



# Jewish Overnight Summer Camps in Southern California

## A Marketing Study

Steven M. Cohen

*Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy  
Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion*



THE FOUNDATION  
JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**The Foundation for Jewish Camping** is the central address for information about, and advocacy for, non-profit Jewish overnight camps, providing leadership, expertise and financial resources to camps, campers and their families across North America. Created in 1998 by a husband and wife team of philanthropists, Robert Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner provided seed money to launch the first public foundation dedicated solely to the Jewish overnight camp movement. FJC serves more than 130 Jewish summer camps, 60,000 campers and 12,000 counselors in North America and has moved the importance of the Jewish summer camp experience to the forefront of the North American Jewish community's agenda. It is our mission to increase the number of Jewish children attending Jewish summer camps. Over the next five years we aim to triple our investment in Jewish camping by fulfilling our compelling vision of systemic change for the field.

From bunk counselor to top leadership, camp professionals need to be supported with training and development. The Cornerstone Fellowship the Executive Leadership Institute are signature programs that nurture leadership skills and teach professionals to usher Judaism into camp life in fresh, meaningful ways. FJC is committed to employing concise marketing and public relations strategies, developed through research, to attract the entire Jewish community to go to and support summer camp: families, synagogues, schools and businesses, private foundations and philanthropists.

By finding out exactly what children and their families want from camp — such as new camps in underserved regions or specialty camps for sports, computers, the arts, or science — FJC can better promote interest and increase participation in Jewish overnight summer camps. Through expert assistance and one-on-one consultation, FJC supports and nurtures nascent camps through to opening. Lastly, FJC is investing in programmatic excellence, introducing innovation and variety to keep the Jewish camp experience relevant, fun and memorable.

**For more information about Jewish overnight summer camps and the Foundation for Jewish Camping, please visit our website at [www.jewishcamping.org](http://www.jewishcamping.org)**

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# Preface

Eighteen months ago, the Foundation for Jewish Camping launched a new strategy aimed at achieving our mission of significantly increasing the number of Jewish children in Jewish summer camp; it outlined a combined approach of professional development, programmatic excellence, capacity initiatives, and advocacy. This last category, advocacy, included the charge to research the market and to support Jewish overnight camps in developing concise marketing and public relations strategies that will effectively reach out to the entire Jewish community.

We knew approximately how many children were in camp and we also knew the influence it had on their Jewish identity and commitment. What we did not know were the primary motivations behind a parents choice to of how to keep their children occupied during summer vacation. Put simply, why does a parent decide in favor or against sending their child to a Jewish summer camp.

This report gives us the first clear understanding of how to communicate best to Jewish families about Jewish resident camps. Altogether, we heard from nearly 1,400 parents, through focus groups in Los Angeles and then through an online survey. They shared with us the decision-making that contributed to their choice of summer plans for their children; this information was invaluable. It is our goal that this study will shape the way Jewish summer camps analyze consumer information and then develop the appropriate strategies to better reach their audience.

Robert Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner  
*Co-Chairs*

Jerry Silverman  
*President*



# Acknowledgements

This study was the first of kind, both for the Foundation for Jewish Camping as well as for the field of Jewish camping as whole. *Kol Hatchalot Kashot*, especially when doing something for the first time. We, therefore, wish to acknowledge the efforts of the people without whom this project could not have succeeded.

Many thanks to John Fischel and the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles for planting the seed for this study. To our sociologist, Steven M. Cohen, the preeminent sociologist of the Jewish community for leading this investigation of attitudes towards Jewish summer camps in the Southern California.

Saul Cohen and Associates, the principle Saul Cohen and their qualitative research consultant, Johnna Freud, crafted the discussion guides that were used to direct the conversation in the focus groups to ensure that they touched upon the major areas of inquiry. Johnna then did the superb job of leading several of these focus groups, moderating both adults and children.

Our special gratitude to Evan Schlessenger for filling in last minute as a focus group moderator and applying his outstanding skills to this effort and to Mark Sass for providing welcome and vital advice on the quantitative phase of the study.

The focus groups in Los Angeles were an invaluable resource. We are indebted to four synagogues, their rabbi's, and staff for permitting us to use their space and engage with their membership. They are Temple Adat Elohim's Rabbi Ted Riter and Richard Howard; Wilshire Boulevard Temple's Rabbi Steven Z. Leder, Howard Kaplan, and Cheryl Garland; Congregation Ner Tamid's Rabbi Isaac Jeret; Temple Beth Haverim's Rabbi Gershon Johnson and special friend of FJC, Debbie Solomon. Thank you also to Rabbi Ed Feinstein at Valley Beth Shalom for his assistance.

Additionally, we are grateful to the Jewish summer camps in California, Camp Alonim, Camp JCA Shalom, Camp Newman and Swig, Camp Ramah, Camp Tawonga, Wilshire Boulevard Temple Camps, for their collegiality and cooperation with this study.

Finally, we are thankful to the Jewish Community Foundation in Los Angeles for their generous support of this endeavor.



Established in 1954, the Jewish Community Foundation is the largest manager of charitable assets and the leader in planned giving solutions for Greater Los Angeles Jewish philanthropists. The Foundation currently manages assets of \$600 million and according to the National Foundation Center, ranks among the ten largest Los Angeles foundations (based on assets). In 2005, The Foundation and its 1,000-plus donors distributed \$57 million in grants to more than 1,300 organizations with programs that span the range of philanthropic giving.



# Introduction



Every year about 60,000 youngsters attend more than 120 overnight Jewish summer camps across the country. By the time they reach adulthood, approximately one-third of American Jews will have attended these camps.

Sponsored by JCCs, Federations, congregational bodies, Zionist movements, individual synagogues, and other Jewish agencies, camps have been demonstrated to exert lasting, long-term influences upon adult Jewish identities. In fact, a mounting research literature testifies to the educational effectiveness of Jewish summer camps (Cohen 2000; Cohen and Kotler-Berkowitz 2003; Keysar and Kosmin 2001, 2005).

Among the many reasons why, observers believe, Jewish camps are effective instruments of Jewish education and socialization is that they engender very positive feelings. Former campers remember their experiences with great fondness, joining Jewish educational growth with pleasurable memories (Fox 1997; Sales and Saxe 2003, 2004).

**Yet with all the expansion in Jewish camp enrollment over the years, the level of participation still has room for further growth.**

Attendance at overnight Jewish summer camps has grown steadily and dramatically over the years. According to the National Jewish Population Study (NJPS), just 21% of adults 65–74 years old had been to a Jewish summer camp in their childhood and adolescent years (Cohen 2003). The younger

the respondent, the higher the percentage who had been to a Jewish summer camp. Among those adults 18–34 in the year 2000, the percent reporting an overnight Jewish camp experience in their youth reached 32%, about one and a half times as large as among those 65–74.

Certainly, participation in overnight Jewish camping has grown significantly for more than half a century. Yet, with all the expansion in Jewish camp enrollments over the years, the level of current participation still has lots of room for further growth.

One factor limiting expanding enrollments is that Jewish summer camps compete with other summer experiences, among them “non-Jewish” camps. Another is that they certainly require financial expenditures on the part of parents, which many find challenging if not difficult, and that almost all see as an optional, discretionary expenditure.



### The Questions: How Many? Who? Why? Why Not?

If overnight Jewish summer camps are to expand their enrollments and to compete more effectively with other summertime options for Jewish youngsters, they will need actionable information to better understand the parents and campers who constitute their market. This research, the first social scientific study of its kind, seeks to provide such information, addressing the following questions, among others:

- Of those who attend summer camps, about what proportion attend Jewish camps, and what proportion attend non-sectarian camps? In other words, to what extent do Jewish summer camps penetrate the market for camps among Jewish families in Southern California?
- Which sorts of Jewish families patronize Jewish camps, non-sectarian camps, or no camps at all?
- What are the incentives and the obstacles to Jewish camping? How important is cost as a barrier?
- To what extent do non-sectarian camps, or other activities, compete with Jewish camping?
- How can camps persuade those who have never experienced Jewish camping to consider sending their children?
- How can camps better retain the loyalty of their current campers, in order to expand numbers of campers and to extend their periods of enrollment?



# Methods



**Two stages of research** To address these and related questions, we conducted our research in two stages, one qualitative and the other quantitative. The first consisted of a round of focus groups with parents and youngsters, conducted by Saul Cohen and Associates of Stamford, Connecticut. The principal purpose of these conversations was to provide insight into the issues and considerations that inform the decision to choose (or reject) overnight Jewish summer camping, as well as to provide the basis for wording questions for the quantitative phase. We followed with a Web-based survey of Jewish parents in the Southern California area, fielded by Research Success Technologies, Ltd., of Jerusalem, and conducted February 8, 2006–March 11, 2006.

**Two survey samples** The survey sample consisted of two segments:

- a “community/camp” list, and
- a “general Jewish population” sample.

The community/camp segment derived from lists provided by local camps and synagogues (in particular: the Wilshire Boulevard Temple Camps, Temple Valley Beth Shalom, Camp Alonim, Camp Ramah California, Camp JCA-Shalom, Camps Newman and Swig, and Congregation Ner Tamid.

In addition, for a general Jewish population sample we turned to Easymail Interactive of Cincinnati — a company that brokers e-mail lists for on-line surveys. Working as a list broker, Easymail acquired respondents who had previously agreed to participate in Web-based consumer-oriented surveys for payment, who were Jewish or married to Jews, and were parents with children under the age of 18 at home.

