss of trust in the evaluation process and its objectivity, with a detrimental effect on organizations' future cooperation with funders and evaluators.

Second, statistically valid conclusions can be drawn for organizations with a response rate of 35% or above. Another rule for deciding whether to rely on the findings, with regard to individual organizations, is that 30 respondents (if we assume a random sample) constitute a statistically useful sample. Based on this cutoff, the findings are useful for only four of the organizations. For this reason, too, we recommend that no immediate painful decisions be made on the basis of the findings.

5. Is there any connection between the extent of participation in the organizations' activities and their influence?

There are two answers to this question. One refers to the level of activity over the year; the other, to the number of years of participation in the organization's activities. An examination of the link between the number of activities in which respondents took part during the year and the organizations' influence indicates that there is no correlation between the variables. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that 74% of the respondents took part in all of the activities and only a minority in just a few events. By contrast, there was significant statistical support for the idea that **the more years participants are involved in an organization, the greater its influence on them.** The findings indicate that the greatest difference is between those who were active for only one year (and were influenced to a rather moderate extent) and those who participated for two years or longer (76.4% of the respondents)—on whom the influence is significantly greater. These findings indicate that continued participation in the organizations' activities made it possible for the influence to penetrate deeper. The findings show mainly that a single-year activity has less influence than multi-year activity.

This phenomenon also emerged in the interviews, which found that participants could be divided into three groups: (1) a small group who came to only a few sessions, said that they were not influenced at all, and soon dropped out of the program; (2) the group of the "influenced with reservations," whose members did not feel that the program had had a critical influence on them. Nevertheless, their comments indicated that they had had some meaningful experience and as a

result had kept up their participation for a year or slightly longer; (3) "the fanatics"—those whose lives had been changed significantly as a result of their participation in the program. These last continued their activity for several years running (three years or more) and expressed great satisfaction with almost every aspect of the program. Nevertheless, we must qualify this with the observation that this conclusion may be based on a phenomenon of self-justification; that is, that some of the long-term participants feel a need to explain to themselves the benefit they reaped from the years they devoted to the organization ("it can't be that I invested so much time and nothing happened to me").

6. Is there any connection between the participants' profile and the extent to which the activities influenced them?

To answer this question we examined the statistical coefficient between participants' background data and the extent of the influence of participation on their lives. We examined seven basic parameters, as follows:

1. **Education:** Some 28.4% of the participants do not have a university degree; 33.3% hold a bachelor's degree and 34.3% a master's degree; 6.3% of the sample have doctorates. The statistical analysis found a negative correlation between influence on participants and their educational level in three areas. The main difference was between those with a university degree—who were less influenced by the activity—and those with no degree, who said that they were influenced to a greater extent by their participation in the organizations' activities. This negative correlation was significant with regard to the development of a pluralistic outlook, Jewish identity, and developing social relationships in the community, but was not statistically significant for the other four types of influence. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the influence of activity by level of education.
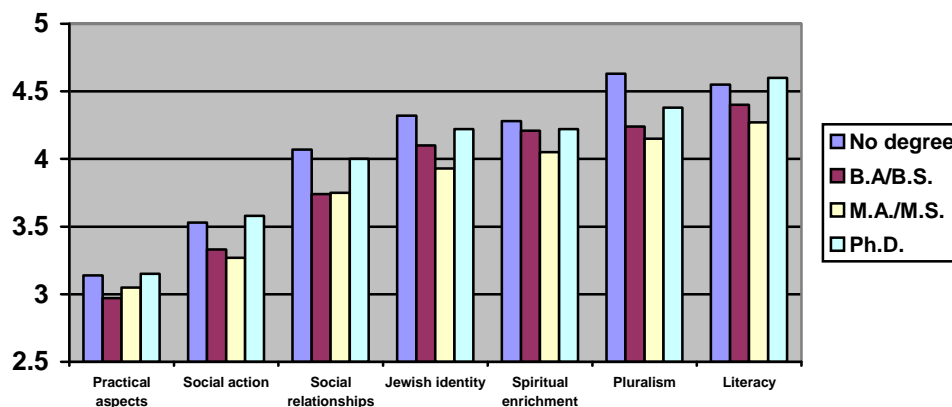

