

Research Findings on the Impact of Camp Ramah

A Companion Study to the 2004 *“Eight Up”* Report
on the Attitudes and Practices
of Conservative Jewish College Students

by Dr. Ariela Keysar and Dr. Barry A. Kosmin



A Report for the National Ramah Commission, Inc.
of The Jewish Theological Seminary

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Foreword

by Rabbi Mitchell Cohen

“Ramah-trained counselors are undoubtedly the elite of the elite.”

– Keysar and Kosmin, 2004

The network of Ramah camps throughout North America (now serving over 6,500 campers and over 1,500 university-aged staff members) has been described as the “crown jewel” of the Conservative Movement, the most effective setting for inspiring Jewish identity and commitment to Jewish communal life and Israel. “I am firmly convinced that in terms of social import, in terms of lives affected, Ramah is the most important venture ever undertaken by the Seminary.” (Dr. Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary, addressing a gathering to celebrate Ramah’s fortieth anniversary.)

Research studies written by Dr. Sheldon Dorph in 1976 (“A Model for Jewish Education in America”), Dr. Steven M. Cohen in 1998 (“Camp Ramah and Adult Jewish Identity: Long Term Influences”), Dr. Seymour Fox and Dr. William Novak in 1997 (“Vision at the Heart: Lessons From Camp Ramah on the Power of Ideas in Shaping Educational Institutions”), and others all credit Ramah as having an incredibly powerful positive impact on the development of Jewish identity.

New Research on the Influence of Ramah on Campers and Staff

I am pleased to present the findings of the most recent research on the impact of Ramah camping on the Jewish practices and attitudes of Conservative Jewish youth. Every now and then a research project is undertaken that attempts to quantify the influence of Jewish summer camping. While those of us deeply involved in camping instinctively know that these experiences are among the most powerful for developing Jewish identity, as well as for building self-esteem and moral character, quantitative analyses can add important perspective and provide a context within which to draw significant conclusions and develop policy implications for the future.

In a general study of the Conservative Movement published earlier this year, Dr. Ariela Keysar and Dr. Barry Kosmin reported on their research of the attitudes and practices of college students who grew up in the Conservative Movement (“*Eight Up*” – *The College Years: The Jewish Engagement of Young Adults Raised in Conservative Synagogues, 1995-2003*, A Project of the Jewish Theological Seminary’s Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism, Dr. Jack Wertheimer, Director). This project was funded by the AVI CHAI Foundation.

Keysar and Kosmin first interviewed over 1,400 students who had recently become Bar/Bat Mitzvah from a cross-section of Conservative synagogues in the mid-1990’s. In 1999, they followed up and interviewed these same young people, now in high school. The researchers published their findings in “*Four Up*” – *The High School Years, 1995-1999*. In the 2004 *Eight Up* study, Keysar and Kosmin report on their findings for this

same group of young people who are now approximately 21 years old, now mostly university seniors.

Keysar and Kosmin were able to contact 1,000 of the students they had surveyed both eight and four years earlier. Their research is therefore quite unique as a longitudinal study, one which finds trends in attitudes and changes in patterns of behavior over time, based upon the influence of various factors, such as high schools attended, Israel experiences, youth group and camp experiences.

Companion Report Looking at the Impact of Camp Ramah

In this current report, a companion to the 2004 *Eight Up* study, Drs. Keysar and Kosmin break down the raw data based upon Jewish camping experiences. Their analysis of this data, particularly the information about the impact of working as a staff member at a Ramah camp, is overwhelmingly positive.

As shown in the 2001 *Four Up* report, **students who attended Ramah as campers were more observant of Jewish ritual, more positive about Jewish and Zionist identity, more inclined to date and marry Jews, and more active in Jewish life on campus.** When the research was further refined to test the practices and attitudes of Ramah campers who went on to work as staff members at Ramah (or in some cases, other Jewish camps), the results were even more impressive. Highlights of this companion to the 2004 *Eight Up* study are as follows:

- **Synagogue Attendance** As shown in Chart 4, 40% of Ramah-trained counselors attend synagogue at least once a week, compared to just 11% of the Eight Up cohort overall and only 5% of those with no Jewish camping experience.
- **Jewish Marriage** Over three-quarters (78%) of Ramah-trained counselors state that it is "very important" to them to marry a Jew, in contrast to just 52% of respondents overall and 39% of those with no Jewish camping experience (Chart 11).
- **Kashrut** Only 17% of students with no Jewish camping experience and 29% of students overall state that they observe Kashrut outside the home. The figure jumps to 71% for Ramah-trained counselors. (See Chart 5.)
- **Jewish Education as a Career** Over one-third (40%) of Ramah-trained counselors state that they can see themselves becoming Jewish educators, nearly twice as many as the 22% of the overall Eight Up cohort and four times as many as the 10% of students with no Jewish camping experience. (See Chart 16.)
- **Jewish Studies Courses** While in college, Ramah-trained counselors are twice as likely as students with no Jewish camping experience to take a Jewish studies course – 63% compared to 31% (Table 2).

- **Israel Advocacy on Campus** Ramah-trained counselors are almost three times as likely to be engaged in Israel advocacy on campus (42%) than are college students with no Jewish camping experience (15%). (See Chart 8a.)
- **Observing Shabbat** Over a third of those with no Jewish camping experience (35%) say that they never do anything special on Friday night or Saturday to celebrate Shabbat. In contrast, none of the Ramah-trained counselors made this statement, and over a third of them (38%) always do something special to observe Shabbat, such as attend synagogue or a Friday night dinner. Further, a total of 60% of Ramah-trained counselors usually or always do something to celebrate Shabbat, compared to only 32% of other camps' counselors. (See Table 5.)
- **Dating Practices** Overall, only 18% of the *Eight Up* cohort states that they date only Jews, compared almost half (47%) of Ramah-trained counselors. As shown in Chart 12, Ramah-trained counselors are almost five times as likely as students with no Jewish camping experience to say that they date only Jews (47% compared to 10%).

A Living Environment

The Ramah summer camp setting, in which campers aged 8-16 and staff members 17 and older live and eat together, study and pray together, play ball and learn theater arts together, water ski and go mountain climbing together, influences young people in numerous ways on many levels. Ramah focuses on the development of each young person's self esteem, to the extent that every member of a Ramah camp is valued for whom he/she is. Ramah camps, through their integrated systems of formal and informal Jewish educational experiences, inspire young people to become more committed to Judaism as a culture, a religion, and as a way of life. Ramah camps, through their hiring of Israeli staff members, camp-based Zionist programming and their networks of programs for North Americans to spend time in Israel, encourage a deep connection between each Ramah participant and the State of Israel.

The Crucial "University Years"

Perhaps most significantly, Ramah camps retain over 75% of their camper populations into staff positions. When young Jewish adults aged 17-22 spend their summers at our camps, they are significantly strengthened to graduate from their university years with a love for Jewish life, a strong connection to Israel and powerful leadership skills that can help with all of life's challenges.

"The Power of Ramah"

Keysar and Kosmin make it clear that it is difficult to know whether the Ramah figures cited above are so high because more committed Jewish families send their children to Ramah, or whether the impact of the Ramah experience itself is the major factor. Their anecdotal evidence, however, indicates that many young people did report that their camping experience had a major impact upon their positive Jewish development. When asked, "What do you think is the most important thing that helped shape your Jewish identity?" a number of respondents chose Jewish camping. In the words of one student,

. . . Camp Ramah helped me shape my Jewish identity more. Being involved in a two-month Judaism experience immersed with Judaism really placed me in a constantly Jewish environment. It taught me to enjoy the best parts of Judaism, and see how special it is to have a spiritual aspect to life.

Another respondent said:

. . . my Jewish summer camp experience probably had the greatest influence on me than any other single experience. Camp Ramah simply incorporates ALL aspects of Judaism; social values, religious values, spirituality, charity, education . . . Thus, one becomes part of a very complete setting of Judaism, and in this way, one can find what unifies Judaism in all these categories.

In the words of Keysar and Kosmin:

We have demonstrated with an array of statistics, tables and charts that Jewish summer camping is an important experience in the lives of many young people and that it is associated with an increase in Jewish involvement during the college years. **College students who participated in Jewish summer camps, either as campers or as counselors at Camp Ramah or any other Jewish summer camps, are by far more engaged Jewishly than those who never attended a Jewish summer camp.** These findings with regard to the Jewish college students . . . ages 18-26 replicate those in the study of Jewish summer camps by Sales and Saxe (2004). (*emphasis added*)

However, we go one step further. We have identified the *crème de la crème* among camp counselors. **All the data presented here point to one remarkable group of young Jewish men and women, namely, those who attended Camp Ramah and later became counselors, either at Ramah or another Jewish summer camp.** These Ramah-trained counselors lead the way and are far ahead of others in various markers of strong Jewish identity, intense Jewish practice and commitment to Judaism. Ramah-trained counselors are undoubtedly the elite of the elite. (*emphasis added*)

From this body of research, we once again have an affirmation that among the many positive experiences that our young people might have, **Ramah camping is among the most effective means of ensuring a high level of commitment to Jewish life and positive Jewish and Zionist identity.**

*Rabbi Mitchell Cohen
Director, National Ramah Commission, Inc.
November 2004*

Introduction

Reflecting on his experience of working at Camp Ramah in the 1950s, the writer Chaim Potok suggested there was a consensus among the staff that, “We were educating the next generation of American Jews in a living Judaism” (Potok, 1993). Camp Ramah has been a mission- and vision-driven enterprise since its inception by a group of Chicago rabbis and volunteer leaders in 1947 (Seymour Fox, 1997; Sheldon Dorph, 1999). It has grown from a single camp in Wisconsin into a network of summer sleep-away camps, day camps, family camps and year-round programs that operates in North America, and Israel under the educational and religious supervision of The Jewish Theological Seminary. Its mission statement, which was revised in the 1990s, makes it clear that its primary purpose is “creating educating communities” in order to “‘raise up’ committed volunteer and professional leadership for the Conservative Movement and contemporary Jewry.” Its program is “directed toward two target populations: Campers (ages 9-16) and Staff (ages 17-25).” Aside from its goals for its campers within Conservative Judaism, Ramah also has Zionist aspirations, and Hebrew is widely used in the camps. Ramah has evolved since its foundation and it has become responsive to the more egalitarian and co-educational religious culture of contemporary Conservative Judaism. It has also become a more sophisticated educational institution that has incorporated much of the latest pedagogy and social science insights into its practice.

The goal of this report is to follow up on the positive findings of the *Four Up* study of 2001, which showed that Ramahniks were measurably superior to other campers and non-campers on most measures of Jewish identity and behaviors at the time they were seniors in high school. That report showed that Ramah was achieving its aim of imparting the practices and values of Conservative Judaism to its campers. This second report is thus a response to Dorph’s call that the *Four Up* report “argues for another look at this cohort somewhere during the junior/senior years at college to see if their commitments maintain themselves in the open marketplace of ideas and lifestyles called ‘university’.”

The experience of counselors – *madrichim* – is of special interest since they are largely made up of college students. Not only are they trained while counselors in training (CIT’s) to be role models for their own campers – *hanichim* – but they are treated as well as a target population which needs special attention. The idea is to maximize the efforts to keep them connected to the Jewish community and so special programs are designed for these counselors.

We will show that Jewish summer camping is an important experience associated with an increase in Jewish involvement during college. College students who participated in Jewish summer camps, either as campers or as counselors at Camp Ramah or any other Jewish summer camps, are by far more engaged Jewishly than those who never went to Jewish summer camp. Ramah-trained counselors, we will show, are the elite of the elite. They clearly represent the next generation of Jewish leaders in their intense Jewish involvement and commitment to Judaism.