In order to focus on the most policy-relevant population, after the survey results were in, we further selected respondents with children 6–18 at home and who were age 30 or older. None of the younger respondents, even with children home, had sent a child to overnight Jewish summer camps. The further specification of the sample left us with 411 cases in the Easymail or general Jewish population sample.

**Analysis limited to the general Jewish population sample** Preliminary analyses demonstrated that the community/camp lists differed dramatically from the general population sample supplied by Easymail. The former consisted almost entirely of camping families.

Of these, almost all belonged to a congregation, few were intermarried, and they tended to score in the higher ranges of Jewish engagement. The Easymail sample contrasted sharply in all these respects. These respondents reasonably coincided with the characteristics of Jewish parents in Southern California generally, as reported in the most recently conducted Greater Los Angeles Jewish population study, sponsored by the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles. The Easymail general Jewish population sample encompassed both camp and non-camp families, that is, those who have sent their children to Jewish camps and those who have not. As such, the Easymail sample not only differed from the more specialized community/camp sample segment, but it also allowed comparisons of camp and non-camp families.

The camp families in the Easymail sample resembled the community sample, with some important differences. Of those who ever sent children to a Jewish summer camp, many more of those in the community-supplied sample reported having sent their children last summer. Moreover, while many attitudes toward camping resembled one another, the Easymail respondents held views that were more sharply critical of Jewish camping than did the community list sample. This observation itself is an important finding, suggesting that camp directors may be insulated from hearing criticisms from unhappy customers, most of whom prefer to simply walk away rather than express their disappointment.

Given our interest in understanding both camp and non-camp families in an unbiased fashion, we focused the statistical analysis exclusively on the Easymail general population sample.

**Terminology** Throughout this report, unless explicitly stated otherwise, the terms, camp, camping, or summer camp refers to overnight summer camps, and not day camps.

# Findings



## These are the Numbers: How Many Attend Camps, Jewish and Non-sectarian?

In this sample, about 15% of the children (the children, 6–17, of the adult-respondents in the general population sample) attended Jewish summer camp last summer (2005). Twice as many (30%) attended a Jewish summer camp at some point in their lives.

Findings in the 2000/01 NJPS, sponsored by the United Jewish Communities, lend confidence to these findings. Both numbers — campers last summer and cumulative attendance — closely approximate national averages. The Foundation for Jewish Camping (FJC) estimates the total number of Jewish campers in any summer at 60,000, which amounts to 13% of the 454,000 youngsters age 8–17 found in the NJPS (Kotler-Berkowitz 2005). The cumulative proportion for this Southern California sample is also in line with the projected comparable figure for the American Jewish adults in the 2000/01 NJPS (Cohen 2003).

While significant numbers of Southern California Jewish youngsters have attended Jewish summer camps, their rates of attendance at non-sectarian camps are even higher. Participation in non-sectarian (“non-Jewish”) camps is about twice as high as Jewish camps. As many as 33% of the children went to non-sectarian camps last summer, and 54% have ever been to such camps. If participation by Jewish youngsters in non-sectarian camps is twice that in Jewish camps, then, by implication, Jewish summer camps own just one-third of the camping market.

The phenomenon of overlapping and successive attendance at Jewish and non-Jewish camps is quite apparent. Most Jewish youngsters in Southern California who attended Jewish camp last summer also attended a non-Jewish camp the same summer. Most of these, in turn, were “specialty” camps, rather than all-around overnight camps.

Obviously, Jewish summer camps face stiff and ongoing competition from non-sectarian camps, particularly those catering to special interests. As a group, the non-Jewish camps draw more youngsters than the small number of Jewish camps in the Southern California area (about a dozen). Jewish campers seem to flow in and out of non-Jewish camps, sometimes during the same summer.



### Who Attends Jewish Summer Camps?

Preliminary to understand why some families participate in Jewish overnight camping and others do not, the analysis examined what may be called “the demography of Jewish summer camping,” asking, in effect: Who attends Jewish summer camps?

In terms of gender (*Figure 1*), boys and girls attend about equally, with boys, in fact, slightly exceeding girls in attending Jewish camps, in this sample (reports from the camps, themselves, point to gender-equality in enrollments). This finding is notable in light of the repeated gender gap in Jewish life (one mirrored in all other religious groups around the world.) By the time they reach adolescence, girls lead boys in most areas of organized Jewish life. Contrary to this general pattern, in childhood years, boys and girls are equally involved in Jewish summer camping. This finding suggests that camping may provide one fruitful

Figure 1

#### Boys and Girls Record Nearly Equal Attendance at Jewish Overnight Camps

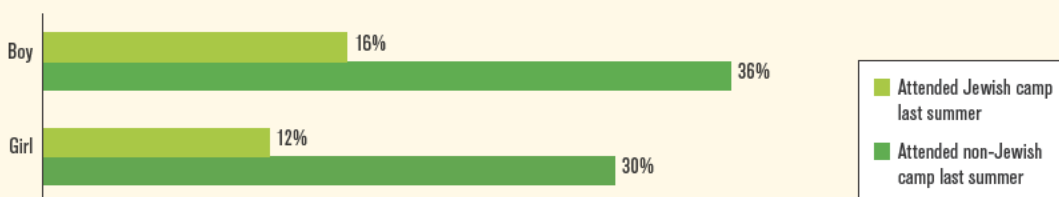


Figure 2

#### Grade in School and Summer Camp Attendance

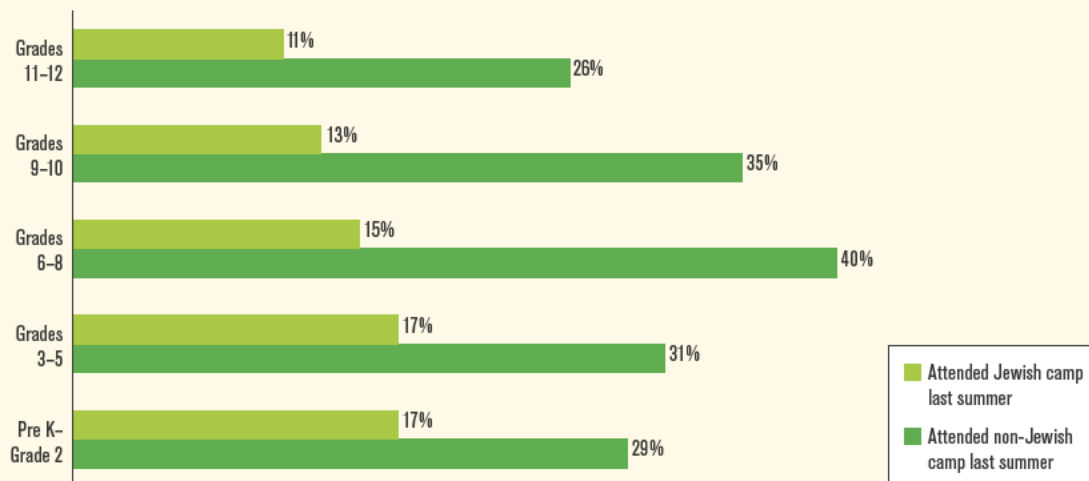
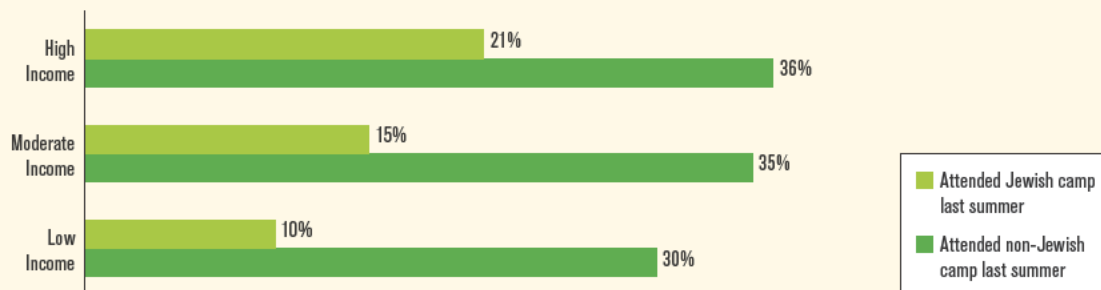


Figure 3

## Affluence is more important for Jewish than for non-Jewish camp attendance



approach to encouraging boys to participate in Jewish life. Elsewhere in the country, camps report a gender imbalance in favor of girls, a circumstance that has prompted many camps to devise strategies to target boys in recruitment and retention efforts.

With respect to age (*Figure 2, page 9*), participation in Jewish camping falls through childhood and teen years, while attendance at non-sectarian camps rises and falls, peaking in grades 6–8. Jewish adolescents past the age of 13 decreasingly engage in Jewish life (also a pattern mirrored in other religious groups). Accordingly, past age 15 or so, fewer Jewish youngsters attend overnight Jewish camps.

### Cost Barrier is Higher for Jewish Camping than for Non-Jewish Camping

Jewish camping is much more strongly related to income (and affluence), and is a more cost-sensitive decision, than is attending non-sectarian camps (*Figure 3*). Lower-income families are relatively less inclined to choose Jewish camping than they are to choose non-sectarian camping; conversely, Jewish camping is especially appealing to the affluent.

