

A Study of  
**JEWISH CULTURE**  
in the Bay Area

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INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH &

COMMUNITY RESEARCH

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## PREFACE

American Jews have shaped and influenced American culture far out of proportion to their relatively small numbers, while also creating a vast array of cultural institutions and programs of particular Jewish cultural interests. Cultural experiences reach nearly all Bay Area American Jews, many of whom may have no other meaningful connection with the organized Jewish community. Yet there has been no comprehensive approach to building the role of Jewish culture within most Jewish communities, including the Bay Area. It is no surprise, then, that research about this domain of Jewish activity has been virtually untouched. Therefore, little is known about the role of Jewish and cultural activities in the Jewish identity and behavior of American Jews in general or of differing segments of the American Jewish community in particular. This case study of the San Francisco Bay Area sheds some light on these issues.

This research will help the community understand the role that cultural encounters play in the Jewish identity of American Jews. Thus the Bay Area Jewish community can better plan and support the creative evolution of Jewish life. This research assesses the role of Jewish culture in identities of all segments of Bay Area Jews. It demonstrates that participation in Jewish culture is more widespread than any other form of participation in Jewish life in the Bay Area.

This study also indicates that continued investment in the growth of cultural activity in the Bay Area is a key strategy for strengthening Jewish identity and participation. This research further indicates that Jewish culture should assume its proper prominent place in the Jewish communal structure. Participation in Jewish culture is a vibrant form of Jewish identity. Along with Jewish education, our relationship to Israel, synagogue participation, and social action, Jewish culture needs to be recognized for its important and vital role in keeping a cohesive Jewish community. Attending a Jewish film festival, viewing a museum exhibition of Jewish interest, or reading a novel by a prominent Jewish author are all expressions of Jewish identity. Indeed, for some Jews, this study shows it may be their only expression of Jewish identity. This research further indicates how vital cultural experiences are in the Jewish identity of most Bay Area Jews. Engaging in the arts and humanities related to Jewish life in the Bay Area generates a great depth and intensity of experience and comprises a critical component of an individual's sense of being a Jew. The scope of Jewish cultural activity is very wide and the depth of identification with Judaism through culture is enormous. Investment in Jewish culture will be investment in the Jewish future.

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*Gary Tobin, Ph.D.*

## INTRODUCTION

Issues of Jewish identity and communal involvement are central to the discourse of American Jews. Concerns around identity confusion, lack of Jewish knowledge, alienation from core institutions, disconnection from tradition and culture have all been expressed. One segment of the community advocates for better education of Jewish youth, another for training of Jewish leaders, while a third calls for intensified involvement in synagogue life. Others emphasize developing commitments to Israel, to Jewish philanthropy, to “Torah-true” Judaism, to outreach, and to reclaiming the intermarried. Initiatives abound. Programs proliferate. At the same time a variety of new cultural idioms distinctively Jewish and American have emerged.

While other aspects of Jewish identity such as religious beliefs and behaviors, philanthropic involvement, and Jewish education have been thoroughly examined, the role of participation in Jewish art and culture as an expression of Jewish identity has been largely ignored. It is widely acknowledged that art and culture have a powerful influence on shaping and reaffirming identity, transmitting heritage and celebrating life (Gittins 1995; Irwin et al. 1999). Therefore, participation in art and culture should also be viewed as an inherent expression of one’s Jewish identity.

Participation in Jewish cultural life is a prominent feature in the contemporary Jewish landscape in America. Programs are created by individuals and institutions; sponsored by patrons, foundations, federations,

and organizations; presented in a variety of public forums and venues; disseminated via diverse media; and consumed by millions of Jewish and non-Jewish Americans each year. Jewish cultural expressions are reviewed in newspapers, journals and the media, discussed and debated in homes and workplaces. While, from time to time, an essay, a conference, a periodical, or a book addresses the forms and meanings of these cultural expressions, serious discussions about culture as expressions of identity are scarce. Remarkably, there have been relatively few studies of Jewish cultural expression in America, and even fewer which examine Jewish culture dispassionately and systematically. There has been no comprehensive study of the relationship between Jewish identity and Jewish culture.

The purpose of this study is to determine if a new component of Jewish identity — culture — may be evolving which should have status, legitimacy and authenticity in the Jewish community. For many American Jews, Jewish identity is not synonymous with religious observance or affiliation with the Jewish community. Nonetheless, many individuals who are not institutionally or organizationally affiliated say that being Jewish is an important part of their lives and look for other avenues to express and strengthen their Jewish identity. Thus the categories of religious/secular or observant/non-observant may no longer have the same meaning in contemporary Jewish life as was the case over the past 50 years.

One could multiply instances to excess — book groups, museum and gallery shows, lectures and performances, books, magazines, newspapers, libraries, archives, historical organizations, conferences, symposia, residencies, video and film festivals, book fairs, and more. The burgeoning world of Jewish cultural activities, as evidenced by the proliferation of Jewish films, books, music, and Jewish culture on the Internet, enables Jews to develop and strengthen their Jewish identity through non-religious means.

Casual observation on both the national and local level reveals a remarkable collage of cultural expression. Within recent years, one could note numerous instances of Jewish art and culture, such as:

- Sponsorship of “Israel in Motion: Israeli Cinema of the 90’s” by the Israel Center of the San Francisco Jewish Community Center of San Francisco.
- Michael Chabon’s *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, a novel about a young Jew who escapes from Europe on the eve of World War II, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2001.
- The formation of a book club for Jewish readers by AOL Time Warner and Bertelsmann.
- Dedication of a new Jewish Studies Center at the University of Southern California, celebrated with a symposium on Jewish autobiography in film and literature.
- The 12 Tony Awards won by Mel Brooks’ *The Producers* on Broadway (Fleishman 2001).
- Opening of the Smith Gallery of Jewish Art and Culture at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the second such gallery in a major mainstream art museum.
- The expansion of The Jewish Museum San Francisco, with world-renowned architect, Daniel Libeskind.
- The creation of the first annual Jewish Image Awards, honoring outstanding work reflecting the Jewish heritage in film and television.
- The launching of the European Association for Jewish Culture in London and Paris.

Art and culture are not only modes of entertainment, but are also important vehicles for engaging people in a communal process and creating individual relationships by bringing individuals together and providing them with a shared experience with which to bond to each other (DiMaggio 1987; Gittins 1995; Miles 1996). These events are especially important for persons going through a life change, such as a divorce or relocation by providing them an outlet to help make new friends (DiMaggio 1987). For Jews, it provides a non-religious space for involvement with other Jews.

According to a recent report on building community, the arts “allow us to create together and discover shared understandings” (Saguaro Seminar 2001). The traditional focus for providing Jewish community has been with the synagogue, although only a small proportion of Jews actually belong to synagogues or attend services on a regular basis. According to Ruskay, culture “creates opportunities to reach and serve Jews who otherwise might not be touched by Jewish agencies” (Ruskay 1985).

Cultural activities bring people together in the same room who may not normally be together. According to DiMaggio and Ostrower, this participation benefits

individuals by establishing social membership and constructing and maintaining social networks that provide access to material and symbolic goods (DiMaggio and Ostrower 1990). Participation in the arts and culture can strengthen communities by nurturing friendships, by helping communities to understand and celebrate their heritage, and by providing a safe space to discuss and solve social problems. It benefits society by contributing to improved quality of life and economic growth; helping to form an educated and aware citizenry; and by strengthening communal identity through giving people a sense of pride in communal achievement. Culture also provides long-term community benefits because by helping us to understand our culture and heritage better, it provides us a legacy to leave to future generations.

Cultural activities create community by connecting people with similar interests. They bring together groups of people who want to celebrate life through film, or theater or music. They are also a way of imparting knowledge in a non-threatening and non-judgmental manner. For some, cultural activities may spark further exploration or more in-depth study of the subject. Others may learn new things that are not covered in traditional forms of education. Still for others, cultural activities provide a way to express themselves creatively.

The world of Jewish art and culture has blossomed in the past two decades as American Jews have been less constrained by social, cultural, and economic repercussions that their parents and grandparents (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Netsky 1998). While much of the organized Jewish community decries the demise of Judaism in America, others see the rise of a new type of American Jew, one who

is fully acculturated in American life, but who has episodic and intense involvement with Jewishness and his or her Jewish identity, predominately through non-traditional forms of expression, such as culture (Krupnick 1993).

In many ways, Jewish art and culture in America in the 1990s bears little resemblance to the art and culture of Jewish immigrants to America at the turn of the century. Studies of ethnic culture emphasize the melding of the traditional with the new (Gittins 1995). American Jewish culture is not simply Jewish culture that has been adapted for American audiences; it is a weaving of thousands of years of Jewish history with the hundred or so years that Jews have been in America. It has been influenced by our new surroundings and the different ethnic and cultural groups that American Jews have found themselves living amongst.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the focus of Jewish immigrants was on becoming American. They sent their children to American schools, spoke English, and stopped attending synagogue or keeping kosher. Young Jewish Americans, the children of these immigrants moved further away from old customs and towards assimilation into American life. Yet, as their tastes have become more American, American Jews have also developed an appreciation of their own past. Beginning in the 1960's Americans of many backgrounds began to search for their ethnic heritage including their art and cultural heritage. Musicians of Jewish heritage, already involved in folk, jazz, or blues music, began to explore their own musical heritage. There has been an increased interest in ethnic/national music by audiences. In the 1990s, the Study of Public Participation in

the Arts began including ethnic music as a category. In 1992, the first year of inclusion, 22% of respondents said they liked ethnic/national music; in 1997, the figure rose to 31% (Jack Faucett Associates Inc. 1998). The expression of Jewish identity through art and culture has not been limited to music. There has also been a new acceptance and reflection of Jewishness in film, the visual arts, media and television (Rosenberg 1996; Saposnik 1998).

While the expression of Jewish identity through culture is widespread in America, serious academic research has left this domain of Jewish activity virtually untouched. Thus little is known about the influence of one's involvement in Jewish cultural activity on the Jewish identity and behavior of American Jews in general or of differing segments of the American Jewish community in particular.

The following is a case study of Jewish cultural life in the Bay Area. Case studies are a valuable means for exploring in-depth a particular community or group. It is also valuable as a way to explore areas that have not been addressed before in order to provide a framework for further research. And finally, case studies provide us with a richness and beauty of the subject matter that cannot be obtained in other ways.

The data provided by this study will help us understand the role that Jewish cultural encounters play in developing and strengthening American Jewish identity in order to: reinforce and expand diverse expressions of Jewish identity as well as to better plan and support the creative evolution of Jewish life in America through culture. And it will redefine Jewish identity to include broader and

more diverse experiences of "legitimate" Jewish expressions. The findings will identify methods to build a stronger Jewish community through the expansion of Jewish culture. It will provide us with information and analysis that will aid the institutions of the organized Jewish community to plan, create, and evaluate programs that will strengthen American Jewish culture and thereby enhance Jewish identity.

This study examines three elements of Jewish culture in the San Francisco Bay Area. First, it looks at what is available, how people find out about it, and where they participate in it. Second, it examines individuals' Jewish identity through traditional measures of Jewishness – behavior, beliefs, and affiliation – and through their participation in Jewish culture. Third, it explores how Jewish individuals view the Jewish cultural experience and what the relationship is between participation in Jewish cultural activities and Jewish beliefs and behaviors.