The *Four Up* study of this same sample of 933 young Conservative Jews, when they were at high school in 1999, revealed that 71% of all the teenagers attended a Jewish summer camp at least one summer during their youth. About one-third of campers dropped out after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but one-fifth attended four or five more summers. Some became counselors in training. A similar pattern of attendance was discovered for Ramah campers, with one-third dropping out after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and one-quarter attending four or five summers during high school. Some of these Ramah campers attended other Jewish summer camps (Keysar and Kosmin, 2001).

It is important to make clear that this study of the *Eight Up* cohort is about the significance and impact of Jewish summer camping on the lives of Jewish college students today. It is not a study of summer camps *per se* since the unit of analysis is the individual student, rather than the institution itself. It is also important to remember that all the respondents in this study are drawn from a sample of young people raised in homes where parents were members of synagogues associated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. All the parents were synagogue members in 1995 and over 90% maintained their membership through 2003. In addition, this is a select and homogeneous cohort not only in terms of age but also in terms of early religious education and socialization since 90% had received Jewish education for five years or more prior to 1995.

Thus in this analysis we are effectively testing for differences within a group which represented the youth of Conservative Judaism at age 13. Specifically we are interested in testing the effect of Jewish summer camping as an independent variable in shaping the Jewish identity of these young people at the time they are juniors and seniors in college. Whereas the *Four Up* study reflected the effect of summer camping during the teenage years, the present study focuses on the college years and investigates whether the value gained from camping is maintained over time once the influence of the parental home is reduced.

The *Eight Up* project was the third phase of a unique longitudinal study of a panel of 933 young people from across North America who were drawn from a representative sample of synagogues in the year following their Bar or Bat Mitzvah during 1995/5755. (See Keysar and Kosmin, 2004.) The research involved both a telephone survey with college students and a series of focus group sessions. (See Appendix A – Methodology.) The data presented in this report are based on both the quantitative (telephone survey) and qualitative (focus groups) parts of the study.

Jewish Camping: Voices of College Students

Most of this report consists of statistical measurement. This is an objective scientific tool that will show the overall or aggregate findings relating to nearly one thousand young people. However, we need to remember that these findings relate to real individual young people whose ‘Jewish journeys’ we have followed since 1995. Fortunately the methodology of the *Eight Up* study allowed us to capture the individual opinions of our respondents and so give more flavor to the bare statistics. Below we present quotes from

our conversations with college students. Here the students express in their words their feelings about their experiences at Jewish summer camps.

These conversations helped us identify five themes relating to Jewish summer experiences that will be investigated in the statistical findings that form the main body of this report. These are: (a) the development of Jewish pride and peoplehood; (b) the practice of Judaism; (c) love of Israel and Zionism; (d) the fostering of Jewish friendships, marriage and dating; and (e) creating Jewish leaders.

Summer camp often helps shape the Jewish identity of college students. According to the students it provides a comfortable Jewish environment that boosts their Jewish pride. When asked, “What do you think is the most important thing that helped shape your Jewish identity (it could be a person, an institution, an event, an experience, a book, a movie, a trip or visit, or all the above)?”, some of our student respondents chose Jewish summer camp:

Summer camp is the institution which has best shaped my Jewish identity, and has made me most proud to be a Jew. Nowhere on earth have I felt more comfortable than in the almost exclusively Jewish environment of summer camp. Anyone I see during the day I can discuss a Jewish issue with, I can make a Jewish joke or speak a Yiddish phrase and everyone around me will understand it, and I can live in an environment where I am not apprehensive about my Judaism, where the fear of anti-Semitism is not an issue.

Going to a Jewish summer camp. This sleep-away camp was where I learned services and prayer, and the meaning of Shabbat. That is where I became a part of the Jewish community, and identified myself as a Jew. I was 11 years old my first summer there.

Another student specifically talked about Camp Ramah:

I think that Camp Ramah helped me shape my Jewish identity more. Being involved in a two-month Judaism experience immersed with Judaism really placed me in a constantly Jewish environment. It taught me to enjoy the best parts of Judaism, and see how special it is to have a spiritual aspect to life.

Summer camp is perceived as a socializing agent by the students themselves. In the words of one student:

I realized I was not alone in the way I felt about many Jewish issues, and having that peer reassurance made me feel proud to be part of the wonderful whole of Judaism. The process of camp shaping my identity was long and gradual, but the Jewish Summer camp has been the strongest socialization agent in shaping it.

Spending the summer with Jewish peers during adolescence in high school and later in college helps build Jewish friendships and networks. As expressed by several students:

I met a lot of people I still hang out with or that I'll know for life.

I loved it, every year of it. I have made more Jewish friends than any other time in my life. Since I didn't go to school with many other Jews, it was a nice change. As much as they tried to educate us religiously, just being around other Jews was the best part for me.

It was the best experience, and all my best friends came from my camp experiences.

The Shabbat experience at summer camp is mentioned again and again:

I always loved camp. It was always something to look forward to. I liked how everyone kept Shabbat no matter what their background was. There was something so special about it when everyone did it.

For some students Jewish summer camps provide non-religious memories:

The best thing that came out of Camp Ramah was learning Jewish songs and cultural stuff. It was enjoyable and educational, and I know it made my parents happy that my brother and I learned some Hebrew there.

I learned a lot from Camp Ramah. When I was younger I also went to Girl Scout camp or tennis camp and I definitely liked Jewish camp the best. Judaism was involved in everything – even things that weren't "Jewish." And they showed us that being Jewish and doing Jewish things can be cool.

Some college students reflect on working as counselors at Jewish summer camps:

I worked at a summer camp that was Jewish. It had a profound influence on me, because I practically grew up there. My experience could best be described as a coming of age event.

Truthfully, it was a great experience, but I did it because I love to work with kids . . . it didn't have some spiritual, profound effect on me, because I worked with the 5 and 6 year olds, and although we did some Jewish stuff, most of it was just fun games and activities

Nevertheless, the experiences were not always completely positive:

I loved working there my first summer. My campers were great and I worked with great staff and I had great friends. I was used to the religious aspects of it because of my USY experiences. It definitely made me want to learn more and be more spiritual. My second summer wasn't as great: campers, staff, programming, etc. I felt like everything was a struggle and saw myself not being the kind of counselor that I wanted to be. I learned a lot of responsibility and I did learn something about myself Jewishly, but I started to realize that I wished every day was a day off.

The Analytical Model

The 933 respondents who comprise the *Eight Up* cohort were divided up into sub-groups according to their Jewish camping experiences in high school and during college. During youth and adolescence, members of the cohort experienced camps primarily as campers. Later, some college students worked in summer camps as staff counselors. Overall, about one-fourth of this cohort of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class of 5755 continued their involvement in Jewish summer camps and became counselors. They worked during college in a Y or JCC camp, privately-run camp, Ramah, B'nai Brith, Young Judaea or Habonim.

Table 1 presents the analytical model designed here to explore the various Jewish summer experiences of our respondents and their correlations with a set of thematically Jewish markers.

The purpose of this model is to evaluate the cumulative effect of the Jewish summer experience of our respondents, namely the importance of additional years spent after age 17 as counselors, not just campers. We wish to measure differences between campers and counselors. In addition, we compare attitudes and behaviors of Ramah-trained counselors to those who were trained in other Jewish summer camps.

Table 1
**Jewish Camping Experience of the *Eight Up* Cohort
in High School and College**

<u>Jewish Camping Experience</u>	<u>Number of cases</u>	<u>%</u>
Ramah-Trained Counselors in College	58	6%
Ramah Campers Only	80	9%
Other Camps' Counselors in College	172	18%
Other Camps' Campers Only	367	39%
<u>None of the Above</u>	<u>256</u>	<u>27%</u>
Total Number of Students	933	100%

Overall, nearly three out of four of our respondents have had the experience of Jewish summer camping. Yet, a considerable part of this cohort (27%) continued to shun Jewish summer camps and so were never campers or counselors.

We divide up the camp counselors between those who were previously campers at Ramah, and those who were campers at other camps. Those who were campers at Ramah we call “Ramah-trained counselors.” The majority of these who went on to become counselors were counselors at Ramah camps. Others were counselors at Y or JCC summer camps. A few worked at other Jewish summer camps.¹

One of the most interesting research questions is: Are counselors similar in their Jewish commitments, regardless of whether they were trained at Ramah or at other Jewish camps? This analytical model allows us to test this question. It allows us to test if the five categories in Table 1 form a linear pattern in the order listed. Alternatively, if the answer to the above research question is positive, “other camps’ counselors” might be placed ahead of “Ramah campers only.”

As we will show in a series of analyses of Jewish attitudes and behaviors, the patterns are not universal. For some Jewish markers, counselors score similarly regardless of whether they were campers at Ramah or at other Jewish summer camps. For other Jewish markers, Ramah campers and counselors exhibit a distinct pattern of behaviors and opinions.

Nevertheless, as we will show, Ramah-trained counselors represent the elite group from a Jewish identity perspective. For most Jewish markers they are the leaders of the *Eight Up* cohort, scoring far higher than any other group.

Background Variables

A. Jewish Education Prior to College

One might hypothesize that most Ramah-trained counselors studied in Jewish day schools. However, a close look at the background data does not support that hypothesis. The majority of Ramah-trained counselors studied at Hebrew high schools and one-fifth of them went to Jewish day schools. True, the latter is higher than the overall proportion of 5% Jewish day school students among the *Eight Up* cohort. Still, they are a minority.

About half of Ramah campers (who did not become counselors) studied at Hebrew high schools and about 10% of them in Jewish day schools.

A substantial proportion (42%) of other camps’ counselors also studied in Hebrew high schools, yet only a fraction of them (4%) went to Jewish day schools.

¹In general, we realize that this is a small sub-sample of both Ramah campers and Ramah-trained counselors. Although they represent thousands of young people, samples are usually only a small fraction of their studied population. For example, to explore voting patterns of about 180 million adult Americans, a sample of less than 1,000 adults is drawn. The findings that will be reported here will be only those that are statistically significant, taking into account small cell sizes.

College students who had no Jewish camping experiences were also the most likely (40%) to have no educational Jewish experiences during their high school years. In contrast, only one Ramah-trained counselor had no Jewish education since Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

B. Jewish Studies in College

Ramah-trained counselors are twice as likely to take Jewish studies courses in college as students with no Jewish camping experiences. Moreover, they are almost twice as likely as Ramah campers to take Jewish studies courses. Thus, they continue their Jewish learning in college. In all, 37% of the *Eight Up* cohort have taken Jewish studies courses in college. Most of these college students do not major in Jewish studies but rather take it as another subject to study.

Table 2
In college, do you take any Jewish studies courses?

<u>Jewish Camping Experience</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Ramah-Trained Counselors in College	63%
Ramah Campers Only	33%
Other Camps' Counselors in College	45%
Other Camps' Campers Only	33%
<u>None of the Above</u>	<u>31%</u>

Those students who took Jewish studies courses in college were further asked if they have taken a Hebrew language course. Overall, 39% of the students who took Jewish studies courses have taken a Hebrew language course.