Figure 4: Influences of activity, by educational level

2. **Sex:** There was no statistical difference between men (34.2% of respondents) and women in any of the seven indices.
3. **Marital status:** There was no statistically significant difference between those never married, those married (75.8% of the sample), those divorced, and those who have been widowed with regard to the influence of participation in the organizations' activities.
4. **Age:** Only 8.4% of participants were younger than 29; 28% of the sample were between 30 and 45, 43.6% between 46 and 65, and 20% past retirement age. There was no statistical difference among age groups with regard to the influence of participation on their lives.
5. **Ethnic origins:** In four of the seven indices of influence, there was a statistically significant difference with regard to ethnic group. Oriental Jews, about 20% of the

respondents, were more influenced by participation in the organizations' activities. By contrast, Ashkenazim (64.7% of the respondents) were the least influenced by the activity (the rest of the sample are of "Israeli" origin). The indices in which the difference was significant are social contribution, development of a pluralistic outlook, practical influences, and development of social relationships.

6. **Religious background:** The breakdown of participants according to religious background was secular, 46.8%; traditional, 27.0%; observant, 23.8%; and Ultraorthodox, 1.2%. There was a statistically significant difference between the secular and the others with regard to four indices. The secular were less influenced with regard to development of consciousness and social action, practical change in their lives, personal enrichment, and development of new social relationships.
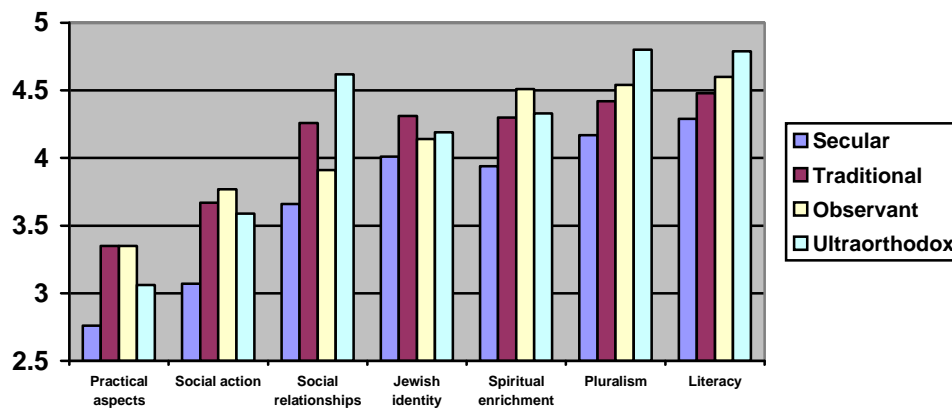

Figure 5: Religious identity and influence of participation

7. **Economic status:** Only 9% of the respondents belong to the low-income strata; 66.7% reported average incomes and 24.2% high incomes. There was a statistically significant difference between those with high incomes and those with low incomes in almost all seven indices (except for pluralistic identity and social relationships). In general, those with low incomes were most influenced by the activity.

In light of this, we should ask whether the organizations are targeting the segment of the population that can be most influenced. Because it was found that traditional and observant participants, those without a university degree, and those with low incomes are most influenced, it seems that **the organizations will have especially significant influence on individuals from this background.** This finding suggests that in order to leverage social change through the participants or to influence their lives as individuals, the organizations should consider a significant change in how they adapt their programs to various segments of the population and how they attract participants.

7. Is there any connection between the organizations' emphases and their influence on participants' lives?

The answer to this question is **"yes."** To answer it we examined the statistical correlation between the six organizational emphases and the seven participant products. We found that (1) the organizations that emphasize the social encounter dimension and that try to get participants to promote social change in the wake of their activity exert a stronger influence on participants than organizations that do not have these emphases. What is more, whereas one might have expected that these organizations' social emphasis would influence only the practical and social domains of participants' lives, their influence was found to be stronger in the individual and existential realms as well. These findings are particularly interesting in light of the resistance that a significant

proportion of the participants evince about translating what they have learned into social action. This means that the organizations that demand more of participants also exert a much greater influence, even though the participants are not overly enthusiastic about realizing the organizations' goals. (2) The organizations that stress literacy and identity do not show a consistent influence. They have a positive impact on the development of a social consciousness and pluralistic outlook, but their influence is linear and less multifaceted than that of organizations with a social focus.