### **WHY STUDY JEWISH CULTURE?**

Culture is not a "thing," a possession, or even a legacy. Instead, culture is a process of continuous exploration and discovery, creation and contention. In its widest sense culture embraces all of what we might call Jewish civilization; but even in a narrower (though by no means narrow) reading, Jewish culture encompasses everyday customs and rituals of daily life, preservation and scholarship, literature, and the arts. Jewish culture in America is an ongoing conversation, and evidence of that conversation can be found throughout the American landscape. We, the Jewish people in America, are the bearers and creators of this culture. It

behooves us to examine our cultural expressions with the same intensity we give to Jewish education, philanthropy, and religious behavior.

In his book on family and family values, Gillis argues that Americans have two families, one that they live with and one that they live by (Gillis 1996). The former is unstable, fragmented, and dysfunctional; the latter is whole, constituted of myth, ritual, and image. The American Jewish community may be interpreted in much the same way: our experience of community is one of disjunction and fractiousness, while our paradigmatic community is coherent, continuous, and cultured--buzz words which we invoke frequently and vociferously as if to reassure or confirm ourselves. In having a bifurcated view of ourselves, we are much like other American ethnic, religious, and cultural groups.

Like these groups, contemporary American Jewry is a product of modernity. Unlike traditional Jewish communities in past millennia, our lives are divided into various spheres. Even our Jewish identities are divided. At one level we have our demographic/ethnic identity: we are members of a small, but persistent, people with deep roots in history. At another level we have our religious identities: we are adherents of an ancient religious tradition, a cornerstone of Western culture. We also have a moral identity: we are committed philanthropists, sustainers of the hungry, the poor, the elderly, and the sick. We have an intellectual identity: we are the "People of the Book," emphatically dedicated to education and lifelong learning. These dimensions of American Jewish identity--as ideal and as reality--have been examined, analyzed, and interpreted with passion and intelligence by

many of American Jewry's creative, critical, and communal leaders. Even more--these dimensions of Jewish identity have long been the objects of policy, funding, and intervention by movements, organizations, and individuals.

Yet, there is another dimension to American Jewish identity--cultural expression. In the 1990 National Jewish Population Study, a majority of respondents identified themselves as Jewish by "culture." What did they mean by this? We do not know. We surmise that Jewish culture is rooted in peoplehood and religious tradition, fueled by study (Torah) and the quest for social justice (Tzedakah). We can see that American Jewish culture is entangled both with the seminal Jewish categories and, often, with mainstream American culture as well. While American Jewish culture is linked to these other categories, it is not congruent with them. In this view, Jewish culture constitutes a "fourth door" to Jewish peoplehood, in tandem with religion, education, and philanthropy. For the purposes of this study, Jewish culture is treated as an independent category, an authentic, living expression of Jewish identity and community in America.

At the outset of this discussion, we need to distinguish between public and private expressions of Jewish culture and individuals' use of Jewish culture to construct their personal identities. Cultural expressions, especially public culture, are the salient features for this type of study. Investigation of identity formation is a parallel, complementary effort that makes use of different methods and data. The two inquiries intersect and inform each other. For example, a part of both studies would focus on how individuals find and use cultural expressions, in one case

we are interested in what we might term cultural consumption; in the other with personal identity. For example, when interviewing creators and producers of Jewish cultural expression, we might inquire about creative intentions, while a study of identity might focus on issues of personal commitment.

Further study of Jewish culture should focus on behaviors and expressions that are visible, rather than internal psychological processes. The following questions appear to be most salient for this type of study:

- What are the forms of Jewish culture in America?
- Where is Jewish culture encountered and engaged?
- Who participates in Jewish culture?
- Who pays for the production and dissemination of Jewish culture?

If we could learn what kinds of cultural expressions are prominent and accessible, then find out who participates in different aspects of Jewish culture, and ask what they think about their participation, then we will deepen our understanding of what American Jews mean when they identify themselves as Jewish by culture.

### **AN HISTORICAL VIEW OF NORTH AMERICAN JEWISH CULTURE**

In order to understand Jewish culture today, it may be instructive to glance back at the recent past and note some of the many salient differences from today's cultural landscape.

Forty years ago there was a single professionally staffed museum dedicated to Judaica and Jewish culture, The Jewish Museum in New York City. Today, there are more than 60 institutional members of the Council of American Jewish Museums from every region of the United States and Canada, some of which are among the largest and best-known North American museums. Forty years ago the first monument to the Holocaust were just being proposed. Today, there are more than 100 Holocaust centers, archives, and museums in communities across the country, among them the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Museum of Tolerance (Bet Ha-Shoah), the Holocaust Museum Houston, and The Museum of Jewish Heritage, Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation video history project, and educational organizations, like Facing History and Ourselves.

There were some regular radio programs on Jewish issues 40 years ago, but no Jewish film festivals, television shows, or on-line sites. Today, there are about 20 annual festivals, professionally staffed and managed, in large and small cities across the country. In addition, there is an annual Jewish Film and Video Competition sponsored by the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley, a Jewish Television Network with several million subscribers, and Jewish channels on cable and public access television. The explosion of information on the Internet has been paralleled by a vast expansion of on-line sites and chat rooms ranging from Parashat Hashavuah to The World of Jewish Music.

Equally striking are expressions of Jewish culture in mainstream cultural venues. Overtly Jewish dramas are seen not only in New York, but also in leading regional theatres across the U.S. Both Hollywood and

independent features frequently feature Jewish characters, issues, and situations. So do television shows—on network and cable — some of which are now classics (e.g., *Northern Lights*, *Rhoda*, *Thirty-Something*, and *Seinfeld*, to name only a few). Overt Jewish content aside, numerous works of mainstream art, dance, music, drama, criticism, scholarship, and literature reflect the influence of Jewish consciousness and sensibility. My own favorite in this regard is Michael Schudson's *Watergate in American Memory* whose author declares in his foreword that the book is actually about Passover (Schudson 1992).

In a recent paper, Jonathan Sarna reminds us that issues of Jewish renewal have a long history in (Sarna 1995). Looking back a century, he discovers that a generation of young, acculturated Jews made conscious efforts to create an institutional framework for an emergent Jewish culture. They created journals, convened study groups, organized a network of interested leaders, and founded the American Jewish Historical Society, the Jewish Publication Society, and other still-vibrant institutions. While the contexts of their activities were markedly different from our own, we are well-advised to recall that great issues often have long tails.

Examination of the roles of Jewish culture in America — what we might call condition reports on the Jewish cultural landscape — have many precedents in this century. We can still find much relevance in Mordecai Kaplan's seminal work, *Judaism as a Civilization* (Kaplan 1967). And, of course, in the most recent forty years there have been numerous studies of specific features in the Jewish cultural landscape. But there is one landmark effort, in particular, that we might examine because it has a direct link to any

contemporary exploration of the Jewish cultural landscape: the 1957-59 National Jewish Cultural Study sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds.

The National Jewish Cultural Study was initially proposed in 1954, the Tercentenary of Jewish arrival in what is now the United States. Three years later, the Council of Jewish Federations decided to sponsor the national study noting that cultural programs "are conducted by a number of small organizations, severely limited in scope and finances...in specialized fields with little continuing relation to one another... The needs, which they are trying to meet... and the impact of the organizations have never been assessed in any total view. Such an assessment has long been overdue." The study was to be field-centered rather than agency-centered. Its purpose was to "determine the condition of each of the fields under study, to assess unmet needs and projected plans, and to make recommendations for strengthening Jewish culture and scholarship" (Fine and Himmelfarb 1959:149-169).

Originally the study was to include "libraries, archives, scholarship, publication, literature, training personnel for adult Jewish education, and channels for information on Jewish affairs, but limitations of time and money narrowed the objectives. It was decided that the primary focus should be on archives, scholarship, research, and publication, with a side glance at Jewish studies in secular institutions of higher learning." In addition to excluding education and religion, the study also passed over the programs of large, national membership organizations and local cultural activities. When all was said and done, the study focused on a baker's dozen of "national" Jewish agencies,

including archives, research institutions, and publishers.

The study committee was very much aware of other cultural manifestations, national and local. In the same issue of the *American Jewish Year Book*, reports on Jewish life in other countries ranging from Algeria to West Germany, made repeated reference to “Cultural Activity.” Under this rubric appeared notice of books, theatre, dance, music, radio broadcasts, exhibitions, and other cultural expressions. In the same volume, a report on Federation allocations listed “Recreation and Culture” as a major category and showed an increase in support from 19.4% in 1953 to 22.1%, while Iva Cohen’s *American Jewish Bibliography* included listings under headings like Art and Music, Literature, Bible, Talmud and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Religion and Philosophy (Fine and Himmelfarb 1959).

The *Year Book* also cited Abraham A. Newman, President of Dropsie College, and Horace Kallen, a prominent scholar. In a reprint of Dr. Newman’s article on “Our Historic Horizons” he argues: “If American Jewry will not allow itself to be diverted from its historic goal, which lies in the realm of the spirit, in religion, in learning, and in culture, in creations of the soul of man . . . it may yet write an historic role of incalculable value to mankind” (Fine and Himmelfarb 1959). In an entry on “Religious Agencies” Dr. Kallen asks (rhetorically) if Judaism is a religious tradition and community or an “aggregation of groups and factions competitively identifying themselves by creed, cult, and culture” (Fine and Himmelfarb 1959).

It is clear from these and other references that Jewish communal leaders construed culture

as an autonomous realm of activity and expression, parallel with education, religion, and — implicitly — philanthropy. That these interpretations were widely shared may be adduced from essays written by sociologist Abraham G. Duker, published and distributed by the Jewish Education Committee Press, a member of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, with funding provided by the Robert Szold Reprint Fund of the College of Jewish Studies in Chicago (Duker 1960).

Dr. Duker’s articles called for investigation of the related processes of transculturation, acculturation, and deculturation, “all too readily lumped together as ‘Americanization,’ as they have affected and affect the immigrant generation and the native born Jew and his children.” The sources for such studies extended to labels on packages and cans, phonograph records, and newspaper advertisements. What is startling about Dr. Duker’s essays is his assertion that “it can be assumed that the Jewish community’s emerging culture patterns are, to a large extent, the same as those of the general American community in terms of language, leisure time activities, demographic developments, and . . . even of stereotypes in thinking, — including religious concepts as well. At the same time the Jewish culture patterns will continue to contain sizable though varying residues of Jewish mores and ways of expression — some inherited from the European immigrants, *others having originated, developed or considerably altered here* [emphasis added].” For Duker, the effects of Americanization are discernible in religious observances and customs — as well as secular behaviors — as, for instance, with the elaboration of Hanukkah, the institution of

Sunday morning prayer breakfasts, and visits to parents' graves on Father's and Mother's Days.

In his introduction to Duker's book, Leon A. Feldman asks, "Does it matter whether we study our Jewish way of life in America? Whether we discover tendencies, which ought to be encouraged or discouraged? Whether we control or influence developments?" (Feldman 1960). To these questions Feldman responds in the affirmative. Noting that American Jewish life is full of confusions, individual and communal, Feldman asserts that "We have a deep responsibility for understanding ourselves and our Jewish way of life . . . and building it into a sound and healthy community." What is meant by "leading a Jewish life" in America? This is a question, which continues to resonate with us, two generations later. Like our predecessors, we need to continue the search for understanding and meaning, as Feldman puts it, "in an orderly and logical manner. The mere effort to do this, even if we get no final answers, helps to build healthy attitudes, a tolerance for one another's point of view."