Table 3
In college, have you taken a Hebrew language course?*

<u>Jewish Camping Experience</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Ramah-Trained Counselors in College	54%
Ramah Campers Only	54%
Other Camps' Counselors in College	51%
Other Camps' Campers Only	36%
<u>None of the Above</u>	<u>22%</u>

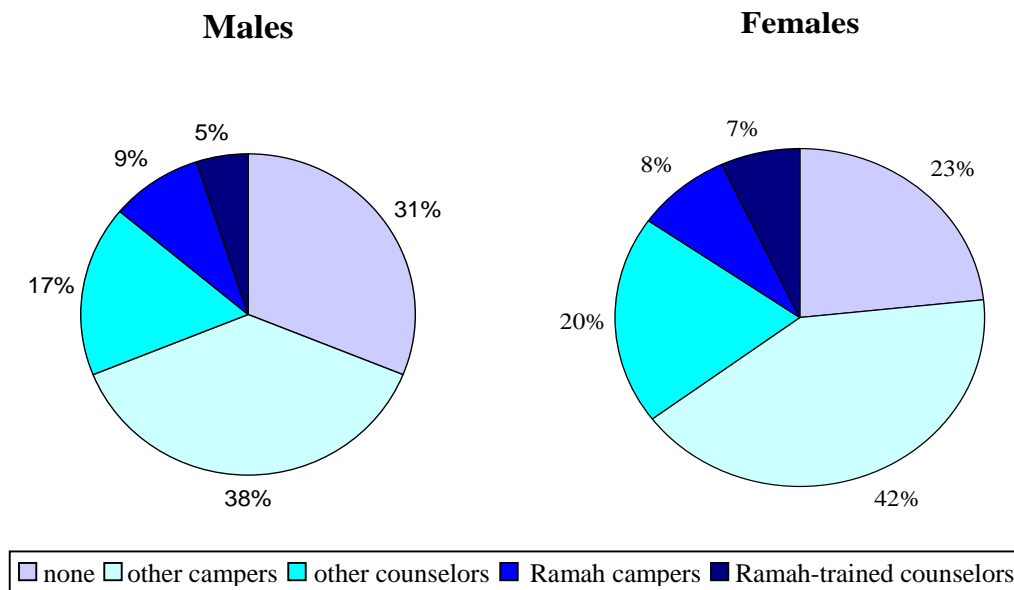
* Among students who took Jewish studies courses in college.

As shown in Table 3, Ramah campers and Ramah-trained counselors as well as other camps' counselors were more likely than average to take Hebrew language courses in college.

C. Gender

In our sample there are 498 male students and 435 females. The major difference between them is that male students are less likely to have Jewish camping experiences. Thus we find more males in the “none” category.

Chart 1
Jewish Summer Camping Experiences by Gender

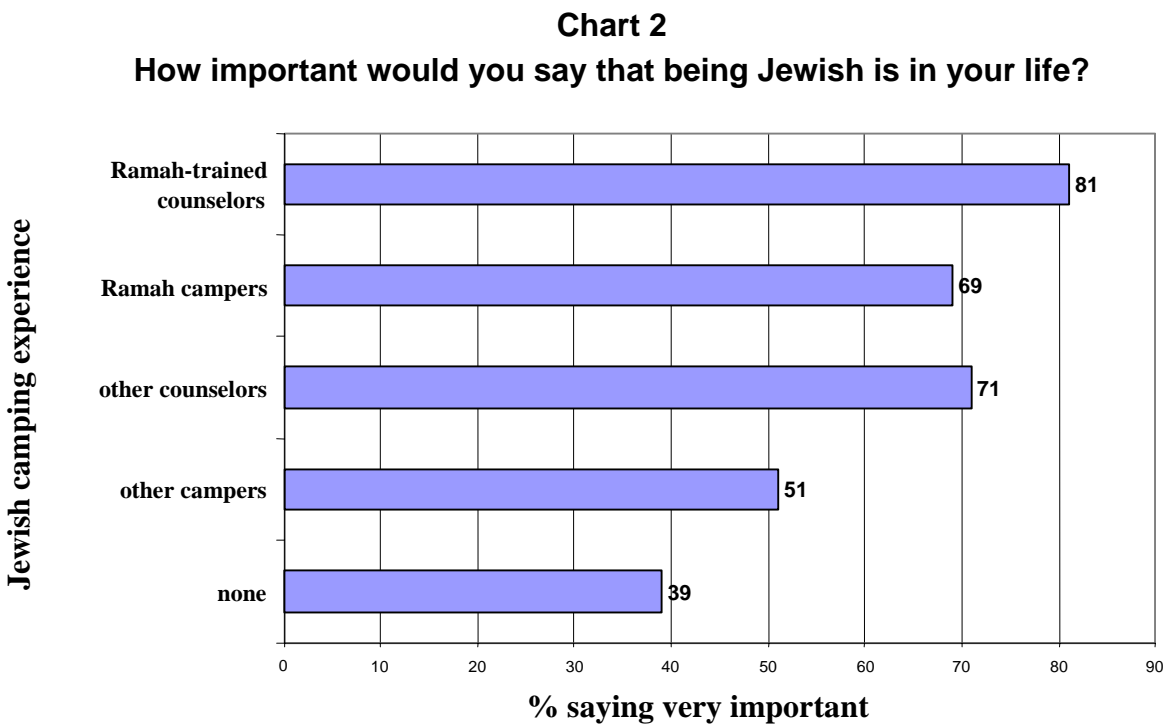


Yet again, egalitarian opportunities and experiences define the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class of 5755. Camping, as we noted before in the *Four Up* Study, is a co-educational activity: Chart 1 shows that 77% of females and 69% of males attended Jewish summer camps at some time. Female college students are more likely to continue their camping involvement as counselors and surpass male students.

Themes

A. Development of Jewish Pride and Peoplehood

One of the most important markers of strong Jewish identity is Jewish pride. We asked our respondents: *How important would you say that being Jewish is in your life?*



Overall, 55% of college students say that being Jewish is very important in their lives. Interestingly, there are hardly any differences between Ramah campers and counselors who were trained in other Jewish summer camps. About 70% of them say that being Jewish is “very important” in their lives. Counselors, however, who were trained in Ramah camps exhibit even higher commitment whereby 81% say that being Jewish is “very important” to them.

Students who had no Jewish summer camping experience express a very different attitude. Only 39% of them say that being Jewish is “very important” in their lives.

Ramah-trained counselors as well as other camps’ counselors are the most likely to express strong feelings and pride in being Jewish. To illustrate, 81% of Ramah-trained counselors, 77% of other camps’ counselors, 70% of Ramah campers, 63% of other camps’ campers, and 60% of those with no Jewish summer camping agree strongly with the statement: “I am proud to be a Jew.”

Peoplehood

How connected are students of the *Eight Up* cohort to other Jews? Do they feel a responsibility to help other Jews around the world? The concept of *Ezrat Achim* (helping one's brothers) is a cherished Jewish value. It is part of the curriculum in Jewish education in general, and in Jewish summer camping in particular. Do they regard the Jewish community as an extended family?

Chart 3
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

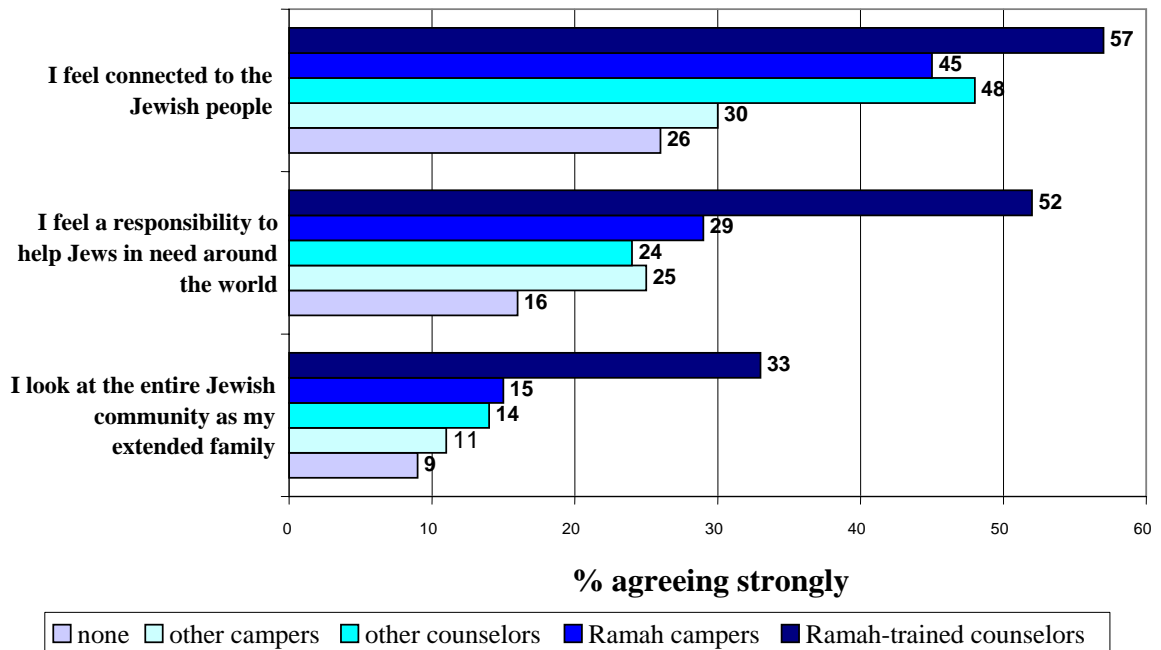


Chart 3 shows that Ramah-trained counselors are the most likely to agree strongly that they feel connected to the Jewish people, feel a responsibility to help Jews in need around the world, and look at the entire Jewish community as their extended family. The difference in responses is the smallest on the first question, "I feel connected to the Jewish people." That may be because the statement is relatively easy to support, even for less-connected Jews. Ramah-trained counselors exhibit a bigger difference from others on the other two questions, which are more demanding. Roughly twice as many Ramah-trained counselors as others agree strongly that they feel a responsibility to help Jews in need around the world, and look at the entire Jewish community as their extended family.

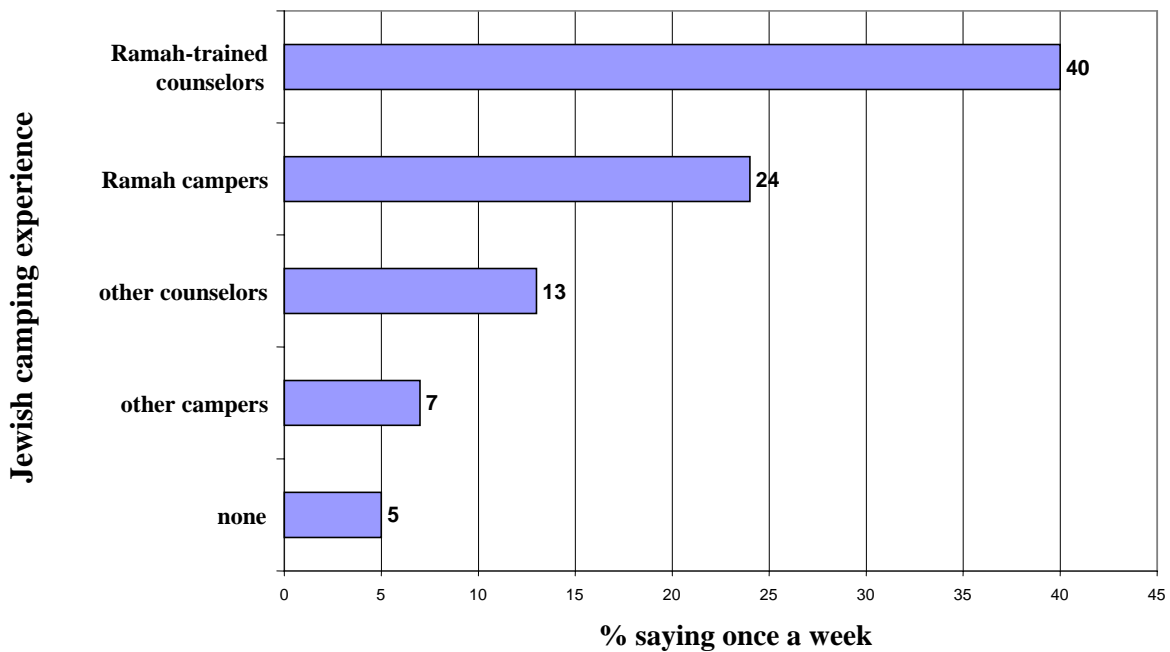
B. Practice of Judaism

Conservative Judaism underscores the importance of religious Jewish practices. Its teaching and requirements of Bar/Bat Mitzvah students, for example, involve observing the *mitzvot*, in general, and participation in synagogue services, in particular.