### The Children of the Jewishly Engaged More Often Attend Jewish Camps

Youngsters from homes that are more engaged in Jewish life are far more likely to attend Jewish summer camps than are those with weaker Jewish connections. This finding replicates a pattern reported repeatedly in the research literature (Cohen 2000, 2003; Keysar and Kosmin, 2001 and 2005; Kotler-Berkowitz 2005). This important link can be observed on several levels, in ways that apply to the parents or to the youngsters themselves.

Thus, unmarried Jews send their children to Jewish camps far more than intermarried couples (*Figure 4, page 12*). In fact, even single-parent Jewish households, with all the attendant issues of limited income, send their children to Jewish camps more than do the relatively



more affluent intermarried. Inter-marriage is associated with lower levels of involvement in Jewish life; moreover, most intermarried couples raise their children as non-Jews. These and other considerations help explain the drastic under-participation of intermarried families in Jewish summer camping. (In the NJPS, children from inmarried homes attended Jewish summer camps almost six times as frequently as those from inter-married homes; Kotler-Berkowitz 2005.)

Consistent with the general theme of a link between Jewish engagement and Jewish summer camp enrollment, synagogue members send their children to Jewish camps about four times more often than non-members (*Figure 5, page 12*). Members of congregations are not only, in general, more committed to raising their children as engaged Jews than others; they also are, by virtue of their membership, exposed to Jewishly engaged social networks and other families who patronize Jewish summer camps and they are more affluent than non-members.

Accordingly, congregations constitute a very fertile arena for identifying families with a predisposition toward Jewish camping. In any given summer, about one congregationally affiliated child out of four attends Jewish camps; but, at the same time, three out of four such children do not. Overall, a slim majority of affiliated children have been to a Jewish summer camp, but almost half have not. At the same time, as the utilization of Jewish summer camps by congregationally affiliated families is relatively high, camps have a long way to go before they saturate this vast market of Jews who are identifiable, connected, reasonably affluent, and oriented to raising their children as committed Jews.

**In other words, the more Jewishly engaged are more likely than non-engaged to send their children to Jewish camps, but they are not much more likely than the non-engaged to send their children to camps in general.**

We see similar relationships of camping utilization with the Jewish engagement of the family (*Figure 6, page 13*). The family's level of Jewish engagement (measured here by a combination of indicators) is a powerful predictor of Jewish camp attendance. Those families who are among the most highly engaged are nine (!) times more likely to have sent their children to Jewish camp last summer than are those who are, essentially, unaffiliated with conventional Jewish life. The relationship of family Jewish engagement with non-Jewish camping is far less pronounced. In other words, the more Jewishly engaged are much more likely than the non-engaged to send their children to Jewish camps, but they are not much more likely than the non-engaged to send their children to camps in general.

Figure 4

## Inmarried families record highest rates of Jewish camp participation

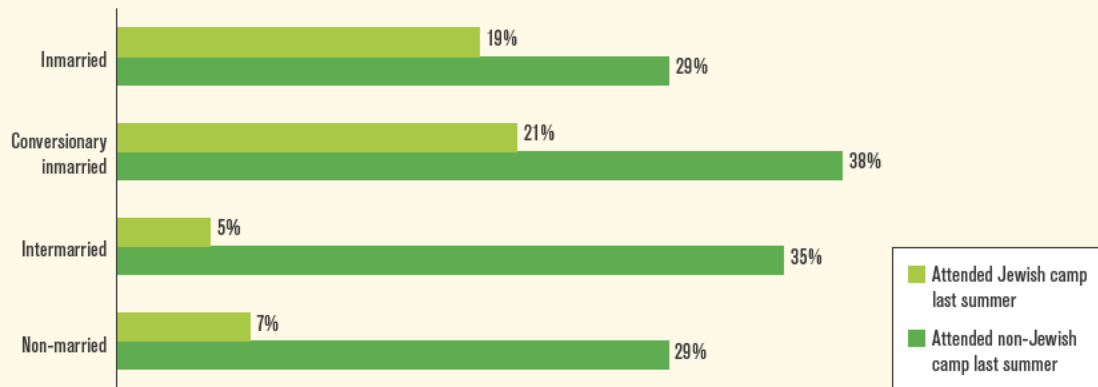
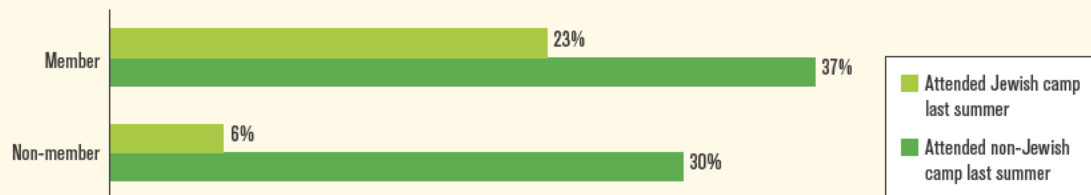


Figure 5

## Synagogue members send their children to Jewish camps far more than others



To elaborate, we may compare those whose Jewish-engagement scores qualify them as “highly engaged,” “moderately engaged,” and “unaffiliated.” Among the highly engaged, youngsters attend Jewish and non-Jewish camps in about equal numbers, implying that Jewish and non-Jewish camps are evenly dividing this segment. In sharp contrast are the camping choices among the unaffiliated. For this group, the least Jewishly engaged segment of the population, youngsters attend non-Jewish camps about six times more frequently than they attend Jewish camps. Jewish camps penetrate only one-eighth of the camping market for the least-engaged Jewish families, as compared with half among the highly engaged.

Consistent with these findings, the Jewish-engagement levels of the youngsters themselves are also strongly related to Jewish camp utilization. Children with more intensive Jewish schooling experience greater chances of attending Jewish camps than do those with less intensive experience, such as one-day-a-week supplementary school or no school at all (*Figure 7*).

The only exception to this pattern is that pertaining to youngsters who attend supplementary school three times a week. These children outscore all other youngsters in attending Jewish camps, even those who attend day schools; and they are the only group where Jewish camp participation exceeds (and by a large margin) attendance at non-Jewish camps. Their surprising behavior may result from a combination of factors. In general, families with children in three-day-a-week Jewish schools in Southern California exhibit higher levels of Jewish commitment, making them predisposed to choose Jewish camping more than their counterparts associated with other supplementary schools. At the same time, they may feel they have more disposable income available to finance their children's Jewish education than do day school parents who are already paying substantial tuition fees for their children.

Figure 6

#### Jewish camp attendance rises sharply with increasing levels of Jewish engagement

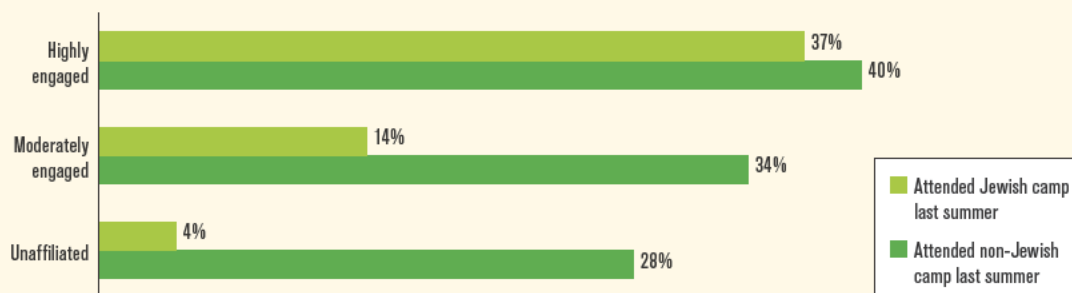
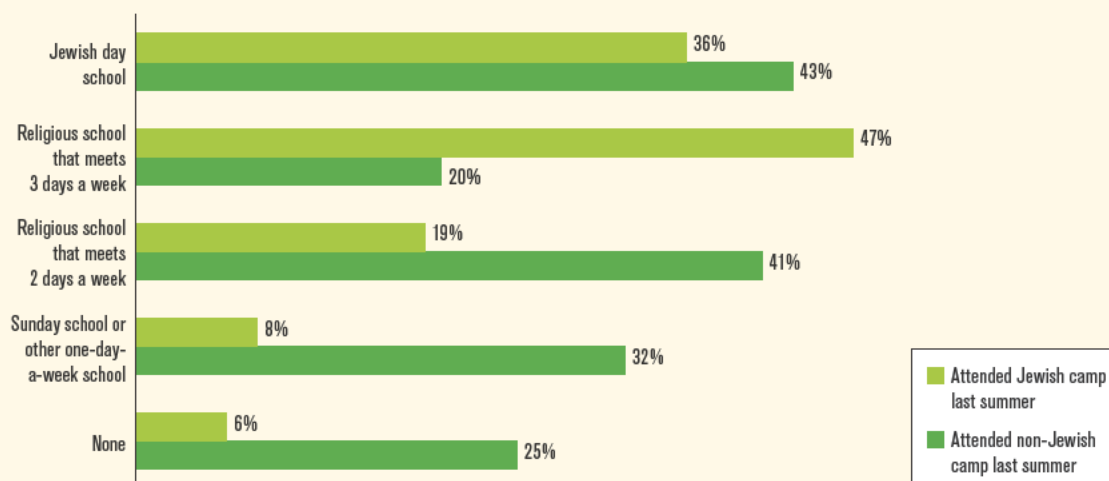


Figure 7

#### Types of Jewish schooling and summer camp attendance



### Wide Diversity in the Jewish Camping Market

We asked parents to report on whether their children had ever attended any of ten Jewish-sponsored camps in the region. Respondents reported that their children attended a wide range of camps in the Southern California area, albeit with varying levels of frequency. The rates of utilization fall into four categories of frequency, with the Wilshire Boulevard Temple camp at the highest level. Following in turn was a group consisting of Camp Alonim, Camp JCA Shalom, and Camp Ramah. The next group, in terms of frequency of utilization, consisted of URJ Camps (Swig and Newman) and Camp Tawonga. Following in turn was a group consisting of Camp Gilboa of Habonim-Dror, Camp Yofi, and “others,” a miscellaneous category.