### **WHAT IS JEWISH CULTURE?**

Unlike the Supreme Court Justice who "knew it when he saw it," we need not assume that American Jewish culture is either obvious or self-evident. An instance of this is found in the new *Encyclopedia of Jewish-American History and Culture*, which employs what the editors call the "broadest possible definition of what is meant by the term Jewish-American" (Fischel and Pinsker 1992). This volume embraces both Jewish contributions

to secular American life and figures who reflect their Jewishness, the Jewish impact on America and American impact on Jewishness. The editors include entries on dance, music, literature, theater, poetry, films, radio, television, journalism, and libraries, but not foodways (which are dismissed as "trivial" and "mundane"). Despite this long list, the editors never quite make clear what "Jewish-American," "this awkward, hyphenated term," really means, nor what marks some expressions as "culture" and others as "not-culture".

The meanings of America, of Jewish, and of culture are all contested, and all three terms of the subject require specification. Let us begin with America. For many, especially advocates or proponents of Jewish cultural expression — and especially of Jewish cultural renewal — America means openness and opportunity. Certainly for Jews, America has been the liberal democracy, welcoming, benign, tolerant. But openness and opportunity are not the only things that America signifies in Jewish discourse. For many, over more than a century, America has represented modernity, secularism, and materialism. We need only recall the myriad complaints of religious Jews coming here in the 19th century who found America a place inhospitable to traditional Judaism. Today, many within the Orthodox wing work (and thrive) within this secular, materialist context, but turn their backs on modern America to preserve the integrity and sanctity of their traditions. Even those Jews who embrace America must recognize that modernity, secularism, and materialism are attributes or qualities that can run counter to communal culture, especially to those cultures grounded in religious tradition.

**Table 1**

**Definitions of Jewish Culture**

- Jewish art is any creative work for secular or religious purposes, executed only by Jewish artists or craftsmen; Art that is used in Jewish religious rituals, but the artists may be Jewish or non-Jewish. (Moment Magazine, April 1997, pg. 64)
- By Jewish art we mean the arts as they are applied to Judaism. Such a concept of art may be called functional, since it does not recognize anything Jewish in art unless it serves a purpose connected with Judaism as a way of life. The definition excludes creations by Jewish artists that are detached from Jewish objectives, but includes works which serve a Jewish purpose even though their makers are not Jewish (Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1959).
- Jewish film are those films that examine an aspect of the Jewish experience and feature at least one clearly defined Jewish central character (Bernheimer 1998).
- The underlying critical assumption is that the work of a Jewish writer must either overtly or covertly reflect a Jewish sensibility, a particular bent of mind that attracts them to certain issues and themes, and a perspective that invigorates their films with a sensitivity that grows out of their Jewishness (Dresser and Friedman 1993).

Paradoxically, America is also a Christian country. Within living memory legal codes and local custom (the so-called Blue Laws) underlined the centrality of Christian concerns in daily life. Even our calendar is Christian. From time to time, great movements of religious revival have sought to impose either generic or specific forms of Christianity on the country as a whole, to date without success. The fact that many of these religious struggles revolved around Protestant-Catholic or fundamentalist-liberal issues does little to vitiate the point: the vast majority of Americans have been professed Christians who see themselves as citizens of a Christian society. Even when verbal accommodation has been made, as in "Judeo-Christian tradition," it has been quite clear which faith community has priority, weight, and power. The arrival of a "multicultural moment" notwithstanding, America remains a predominantly Christian country in which American Jewry is but a small fraction of the

population. We need to be conscious that America is both valued and problematic.

The word "Jewish" in American Jewish culture is also problematic. One threshold of confusion is the conflation of Yiddish and Jewish culture. Yiddish culture, largely a response to modernity among European Jewry in the 19th and early 20th centuries, achieved a remarkable efflorescence in literature, theater, scholarship, and music. The density and richness of this culture has benefited from acute critical attentions, both in its native lands and in its American transplantation. But Jewish culture, certainly in America, is not limited to Yiddish culture. American Jewish culture is a different category, overlapping with Yiddish culture, but not coincident with it (Schiff 1995).

Even when we have passed beyond the distinction of Jewish and Yiddish, problems remain. Does Jewish culture embrace

expressions in which Jewish concerns are implicit as well as those in which they are explicit? The consciousness and intention of the artist may be a defining criterion here. Composer and performance artist Liz Swados represents a non-Jewish family and idiom in her work "The Haggadah," but the Jewish content is explicit; in contrast, some of her most Jewish work is not overtly Jewish. Maurice Sendak thinks that his classic *Where the Wild Things Are* is a Jewish book, just as Jewish as his *Zlotka the Goat*. Do we count as Jewish cultural expression those productions, which reflect a Jewish style as well as those with overt Jewish content? Does Jewish culture encompass the myriad cultural expressions of American Jews, regardless of their identifications and intentions? The fluidity of culture and a multiplicity of cultural activities make these questions important.

One must clarify what is included in a study of Jewish art and culture. This is not an easy task. There is considerable debate and numerous definitions about what Jewish art and culture is. In this study, art and culture are used interchangeably. Rather than limit the study to the visual or performance arts, we chose to be as inclusive as possible. By focusing exclusively in the domain of the "high arts," such as the visual or performances arts, we would be excluding festivals, lectures and other events that individuals participate in to connect with the Jewish community.

So then, what is Jewish culture? Various definitions of Jewish art and culture have been proposed by academics, experts, and the media. Some of the definitions insist that the works must include religious themes or use for religious purposes. Others believe it must include of sense of Jewishness – either

experience or sensibilities. In many of these definitions, the Jewishness must be visible, while others believe it can be underlying sense of Jewishness.

As difficult as it is for experts and academics to reach consensus on a definition of Jewish culture that is commonly accepted, it is equally difficult for those of us who participate in Jewish culture to know what it is. Focus group interviews show that there are as many definitions and questions among consumers as to what constitutes Jewish culture, as expressed in the following:

"What does it mean? Jewish art. I understand what French art or Russian art is, because you're talking about nationality plus country. I understand what is Israeli art. At least I think I understand. But what would be Jewish art? I don't [understand]."

The dialogue below between focus group participants serves as a good indicator of the confusing definitions surrounding any aspect of Jewish culture:

(M): I don't think there's anything such thing as a Jewish film.

(M): Unless it's in Yiddish. Then it's a Jewish film, but there are films about Jews. There are films that have little vignettes about Jews and there are films about Jewish families, but generally in the context of a community. What's a Jewish film?

(M): *Fiddler on the Roof*.

(F): No, *Fiddler on the Roof* was a very embarrassing film. I hate to tell you. They took a story and they make a nice musical out of it.

(M): And [then] again, it's not a Jewish film. It's a film about a Jewish family and the problems they have in coming into a modern age.

(F): Well, it depends upon what your interpretation of the expression Jewish film means.

(F): I think that there were two films. One was with Amy Irving...

(F): It was *Crossing Delancey*.

One individual, however, had a very clear idea of what defines Jewish culture – Klezmer music. He found this art form to be clearly and unambiguously Jewish:

"The fact that it's Jewish. I don't go to hear clarinets. I'm not going to go to a place just to hear a clarinet. It's Jewish. It's got a Jewish subject matter. It's on the Jewish history. To me, what Jewish art is, is very clear and simple really. I don't think that we think of them as Jewish artists but the music is Jewish and it's a Jewish subject matter, so I think that that's what attracted me."

What, then, does the term Jewish culture comprise? Is it limited to what this man could easily separate as Jewish or the confusion about what constitutes Jewish film? We propose an inclusive definition elastic enough to encompass customs, rituals of everyday life, and popular culture as well as Jewish intellectual life, the preservation of historical Jewish artifacts, the visual and the performing arts. If culture is process and not just product, then we must look for activity

as well as markers in the landscape if we are to discern the characters, forms, and meanings of Jewish culture in the American context. Because of the difficulty in using this definition in a study such as ours, we decided to define Jewish events for our survey respondents as Jewish if they contained Jewish themes or content. We recognize that the use of this definition assumes explicit and common themes in Jewish art and culture and that to rely solely on this definition may limit our responses for the following reasons. According to Whitfield, to expel from consideration whatever omits Jewish subject matter unnecessarily diminishes the effort to understand the Jews who

created such works and would make the task of classification even more difficult (Whitfield 1999). For example, how explicit does the content need to be? How do we measure content? Some of these events may share a common

theme, a common language, history, interests, and culture. For some works, however, the Jewishness may be buried deep within the art; while for others, it is the Jewish sensibility that the artist brings to his or her work. Jewish art and culture reflects the creator's Jewish identity, which is also comprised of a mix of their historic, cultural, ethnic and religious identities. For example, one of the programs we found through our content analysis is Maurice Edelstein's exhibit "Images of Chinatown: Three Decades of Photographs." While the Jewish themes and content are not apparent in the title, the author says that he sees "a common bond between Chinese immigrants and Jewish settlers." There was much discussion about whether this should

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*This study proposes a definition of Jewish culture elastic enough to encompass customs, daily rituals, and popular culture as well as intellectual life, historical preservation, the visual and performing arts.*

---

be included as a Jewish art or cultural program. In the end, it was not.

The different traditions and modes of observance that constitute Jewish life influence Jewish art and culture. While this heritage is not expressed in the content of the work, it is a drawing force (Harris 1996). So where do we put works that reflect this sensibility and intelligence? Contemporary Jewish immigrants to the United States are characterized by distinct cultural, linguistic, and national heritages. While they have geographic, cultural, religious and economic links with American Jews, national preference often predominates and they often gravitate towards their own enclaves (Gold 1998). For example, Yiddishkeit Jewishness is not typical of every segment of the Jewish community; yet, Jewish writing and identity has come to mean Yiddish-influenced speech, irony, urban angst and alienation, wisecracking humor, social radicalism, tension between assimilation and tradition, and Jewishly colored humanistic values (Hirschberg 1972; Matza 1997).

Focus group participants questioned whether or not the fact that an artist is Jewish makes the art, in and of itself, Jewish art:

“Schlesinger ...we are talking about the cinema film director who did *Midnight Cowboy*. He’s Jewish, but I mean is *Midnight Cowboy* Jewish film?”

or:

“[Simply because] it’s a Jewish painter of significance, I would not [necessarily] consider it Jewish art, Jewish painting.”

This issue also works in reverse, with non-Jews creating Jewish art:

“To me, I have a friend who is a sculptor who is Chinese who made a beautiful menorah. Now she’s obviously non-religious, but it’s a beautiful piece of art and she loves having it. I would think that there must be non-Jewish artists who may go to Jerusalem and paint beautiful scenes of Jerusalem. And that would be Jewish art whether it was made by a Jew or a non-Jew. So it seems to me that there must be klezmer musicians who aren’t Jewish.”

Is this Jewish culture? It is, undoubtedly. Jewish culture should be defined both by the artist and the product.