The theme of practice of Judaism is of interest to rabbis, Jewish educators and lay leaders as they assess the potential clientele of religious institutions and plan programs specially geared for young people.

1. Synagogue Attendance

Chart 4
How often do you go to a synagogue?



As we can see in Chart 4, only a small minority of college students attend synagogue services frequently. Overall only 11% of college students attend synagogue once a week.

As they lead independent lives away from their parents, they distance themselves not only geographically, but also away from the intense synagogue attendance required during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah training.

Ramah campers and even more so Ramah-trained counselors behave differently. They are by far more likely to be regular synagogue attendees. In fact, 40% of Ramah-trained counselors go to synagogue once a week during college. If we add those who attend once a month, we get 64% of Ramah-trained counselors. This is a high figure. In the 1995

Membership Survey only 31% of Conservative members under 35 years old attended synagogue services at least once a month (Wertheimer, 1996).

The linear pattern shown in Chart 4 supports the analytical model defined here, whereby Ramah students do extremely well on this Jewish involvement. Frequent synagogue attendance might be further associated with other involvements in the Jewish community and its leaders on campus and later off campus. Frequent synagogue attendance might be further linked to enhanced Jewish friendships among college students.

These are critical hypotheses that will be later explored in this report using multivariate analysis.

Multivariate Model

Does the camping experience have a lasting impact on Jewish involvement that is separate from parental upbringing? The logistic regression model presented here helps us better understand the net effect of Jewish summer camping. We chose to look at one Jewish practice, found to be distinct for Ramah campers and counselors, namely frequent synagogue attendance. The research question we are exploring is the interplay between two influences: summer camping and parental upbringing.

If we find an independent effect of Jewish summer camping, then logically there is a policy imperative that there ought to be further investment in Jewish summer camps and encouragement of more young college students to take summer positions as counselors. These counselors become the role models for younger persons who are their campers, who will, hopefully, follow in their footsteps.

Previously in the *Four Up* study we found a strong correlation between parents' synagogue attendance and their high school children's synagogue attendance. That finding was not surprising, given that the children still lived at home, and in many cases all family members go together to services. Moreover, we found that Jewish summer camping was an important predictor of teenagers' synagogue attendance even when the family's influence is controlled. Ramah campers scored above other Jewish campers in frequent synagogue attendance (Keysar and Kosmin, 2001).

In college, students lead independent lives. They usually join their peers, rather than their families, to go to synagogue services. They are less pressured by their parents to go weekly to Shabbat services. Furthermore, they have to make their own choice rather than being told to go to services. Still, the influence of family upbringing cannot be ruled out. Past behavior typically predicts subsequent behavior. Students who were used to going to synagogue every week or every month would be more likely to continue to do it. But to what extent?

Table 4
Logistic Regression of Frequent Synagogue Attendance in College

Variable/Category	Reference Category	B	Odds Ratio
1. Synagogue Attendance in 1999			
Once a week (n=161)	Never (n=34)	3.614*	37.1
Once a month (n=239)		2.745*	15.6
6+ times a year (n=287)		1.184	3.3
Only on High Holidays (n=209)		0.189	1.2
2. Jewish Camping Experience			
Ramah-trained counselors (n=58)	None (n=256)	1.045*	2.8
Ramah campers (n=79)		0.516	1.7
Other camps' counselors (n=172)		0.231	1.3
Other camps' campers (n=365)		0.073	1.1
Constant		-1.410*	

*p<.01

Multiple R Squared=.384

In the logistic regression, shown in Table 4, we define the dependent variable as synagogue attendance during college. We assign the value 1 to frequent attenders, (i.e. those attending synagogue weekly or monthly), and the value 0 to those attending less frequently, (i.e., attending more than six times a year, on the High Holidays, or never). The two explanatory independent variables are synagogue attendance during high school, and summer camping experience.

Both independent variables are statistically significant at the .05 level.² The effect of each variable is shown by the odds ratios. For each category we estimate the likelihood of frequent synagogue attendance as compared to a reference group. For synagogue attendance in 1999 the reference group is students who never attended synagogue. For Jewish summer camping experience the reference group is students who never attended Jewish summer camp.

² The logistic regression model shows the overall significance of an explanatory variable as well as its sub-groupings. Thus we find for each variable for some categories the relationships are not statistically significant.

Clearly past frequent attendance is associated with significantly higher frequent synagogue attendance during college. The odds ratios are extremely high for those who used to go to services once a week or once a month compared to those who never went to synagogue during high school.

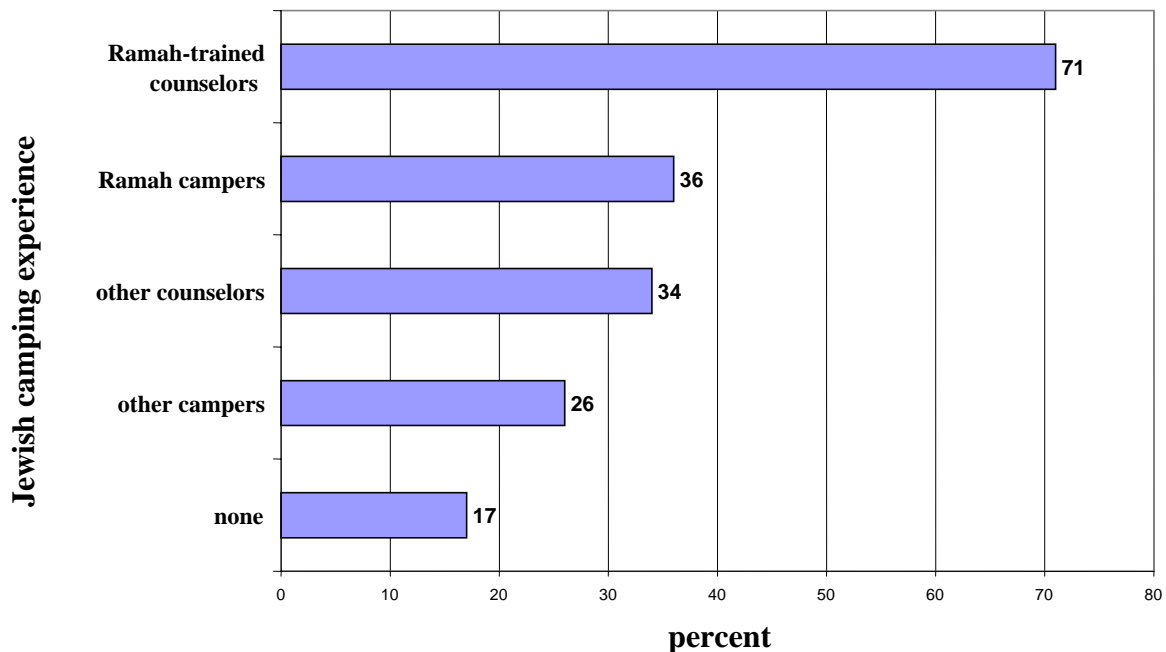
Jewish camping experience has an influence on frequent synagogue attendance even when past synagogue attendance is controlled. Ramah-trained counselors exhibit statistically significant higher synagogue attendance (almost three times as likely) compared to students who never attended Jewish summer camps. The differences between Ramah campers and those who never attended Jewish summer camps are not statistically significant.

Interestingly, Jewish educational experiences before college were tested in this model and were found to have no statistically significant net effect on frequent synagogue attendance during college after controlling for the other two mentioned factors.

Overall, the model explains 38% of the variance in synagogue attendance of this cohort of college students. This is an unusually high score for a social behavior.

2. Indicator of Kashrut Observance Outside Home

Chart 5
Do not eat meat and dairy foods together when go out



The choice not to eat meat and dairy together when going out is an indicator of Kashrut observance outside the home. Overall, 29% of college students do not eat meat and dairy when they go out. While there are no differences between Ramah campers and counselors of other Jewish summer camps, Ramah-trained counselors again stand out. Whether they follow the dietary teaching they learned at Ramah, or they follow the footsteps of their parents, is hard to know. Yet, clearly, the level of observance found here, though it is a limited indicator, is very high, with 71% not eating meat and dairy together outside the home. By way of contrast, the *Four Up* Study showed that a smaller 58% of high school students who attended Jewish day schools did not mix meat and dairy together outside the home (Kosmin and Keysar, 2000).

3. Shabbat Observance

Shabbat observance is one of the most important features of Jewish summer camps. Campers and counselors mention the environment on Shabbat as part of their Jewish memories. They refer to their experiences in sleep-away camps.

As an indicator of Shabbat observance, we asked the students if they celebrate Shabbat in any way.

Table 5
How often do you do something special on Friday night or Saturday because it is the Jewish Sabbath?

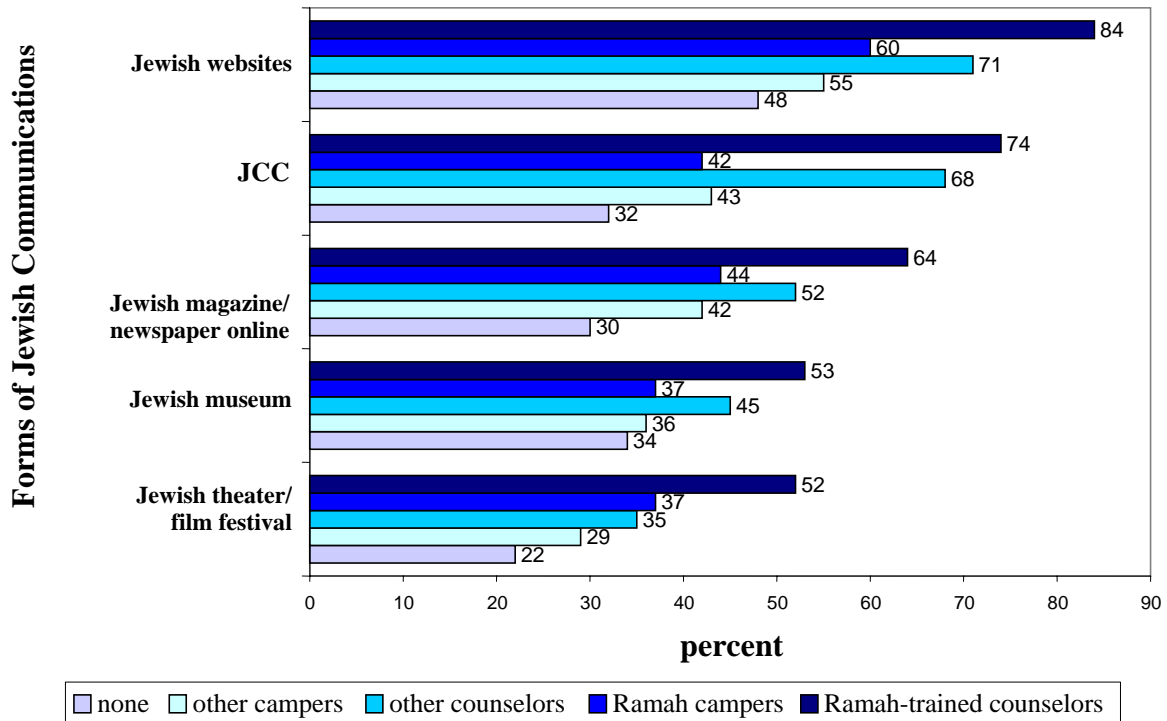
<u>Jewish Camping Experience</u>	<u>Always</u>	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
Ramah-Trained Counselors in College	38%	22%	40%	--
Ramah Campers Only	19%	20%	46%	15%
Other Camps' Counselors in College	16%	16%	56%	12%
Other Camps' Campers Only	9%	12%	49%	29%
None of the Above	5%	11%	48%	35%

Clearly, most Ramah-trained counselors in college “always” or “usually” do something special on Friday night or Saturday to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath. Even when they are away from home, leading independent lives, most celebrate Shabbat in one form or another. None of these students say that they “never” celebrate Shabbat, compared with 35% of the students with no Jewish camping experience. In contrast, most of other camps’ counselors “sometimes” celebrate Shabbat in college. Celebrating Shabbat was not preserved by Ramah campers who did not become counselors during college either.