### Other Summer Activities: The Complementary “Competition”

Children who attend Jewish overnight summer camps also patronize other sorts of camp, both day camps and overnight camps, both Jewish and non-sectarian camps (*Table 1*). Most children who attended a Jewish overnight camp last summer also spent some time the same summer in a Jewish day camp. Most Jewish overnight campers also went to a non-Jewish overnight camp for some time as well. Among non-Jewish camps reported by the parents, those defined as a “specialty camp (sports, drama, arts)” registered more frequent participation than did the response category, “all-around summer camps,” suggesting the appeal of specialty camps.

The high rates of attendance at multiple camps may well characterize Southern California campers more than those in other parts of the country. Most Jewish summer camps in this region offer relatively short sessions of two-to-three weeks (Ramah may be the one exception). In contrast, in much of the rest of the country, Jewish camps offer a minimum stay of four weeks. As a result of the availability of shorter sessions, families in Southern California piece together a summer consisting of several options, among them different forms of camping, both day and overnight.

The overlap between Jewish campers and non-Jewish campers is even more pronounced when we examine not just the last summer, but the children’s experience over the course of their lives, thus far. Many Jewish summer campers have attended more than one Jewish camp, and most have attended non-Jewish camps at some point. Were we to have considered all the children in the family, the blurring between Jewish and non-Jewish camping families would have been even more pronounced.

Table 1

There is wide participation in day and overnight camps, and non-Jewish camps among those who go to overnight Jewish camps

<i>Last summer attended</i>	<i>Attended Jewish camp last summer?</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
A Jewish-sponsored day camp	64%	16%
A non-sectarian day camp	9%	25%
A non-sectarian all-around overnight camp	37%	16%
A non-sectarian specialty camp	47%	21%
Any non-Jewish camp (all-around or specialty)	54%	29%

The implication is that Jewish camp participants go to several camps in any given summer, assembling, with their parents' help, a variety of summer experiences, including other camps, both Jewish and non-Jewish, both day and overnight, meaning that they are constantly encountering the "competition." It follows that they are keenly and immediately aware of differences between and among camps, and can easily and quickly compare experiences and satisfaction across various summer camp alternatives.

### Moderate "Brand Loyalty" Among Jewish and Non-sectarian Campers

Based on the parents' reports on their children's "likely" activities next summer, as compared with their activities this past summer, we learn that of those who went last summer only to a Jewish camp, about 40% are likely to return next summer (*Table 2, page 16*). In contrast, of those who went only to non-sectarian camps, as many as 60% are reported to be likely to return next summer. Of those who went to both Jewish and non-Jewish camps, more will return to non-Jewish camps than who will return to the Jewish camps (about two-thirds versus a slim majority). At the same time, those who went to any sort of camp this summer are more than twice as likely to go back to a camp next summer than are those who went to no camp this summer.

*Table 2***Plans for next summer, by patterns of camp attendance the past summer**

<i>Camps may attend next summer</i>	<i>Camps attended last summer</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>None</i>	<i>Non-Jewish only</i>	<i>Jewish only</i>	<i>Both</i>	
No camp	69%	27%	33%	21%	52%
Non-Jewish only	11%	35%	25%	21%	19%
Jewish only	8%	12%	25%	9%	10%
Both	10%	24%	14%	46%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Table 3***Percent satisfied with specific aspects of Jewish camping, by whether their children attended a Jewish summer camp last summer**

<i>Attended Jewish camp last summer</i>	<i>Satisfied with</i>				
	<i>Jewish ambience</i>	<i>Facilities</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Counselors</i>	<i>Campers</i>
No	80%	73%	62%	68%	71%
Yes	80%	85%	69%	81%	83%

Of those whose children are in grades 3–9, rates of return to each group of camps (Jewish and non-sectarian) hover around 60%, consistent with the reports of some local camps. That is, of those in these grades who attended Jewish camps last summer, 58% will return to Jewish camps next summer (or so their parents now say). The comparable figure for non-sectarian camps is 62%.

The results point to a definable market for summer camps, with semi-permeable boundaries, in which Jewish camps compete with each other and with non-sectarian camps. In other words, some families and their youngsters are inclined to summer camping and others are not (or are less so). Those who attend camp in one summer are more likely to go to a camp the next summer than those who experience no overnight camping, be it Jewish or not. The implication here is that the Jewish camps of Southern California can clearly increase their attendance by increasing the rates at which former campers return, summer after summer.



## Goodwill Toward Jewish Camps

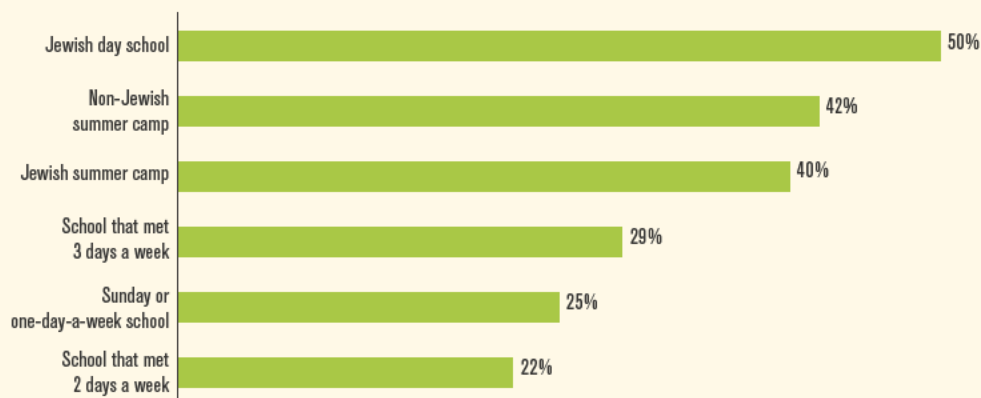
In many ways, former campers and their parents express satisfaction with Jewish summer camping. Satisfaction levels among parents whose children attended Jewish summer camps the past summer average around 80% for such matters as Jewish feel or ambiance, the facilities, the counselors, and the other campers (*Table 3*). The only minor exception to this pattern entails, “cost,” where 69% express satisfaction. As we shall learn, cost emerges repeated as a major obstacle to participation in Jewish summer camping. In all, as many as 87% of parents of Jewish camp children say that their camping experience met their expectations.

The good will expressed by camp-alumni-parents is relevant in that they form a likely constituency for camping today. As our field notes from our focus groups report: *Parents who attended sleep away camp as children, or who wanted to but were unable, seemed to be more determined to enable their children to attend sleep away camp than parents without this experience. While those who had not gone to camp as children, had not considered it for their children, and/or their children had not mentioned it to them as an activity of interest.*

Further evidence of a reservoir of positive feelings to Jewish camping comes in the parents’ feelings toward their own Jewish educational experiences, including camping, when they were children, some 20, 30, or 40 years ago. Their memories of Jewish camping compare favorably with their memories of other forms of Jewish education in their childhood. We asked respondents to assess their Jewish educational experience on a five-point scale, ranging from negative to positive (*Figure 8, page 18*). Of those who went to Jewish day schools as youngsters, 50% assigned the highest possible “positive” score (5 out of 5) to their experience. In contrast, between 22% and 29% were as positive about various forms of supplementary schools they attended. For their part, Jewish summer camps scored high as well, with 40% garnering the maximum score, placing them below day schools but well above all types of supplementary schools. The responses for Jewish summer camp mirrored those for non-sectarian overnight summer camps, where 42% provided the most positive assessment.

Figure 8

Percent of parents with “very positive” memories of Jewish educational experiences and non-sectarian camping in their childhood years



### Variations in Extent of Familiarity with Local Jewish Camps

The extent to which parents are familiar with Jewish summer camps in Southern California is very closely tied to their children’s attendance at such camps. Parents whose children attended such camps last summer are familiar not only with their own camp, but, most often, with several other camps. On the other hand, parents whose children never attended a Jewish summer camp claim little familiarity with overnight Jewish summer camps. This finding points to a widespread lack of awareness of Jewish summer camping, and implies that camps may well benefit from better communication with these families, those who are outside the current Jewish camping market.

In fact, lack of familiarity may well be more widespread than these results suggest. The focus groups turned up several participants who had clear images of specific camps, although these images were clearly distorted or mistaken. On the survey, they would have claimed familiarity with one or another Jewish camp, but would be lacking in factual knowledge about the camps with which they claimed familiarity. This circumstance too points to the need for more effective communication with real and potential camp families.