And what about how the artists themselves identify? Does the label of Jewish artist come from the artist themselves or from patrons, funders, and consumers of his or her art? A number of our focus group participants were themselves artists. Many of them talked about their own confusion about whether they considered themselves a Jewish artist and whether or not their art is Jewish art:

“I am in a real interesting dilemma now as an artist. I’ve been making art for almost 50 years and my family and I took this trip to central Europe about 2 years ago. We went to the Czech Republic and the Austria and to Hungary for three weeks and we went to to Madhausen and although I have always thought I was a very educated Jewish woman about the issues of Jewish history ... I’ve read a lot. I’ve seen a lot of films ... I thought I really was prepared, but I guess I wasn’t for what I felt and saw there. And I was born the same year as Anne Frank, so I’ve always identified with Anne Frank in some way. I took a few photographs while I was there but I couldn’t take many because I kept saying there’s no way a camera can record what I’m feeling. It was a very emotional experience. Am I a Jewish artist? Am I an artist who just happened to make two pieces that are so strongly Jewish in content? ... I don’t want to be seen as Jewish.

I've never identified or put my work into the work of women artists. I don't want to be a woman artist and I don't want to be a Jewish artist, but I happen to have made two pretty important pieces that are very strongly Jewish. ... I don't know quite how to think of it."

She, of course, represents many of the conceptual issues explored in this study. Jewish art and culture also reflects the ways that Jews have been seen and identified by the world and how they see themselves (Kleeblatt 1996). Images of Jews in commercial arts are rarely controlled by Jewish organizations and are geared toward general audiences. As Rosenberg states, films of Jewish experience are intimately bound up with the non-Jewish world's use of Jewish experience for its own reflection (Rosenberg 1996). Jews in some sense participate in that reflection and have shaped it in significant ways, we are dealing in any case, with an intercultural realm, which has cultural claims of its own (Rosenberg 1996:4). Jewishness is expressed in terms that do not specifically refer to Jews. Focus group participants also reflected on this theme:

"It's interesting, on TV recently, the chief representations of Jewishness are not Jewish. That is to say if you look at Paul Reiser or you look at *Seinfeld*, I mean they are and aren't. I saw a scene that was a eulogy at a funeral — it's clear that you're supposed to understand that everyone on Paul's side are all Jews. They're all Jewish characters, and yet they make it in such a way that there is nothing distinctly Jewish that everyone knows. Similarly, there's a kind of suspension of that understanding with *Seinfeld*. Elaine is, but in theory, is not Jewish as far as the program goes."

Should Jewish art be concerned only with how American Jews want to be seen by

the world and how they see themselves. What are the images of Jews that Jewish institutions want to promote? And what do we do with works that reflect Jews in negative ways. For, example, Fiedler asks whether works that include Jew as villain, such as *Merchant of Venice*, constitute Jewish works (Fiedler 1991).

Jews are very conscious of their image in popular culture:

"One *Seinfeld* skit was just absolutely atrocious. When the rabbi was going to do a circumcision. It was terrible. It was ugly, anti-Semitic. The rabbi was a real caricature. And I don't feel good about that."

Because culture is created continuously, sometimes this creativity is subversive. As Nessa Rapoport has remarked, culture is anarchic (Solataroff and Rapoport 1992). Culture is also amorphous — multidimensional and multi-disciplinary, inclusive and exclusive, narrow and broad, all at the same time. While culture can be concrete—foodways provide but one example — it is also abstract. Saul Bellow has captured the elusiveness of culture as follows: "We do not make up history and culture. We simply appear, not by our own choice. We make what we can of our condition with the means available. We must accept the mixture as we find it — the impurity of it, the tragedy of it, the hope of it" (Bellow 1963:16). Today, we look in vain for a comprehensive, or even a coherent overview of Jewish culture in America. Jewish culture has yet to find its forum, let alone its Baedeker. We may not then, "know it when we see it." One dialogue between focus group participants went like this:

(F): I don't think there's ever been a Jewish character that I can think of on a television show that just distinctly is Jewish and...

(F): What about the female?

(F): Female?

(F): Joan Rivers.

(F): Well, she was a talk show host, yeah. She made it quite known that she was Jewish.

(M): I think a major female entertainer...Barbra Streisand is the only one who has ever been on television, on anything and always played a Jewish person. And totally proud of it.

(F): I don't think she stresses it as much as Woody Allen.

(M): No, but every character she's played, she's always been Jewish.

(M): She never denies it.

(M): Not just Yentl, even the more modern characters that she's played.

(F): The Way We Were, she was a Jewish character.

(M): A Jewish woman.

Jews are aware of the cultural disagreements. They live it themselves, as creators and participants, observers and analysts. These discussions about Jewish identity are as common as any in Jewish life. They are Jewish life.

### **HOW CAN WE STUDY JEWISH CULTURE?**

The landscapes of contemporary American Jewish culture offer a kaleidoscope of images.

To some observers the landscape is dry and desolate. To others, the landscape is barren with small oases of vigor, or fallow with indications of incipient fertility, or overgrown with lush vegetation. To this observer, the landscape of American Jewish culture presents a diversity of Jewish cultural expressions, ranging from life cycle rituals to the World Wide Web, from video games to blockbuster exhibitions. In addition to contemporary features, predecessor landscapes, native and foreign, are embedded and evoked. The Jewish cultural landscape has its bare spots, even its deserts. But overall, the landscape is a rich, complicated mix of meadows and woodlands, gardens and fields, roadways and rendezvous, structures and streams.

Given the rich diversity of the cultural landscape, we need a set of organizing frameworks or taxonomies to focus on salient features. Since there are many ways to parse the cultural landscape, we need at the outset to specify a taxonomy, which can guide systematic investigation. The criteria for such a taxonomy are potentially overwhelming, but three criteria at least must be satisfied if the proposed taxonomy is to be effective:

- The taxonomy has to force the important questions. There is a plethora of questions that might be asked about Jewish culture in America. Many of these questions concern individual identity rather than public culture, and others focus on limited sectors of the landscape. A taxonomy is needed that will direct attention to key aspects of the cultural landscape and will focus on the minimum significant agenda or questions described previously.
- The taxonomy has to promote a feasible investigation. The cultural landscape is so vast and so complex that the taxonomy needs to focus attention on select issues.

While the taxonomy must be broad-gauged and inclusive, minor elements and byways must be rigorously excluded so that the study can be done cost-effectively, on time, and within budget.

- The taxonomy has to be germane and useful to key constituencies. Cultural creators, presenters, patrons, funders, scholars, cultural advocates, and community leaders are the key constituencies for this study. The preferred taxonomy has to guide a study that is useful for multiple constituencies and not just a single constituency.

Many kinds of taxonomy could be devised for the Jewish cultural landscape. One could, for example, imagine taxonomy based on specific fields of Jewish culture — music, dance, literature, scholarship, criticism, media, preservation, etc. The complexities of any given field, however, could easily consume so much budget and energy that the investigation would be limited to only one or a few specific fields, making the study useless to all constituencies except those directly involved in the given field(s). One could employ a taxonomy that is organized in broad categories such as intellectual culture, popular culture, material culture, visual and performing arts. But these broad categories would likely produce overlap and redundancy. The analysis that follows is based on survey data of Bay Area Jewish residents, focus groups, and a content analysis of local newspaper listings of Jewish art and culture events (See Appendix A for methodology). We propose three taxonomies to organize our analysis — one based on an ecological model that examines the patrons and funders, creators, and audiences and users of Jewish culture, another based on venues, and a third based on content.

## **ECOLOGY-BASED TAXONOMY**

In America, an open, market-based system of cultural production, distribution, and consumption is the norm. Jewish culture is no exception. It is possible to distinguish different kinds of cultural creators and preservers, presenters and interpreters, patrons and funders, advocates and critics, and audiences, users, and consumers of culture. All of these groups are linked in a system we might call the political economy or ecology of culture. This typology points toward cultural expression as a system in which key elements are networked. Such a typology would focus on the major constituents or parties within the system, first within the Jewish community and then in mainstream America.

### **The Role of Cultural Patronage in Support of Jewish Art and Culture**

The availability of Jewish art and culture is an important avenue for full participation in Jewish life and the expression of Jewish identity. Its availability is the result not just of a single individual or organization, but a collaborative effort among the artists involved in its creation, those who fund it, those who provide a place for it to be exhibited or performed, and the audience who comes to view it. It is important to understand the range of funding sources for Jewish culture, to define their respective priorities and strategies, and to analyze the relationship between producers, presenters, and consumers of culture. However, while studies on Jewish art and culture have focused their attention on its creation and performance, little attention has been given to the role of organizations and funders in its production.

According to Wolff, works of art are not closed, self-contained entities, but are the product of specific historical practices on the part of identifiable social groups in given conditions and bear the imprint of the ideas, values, and conditions of those groups (Wolff 1993). In other words, the production of art is influenced by a variety of factors and is not solely the creation of the individual artist. Cultural organizations, funders, critics, and audiences all affect how the artist's work is produced, performed, and made available to the public (Blau 1989; Wolff 1993).

Environmental factors on the local level, such as employment opportunities and availability of art spaces may also contribute to the production of specific types of works over others (Becker et al. 1989). Organizations that sponsor art and culture act as gatekeepers by filtering the types of programs that are presented. By supporting and promoting certain types of art and cultural events, they enable us to see only what they want us to (Miles 1996). Additionally, competition for funding may encourage certain types of art to be produced over others (Alexander 1996).

How individual organizations decide on the type of art and culture that they want to promote is based on a combination of factors. The organization may be involved in long-term planning and promote art and cultural events that reflect the type of institution they want to become. Programming may be also be influenced by short-term objectives, such as the desire to expand their audience, the current financial status of the organization, and the availability of outside funds or of particular programs (Cameron 1991).

One must also take into account the extent to which arts organizations in the United States are dependent on a multitude of external

funding and sponsoring agencies, which is greater than in most industrialized countries (Blau 1989). In the cultural system, sponsors of institutions, projects, and programs play an instrumental role. Jewish cultural patronage runs a gamut, from Jewish communal leaders in the organized Jewish community to individual donors and philanthropists to foundations and corporate sponsors.

In recent years, external support has become increasingly important to the production of art and cultural events. The rising costs of events and growth of institutional budgets cannot be met solely by the cost of admission or price of the ticket. Therefore, most programs must be underwritten by an outside donor, whether it is an individual, corporation, private foundation, or the government. Studies have shown that the average number of exhibitions per museum that are sponsored by outside donors has been rising steadily since 1972 (Alexander 1996).

Donors also have an effect on the form and content of the events that are produced by their willingness to fund certain types of programs over others (Alexander 1996; Delacoma 1997). Wealthy individuals may prefer to support small art exhibitions that help them gain status as a connoisseur of rare works while corporations may favor programs that improve their corporate reputation. Some foundations support only well established organizations that are in their own community.

Government support has become increasingly susceptible to political favoritism. The preferences and biases of the external sources of support may conflict with the wishes of the cultural institutions. Each organization must then decide whether or not they are

willing to have the donor's interests influence their programming.

Funding for arts and culture must also take into account the relationships among arts and cultural organizations and other institutions. The art and cultural environment has become more competitive, and these organizations must increasingly vie with one another for funding and audiences. Increasingly, trustees and committee members on the boards of art and culture organizations are affiliated with corporations or foundations that represent potential funders (Cameron 1991; Whitt and Lammers 1991). Therefore, the institutional board may also lean towards the types of programs that are supported by funders. Innovative programming, without a stable source of funding, is difficult to sustain over the long term. There are some foundations, although few in number, that have recently become involved in supporting programs that encourage innovation and experimentation in art and culture (Delacoma 1997).