4. Jewish Communications

In a modern society, attachments to Judaism take many forms. There is religious attachment, through membership in a synagogue and attendance at religious services. There can also be secular attachment, such as belonging to a Jewish Community Center (JCC) or visiting a Jewish museum, film or music events. For a technologically-advanced group such as college students, Jewish websites open a wide world of opportunities to be in touch with one's Jewishness. More and more institutions, religious and secular, create their own websites to convey a message, advertise and even to teach. College students who spend much of their time searching online are also visiting Jewish websites intensively as we see in Chart 6.

Chart 6
In the past 12 months have you visited any of the following?



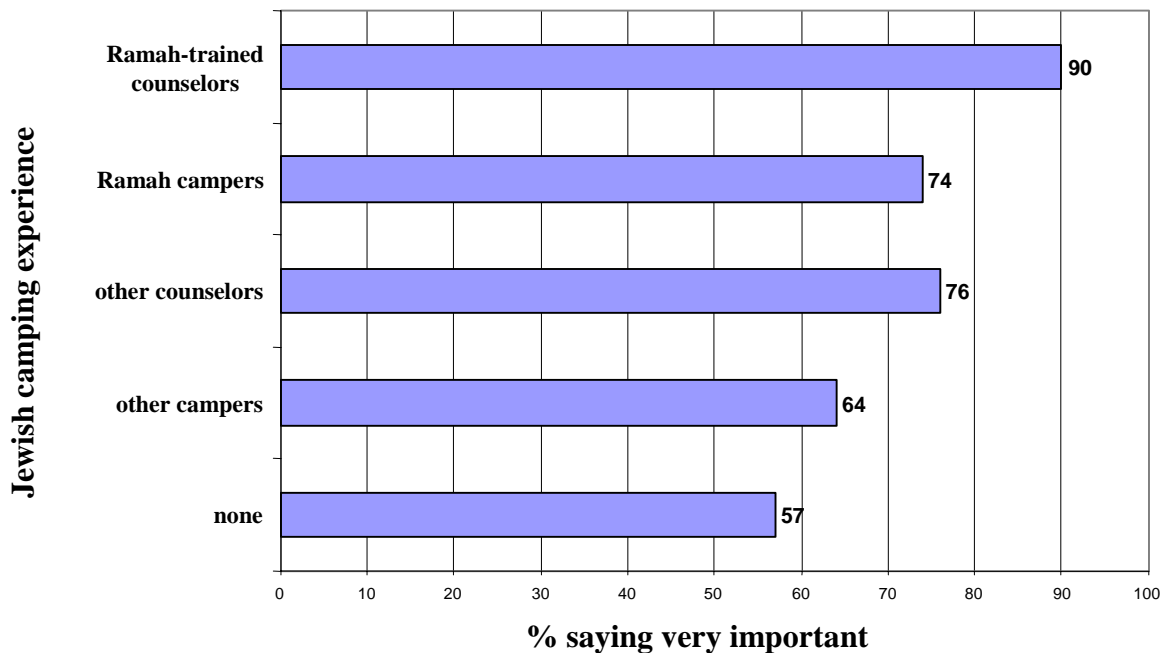
Ramah-trained counselors score high on all the Jewish communications items. About half of them visited a Jewish theater, film, or music festival, and about half visited a Jewish museum. About two-thirds read Jewish periodicals, magazine or newspapers online.

More (74%) visited a JCC in the past 12 months. But the most popular Jewish communication is Jewish websites, visited by 84% of Ramah-trained counselors.

C. Love of Israel and Zionism

The strong and committed attachment to Israel is one of the unique, unfolding patterns of the *Eight Up* cohort (Keysar and Kosmin, 1999 and 2004 forthcoming). In fact, the attachment to Israel intensified during the college years despite incidences of anti-Zionism the students have been exposed to on campus since the second Intifada started in 2000.

Chart 7
How important is Israel to you?



Overall, 67% of college students say that Israel is very important to them. Ramah campers and counselors who were campers at other Jewish camps surpass that level. As might have been expected, Ramah-trained counselors lead, with 90% saying that Israel is very important to them.

This high and almost universal expression of strong attachment to the Jewish homeland goes hand in hand with the Zionistic approach of Ramah. The curriculum at Ramah camps – with celebrations of Israel’s achievements, learning about Israel’s geography and its people, learning and speaking some Hebrew, singing Israeli songs and getting to know many counselors from Israel – enhances the ties of its campers and counselors.

Ramah-trained counselors were the most likely to visit Israel during college – 31%, compared with 20% of Ramah campers and 22% of other camps’ counselors.

***Aliya*—living permanently in Israel**

Ultimately, realizing the Zionist dream entails living permanently in Israel. Only a small minority – 16% – of the *Eight Up* cohort see themselves living permanently in Israel. In reality, of course, fewer students than that will realize their dreams and actually live in Israel permanently.

Table 6
Do you ever see yourself going to Israel on *Aliya*?

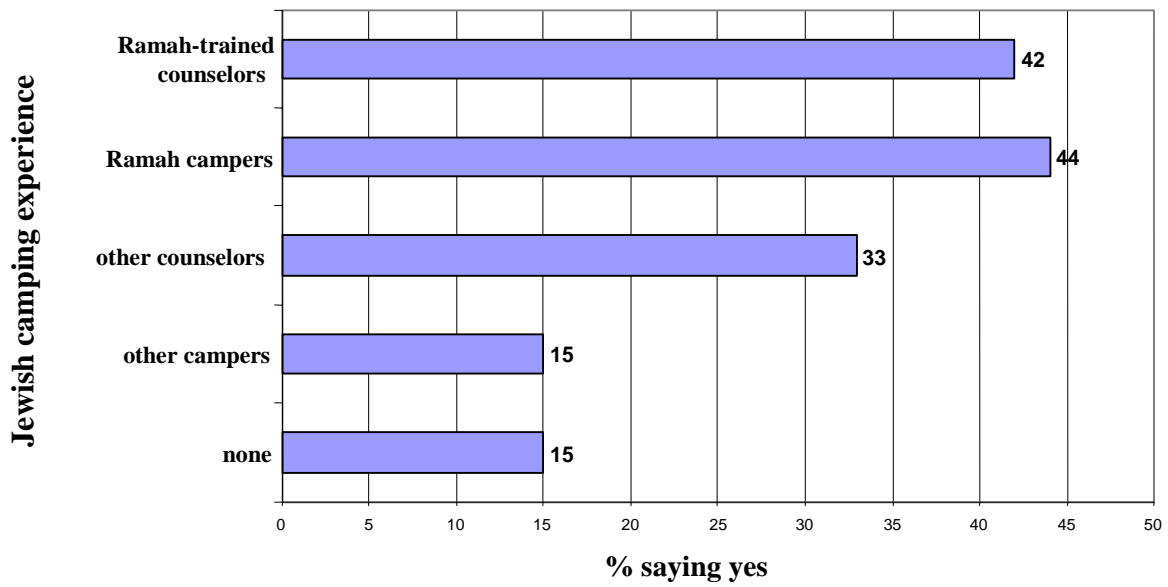
<u>Jewish camping experience</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe/Not sure</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ramah-Trained Counselors in College	26%	59%	15%	100%
Ramah Campers Only	15%	75%	10%	100%
Other Camps’ Counselors in College	21%	67%	12%	100%
Other Camps’ Campers Only	13%	79%	8%	100%
<u>None of the Above</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>80%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>100%</u>

The patterns presented in Table 6 do not follow a linear pattern. In fact, Ramah campers and those who had no Jewish camping experiences express the same low level of interest in making *Aliya*. Although Ramah-trained counselors show the highest interest, still, only about one-quarter of them are interested in living permanently in Israel, slightly higher than counselors of other camps.

Thus, the strong attachment to Israel does not translate to the commitment of living in Israel. It does, however, translate into students’ participation on campus on behalf of Israel.

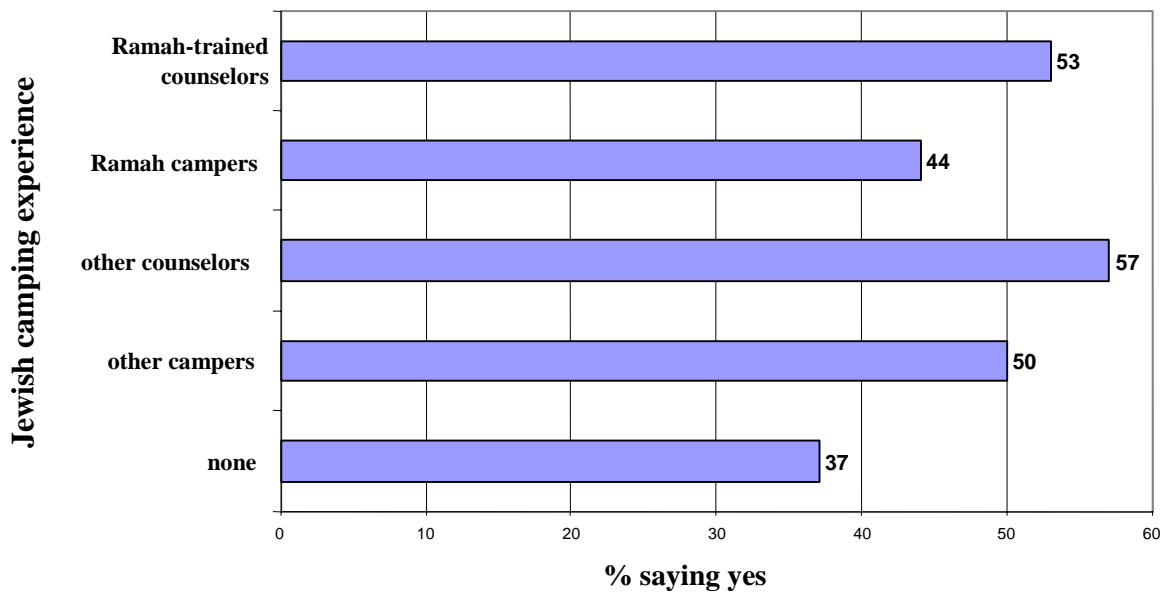
As we see in Charts 8a and 8b, some college students participate on campus in Israel advocacy. The leaders in that respect are those who were Ramah campers, including ones who became counselors. Interestingly, many students, primarily counselors of any Jewish camps, who are not engaged in Israel advocacy, say that they would be willing to participate in such activities, if approached by a Jewish or Zionist organization.