We presented respondents with a list of the ten local Jewish summer camps, asking, in each case whether they had heard of the camp and, if so, whether they were familiar with it. The analysis constructed an index totaling the number of camps where they claimed familiarity.

Among those who sent their children to Jewish summer camp the previous summer, 75% claimed familiarity with two or more camps — their own camp and at least one other (*Tables 4 & 5*). For those who had sent their children to such camps in the past, but not last summer, the comparable figure dropped to 52%. For those who never sent their child to a Jewish summer camp, the proportion familiar with two camps dropped to 17%. In fact, among

such parents of children 6–17 years old, as many as 71% could not name a single Jewish summer camp with which they felt familiar. Moreover, of parents whose children had been to non-sectarian camps, half had no familiarity with any Jewish-sponsored summer camps. Even among those who sent their children to non-sectarian camps last summer, a very lively and active camping market, as many as 47% claimed familiarity with no Jewish camps.

Of course, we cannot determine whether familiarity with Jewish camps promotes attendance, or whether attendance promotes familiarity. Undoubtedly both processes are at work.

To some extent, then, we can assume that lack of familiarity impedes serious consideration of attending Jewish summer camps. Thus, making all constituencies of Jewish parents aware of, informed of, and interested in Jewish summer camps — especially those already sending their children to summer camps, albeit not Jewish camps — is an obvious critical challenge for Jewish camps specifically and generally.

*Tables 4 & 5*

**Familiarity with Jewish camps by previous experience with Jewish camps**

<i>Number of Jewish camps familiar with</i>	<i>Prior Jewish camp experience</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Never attended</i>	<i>Attended prior to last summer</i>	<i>Attended last summer</i>	
None	71%	31%	15%	56%
One	11%	15%	10%	12%
Two	3%	10%	20%	7%
Three	3%	13%	8%	6%
Four or more	9%	28%	45%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

<i>Number of Jewish camps ever attended</i>	<i>Attend Jewish camp last summer?</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
None	3%	82%
One	41%	13%
Two or more	56%	6%

### To Have Fun as a Camper and to Grow as a Person – The Appeal of Jewish Camps

Drawing upon the results of our focus groups, we presented parents with several reasons for sending “children to Jewish overnight camps,” asking them to evaluate the persuasiveness of each argument (*Table 6*).

For those who have never sent their children to Jewish camps, two reasons emerged as most persuasive:

- “He/she would have a good time”
- “Being away from home with others the same age would help your child grow and mature”

*Table 6*

Percent regarding several arguments for Jewish camps as very persuasive, by prior experience with Jewish camps

<i>Arguments for attending</i>	<i>Prior Jewish camp experience</i>		
	<i>Never attended</i>	<i>Attended prior to last summer</i>	<i>Attended last summer</i>
He/she would learn a lot about being Jewish	47%	62%	73%
A Jewish camp would strengthen his/her pride in being Jewish	53%	65%	75%
It helps build commitment to Jewish values	53%	68%	71%
It strengthens friendships with other Jewish kids	48%	65%	73%
He/she would have a good time	73%	74%	78%
Being away from home with others the same age would help your child grow and mature	66%	68%	75%

Among those parents whose children never went to Jewish camps, 40% found the “good time” argument very persuasive, and 32% resonated in like fashion with the “grow and mature” claim. As our field notes from the focus groups report: *Parents who sent their children to sleep away camp felt that this experience helped their children to become more independent, make new friends, and gain organizational and leadership skills.*

The other reasons presented in the survey — all of which related to Jewish educational effectiveness — each managed to appeal strongly to about 20% of these respondents. An example of such an argument: A Jewish camp would strengthen his/her pride in being Jewish.

Those who sent their children to Jewish camps last summer found all the arguments in favor of Jewish camps more persuasive. But unlike those who never experienced Jewish camping, they resonated both with the Jewish and with what may be called the more general reasons to consider Jewish camping. For example, we may take the claim that a Jewish camp experience “strengthens friendships with other Jewish kids.” Just 18% of the non-camping parents found this argument very persuasive, as compared with 54% of those whose children had been to Jewish camp the previous summer.

A large part of the difference between the two groups can be attributed to Jewish engagement, or lack thereof, among the non-camping parents. Those parents who were strongly engaged in Jewish terms resonated with the Jewish educational effectiveness arguments, even if their own children had not recently attended Jewish camps.

**Advocates of Jewish camping need to take into account parents’ level of Jewish engagement, as well as their prior experience with Jewish camping.**

**Tailoring the messages** Advocates of Jewish camping need to speak differently to parents. They need to take into account parents’ level of Jewish engagement, as well as their prior experience with Jewish camping.

For the more Jewishly engaged parents, or for those whose children have previously been Jewish campers, arguments entailing Jewish educational effectiveness as well as the overall recreational quality of the camps may be persuasive. But for those who are less familiar with Jewish camps or who are less concerned about providing their children with a strong Jewish education, the points to emphasize are those other than Jewish educational effectiveness. Among them are the recreational potential of the camp experience and the value of camps in promoting independence and maturation.

### Fear of Ghettoization and Cost: Two Obstacles

We asked parents to assess the persuasiveness of several arguments against sending children to Jewish overnight camps (*Table 7*). Two reasons stood out as especially important objections and were adapted for the survey questionnaire. They were:

- It (Jewish summer camping) costs too much
- He/she (my child) should be exposed to all kinds of kids, not just Jewish kids

Parents were more sensitive to these objections than any others. Those who sent their children to Jewish camps last summer generally found these objections less persuasive than others; but among the 12 reasons offered, more found these two persuasive than all other reasons listed.

Parents who had never sent their children to Jewish camps were more “put off” by the cost than by the matter of getting to know non-Jewish children. Intriguingly, we find the opposite pattern among parents who had once sent their children to Jewish camps but had not done

so last year. For these parents, who have, in effect, turned away from Jewish camps, concerns about integration (or its opposite: ghettoization) loomed larger.

Jewish camps may lose campers from one season to the next because the campers and their families are seeking a mixture of Jewish

**Many American Jews, when thinking of how to raise their children still wrestle with the trade-offs between group survival and social integration.**

and “general” experiences. This finding may well have implications for camp programming, perhaps suggesting that thought should be given to how Jewish camps can effect relationships with non-sectarian camps or undertake social action projects connecting campers with non-Jewish populations. Such innovations may well address parents’ concerns that their children gain exposure to non-Jews as well as Jews, even as they attend Jewish-sponsored camps.

Notably, the theme of integration and ghettoization figures prominently in the consciousness of American Jews today, as it has since their arrival in colonial times. The diminished concern with integration helped prompt a rise in day school utilization over the last quarter century. Yet, many American Jews, when thinking of how to raise their children — be it in terms of schools or summer camps — still wrestle with the trade-offs between group survival and social integration.



Table 7

Percent regarding several objections to Jewish camps as very persuasive, by prior experience with Jewish camps

<i>Objections to attending</i>	<i>Prior Jewish camp experience</i>		
	<i>Never attended</i>	<i>Attended prior to last summer</i>	<i>Attended last summer</i>
Jewish-sponsored camps don't really make kids any more committed to being Jewish	18%	30%	31%
He/she should be exposed to all kinds of kids, not just Jewish kids	37%	46%	34%
The kids at Jewish camp aren't right for your child	13%	29%	27%
Jewish camps make it difficult for children to participate in quality summertime activities	19%	33%	29%
Jewish camps simply are not very good	15%	28%	27%
Your child wouldn't do well in such a program	17%	28%	32%
He/she should just have fun during the summer	31%	34%	29%
It costs too much	49%	38%	37%
The programming is too religious with too much praying	25%	31%	28%
Summer camping in general would not be safe for my child	16%	28%	32%
Jewish summer camp simply isn't very cool or fashionable	16%	32%	29%
My child gets enough Jewish school during the year and should have a break during the summer	15%	22%	24%

*Table 8*

**Percent citing each of several objections as the main reason not to send their children to Jewish camps, for those who have never done so**

We are just not interested in summer camp, be it Jewish or non-sectarian	27%
It costs too much	50%
It's too Jewish	13%
The quality of the recreational activities is not very good	11%
I don't know much about Jewish summer camps	34%
My child's friends wouldn't be there	24%

### **Cost and Lack of Familiarity: Obstacles for Many**

We asked those parents who never sent their children to Jewish camps to assess several reasons why they “hesitate to send your child to a Jewish summer camp” (*Table 8*). Consistent with previously reported findings, two reasons head the list:

- It costs too much
- I don't know much about Jewish summer camps

These two issues were cited as the “main reason” more often than the others we presented. While cost presents itself as a barrier for all parents, for those who have never sent their children to Jewish camps, lack of familiarity poses another crucial obstacle to considering such camps.

### **Who is More Cost-Sensitive?**

#### **The Less Affluent, the Less Engaged, the Less Exposed**

Drawing upon three questions that reflect concerns about the financial affordability of Jewish summer camping, the analysis constructed an index that measured cost-sensitivity (*Table 9*). This index combines responses to these questions, abbreviated as follows:

- It (Jewish camping) costs too much, as a persuasive reason
- How much of a role did/will finances play in your decision ...? (important factor)
- Camps charge about \$1,800 for a two-week session ... would you find it difficult to justify that expenditure?