The art establishment, consisting of experts, scholars, and critics, also influence the production of art through their participation in key decisions, especially in funding for the (Brudney 1990). This establishment has been criticized for being too focused on the fine arts at the expense of cultural diversity and experimentation. Critics also have the power to influence the careers of artists and performers, since they review only a small number of the events that are produced (Giuffre 1999).

Finally, audiences are involved in the production of art and culture. They make their preferences known every time they buy a ticket or attend an event (Delacoma 1997).

Innovation may be influenced by the ability

of the performer or artist to draw audiences which may influence their ability to sustain financial resources (Blau 1989; Wolff 1993). Audience tastes also differ by age, income and education and may shift due to advancing age, higher education, and change in income. Therefore, there is no distinct market and no conspicuous process of cross-generational transmission (Blau 1989).

In recent years, all types of organizations have become involved in the production of Jewish art and culture. Differences exist between communities based on the same factors found in the art and culture world at large — the vision of organizations, funders, and critics, the likes and dislikes of audiences, and the availability of space, and employment opportunities, in addition to size, geographic location, and the urban/suburban/rural characteristics of the Jewish community. The study of Jewish art and culture must explore the resources available in each community.

All types of organizations in the Bay Area are involved in the production and promotion of Jewish art and cultural programs. These organizations include religious, cultural, educational and communal institutions under Jewish, non-Jewish and mixed auspices.

The programs that are sponsored by each organization are influenced by a combination of factors. These include the institution's choice of financial resources, theological or ideological beliefs, staff support, physical facilities, and membership. For example, the United States Holocaust Museum, which co-sponsored "Remember the Children: Daniel's Story," an exhibit and other programs about the Holocaust with the Bay Area Discovery Museum, is supported primarily with

**Table 2**

**Sponsors and Promoters of Jewish Culture in the Bay Area**

***Jewish***

Ahavat Yisrael  
 ALSJCC  
 A Traveling Jewish Theatre  
 American Jewish Congress  
 Beth El Choir  
 Berkeley Richmond Jewish  
 Community Center  
 Bureau of Jewish Education  
 Cafe Europa for Holocaust  
 Survivors  
 Friends of Jewish Community  
 Library  
 Contra Costa Jewish  
 Community Center  
 Center for Humanistic Judaism  
 Center for Jewish Living and  
 Learning of the Jewish  
 Federation of Greater East Bay  
 San Francisco Jewish Film  
 Festival  
 Osher Marin Jewish  
 Community Center  
 Central Pacific Coast Hadassah  
 San Francisco City Wide Hillel  
 Chabad of Greater South Bay  
 Chabad of Marin  
 Chochmat HaLev  
 Peninsula Temple Beth El and  
 Temple Beth El Brotherhood  
 Congregation B'nai Israel  
 Congregation B'nai Torah  
 Congregation Beth Am  
 Congregation Beth David  
 Congregation Beth El  
 Temple Sinai  
 Congregation Beth Israel-Judea  
 Congregation Beth Israel  
 Congregation Beth Sholom  
 Congregation Beyt Tikkun  
 Congregation Emanu-El  
 Lehrhaus Judaica  
 Congregation Kol Emeth  
 Congregation Kol Shofar  
 Congregation Ner Tamid  
 Congregation Rodef Sholom  
 Congregation Sha'ar Zahav  
 Congregation Sherith Israel  
 Congregation Shir Hadash

Congregation Shir Shalom  
 Congregation Shomrei Torah  
 Consulate General of Israel  
 The Friedman Center  
 Givat Haviva Educational  
 Foundation  
 Jewish Community Relations  
 Council and Israel Center of  
 Jewish Community  
 Federation  
 The Jewish Museum San  
 Francisco  
 Greater San Francisco Unit No.  
 21 B'nai B'rith  
 San Francisco Jewish  
 Community Center  
 Israel at 50  
 Israel Center of the Jewish  
 Community Federation  
 The Israel Project  
 Tzavta of the Israel Center  
 Israel Bonds  
 Israel Book Club of Israel  
 Center of Jewish Federation of  
 Greater East Bay  
 Israel Center of the Jewish  
 Federation of Greater East  
 Bay  
 Judah L. Magnes Museum  
 Jewish Community Relations  
 Council  
 Northern California Jewish  
 Bulletin  
 Israeli Foreign Ministry  
 University of California  
 Berkeley Hillel  
 University of California Santa  
 Cruz Hillel

***Non-Jewish and Mixed  
 Auspices***

A Clean Well-Lighted Place for  
 Books  
 Altarena Playhouse  
 Amnesty International  
 Holocaust Center of Northern  
 California  
 Artrise Theatre  
 Ashkenaz

Barnes and Noble  
 Bay Area Discovery Museum  
 U.S. Holocaust Memorial  
 Museum  
 Berkeley Store Gallery Annex  
 UC Santa Cruz Early Music  
 Singers and Antiquarian  
 Funks  
 Boaz Accordions  
 Book Passage  
 Bucheon Gallery  
 Bus Barn Theater  
 Cal State Hayward  
 California Conservatory  
 Theatre  
 California Historical Society  
 Yerba Buena Center for the  
 Arts  
 Center for the Performing Arts  
 San Francisco State University  
 Jewish Studies Programs  
 California Institute of Integral  
 Studies  
 Clark University  
 Cody's Bookstore  
 Commonwealth Club of  
 California  
 Oakland Public Library  
 Easy Going Travel Shop &  
 Bookstore  
 First Congregational Church  
 First United Methodist Church  
 Fort Mason  
 Freight & Salvage  
 Friends of San Francisco Public  
 Library  
 Gaia  
 George Krevsky Gallery  
 San Francisco Humanities Inc.  
 Gunn High School  
 San Francisco Unified School  
 District  
 Varian Fry Foundation Project  
 International Rescue  
 Committee  
 San Francisco Public Library  
 Irish Literary and Historical  
 Society

government funds. Jewish studies programs, such as the Swig Jewish Studies Program at the University of San Francisco, which sponsored "Jews and Christians in a Secular World," receives both university and private funding. The sources of support may influence these organizations towards supporting cultural programs with Jewish themes or content that would be of interest to both Jews and non-Jews.

Synagogues, federations, Jewish community centers, Jewish museums, and Jewish libraries, among other Jewish organizations are involved in the production of Jewish art and culture. These organizations are the gatekeepers for the community. The art and culture that is promoted by these organizations is primarily geared for Jewish audiences. Future investigations should examine the role of these institutions in influencing the form and content of the art and culture available to the community. For example, while studies have shown that the Holocaust and Israel have become less important to a large majority of American Jews as an expression of their Jewish identity, they remain major themes found in Jewish art and culture.

### ***Co-Sponsorship of Programs***

Jewish organizations frequently co-sponsor events with each other. Art and cultural events provide an arena for collaboration between denominational organizations, and between religious institutions and communal organizations. The South Bay Institute for Living and Learning co-sponsored a number of lectures at synagogues, including "Mystic Tales from the Zohar" and "Reclaiming the Power of Blessing." The Jewish Federation of the East Bay sponsored "New Women's

Writing from Israel" with Congregation B'nai Tikvah.

Collaboration among Jewish and non-Jewish organizations has also become common. The involvement of Jewish and non-Jewish organizations is one reflection of the assimilation of Jews into American society. Jews are involved, as employees, volunteers, directors of all types of non-Jewish cultural and communal organizations and bring their own interests and experiences as Jews with them and may be involved in spearheading collaborative efforts on Jewish art and cultural events. Jewish art and culture has also become, in many ways, so much a part of American culture on a larger scale that these organizations actively seek to participate in Jewish art and culture. Additionally, art and culture provide a safe place for organizations that may differ on religious, political or ideological grounds, to work together. Examples of such collaborative efforts include, "50/50: Israeli Art from Bay Area Collections" at the The Jewish Museum San Francisco and co-sponsored by the Magnes Museum and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; a lecture about Jews in 20th Century Ireland at the Northern California Holocaust Center was co-sponsored by the Irish Literacy and Historical Society and the San Francisco Jewish Community Center; and a music and dance event at the UC Berkeley Hillel was co-sponsored by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the Middle East Children's Alliance, and American Friends Service Committee.

Given the competition for financial resources, increased collaboration between funders and sponsors may also be necessary. This may be especially important across geographic boundaries, because as we will see from our

data, the audience and users of Jewish culture are dispersed throughout a wide area. Smaller organizations may need the assistance of larger Jewish organizations and local non-Jewish ones in order to present a wider range of Jewish art and culture to their constituents. Since collaboration and partnerships do not usually happen on their own, these organizations may need assistance in facilitating these types of relationships, including help in learning about their existence. Additionally, since there are both positive and negative aspects of working with other organizations, assistance may be needed in navigating these new relationships, such as spelling out the details of the collaboration and managing conflicts that arise.

### **AUDIENCES AND USERS**

Our data allows us to examine the audiences and users of Jewish culture in the Bay Area to

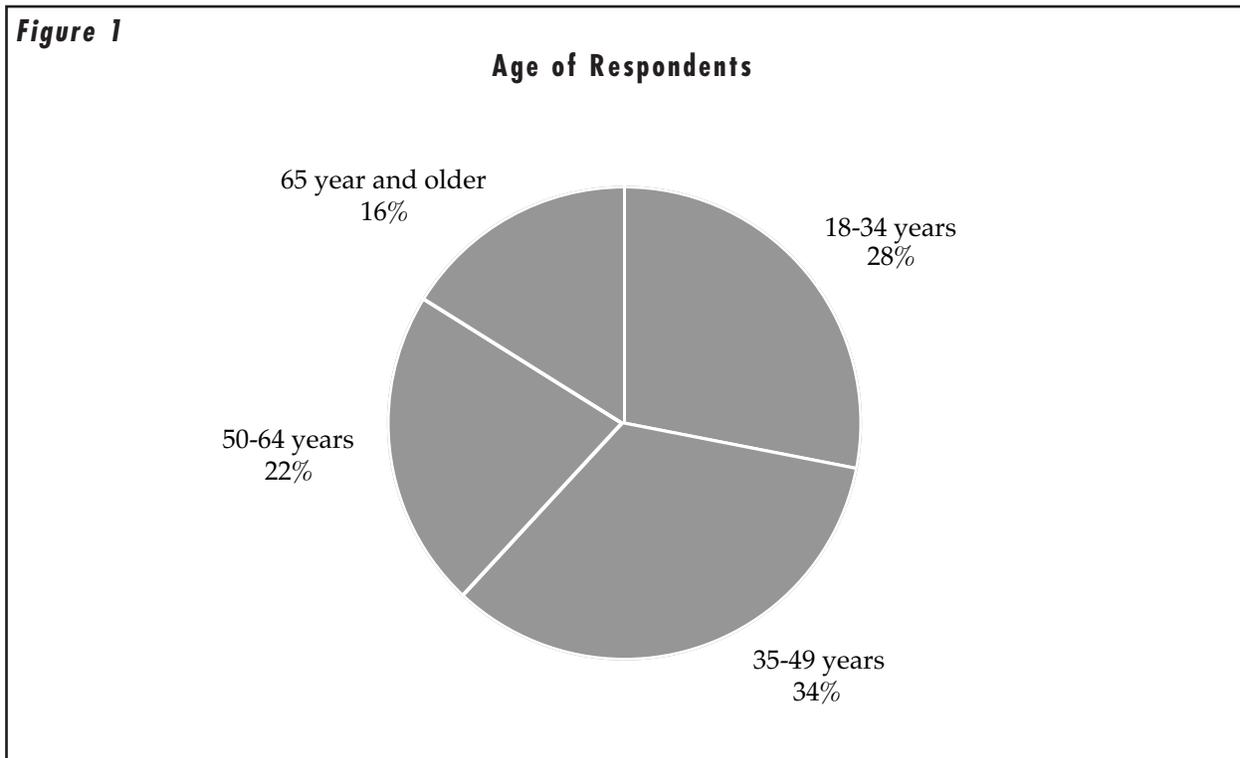
understand the role that culture plays in their construction of Jewish identity, their knowledge of Jewish cultural resources, their patterns of response, and their assessments of their encounters with different forms of Jewish cultural expression.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Sample**