Chart 8a
Are you engaged in or participating in Israel advocacy on campus?



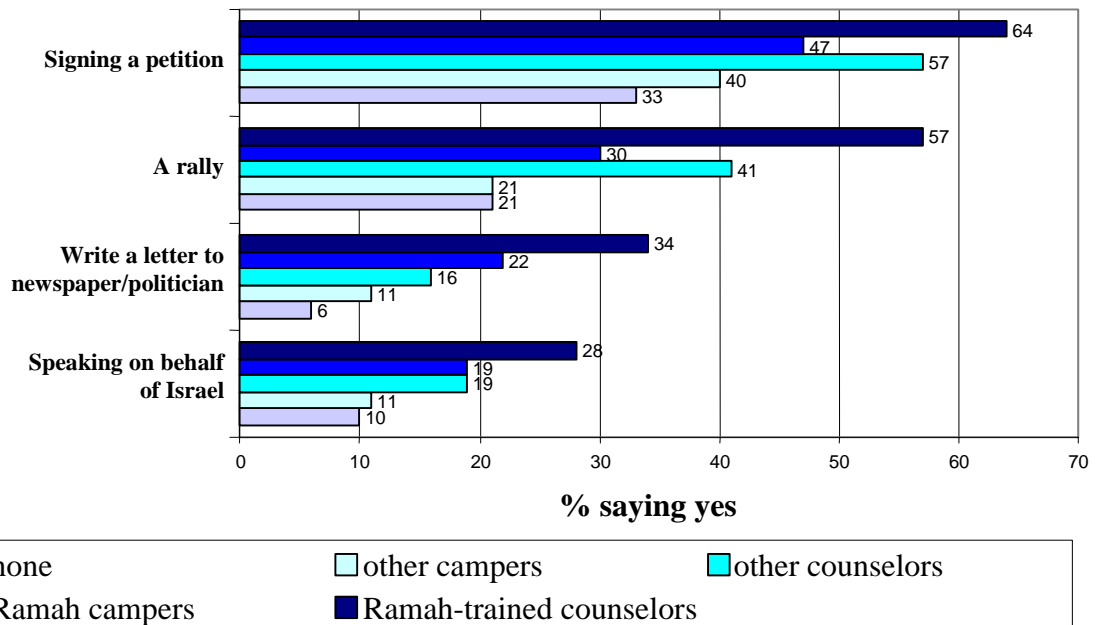
For those who said “no”:

Chart 8b
Would you be willing to participate if approached by a Jewish or Zionist organization?



The type of pro-Israel activities on campus is illustrated in Chart 9. Signing a petition is most popular, primarily for counselors at Jewish summer camps. Speaking on behalf of Israel or writing a letter to a newspaper or politician supporting Israel are more demanding and are not appropriate for everyone. Even the most engaged students, Ramah-trained counselors, are not as engaged in speaking on behalf of Israel as they are likely to sign a petition or participate in a pro-Israel rally on campus.

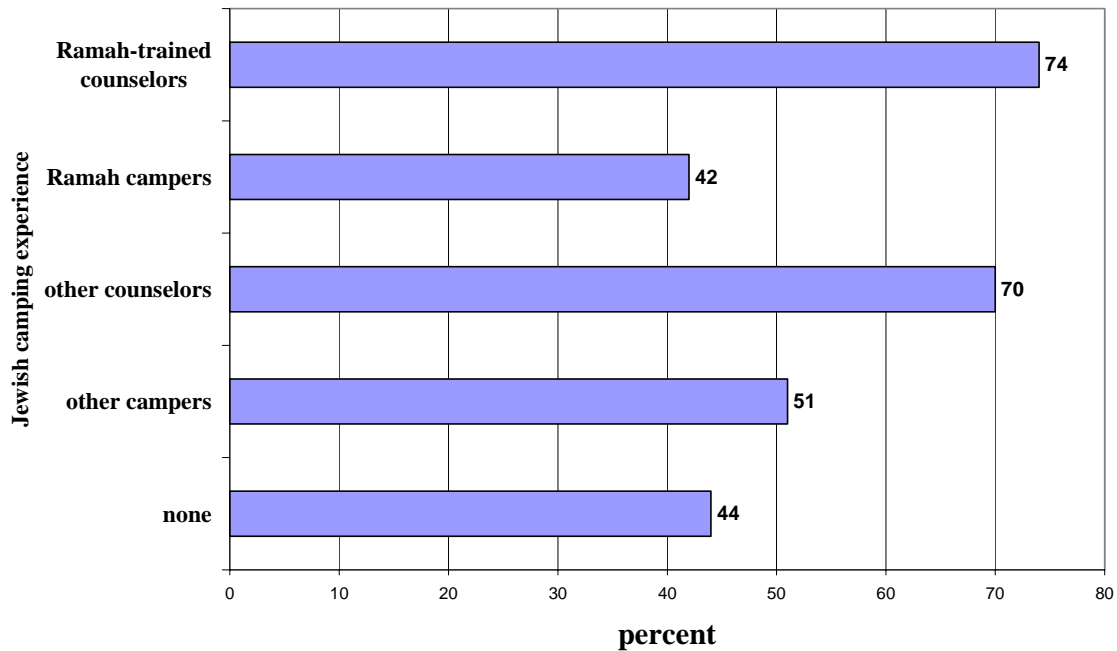
Chart 9
Have you participated in any of the following pro-Israel activities on campus?



D. Fostering Jewish Friendships, Marriage and Dating

Informal Jewish educational activities, such as summer camps and youth groups, are directly linked to fostering Jewish friendships. Some of these friendships last for many years.

Chart 10
Most or half of friends are Jewish



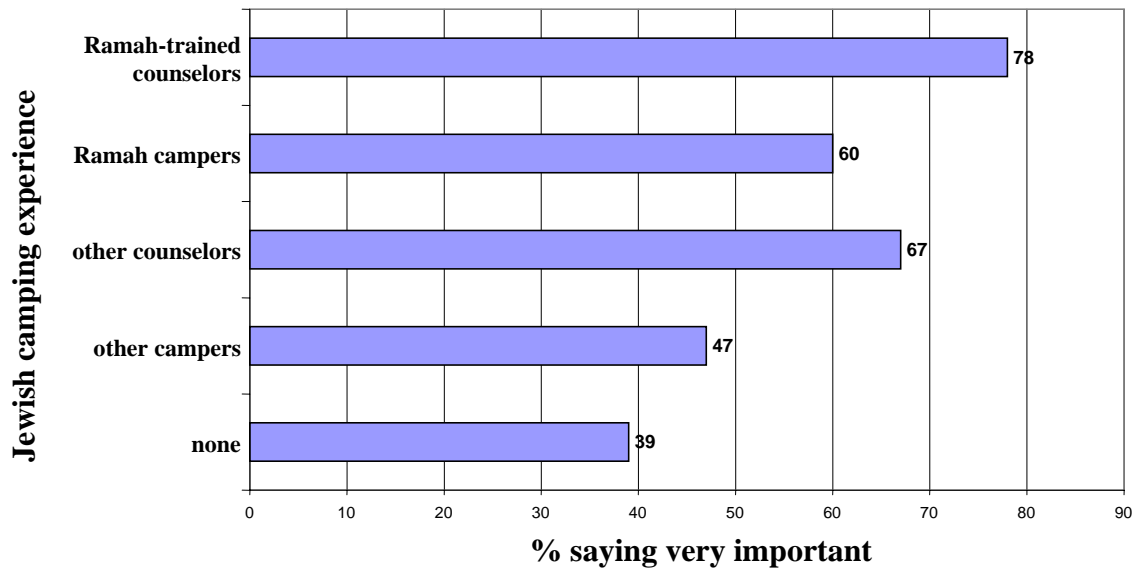
Overall, 53% of college students say that most or half of their friends are Jewish. Counselors at Jewish summer camps have notably higher proportions of Jewish friends—70% or higher. They may have maintained friendships that were established with other Jewish colleagues while working as counselors.

Indeed, 76% of students from the *Eight Up* cohort who worked as counselors at Jewish summer camps indicated that they communicate with their fellow counselors from Jewish summer camp at least several times a year.

This strong Jewish bonding may have further consequences. The young men and women build friendships during the college years that later develop into serious relationships. Dating partners are in most cases part of their social networks.

As we will see from Chart 11 and Chart 12, attitudes toward marrying other Jews and actually dating Jews do not go together for the *Eight Up* cohort. As Chart 11 shows, for most of them it is “very important” to marry somebody Jewish. Yet only a small fraction of these college students date only Jews (Chart 12).

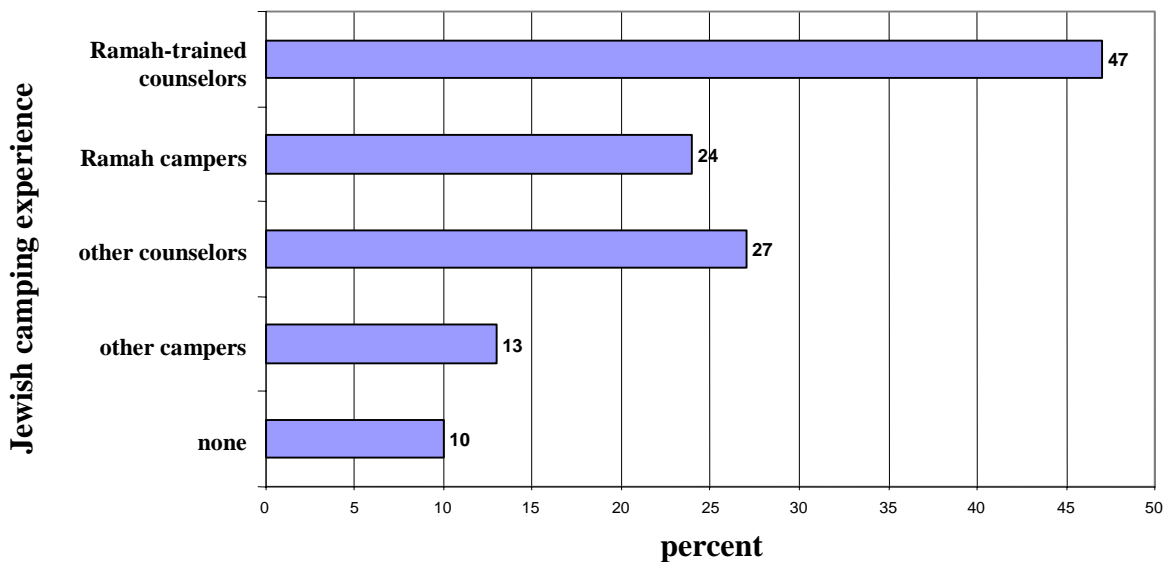
Chart 11
How important is it/was it for you to marry somebody Jewish?



A great majority of Ramah-trained counselors believe in the importance of Jewish marriages—more than Ramah campers and other counselors. Students with no Jewish camping experience and campers in other Jewish camps score lower than the overall 52% of college students who say that “it is very important to marry somebody Jewish.”