Clearly, someone answering all three questions in the same direction feels hard-pressed to pay for camping, and/or finds relatively little value in Jewish summer camping. Accordingly, the analysis discerned that three characteristics are especially associated with cost sensitivity:

- Those with relatively lower income
- Those with lower levels of Jewish engagement
- Those who did not send their children to a Jewish camp last summer

Thus, those who combine low income, with little Jewish engagement, and who have little immediate connection with Jewish camping are most likely to feel that Jewish summer camping does not offer value commensurate with its cost. Conversely, those who are more affluent, have higher levels of Jewish engagement, and who are highly connected to Jewish camping are among those most willing to pay the financial price that Jewish summer camping demands and commands.

*Table 9*

**Index of sensitivity to the costs of Jewish camping by Jewish engagement, income, and prior experience with Jewish camping**

<i>Level of Jewish engagement</i>	<i>Index of sensitivity to costs of Jewish camping</i>
Unengaged	60%
Engaged	51%
<i>Family income</i>	
Low	66%
Moderate	55%
High	42%
<i>Prior experience with Jewish camping</i>	
Never attended	57%
Attended prior to last summer	55%
Attended last summer	49%

### A Two-Hour Drive for a Two-Week Session

When asked about the maximum distance from home they would consider acceptable in a Jewish camp, just under half found a three-hour drive acceptable, and more than 80% felt comfortable with a drive of two hours or more (*Table 10*). Those with experience with Jewish camping, especially attendance during the past summer, were willing to consider prospective camps that were further away. Conversely, those who had never sent their children to Jewish camps were less likely to consider camps further away from their homes.

Parents divided on the question of the ideal length of a camp session, with the median and modal response falling at two weeks (*Table 11*). However, parents who had sent their children to Jewish camp differed dramatically from those who had never done so. Among parents with prior camping experience, only a small number opted for a one-week session, and almost half preferred three weeks or more. In contrast, for parents who never sent their child to Jewish summer camp, as many as a third preferred the one-week session, and only a quarter were interested in three weeks or more.

Again, the results point to a clear distinction between current-camper and never-camper families.

More detailed comments derive from our focus groups, as follows:

*Most parents wanted to send their children for a two-week session. They felt that two weeks enabled their children to settle into the camp routine, get to know the other campers, and enjoy themselves. They also felt that within a two-week period, they could also relax and/or take their own vacation without their children.*

**Most parents felt that two weeks enabled their children to settle into the camp routine, get to know the other campers, and enjoy themselves.**

*Some felt that three weeks was better because it provided a longer camp experience that provided better opportunities for their children to bond with other children. A few*

*either had themselves or had friends who attended eight-week camp on the East Coast and had not adopted “the West Coast mentality that camp should be only two weeks.” Others indicated they would like to send their children for more than two weeks (and their children would like to go for longer than two weeks), but finances limited what they could provide, especially in families where more than one child attended sleep away camp.*

Table 10

**Maximum travel time acceptable in a Jewish camp by prior experience with Jewish camping**

<i>If you were thinking about sending your child to a Jewish camp, what would be the maximum distance from home you would consider?</i>	<i>Prior Jewish camp experience</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Never attended</i>	<i>Attended prior to last summer</i>	<i>Attended last summer</i>	
One hour drive	20%	18%	5%	18%
Two hour drive	41%	36%	35%	39%
Three hour drive	18%	18%	28%	19%
Four hour drive	12%	16%	14%	13%
Airplane trip	9%	13%	19%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 11

**Ideal length of camping session by prior experience with Jewish camping**

<i>If you were thinking about sending your child to a Jewish camp, for how many weeks would you want him/her to go to camp this summer?</i>	<i>Prior Jewish camp experience</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Never attended</i>	<i>Attended prior to last summer</i>	<i>Attended last summer</i>	
One week	32%	15%	14%	27%
Two weeks	42%	38%	48%	42%
Three weeks	11%	12%	10%	11%
Four weeks	9%	23%	20%	13%
Five weeks	1%	3%	—	1%
Six weeks	3%	6%	5%	4%
Eight weeks	2%	3%	3%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

# Implications



Running through the analysis are several action-related themes that can prove useful to advocates of Jewish overnight summer camping in Southern California and, by logical extension, to other areas as well.

Most fundamentally, we must recognize that camping and non-camping families differ dramatically, suggesting that advocates of Jewish summer camping need to approach those who have no experience with Jewish camping differently from those who have already sent their children to such camps. One challenge, among the non-camp families, is a matter primarily of recruitment; the other challenge, among camp families, is primarily one of retention.

The differences between the two family groups can be rather substantial. Camping families are more Jewishly engaged in many respects. For them, the results point to the ongoing competition with non-sectarian camps, particularly specialty camps that cater to particular

needs and interests of the camper. One appeal of non-sectarian camps is that they are ... non-sectarian: they bring together Jewish and non-Jewish children, an experience that even campers and families at Jewish camps seem to value. In addition, camping families remain sensitive to costs, although less sensitive than non-camping families. For camp families, the principal

**Advocates of Jewish summer camping need to approach those who have no experience with Jewish camping differently from those who have already sent their children to such camps.**

challenge to camps lies in the area of retention. The challenge is to get campers to return each summer, to remain with the camp in question and not opt for a non-sectarian camp, and to extend camping into the middle-adolescent years, beyond eighth grade.

For the non-camp families, other sorts of issues emerged. Like their counterparts who are already sending their children to Jewish camps, they are sensitive to financial cost, and even more sensitive than camp families. Unlike their camp-family counterparts, they are not particularly motivated by Jewish educational concerns. Rather, they will need to be sold on the basis of camps as places where their children can have fun and mature as independent youngsters. They are also unfamiliar with Jewish camps, and need to learn more about their availability and offerings. As opposed to those who already send children to Jewish camps,



non-camp families are especially keen on shorter sessions, lasting perhaps one-to-two weeks. This finding suggests that camps that limit their offerings to four-week sessions may be impeding interest and exploration by families who would consider only shorter sessions.

The widespread utilization of non-Jewish camps, even by Jewish campers and even by the most Jewishly engaged families, point to at least three issues that need attention from Jewish camps:

- 1) Lack of opportunities for interaction with non-Jews
- 2) Limitations in facilities and in quality of recreational activities
- 3) Limited number of opportunities for specialized experiences

In other words, Jewish camps in Southern California may well broaden their appeal if they devise ways for their campers to spend time with non-Jews; if they can invest in and improve their facilities; and if they can offer either alternative camps or specialized tracks that focus on specific activities, such as certain sports or the arts.

While many questions obviously remain, these are the initial action-oriented findings that emerge from this, the first marketing research study in the field of overnight Jewish summer camping. Though conducted exclusively among Jewish parents in Southern California, its findings and analyses may well hold lessons for Jewish camping throughout North America, and they set the stage for follow-up studies to build upon the lessons gleaned here.





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# Appendix

## Survey Questionnaire

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January 23, 2006

### Jewish Summer Camps: A Survey of Parents in Southern California

To what extent, if any, do Jewish parents have an interest in Jewish-sponsored camps for their children? What sorts of camps would they want? What are they looking for in summer activities for their children?

These are some of the questions we're exploring in this study of Jewish parents in Southern California. I'm writing you to ask that you participate in this study that your congregation or children's summer camp is helping us to conduct. As the study director (I'm Professor Steven M. Cohen, of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the rabbinical seminary of Reform Judaism), I can assure you both of confidentiality and of my readiness to answer any questions you may have. You may reach me at my personal e-mail, [steve34nyc@aol.com](mailto:steve34nyc@aol.com).

I ask that you take a few minutes and help us out by being in the survey. It takes only about 15 minutes to complete. And the findings will help Jewish camps provide better opportunities for families such as yours.

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**1. Does at least one of the adults in your home identify as Jewish in some way?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No (*go to exit and thank you page*)

**2. Are there children under the age of 19, and not yet in college, in your home?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No (*go to exit and thank you page*)

**3. How many children under the age of 19 live with you? \_\_\_\_**

**4. What are the ages of the child(ren) (including stepchildren) who live with you?**

\_\_\_\_ \_

**5. With respect to your child(ren), how important to you is that ....** *(Please answer on a scale from 1 to 5 – 1 being “Not at all important,” and 5 being “Extremely important.”)*

- \_\_\_\_ They acquire a foundation of Jewish knowledge and tradition?  
 \_\_\_\_ They receive an intensive Jewish education?  
 \_\_\_\_ They make good friendships with other Jewish children?  
 \_\_\_\_ They make good friendships with non-Jewish children?  
 \_\_\_\_ When they are old enough, they date only Jewish people?  
 \_\_\_\_ They marry someone Jewish (or who converts to Judaism)?  
 \_\_\_\_ They celebrate Shabbat and/or Jewish holidays as an adult?

**6. Do you happen to know of any Jewish overnight camps, that is, camps which are under the sponsorship of a Jewish movement, synagogue, JCC, or other agency?**

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

**(If Yes) Would you say you are “familiar” with any of them, and with what they can offer your children?**

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

**7. Do you happen to know of any overnight camps not under Jewish sponsorship?**

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

**(If Yes) Would you say you are “familiar” with any of them, and with what they can offer your children?**

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

**8. Have you heard about and are you familiar with each of the following Jewish-sponsored overnight summer camps?**

	Heard about it	Heard about it, but not familiar	Not heard about it
Camp Alonim	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camp Gan Israel Running Springs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camp JCA Shalom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camp Mountain Chai	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camp Ramah in California	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camp Tawonga	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camp Yofi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Habonim Dror Camp Gilboa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
URJ Camp Swig and Camp Newman	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wilshire Boulevard Temple Camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**9. Of the Jewish parents you know whose children are about the age of your children, about what proportion do you think have chosen or will choose to send their children to a Jewish overnight camp?**

- ☐ None      ☐ A few      ☐ Some      ☐ Most

### Your Child

In the next few questions, we ask about the summer activities of one of your children. If you have one child, please answer with respect to him/her. If you have more than one at home, then please select the child who is closest in age to 10 years old.