#### ***Age and Gender***

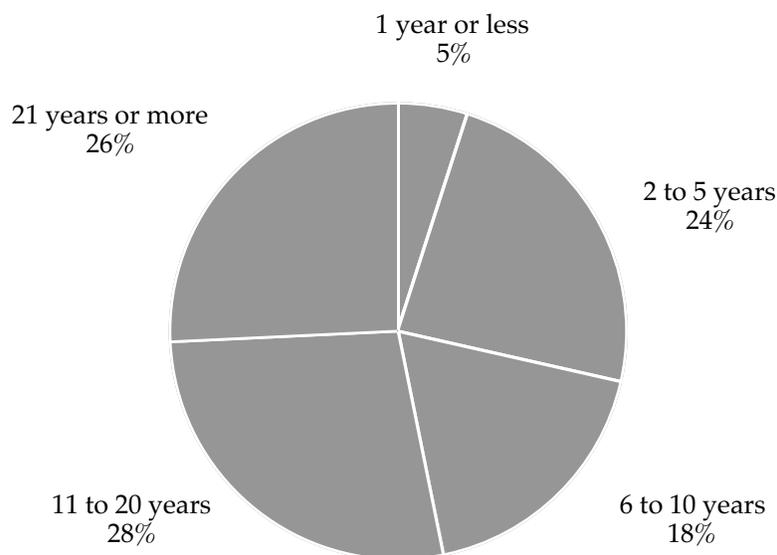
Some of the demographic characteristics of the sample reflect the character of the general population of the Bay Area. For example, a slightly higher proportion of the population is female, and 51% of the survey respondents are female. In terms of age, the Bay Area Jewish population is relatively young, with a sizable population under 35 years old. Among survey respondents, 28% are between 18 and 34, 34% are between 35 and 49, 22% are between 50 and 64, and 16% are 65 and over (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

**Length of Residence in the Bay Area**



**Place of Birth and Length of Residence in the Bay Area**

The majority of Bay Area Jews in the sample were born outside California, including 11% who are foreign born. Most of the other respondents are from the Northeast (34%) including 19% from the New York Metropolitan Area alone. Furthermore, many of these migrants have come within the past few years. About 30% have been here less than five years, and only 26% have been here for more than 20 years. Over half of respondents have lived in the Bay Area for 10 years or longer, 18% have lived there between 6 and 10 years and 29% have lived in the Bay Area for five years or less. Not only is the population mobile, it is spread throughout the Bay Area. While some concentration can be found in the Richmond and Sunset neighborhoods of San Francisco, the sample was geographically dispersed everywhere else. No zip codes had more than 3% of respondents and most had less than 1% (see Figure 2).

**Marital Status**

The sample reflects the diversity of households in terms of family status. There is a sizable population of single adults; more than 40% of the households report having never been married or are currently divorced, separated or widowed. Thirty percent of the respondents are single or never married, 4% say they are divorced or separated and 7% say they are widowed. Fifty-nine percent are currently married or living with a partner. We can also assume that given the large gay and lesbian population in the Bay Area, many of those who say they are married or partnered are gay or lesbian (see Figure 3).

**Intermarriage**

Among those respondents who are married or living with a partner, 35% live in intermarried households. This does not represent the rate of intermarriage, which would be considerably higher than 35%. This total includes all married and partnered couples across age and generational categories. Intermarriage

rates are much lower for older Jews, closer to 10% for those over 65, for example.

**Race**

The sample also shows more racial diversity than is commonly assumed in the Jewish community. About 10% of the respondents indicated that they were Black or some other non-Caucasian race, as were 10% of their spouses. Since these are not perfectly intersecting, we estimate that 13% of the sampled households are interracial. If one includes adopted children of color, the proportion of Jewish-mixed race households is even higher.

**Education**

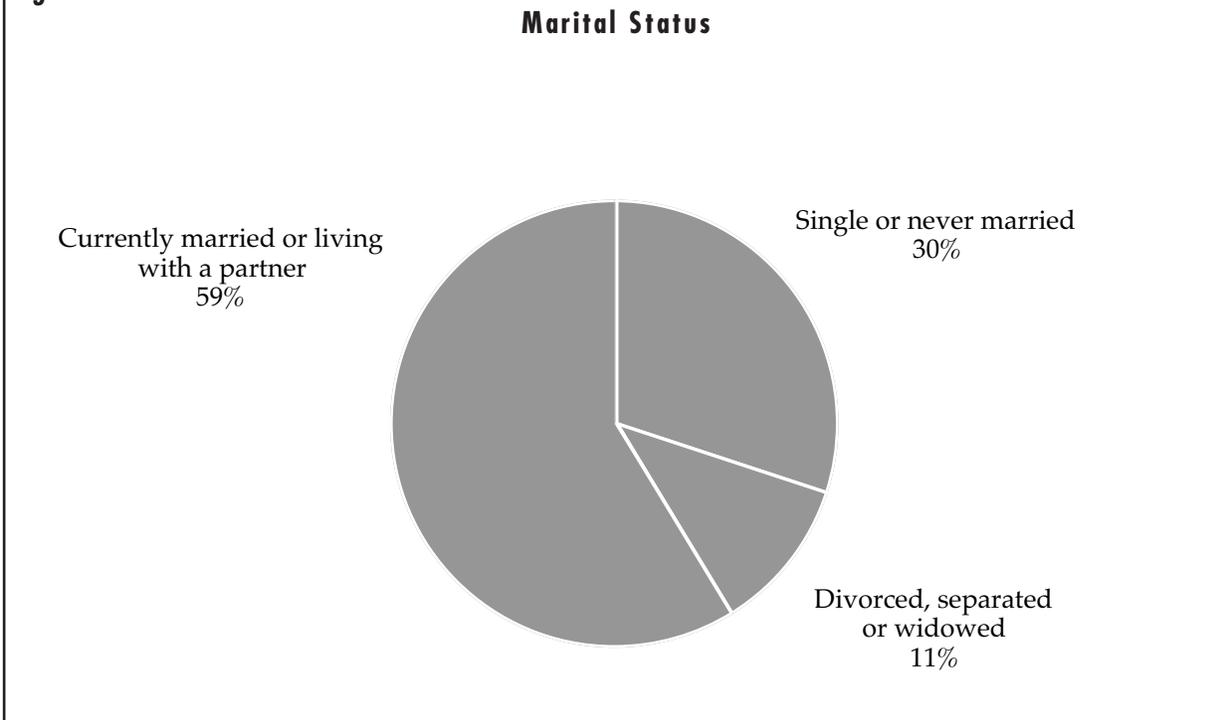
Bay Area Jews are remarkably well-educated — 90% have a college degree or higher. The vast majority of respondents have finished at least four years of college. Less than 10% have a high school education or less. Thirteen percent of respondents have an associates degree or similar type of degree or

diploma. Thirty-eight percent of respondents say they have a bachelors degree, 22% say they have an masters degree, 17% have a doctorate or other professional degree, such as a JD or MD (see Figure 4).

**Income**

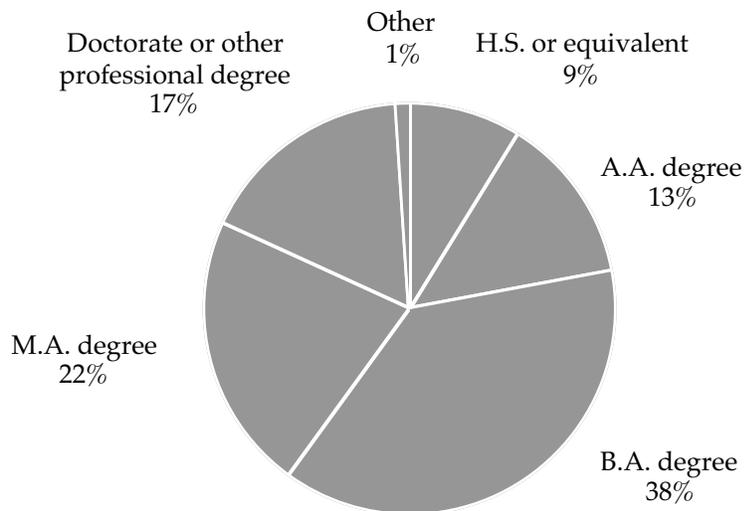
Jews tend to have higher incomes than the general population. The median income of Jews in the sample is \$87,500 versus the \$50,767 median reported for the Bay Area in the U.S. Census Bureau’s March 1999 Current Population Survey. Twenty-one percent of respondents earned less than \$50,000 in 1999, 20% earned between \$50,000 and \$74,999, 24% earned \$75,000-\$99,999 and 35% earned over \$100,000, including 8% earning more than \$250,000 per year. Nevertheless, 41% of households are either low income or middle income, challenging the notion that all Jews are wealthy and would have money for expensive social activities (see Figure 5).

**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**

**Highest Degree or Diploma**



**Jewish Identity and Jewish Education**

**Denomination**

The Jews of the Bay Area are most likely to identify themselves as Reform. This does not mean that they belong to a Reform congregation or believe in the Reform ideology. It does mean that they have some affinity for Reform Judaism as opposed to other branches. Forty-five percent of respondents identify as Reform, 25% as Conservative, 5% as Reconstructionist or Renewal, and 26% say they identify as something else. Something else includes just Jewish, culturally Jewish, and many other self-defined labels that people use to describe their own Judaism. Many of the survey respondents also do not identify themselves religiously as Jewish. Almost 19% identified themselves as agnostic, say they are more than one religion, or say they have no religion (see Figure 6).

Even fewer, only 69% of the respondents identified their children as being Jewish and

no other religion. About 6% identified them as either Protestant or Catholic, 12% as agnostic or none, and 14% as more than one religion, including Jewish. The data reflect the ambiguous nature of many children's Jewish identity. The 6% who identify as Christian has grown significantly since the 1987 study of the Bay Area Jewish population (Tobin 1988).

Focus group participants also had strong feelings about being a Jew without defining themselves through a denomination. The following response was heard often in the focus group discussions:

"I strongly identify as a secular Jew and I put capital letters on the [term] Secular Jew because my resentment about the Jewish community is that you can only define yourself as a Jew if you have religion."