Dating Patterns

Chart 12
Date only Jews



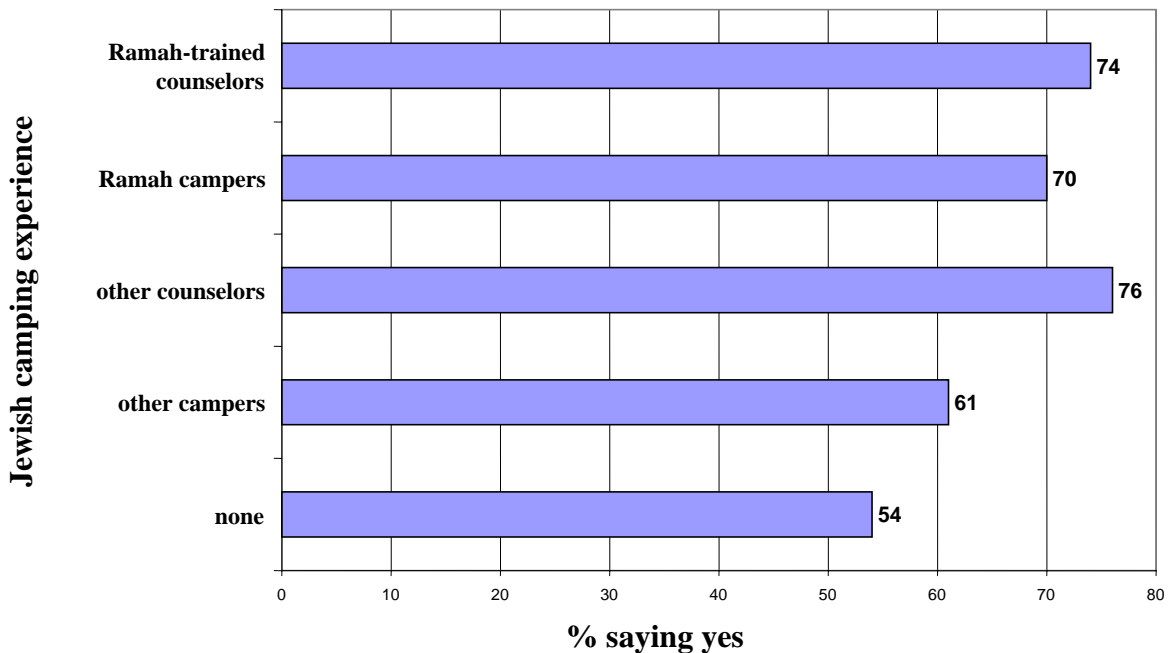
A great concern to the Jewish community is the finding that only a small minority of college students date only Jews. Among the *Eight Up* cohort, 18% say that they date only Jews. The pattern by group resembles the pattern of attitudes toward Jewish marriage, although the levels are different. As shown in Chart 12, 47% of Ramah-trained counselors date only Jews. True, this is lower than the 78% who say that it is “very important” to marry Jews.

This cohort of college students do not look for serious partners while dating. We have already learned from our conversations with them that they are mainly engaged in casual relationships during the college years. In the words of some female students: We are just looking for “Mr. Fun,” not “Mr. Right.” Clearly, they don’t see the possible outcome of these casual dates as subsequent marriages with non-Jews.

Before we turn to the multivariate analysis, we present the fifth theme of creating young leaders. We are looking at the civic involvement of college students on campus both in Jewish and non-Jewish organization. We start with fulfilling an important Jewish mitzvah—voluntarism.

E. Creating Jewish Leaders

Chart 13
Do you volunteer in your community?



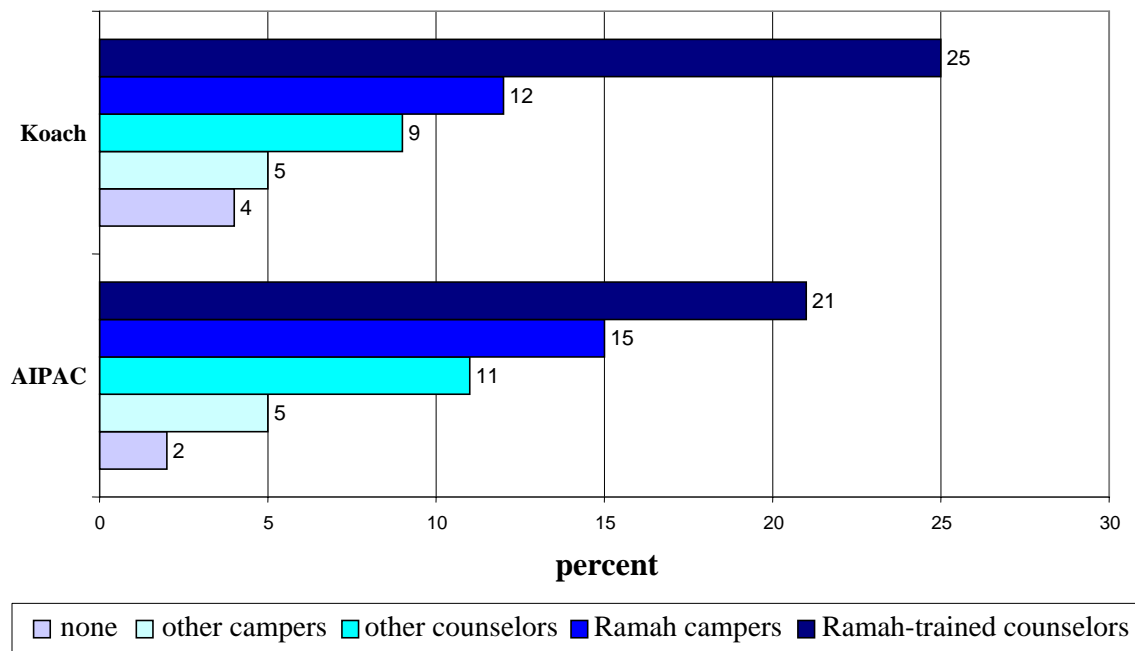
Overall, 64% of college students of the *Eight Up* cohort volunteer in their community. Counselors at Jewish summer camps, both Ramah and others, are even more likely to volunteer – three-quarters of them do so. (See Chart 13.)

Volunteers of the *Eight Up* cohort tend to either volunteer in the general community or in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Only a fraction of these college students volunteer only in the Jewish community. Ramah-trained counselors are the leaders among the volunteers—65% of them volunteer in both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations.

Chart 14 focuses on membership in Jewish organizations and services on campus. We focus in the chart only on leadership organizations: Koach (the college division of United Synagogue Youth) and AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee).^{3 4}

Chart 14

Do you belong or have you belonged to any of these Jewish organizations?



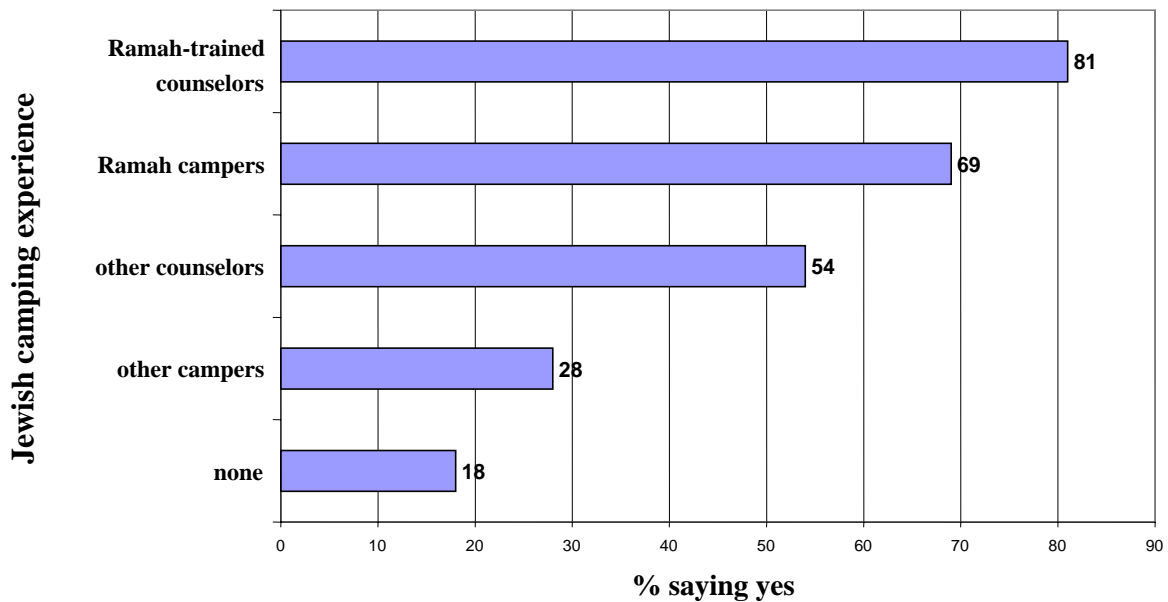
Ramah-trained counselors stand out in their higher involvement on campus in the elite Jewish organizations Koach and AIPAC.

³ The most popular Jewish organization on campus is Hillel (not presented in the chart). More than half (58%) of the students belong to a Hillel. Ramah-trained counselors and other camps’ counselors are most likely to belong to Hillel—73% and 68% respectively.

⁴ A number of other Jewish organizations on campus were looked at, such as Lights in Action, UJA, Keshet, Kiruv, and Hamagshimim. None of them showed significant differences between the various camping experiences.

Overall, 42% of the *Eight Up* cohort served on a board of a campus organization of some kind – Jewish and otherwise – during their college years. When looking at all types of campus organizations, there are no statistical significant differences in the leadership behavior of students with different camping experiences. However, there are substantial differences when it comes to serving on a board of a Jewish organization.

Chart 15
Have you ever been on a board of any Jewish organization on campus?*



* This refers only to students who served on a board of any campus organization (n=363).

As seen in Chart 15, attending any Jewish summer camp is associated with attaining leadership roles in Jewish organizations on campus. Ramah-trained counselors lead the leaders. The clear linear pattern shows Ramah campers in second place and counselors trained in other Jewish camps trailing behind.

Plans for the Future

Two students who were Ramah campers talk about their plans for the future. Both of them want to be involved in the Jewish community through a synagogue:

I want to stay very involved with the Jewish community through a synagogue. I also want to be a social worker and work at Jewish Family Services or something like that.

I want to keep ties to the synagogue where I grew up. Since most of my friends are now Jewish, I am sure that I will continue to have ties with many of them. I want to find a synagogue that I can eventually raise a family in, and I want to continue keeping kosher.