Summary

During the last decade in Israel, an effort has been made to expose sectors of the secular population to their cultural and religious heritage and to create dialogue and encounters between different streams of Judaism. The present study focused on programs that have set this as their goal and on their long-term influence on participants. During the course of the study we met with dozens of directors and facilitators of 12 organizations that have received support from AVI CHAI in recent years, in some form or other. We also interviewed dozens of participants who provided first-hand account of the experience of learning in these organizations and analyzed 436 questionnaires.

This diverse infrastructure indicates that the common basis of all the organizations is to be found in their desire to influence Israeli society, whether through their alumni or through their existence as organizations that promote cultural pluralism and enrich the cultural discourse in Israel. Some of them want this influence to bear practical fruit through the creation of social leadership and the initiation of projects in the community. In addition, these organizations run professional, dedicated, and competent educational systems; it is clear that they are working with a sense of mission and have an understanding of their organization's specific contribution, activities, and objectives. They allow facilitators and participants great autonomy in the selection of materials and ways of dealing with them and give participants an experience of action and authenticity. In short, these programs have added value over and above the instruction provided in colleges and universities. The small groups, the personal relationship, and the willingness to incorporate interdisciplinary aspects that are relevant to the participants' daily lives—all of these give participants a special experience and, as an initial impression, hold the potential to exert significant influence. The findings about the influence of most of the organizations on those who participate in their activities and with regard to their particular modes of operation indicate that those interested in personal-existential-literacy changes will find favorable conditions in these organizations to fulfill their goals.

Nevertheless, there is a discrepancy between what some of the organizations want to generate among the participants and what the latter are interested in achieving. This gap was conspicuous in several senses: first, a significant number of the organizations want to effect practical changes in participants' lives and even to inspire them to active social and community involvement. We found, however, that participants did not carry over what they had learned to their practical lives and even resisted the organizations' desire to mobilize them for social action in the field. Most subjects stated that their goal was to have an experience that was chiefly internal: study for the purpose of self-examination and enrichment. This creates problems for organizations that want to effect social change through their alumni. Because the organizations cannot attract large masses who want to effect social change, they tend to focus on theoretical activity with an individual and existential impact.

Second, some of the organizations follow a strategy of attracting those with advanced education, with the expectation that those who hold advanced degrees and have high incomes will serve as a spearhead for changing the face of Israeli society. Those few organizations that tried to attract heterogeneous groups proved unable to do so in the absence of a diverse pool of applicants. Nevertheless, the findings show that those who are most strongly influenced by the activity—those who made a practical change in their lives and say that they are involved in the community—are in fact those who do not have university degrees, come from a traditional or observant background,

and are not financially well-off. Because participants without a university degree constitute less than 25% of the respondents, one should consider whether recruiting those who have advanced degrees and are economically well-off can in fact lead to significant change in their lives and in society in general. The findings indicate that this assumption is unrealistic, because participants prefer to make do with a personal and existential change and are not willing to deal with dismissive and hostile reactions in their immediate environment. In these circumstances, educational activity that is limited to a once-a-week session—however successful and high-quality—is unlikely to effect a significant change of identity in Israeli society, especially if it is not supported by a broader change in participants' family and community lives.

In conclusion, the hope expressed by the organizations' directors that they could create a unique arena for promoting a fundamental change of values in Israeli society and building mass institutions does not correspond to the participants' profile and goals. In general, the demographic data indicate that the participants tend to come from the older, educated, and secular Israeli bourgeoisie, who are complacently settled in conservative communities. These participants do not see themselves as a lever for changing social values and processes and are not enthusiastic about the expectations of the organizations' directors. Consequently, the latter's hope that their organizations can create a critical mass for conspicuous social change seems to be somewhat unrealistic. For a significant share of the participants, activity in these programs cannot create substantial change because it serves only as another line on their academic resumés, even if this line refers to an "alternative" setting and not academic study in the standard university. For the older participants, it is a place to relax and meet people, a place they go voluntarily, one that allows them to have social interaction and does not demand commitment and personal change. In general, the findings indicate that few participants want to acquire substantial Jewish knowledge that provides them with the working tools required for producing a significant change in Israeli society. Most of them want to study in a special program and enjoy it; they want an encounter with others and sometimes to build learning communities for themselves; they are coming for themselves, not for others, and not as a means to achieve lofty goals.

In these conditions, the organizations that we studied can exert only a moderate influence. Some of them have been doing so quite successfully; others less so. The nature of their work, it seems, cannot alleviate the basic tension between the participants' individual interests and the organizations' aspiration to influence Israeli society as a whole by empowering those who take part in their programs.

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