Stories of institutional disaffiliation are also quite common:

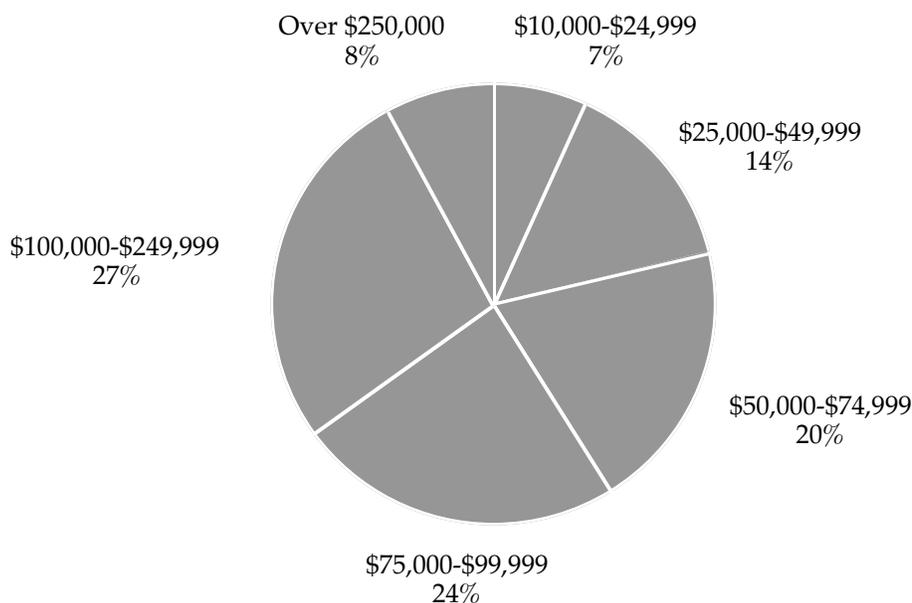
"I grew up for the first thirteen years in a public school in Brooklyn and the rabbi lived four doors from us so, of course, I went to Hebrew school as did my other two brothers. I loved the ritual, I loved the singing, I was the cantor for the group. I was the rabbi's favorite person to do anything of the singing or reciting nature. ... When I turned thirteen and had a wonderful bar mitzvah, I totally disconnected. I had not really believed in God, I didn't know what God was all about. Even as a youngster I never thought about it. But when we had an opportunity to become secular and still retain Jewish identity, Jewish songs and some of the rituals, etc., I jumped at it."

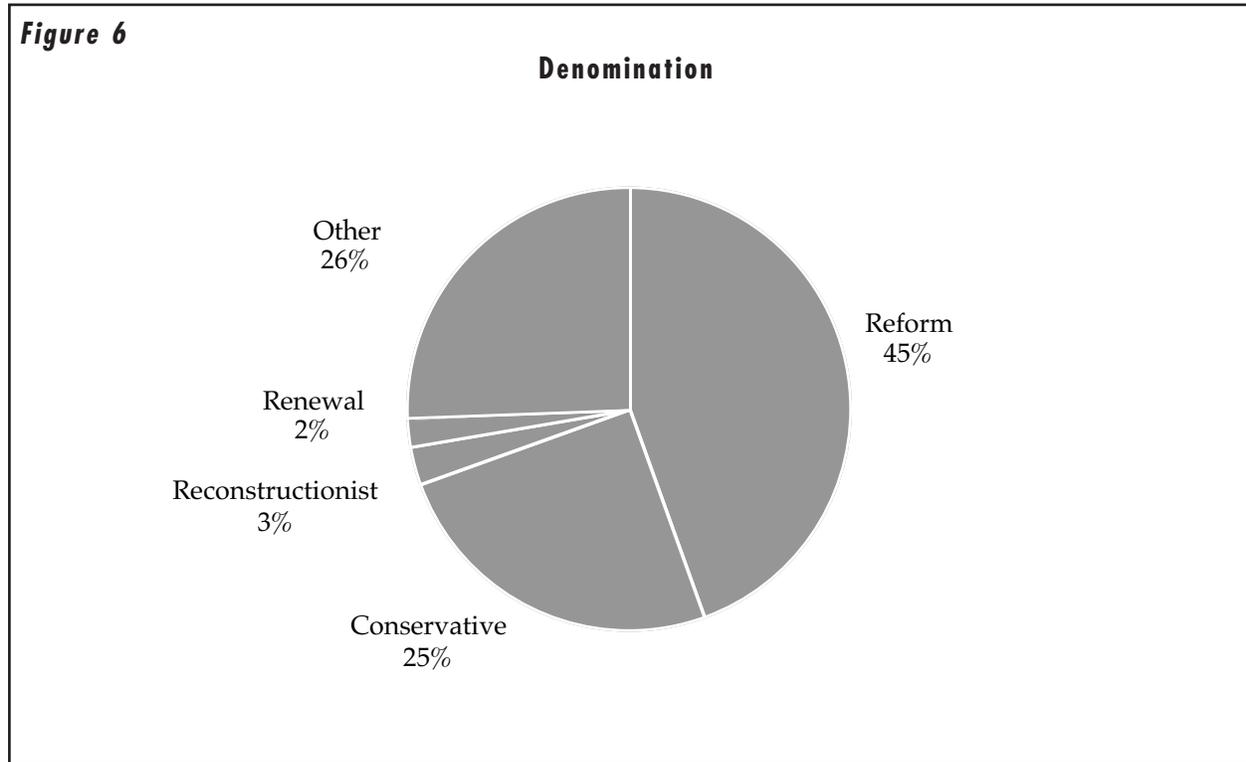
Others report negative experiences with the organized Jewish community that led them to dropping out of Jewish communal life. Some reject cultural Judaism. And others who are religiously involved believe that those who do participate are the real Jews:

"I've been noticing so many of the participants here really don't talk so much about religiosity and God but more they talk about cultural identification. And I think, in my mind, that there's a real partition. I mean, I like Jewish traditions... I love to hear the Jewish cantors on Yom Kippur. I put it on my record player and I go crazy. I cry sometimes because it tugs at your heart strings. But I don't believe in God. It's ridiculous. And I think most people, if they would really face up to it, are ... expressing hypocrisy. I mean Jewish culture, Jewish history, Jewish identification, be proud of Jewish Olympic stars, actors...that's wonderful. That's national pride. That's Judaism. But that's not religious Jewishness. ... Yiddish is not Jewish. Hebrew is Jewish. In order to be Jewish you've got to be an orthodox Jew. They are the only true Jews, in my opinion. Everybody else is a cultural Jew. Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist."

**Figure 5**

**Reported Income in 1999**





This participant reflects the view that only the Orthodox are real Jews. Others are satisfied with their levels of participation:

“I am not disappointed in Judaism. I think people take what they want out of it. I take a Bible study class at the Jewish Community Center in Palo Alto, so that’s where I come from. I am not basically religious. I mean ... we don’t go to synagogue now. We go to Hillel for services on the High Holy Days.”

Both the qualitative and quantitative data show that one’s Jewish identity is not synonymous with one’s religious identity. The issue of defining one’s Jewishness must also encompass ethnic identity and is important since many who do not see themselves as a Jew by religion have been excluded from many traditional surveys of Jewish identity. One participant, a schoolteacher, said that people, especially younger ones, are more willing to express their Jewish identity:

“It’s the mood, it’s the genre of the time. It’s chic now to have some ethnic identity.”

Another participant in a different focus group picked up on this theme:

“I’ve always been envious of people who had an ethnicity. I would look at people who were Italian and think, ‘Wow! It’s so neat to be Italian,’ or any ethnicity, and then all of a sudden I realized I had one. And I hadn’t really paid attention to it. So once I realized I had one too, I liked it. I like the ethnicity, and I like the cultural part of being Jewish.”

When given the option to identify as a cultural Jew, a religious Jew, or both, most people say they are both. They see Judaism as an amalgam of both ethnicity and religiosity. Twenty-eight percent of respondents identify as either only a Jew by religion or a Jew by religion and culture and /or ethnicity. Fifty-four percent identify only as a Jew by culture

or ethnicity, and 18% do not identify themselves in this way at all.

Many of the participants were aware of the difficulty of putting a single label on Judaism:

“Is it a matter of religion or is it a matter of ethnicity? Even the word ethnicity fails — peoplehood rather than ethnicity. It’s a complicated mix.”

Focus group participants agree that one does not need to participate in religious practices in order to consider oneself Jewish.

Connections to one’s Jewish identity are expressed in a variety of ways. One participant noted:

“I don’t come from a religious background, but from a very ethnically conscious background,”

while another said:

“I was raised in an ethnically, culturally Jewish home, but with not much religious input.”

Many focus group participants say they express their Jewishness through non-religious practices and behaviors, such as identifying with other Jews and their interest in Jewish culture:

“You don’t have to be religious to be Jewish. I feel just as Jewish, as an atheist, as anybody does. And I love Jewish music, I like Jewish food, I like Jewish jokes.”

People feel strongly connected as Jews, but not necessarily to religious Judaism as defined by synagogue:

“My grandmother kept a kosher house and I loved going over there as a child because of the smells. I never had any Jewishness in my house except when my grandmother came over. The Jewishness of the whole community was there, very dominant, in my early upbringing. Later through art and films and music, I’ve had Jewishness in my life, but it’s never been a religious element. Often times for Passover Seder, a friend invited me in to the JCC but it wasn’t part of my upbringing to observe my

Jewishness. I feel it, it’s part of me, I identify with it, I go to art events and music events, cultural events. I don’t know, I think it’s just such a richness that even if you don’t practice and study Hebrew and the Talmud it’s still just a beautiful tradition.”

***“I went to Hebrew school. I loved the ritual and the singing. Then, after my bar mitzvah, I totally disconnected. But, later, when I had an opportunity to become secular and still retain Jewish identity, I jumped at it.”***

Individuals love being Jewish, and are expressive in their passion. The theme of defending being Jewish without kashrut and regular synagogue attendance is something that many grew up with and embrace:

“We didn’t keep Shabbat. We didn’t keep kosher. We [didn’t go to synagogue, except for] Sunday school and High Holy days and [we celebrated] Pesach and Hanukkah at home. But [through my activities] I always felt culturally and socially Jewish — youth group at the temple, the B’nai B’rith Girls. ... When I went to my twentieth high school reunion ten years ago, I sat there with two big tables full of people that were BBG.”

Focus group participants also talked about their connection to their Jewish identity through their beliefs in Jewish traditions and sensibilities that were embedded in them when growing up – a sense of social justice, a certain political perspective or intelligence, and even humor. One man talked about his Jewish identity coming through in his work. He said: “I’m a plaintiff civil right’s lawyer and that’s part of my Jewish identity.”

Others equate Judaism with a good and decent parent:

“My father spoke Yiddish. My father was an amazing model of human decency and humility and I can say a lot about that. Also humor. He was an amazing man, and I kind of associate the Jewish ethical sense with my father.”

Some cultural Jews feel that their form of Judaism will not last, that true Judaism is being “diluted” and may not survive:

“So the attachment to Judaism was very broad. It was a religious attachment, a Zionistic attachment. Culture didn’t exist as a separate thing from the totality, so it wasn’t separated out. It’s something you were. And, depending on who you were, you had to know your history, you had to know your God, you had to know your people, you had to know your culture because it’s who you were. It isn’t something that you chose — it’s something that chose you. And that your responsibility was to perpetuate that to your children. Because of its uniqueness and preciousness, you don’t let it slide. And fortunately, enough of that was transmitted. My sons

are both building very Jewish lives with their wives and the grandchildren. All the kids go to these Hebrew type schools and it gives me enormous pleasure that they are as knowledgeable as I was, as my parents were, and there’s a sense of a future when I look at them. If I look at pure cultural Judaism, I don’t see that. I see dilution after dilution and what’s going to be passed...and I look at it and it makes me very, very sad. As a piece of a larger thing, I can see it. As a thing in itself, I don’t.”