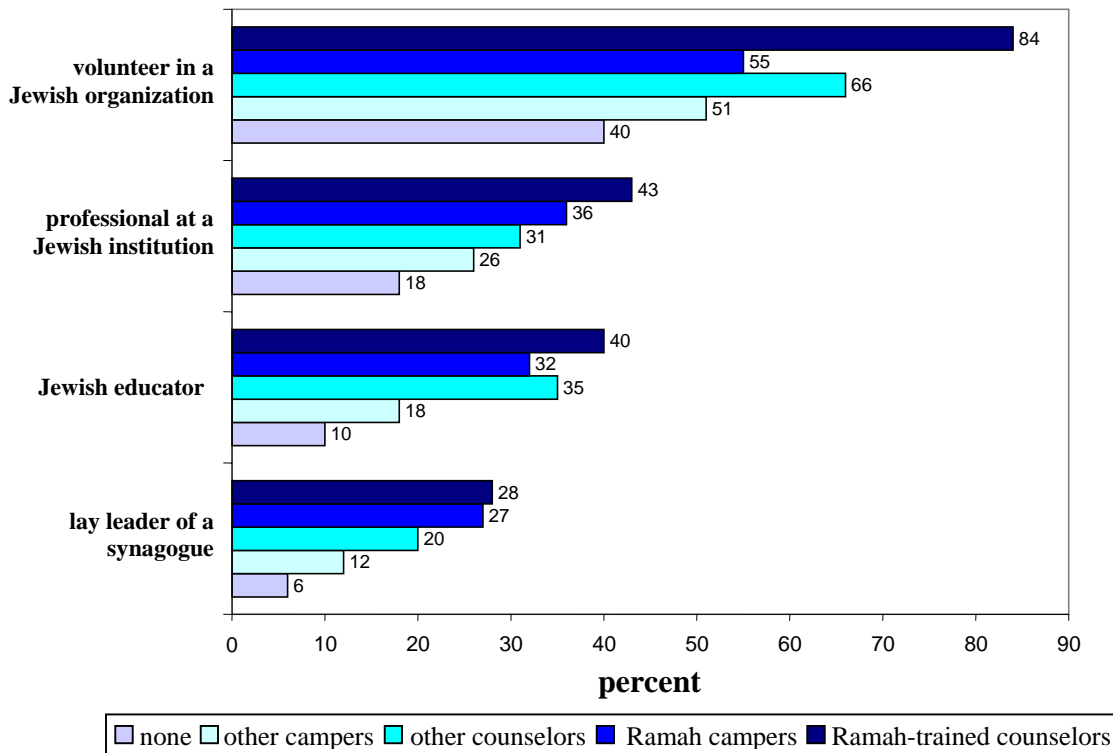
Other summer camp staff also seems to have incorporated the institutional message into their hopes for the future:

I would like to be connected with social action projects, services, adult education opportunities, women’s groups, holidays, and maybe even help out with youth activities.

I would like to be connected to Jews through tzedaka (charity), through synagogue, and through friendship.

Looking ahead toward future involvement in the Jewish community, the most encouraging finding is Ramah-trained counselors’ interest in becoming Jewish educators. While about 22% of the *Eight Up* cohort see themselves becoming a Jewish educator, Ramah campers and Ramah-trained counselors, as well as other counselors, are even more interested. Possibly, their positive experiences at Jewish summer camps and favorite impressions of their educational staff lead them to consider education as a profession. (See Chart 16.)

Chart 16
Do you ever see yourself becoming a . . . ?



The most popular leadership role in the Jewish community for this cohort is a volunteer; the least popular role is a lay leader of a synagogue. In every potential role, Ramah staff lead the field. This generation appears to have already formed its impressions of leaders in Jewish organizations and decided about its preferences for its own future involvement in the Jewish community. The high level of interest in becoming a Jewish professional or educator is particularly striking.

Conclusions

We have demonstrated with an array of statistics, tables and charts that Jewish summer camping is an important experience in the lives of many young people and that it is associated with an increase in Jewish involvement during the college years. College students who participated in Jewish summer camps, either as campers or as counselors at Camp Ramah or any other Jewish summer camp, are by far more engaged Jewishly than those who never attended a Jewish summer camp. These findings with regard to the distinct and high levels of Jewish involvement of camp counselors compared to other Jewish college students ages 18-26 replicate those in the study of Jewish summer camps by Sales and Saxe (2004).

However, we go one step further. We have identified the *crème de la crème* among camp counselors. All the data presented here point to one remarkable group of young Jewish men and women, namely, those who attended Camp Ramah and later became counselors, either at Ramah or another Jewish summer camp. These Ramah-trained counselors lead the way and are far ahead of others in various markers of strong Jewish identity, intense Jewish practice and commitment to Judaism. Ramah-trained counselors are undoubtedly the elite of the elite. What is special about this group? Is it their home background, their Jewish education, or other individual traits? What motivates them to spend their summers working in Jewish camps? Clearly it is not economic reasons.⁵ That they score better than counselors trained in other Jewish camps on every item in this study suggests that there is a successful formula currently operating at Ramah camps.

These questions and findings ought to be of great interest to Jewish educators. Although we have demonstrated a correlation between camping experiences and later Jewish involvement, we do not claim causality. In other words, we have not proven that being a Ramah camper and later being a camp counselor in and of itself necessarily *causes* a person to become more Jewishly involved. However, we did discover hints of such an effect when conducting the multivariate analysis of synagogue attendance. This analysis zeroes in on the effect of Jewish camping experiences by holding constant other likely influences on Jewish involvement, such as the role of parents. It provided an impressive score that points to the influence of summer camp and Ramah in particular in positively affecting participation in synagogue life on campus and back home.

It would be valuable to test the analytical model that was presented in this research on a larger group of college students. Given the small number of Ramah campers and Ramah-trained counselors in our sample, future research ought to look further at a larger group of Ramah campers as well as counselors and explore their Jewish connections during college.

The continual involvement in Jewish education that is demanded by Ramah, when linked with the Jewish camping experience, has a strong positive effect on religious behavior.

⁵ According to Sales and Saxe (2004), counselors' main reasons for working at camps are having fun and working with kids. Spending the summer in a Jewish environment is only secondary.

Both of these commitments are voluntary by the college years. Even clearer is that campers' interest and commitment to Israel far exceeds that of non-campers on campus. The camps have obviously created a strong human and emotional bond to Israel for campers and the longer the Ramah connection the stronger it is.

The retention of staff at camp during the college years may be seen as a critical aspect of identity formation. It creates an alternative membership peer culture to that found on the campus. It provides a second and sometimes primary reference group that offers alternative values and social standards to which they can aspire as Jews. This may be particularly crucial in the matter of dating and attitudes towards in-marriage as the results for Ramah staff indicate.

Finally, the intensity of their Jewish involvement and their commitment to Judaism clearly reveals Ramah staff as the next generation of Jewishly-committed leaders. Once again, to fully comprehend the social processes involved, it is valuable to return to the actual words of a student in order to appreciate what summer camp means for some individuals:

As I mentioned before, my Jewish summer camp experience probably had the greatest influence on me than any other single experience. Camp Ramah simply incorporates ALL aspects of Judaism; social values, religious values, spirituality, charity, education Thus, one becomes part of a very complete setting of Judaism, and in this way, one can find what unifies Judaism in all these categories. As a camper, I also LOVED being able to be free. Going to summer camp allowed me to be myself and to take care of myself, important to any child. As a counselor, I loved being able to be a guide and role model for my campers, and to learn about their lives. I really loved my experience, and it is difficult letting it go now.

Appendix – Methodology

The research design for the College Years Project 2003, which forms the third phase of the Longitudinal Study of Young Conservative Jews, integrates qualitative data collection (in-depth focus group sessions) with quantitative data (a telephone survey). This innovative and integrated design, using both qualitative and quantitative components, was praised and highly recommended by the President of the American Association for Public Opinion Research at its 2003 annual meeting. In his presidential address to hundreds of survey methodologists, Dr. Mark Schulman described this longitudinal study in detail and cited it as an example of how social science research ought to be carried out in the 21st century.

A. Quantitative Data Collection

1. Pre-Test

Nineteen students from List College of The Jewish Theological Seminary participated in the pre-test. It began on October 31, 2002 and finished on November 19, 2002. The interviews were very useful in testing and refining our questionnaire. The second version was tested in the last nine interviews. It took 21 minutes to complete on average and it was smoother and better understood.

List College students were recruited through the office of the school's dean, Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz. We selected both male and female students at different stages of their college careers. Each student received \$50 for his/her participation.

2. Mailings

Students were sent a letter from the Ratner Center at JTS, signed by Professor Jack Wertheimer.

The mailings started on December 12 to all respondents in the 1999 High School Survey as well as a few students of the 1995 Bar/Bat Mitzvah Survey who were not interviewed in 1999.

3. Telephone Interviews

The telephone interviews started on December 26, 2002. The telephone interviews continued until July 11, 2003.

At the end of each telephone interview, students were offered the opportunity to participate in the focus groups, which took place in March-April, 2003.

Overall, 1,006 students completed the telephone interview of the College Years Survey. In all, 969 students participated in all three waves of the longitudinal study, in 1995, 1999 and 2003. The number of completes in the College Years Survey exceeded the number

who participated in all three waves because some students who did not participate in the 1999 survey did participate in the 2003 survey. This report is based on a panel of 933 respondents who were interviewed on all three occasions and reported on their camping experiences.

B. Qualitative Data Collection

1. Traditional Focus Groups

Focus groups are interactive sessions of participants who share a common cause or trait. In our research, all participants were part of the longitudinal study of young Conservative Jews. They were recruited from respondents in the telephone interviews of the College Years Survey who agreed to take part in these sessions.

Since the questions in the focus groups were open-ended, they offer the researchers a wealth of data to follow up on the topics discussed in the telephone interviews. Moreover, these sessions enriched the data with quotes from the students, allowing them to express their ideas and feelings in detail and in their own words.

The focus groups took place in late March in two different locations: The first was conducted in New York City at the campus of Columbia University, with eight students from New York University, Barnard and Columbia present. The second focus group included 11 students in the Midwest. It was held at the Hillel House at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

One lesson we learned is that it is difficult to recruit men to participate in face-to-face meetings. Men are possibly less likely to feel comfortable talking about their personal lives in front of other people. Thus, female students were over-represented in the meetings in both New York and Michigan. We were able to rectify the gender bias by recruiting more male students for the online discussions.

2. Online Bulletin Board Research

The face-to-face focus groups were complemented by online bulletin board sessions which took place at the beginning of April during a six-day period from Sunday to Friday. In all, 36 students participated in the daily discussions. Each student was paid \$100 for his or her time.

Online bulletin boards are like chat sessions except that they occur asynchronously. The moderator posts questions on a secure Web site. Participants log on and respond to the questions at their convenience during the period assigned for the research. Each participant can see the answers that others have given, but only after posting his or her own comments. Participants are encouraged to interact with one another, not just with the moderator. The moderator and researchers have the opportunity to follow up and probe

certain questions with all or some of the participants during the course of the discussions. Thus the result of these sessions is a rich, multi-faceted dialogue.

Online focus groups allow researchers to gather respondents who are geographically widespread. In our case, it allowed us to hear voices of students in remote colleges in the U.S. and Canada. Because we could locate college students who did not study with other Jews, we were able to involve those students who are hardly exposed to a Jewish environment on campus.

The convenience of bulletin board discussions makes them more suitable for research on college students of this high-tech generation. The personal topics covered in our research make the online discussions more desirable. Due to their relative anonymity and less pressured setting, they offer opportunities for more candid responses as compared to the traditional focus groups where peers may influence each other.

We were able to hear the voices of dispersed students from areas not covered by the face-to-face focus groups, including remote colleges in the U.S. and Canada. Some of the students logged on and participated in the discussions while studying abroad. These students, who were interviewed on the telephone earlier in the winter, spent the spring semester abroad in Europe and Australia yet were eager to join the discussion group online. Since the students were able to take part at any time of the day or night, obstacles created by time zone differences were overcome. This arrangement is optimal and convenient for students who do not necessarily operate during regular hours. Many students study or chat online in the middle of the night.

To illustrate how successful this endeavor was, we share the following anecdote. On Saturday night, April 6, after midnight, the first set of questions was posted. Thirty seconds later, at 12:00:30, the first answer was given. Students were so eager to be part of this experience that they could not wait to start. They wanted to share their ideas with us. They wanted their voices to be heard. Here, then, is still another policy implication stemming from our work: The Internet provides an opportunity to engage college-age Jews in serious reflection on what being Jewish means to them.

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