With respect to *him/her* (either your only child, or the one you selected who is closest to age 10)...

**10. Is he/she a boy or a girl?**

- ☐ Boy      ☐ Girl

**11. How old is he/she? \_\_\_\_**

**12. What grade is he/she enrolled in for this school year?**

- ☐ Nursery/Pre-K/Gan      ☐ K      ☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3  
☐ 4      ☐ 5      ☐ 6      ☐ 7      ☐ 8      ☐ 9  
☐ 10      ☐ 11      ☐ 12      ☐ Other      ☐ Not enrolled in school

**13. What type of school is he/she attending?**

- ☐ Public school      ☐ Jewish day school (*skip to question 15*)  
☐ Private school      ☐ Some other type of school (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**14. (If not currently in day school in question 13) What is the main type of Jewish schooling he/she has received, or will receive, if any?**

- ☐ None  
☐ Sunday school or another on-day-a-week school  
☐ A religious school that meets two days a week  
☐ A religious school that meets three days a week  
☐ Jewish day school

**14a. How many of your child's closest friends are Jewish?**

- ☐ None      ☐ Some      ☐ Half      ☐ Most      ☐ All

**14b. During the past year, how often did your child go to Jewish worship services?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never, or bar/bat mitzvahs | <input type="checkbox"/> Just for high holidays    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A few times a year         | <input type="checkbox"/> About once a month        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 times a month          | <input type="checkbox"/> About once a week or more |

**15. Below is a list of summer activities that your child may engage in. Which did he/she do last summer, and which do you think he/she is likely to do next summer?***(Check all that apply)*

	Last summer	Next summer
A swim club or beach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A family vacation home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A family vacation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel in the US	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel outside the US	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Jewish-sponsored day camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A non-sectarian day camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Jewish-sponsored overnight camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A non-sectarian all-around overnight camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A non-sectarian specialty camp (sports, drama, arts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Overnight Summer Camps***(If non-sectarian camp checked for last summer or next summer, ask:)***Which camp(s) did he/she attend or will he/she attend?** *(List all possibilities, please)*


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**16. Did he/she ever attend an overnight camp that is not specifically Jewish?**

- ☐
- Yes
- ☐
- No

**17. (If no) Did you or your spouse/partner ever think of possibly sending him/her to an overnight camp that is not specifically under Jewish sponsorship?**

- ☐
- Yes
- ☐
- No



**18. Did he/she ever attend an overnight camp under Jewish sponsorship?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**19. (If no) Did you or your spouse/partner ever think of possibly sending him/her to an overnight camp under Jewish sponsorship?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**20. (If attended overnight Jewish camp) Which Jewish overnight camp did he/she attend?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Alonim	<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Gan Israel Running Springs
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp JCA Shalom	<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Ramah in California
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Tawonga	<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Yofi
<input type="checkbox"/> Habonim Dror Camp Gilboa	<input type="checkbox"/> URJ Camp Swig and Camp Newman
<input type="checkbox"/> Wilshire Boulevard Temple Camps	

**21. (If attended overnight Jewish camp) How satisfied have you been with each of the following aspects of his/her Jewish overnight camp experience? (Answer from 1 to 5 – 1 being the least satisfied and 5 being the most satisfied.)**

\_\_\_\_ Jewish feel or ambiance of the camp  
 \_\_\_\_ Quality of the facilities  
 \_\_\_\_ The cost  
 \_\_\_\_ The counselors  
 \_\_\_\_ The other campers  
 \_\_\_\_ The quality of the program  
 \_\_\_\_ The choice of activities  
 \_\_\_\_ Your child's overall experience

**21a. (If attended overnight Jewish camp) Did the camp experience meet your expectations?**

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

*Please explain your answer in a few lines.*

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**22. (If attended overnight Jewish camp, or if ever considered) In deciding whether to enroll your child in an overnight camp under Jewish sponsorship, to what degree were each of the following people in favor of the idea? (Answer on a 1 to 5 scale – with 1 being strongly against and 5 being strongly in favor.)**

- \_\_\_\_ You  
 \_\_\_\_ Your spouse/partner  
 \_\_\_\_ Your child

**23. (If attended overnight Jewish camp, or if ever considered) How much of a role did (or will) finances play in your decision whether or not to send your child to an overnight camp under Jewish sponsorship? Were finances...**

- ☐ The most important factor  
☐ An important factor, but not the most important  
☐ A minor factor  
☐ Completely irrelevant to the decision

**24. Jewish overnight summer camps charge about \$1,800 for a two-week session, or \$3,500 for four weeks. Given all of your family's commitments and obligations, to what extent would you find it difficult to justify that sort of expenditure?**

- ☐ Very difficult      ☐ Somewhat difficult      ☐ Not at all difficult

### **Jewish Overnight Camp: Reasons For and Against**

#### *Reasons For Sending Your Child to a Jewish Camp*

**25. Below are some reasons parents give for sending their children to Jewish overnight camps. For you personally, how persuasive do you find each of the following reasons for sending your child to such a camp. Please answer on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "not persuasive" to 5 for "very persuasive."**

- \_\_\_\_ He/she would learn a lot about being Jewish  
 \_\_\_\_ A Jewish camp would strengthen his/her pride in being Jewish  
 \_\_\_\_ It helps build commitment to Jewish values  
 \_\_\_\_ It strengthens friendships with other Jewish kids  
 \_\_\_\_ It puts children in an all-Jewish environment  
 \_\_\_\_ He/she would have a good time  
 \_\_\_\_ Being away from home with others the same age would help your child grow and mature

### *Reasons Against Sending Your Child to a Jewish Camp*

**26. Below are some reasons parents give for *not* sending their children to Jewish overnight camps. For you personally, how persuasive do you find each of the following reasons for not sending your child to such a camp. Please answer on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “not persuasive” to 5 for “very persuasive.”**

- \_\_\_ Jewish-sponsored camps don’t really make kids any more committed to being Jewish.
- \_\_\_ He/she should be exposed to all kinds of kids, not just Jewish kids
- \_\_\_ The kids at Jewish camp aren’t right for your child
- \_\_\_ Jewish camps make it difficult for children to participate in quality summer-time activities.
- \_\_\_ Jewish camps simply are not very good
- \_\_\_ Your child wouldn’t do well in such a program
- \_\_\_ He/she should just have fun during the summer
- \_\_\_ It costs too much
- \_\_\_ The programming is “too religious” with too much praying
- \_\_\_ Summer camping in general would not be safe for my child
- \_\_\_ Jewish summer camp simply isn’t very “cool” or fashionable
- \_\_\_ My child gets enough Jewish school during the year and should have a break during the summer

**27. (If child never attended Jewish summer camp) What is the main reason why you hesitate to send your child to a Jewish summer camp (check one box in the first column)? What are any other reasons why you hesitate to send your child to Jewish summer camp (check as many boxes as apply in the second column)?**

	Main reason	Other reasons
We’re just not interested in summer camp, be it Jewish or non-sectarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It cost too much	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It’s too “Jewish”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The quality of the recreational activities is not very good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don’t know much about Jewish summer camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child’s friends wouldn’t be there	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**28. In your own words, what may motivate you to seriously consider sending your child to a Jewish summer camp?**

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**29. If you were thinking about sending your child to a Jewish camp, for how many weeks would you want him/her to go to camp this summer?**

- |                                      |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One week    | <input type="checkbox"/> Two weeks   | <input type="checkbox"/> Three weeks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Four weeks  | <input type="checkbox"/> Five weeks  | <input type="checkbox"/> Six weeks   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seven weeks | <input type="checkbox"/> Eight weeks |                                      |

**30. If your child were 16 or 17, do you think you would encourage him or her to participate in an educational trip to Israel?**

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

### Your Involvement in Jewish Life

**31. How important is being Jewish in your life? On a scale from 1 to 5, – 1 being “not at all important” and 5 being “extremely important.”**

- ☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5

**32. Thinking about Jewish religious denominations, what denomination do you currently consider yourself to be, if any?**

- |                                       |  |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orthodox     | <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional       | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reform       | <input type="checkbox"/> Reconstructionist | <input type="checkbox"/> Secular      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Jewish        |                                       |

**33. This past year...**

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Did you or your spouse/partner fast all or part of the day on Yom Kippur? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Did you have a Christmas tree in your house?                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Did you or anyone in your household usually light Sabbath candles on Friday night?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Did you or your spouse/partner donate to a Jewish Federation or Jewish organization other than a synagogue? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Did you serve as an officer or Board member of a synagogue, JCC, Federation or other Jewish agency?         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- 34. This past year, were you or anyone in your household a dues paying member of a synagogue?**  
☐ Yes      ☐ No
- 35. What is the denomination of this synagogue?**  
☐ Orthodox      ☐ Traditional      ☐ Conservative  
☐ Reform      ☐ Reconstructionist      ☐ Other
- 36. During the past year, *how often* did you go to Jewish worship services?**  
☐ Never or bar/bat mitzvahs      ☐ Just for high holidays  
☐ A few times a year      ☐ About once a month  
☐ 2–3 times a month      ☐ About once a week or more
- 37. How many of your closest friends are Jewish?**  
☐ None      ☐ Some      ☐ Half      ☐ Most      ☐ All, or almost all
- 38. Do you identify yourself as:**  
☐ A Jew by birth      ☐ A Jew by choice of conversion  
☐ Non-Jewish
- 39. What was the main type of Jewish schooling you received as a child, if any?**  
☐ None  
☐ Sunday school or another one-day-a-week school  
☐ A religious school that met two days a week  
☐ A religious school that met three days a week  
☐ A full-time Jewish day school  
☐ Other
- 40. (If any answer other than none) Looking back at your Jewish schooling, how positive or negative was the experience? On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being “very negative”, 5 being “very positive”**  
☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5

**41. Did you ever participate in...**

- ☐ Jewish day camp
- ☐ Jewish overnight camp
- ☐ An overnight camp not under Jewish sponsorship
- ☐ Jewish youth group
- ☐ Youth trip to Israel
- ☐ Hillel at college

**42. (If attended as a child Jewish overnight camp) Looking back at your Jewish overnight camp experience, how positive or negative was the experience? On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being "very negative", 5 being "very positive"**

- ☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5

**43. (If attended as a child overnight camp not under Jewish sponsorship) Looking back at your experience at camp that was not under Jewish sponsorship, how positive or negative was the experience? On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being "very negative", 5 being "very positive"**

- ☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5

**44. Are you:**

- ☐ Male      ☐ Female

**45. How old are you? \_\_\_\_**

**46. Are you currently:**

- ☐ Married      ☐ Single/never married      ☐ Divorced or separated
- ☐ Widowed      ☐ Living with someone in a committed relationship

**47. Are you currently:**

- ☐ Employed full-time      ☐ Employed part-time      ☐ A full-time homemaker
- ☐ Not employed      ☐ Other

**48. What is the highest level of education you have attained?**

- ☐ High school graduate or less      ☐ BA or BS, college degree
- ☐ Master's degree      ☐ Doctorate, MD, JD or equivalent
- ☐ Other

**50. What is your zip code? 9 \_ \_ \_ \_**



### Your Spouse or Partner *(if married or living with someone)*

Now we have a few questions about your spouse/partner.

**52. During the past year, how often did your spouse/partner go to Jewish worship services?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never or bar/bat mitzvahs | <input type="checkbox"/> Just for high holidays    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A few times a year        | <input type="checkbox"/> About once a month        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2–3 times a month         | <input type="checkbox"/> About once a week or more |

**53. Does your spouse/partner identify him or herself as...**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Jew by birth | <input type="checkbox"/> A Jew by choice or conversion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Jewish     |  |

**54. Did your spouse/partner ever participate in...**

- ☐ Jewish day camp
- ☐ Jewish overnight camp
- ☐ An overnight camp not under Jewish sponsorship
- ☐ Jewish youth group
- ☐ Youth trip to Israel
- ☐ Hillel at college

**55. How old is your spouse/partner? \_\_\_\_**

**56. Is your spouse/partner currently...**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employed full-time | <input type="checkbox"/> Employed part-time | <input type="checkbox"/> A full-time homemaker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not employed       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other              |  |

**57. What is the highest level of education that your spouse/partner has attained?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate or less | <input type="checkbox"/> BA or BS, college degree        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree              | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate, MD, JD or equivalent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other                        |  |

*(Ask all)*

**58. Finally, one last question for statistical purposes only – Which of the following categories best describes your annual household income last year?**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$25,000     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 to \$49,999   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 to \$74,999   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,000 to \$99,999   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 to \$149,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$150,000 to \$199,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200,000 to \$399,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$400,000 or more      |   |

## Discussion Guides for Focus Groups

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Saul Cohen & Associates  
Stamford, CT 06903  
September 2005

### Summer Experience Focus Groups *Moderator's Discussion Guide for Kids*

*Approx time*

**15 min. I. Introduction and Warm-Up**

- (Name, age, family composition, where do you go to school, grade)
- hobbies/interests
  - involvement in Jewish activities

**30 min. II. Summer Activities**

- What activities did you participate in this past summer? why these, not others?
  - what were the best/worst things about these activities? why?
  - how were these activities similar to/different from previous summers?
- What activities did your older/younger brothers and sisters participate in?
- Describe how you decided what to participate in this past summer
  - (unaided)
  - when do you typically plan summer activities?
  - have plans been made for next year?
  - what factors influence the decision?
    - > (unaided)
    - > your parents
    - > your interests
    - > what your friends are doing
    - > time constraints
    - > proximity to home
    - > financial

*15 min.*    **III. Sleep Away Camp**

- Which sleep away camps have you heard of?
  - how did you hear about them?
- Describe how you feel about sleep away camp
  - what do you like/think you would like? why?
  - what do you dislike/think you would dislike? why?
- What do your friends think/say about sleep away camp?
  - how does this make you feel about sleep away camp? why?
- What do your parents think/say about sleep away camp?
  - how does this make you feel about sleep away camp? why?

*30 min.*    **IV. Jewish Sleep Away Camp**

- Describe how you feel about Jewish sleep away camp? why?
  - what do you like/think you would like? why?
  - what do you dislike/think you would dislike? why?
- Which Jewish sleep away camps are you aware of?
  - what have you heard about them?
- What do your friends think/say about Jewish sleep away camp?
  - how does this make you feel about Jewish sleep away camp? why?
  - why do some kids go to Jewish sleep away camp and others do not?
- What do you think you would do in a Jewish sleep away camp?
  - what would the activities be like?
- If you could create your own Jewish sleep away camp, what would it be like?
  - (unaided)
  - program/activities
  - location
  - length of camp session
  - size of camp
  - “Jewishness”
- What must a Jewish sleep away camp offer for you to be interested in it? why?
  - what, if anything, would make you not interested in it?
- What must a Jewish sleep away camp offer for your parents to let you attend it? why?
  - what, if anything, would make them not interested in it?

## Summer Experience Focus Groups

### Moderator's Discussion Guide for Parents

*Approx time*

15 min.

#### I. Introduction and Warm-Up

(Name, family composition, occupation, family's involvement in Jewish activities)

40 min.

#### II. Summer Activities

- What activities did your children participate in over the summer?
  - what were the best/worst things about these activities? why?
  - how were these activities similar to/different from previous summers?
- How did your children feel about what they did last summer?
  - what did your children get out of these activities?
- How did you and your family decide which activities your 8–12 year old kids participated in over the summer?
  - (unaided)
  - who participated in the decision?
  - where did you go for information about alternatives? why these resources?
    - > (unaided)
    - > friends/family
    - > kids' friends
    - > rabbi
- How much did the children's interests and opinions affect this decision? why?
- What other factors influenced the decision?
  - > (unaided)
  - > time constraints
  - > proximity to home
  - > financial
- When do you typically plan summer activities for your kids?
  - have plans been investigated for next summer? why/why not?
  - when will you start making plans for next summer?
- Describe your hopes for your children
  - (unaided)
  - how do/can summer activities influence these hopes?

**25 min. III. Camping**

- Have you or your spouse ever gone to a sleep away camp?
  - how was the experience?
- How do you feel about sleep away camp as a summer activity for your kids?
  - if they went to an overnight camp, for how long would you like them to go?
    - > (unaided)
    - > 2 weeks, 4 weeks, 6 weeks?
- What are the best/worst things about overnight camps for kids? why?
- What are the key elements that make an overnight camp experience:
  - successful?
  - unsuccessful?
- Do you feel sleep away camp is safe? why/why not?
- Compare:
  - day camp vs. sleep away camp
  - Jewish camp vs. non-sectarian camp

**40 min. IV. Jewish Camping**

- What are the best/worst things about Jewish sleep away camp? why?
  - what must a Jewish sleep away camp offer for you to want your kids to attend it? why?
  - what, if any, are the potential drawbacks?
- Which Jewish sleep away camps are you aware of?
  - what have you heard about them?
  - what are your impressions of them?
- What is the primary motivation/drawback for you to send your child to a Jewish overnight camp?
  - why do some parents send their kids to Jewish sleep away camp and others do not?
- What must a sleep away camp offer for your kids to be interested in it? why?
  - what would be the potential drawbacks?
- What must a Jewish sleep away camp offer for your kids to be interested in it? why?
  - what would be the potential drawbacks?

- If you could create your own Jewish sleep away camp for kids, what would you design?
  - (unaided)
  - program/activities
  - location
  - length of sleep away camp session
  - size of sleep away camp
  - fees
  - “Jewishness”
  - what, if anything else, would your children add to your design?
- What role does Jewish sleep away camp have regarding:
  - survival
  - education
  - heritage/tradition/ethnic identity
  - culture/Jewish culture
  - networking/building a friendship base with other Jewish kids



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Foundation for Jewish Camping, Inc.

6 East 39th Street  
10th Floor  
New York, NY 10016  
212-792-6222

90 Oak Street  
PO Box 9129  
Newton, MA 02464

[www.jewishcamping.org](http://www.jewishcamping.org)