Some argued that being Jewish requires understanding of Judaism, laws, and theology. Even if one is not observant, he has to be cognizant of basic Judaism:

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*“I’ve always been envious of people who had an ethnicity. I would look at Italians and think, ‘Wow! It’s so neat to be Italian.’ Then all of a sudden I realized I had one. ... I like the cultural part of being Jewish.”*

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“It is, in our case, a culture and history is linked to our religion because that’s where it all came from. That’s where our laws came from, and the ethics and the teachings and the conflicts and the understanding of the incompleteness of man and the fallibility of

everybody including our greatest prophet, Moses, and what this means about society in general. If you don’t understand these things, you can’t really be a Jew. Now, if you understand them, without being religious — fine with me. Religion as such, no but you’ve got to understand. To be a Jew, you’ve got to understand. You’ve got to do more than love kosher food and Jewish music.”

For others, being Jewish is an intellectual endeavor, that Jews must be thinking and analyzing:

“It’s this Jewish intellectual way of thinking about the world and I think that the Seder says it all. Why is this night different [from]

other nights? And you read the Jewish articles or Jewish books and they all, from my mind, ask that same question but in different ways. That's what I think differentiates a Jewish book or Jewish thing from others and it's a higher level of intellectual thinking. ... Look at the atonement. What other religions produce something like atonement? Such a great intellectual paradox of thinking. Every other religion produces the books that tell you how to think and what to think. Judaism gives you ways of thinking, not how to think and what to think. So that makes me very proud because I see that way of thinking in almost everything that's Jewish."

One man described being Jewish as a blend of culture, observance, and a distinctiveness. He relates to Woody Allen's satire of defining gentiles:

"You know, we play klezmer music at home. I play clarinet and my 12 year old plays the sax and my 8 year old plays the piano. He and his mother each play a hand and it's wonderful — the cultural thing. And I'm much more observant than my parents were. I was sort of their delegate to the synagogue and went to a Conservative synagogue [but] they never went. And they never observed anything. And when we'd have a Seder, my mother would say after about ten minutes, let's eat, already. I'm not very observant. I go on the High Holy days and now I'm getting more involved because of my son's bar mitzvah but, you know, we always have a Seder, we always observe Hanukkah, light the candles every night and mostly Friday nights although it's not totally consistent. She's more Unitarian. I feel almost as comfortable with Unitarians as in the Jewish renewal except that I can't get white bread out of my mind, you know, the Woody

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*"I grew up in New York City, so you could definitely be a cultural Jew. ... It was a Jewish neighborhood, but you never saw anyone being observant except for the High Holidays."*

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Allen description of it. Because, I mean, they do some Jewish ritual in Unitarian, but it doesn't seem right for some reason. It seems to be a mimicry. Anyway, there are all these different aspects of it. There's the culture, there's the music, there's the history. The observant, which I guess could be called religious, the cultural, the historical sense, the music. I mean, all of that doesn't all quite fit, you know. It seems like Judaism can be so many different things."

A large number of survey respondents and focus group participants were raised in or lived in New York before moving to California. These individuals highlight a sense of Jewishness being all around them in New York, rather than a more limited or isolated feeling that exists in the Bay Area.

One said:

"I grew up in New York City, so you could definitely be a cultural Jew without being observant. And most people that I

knew were not observant at all. They were Jewish, yeah. And the neighborhoods were Jewish, you know. It was a Jewish neighborhood, but you never really saw anyone being observant except for the High Holidays, like Passover."

The New York factor is important, and expressed by a number of discussants. They were surrounded by the religion, the culture, and the ethnicity of food and language:

"I come from the East Bronx. When I was a child, I thought everyone in the world was Jewish. We lived [with] a million Jews."

Finally, culture, the main subject of our study, was identified as the way that many individuals connected to their Jewish identity:

“What I do now, what I’m really interested in is music and dance. I’m really getting into klezmer just like I really got into salsa. I teach Israeli folk dance in addition to teaching English so there are a lot of different ways, culturally, that I’m very involved.”

The cultural aspects are often filled with memories of grandparents and parents. They are auditory, visual, and other sensual connections to their past through culture:

My great-grandmother was not a religious person but was very active in the Yiddish Theater in Chicago. Another part of my family was musicians for generations. They owned a piano factory and we knew that people in the family always played the piano but we had kind of lost the connection to the music. So I have no music that I know that my family played or sang for generations. And it’s funny because there was something — something didn’t get translated down in terms of the actual music or the actual Yiddish poetry or the mandolin playing — but the, there was a spark there and in the stories somehow, it’s come down that we were connected to this and these things were important to us.

For others, they are moved by the Jewish culture that they find in general society:

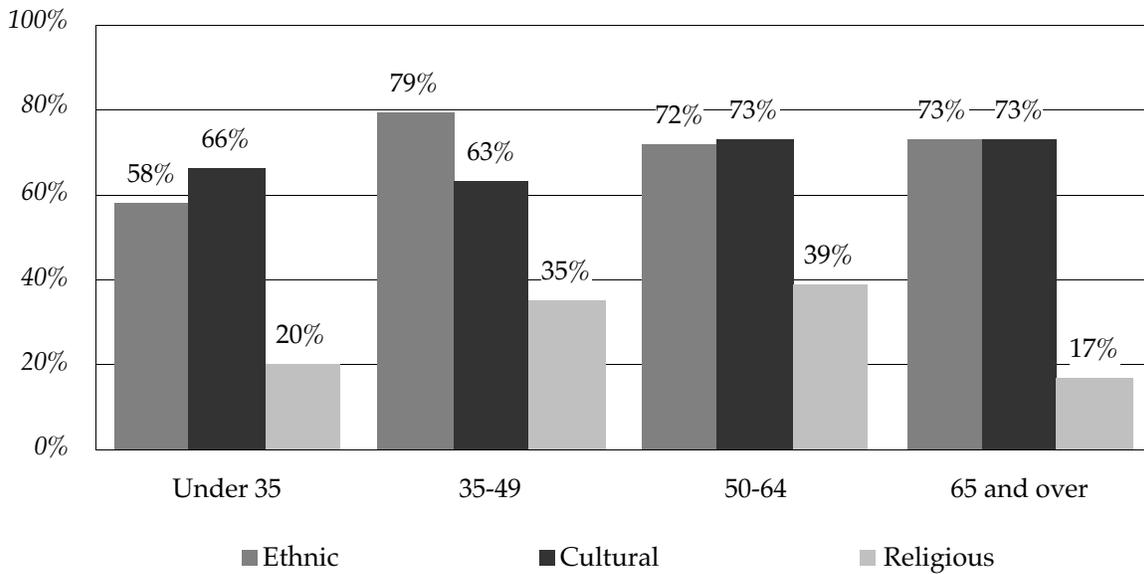
I’ve always been in love with Broadway. Broadway shows and the whole theater thing, the whole, you know, performance aspect of music and culture and it’s always been very important to me that the people I surround myself with be very intelligent. I just can’t stand people who aren’t smart, you know, and I think all that comes — it’s stereotypical, but there are certain values that Jews have on culture [and] education and intelligence and humor. ...There are just things that I really like about being Jewish a lot.

Not all participants had a strong sense of their Jewish identity in any way. Some individuals expressed outright ambivalence about their relationship to Judaism or concern about the lack of Jewish identity that comes from their own limited connection to Judaism:

I guess the thing with my relationship to Judaism is ambivalence. And I look back...my father was raised in an Orthodox family. The first time he had pork was at my mother’s house who was also from a Jewish family but not religious. And my parents, I think, never quite resolved between themselves and their five children, how to deal with Jewish life. They sent us, in a kind of rote way, to Jewish summer camp and to Jewish school and my brother and my sister and all my other siblings got bar mitzvahed, but I was rebellious and I refused to do it. And part of it was, I think, at that young age, sort of recognizing a kind of hypocrisy in the whole situation. And I think the shallowness of the education that was being transmitted to us. Not ironically, I became the most interested in the family in being Jewish once I got older. It’s no surprise because I think I was always the most interested but, you know, rebelled against the shallowness. And it’s funny, my parents still to this day remain kind of politically and culturally Jewish but kind of bristle at the fact that some of their children observe Shabbat. You know, it’s kind of weird and creepy for them. It’s a little weird and creepy for us too. And so there’s a kind of ambivalence about all that. Nonetheless, my father always did this incredibly beautiful Seder every year. You know, with a huge group of people and he took great pride in that. And so, one of my best friends is a guy who comes from a long lineage of rabbis and I have a kind of envy of my friend because he’s so clear about his Judaism. I mean, he knows exactly what to do with it, how to teach his kids and I don’t have any of that. I mean, I

**Figure 7**

**Identify as a Cultural, Ethnic, or Religious Jew by Age**



married a woman who was in the process of converting to Judaism when I met her and that was important to me that I have a Jewish wife. But that's also ambivalent, the relationship that we have — is she really Jewish? Oh, kind of — not really. And I think that my case, in many ways, is quite common among my generation and so, on a certain level I feel very attracted to Jewish religion and repulsed at the same time.

Nearly all Bay Area Jews identify as cultural or ethnic, rather than religious. Younger Jews are slightly more likely to emphasize the cultural (see Figure 7).

**Synagogue Membership**

Synagogue membership is very low. Less than one-third of respondents say they currently belong to a synagogue. These numbers are highly inflated, since other studies have shown that Jews over-report synagogue membership by a factor of 100%. Therefore, we should expect synagogue affiliation to be

about 16%. Age is also a significant factor in synagogue membership. Only 17% of those who are under 35 say that they belong to a synagogue, compared to 31% of those 35-49, 46% of those 50-64, and 40% of those 65 and over. If we decrease the numbers by half, we see remarkably low rates of membership for those under 35.

In addition to synagogue membership, formal affiliation is experienced through belonging to other organizations, such as a Jewish Community Center, Hadassah or the Anti-Defamation League. For the most part, individuals who belong to synagogues also belong to other Jewish organizations. Fifty-eight percent of respondents say they do not belong to any Jewish organization or synagogue, compared to 19% who say they belong to synagogue and other Jewish organizations, 13% who say they are currently a member of a synagogue only and 10% who say they belong to other Jewish organizations

but do not belong to a synagogue (see Figure 8).

Younger Jewish respondents, therefore, are less likely to have any formal affiliation than older Jewish respondents. Among respondents 18-34, two-thirds say they do not belong to a synagogue or other Jewish organization, compared to 59% of respondents age 35-49, 48% of respondents age 50-64 and 36% of respondents age 65 and over. Overall, the large majority of households are not formally connected to the Jewish community (see Figure 9).

Low affiliation rates were also found to be related to one's length of residence in the Bay Area. Only 13% of those who have lived in the Bay Area one year or less and 36% of those who lived in the Bay Area five years or less belong to a synagogue or other Jewish organization, compared to 45% of those who lived in the Bay Area six to ten years, 40%

who have lived in the Bay Area 11 to 20 years, and 63% of those living in the Bay Area 21 years or longer.

As we will see later in this report, low membership in synagogues and other Jewish organizations may have implications for individuals' participation in Jewish culture.

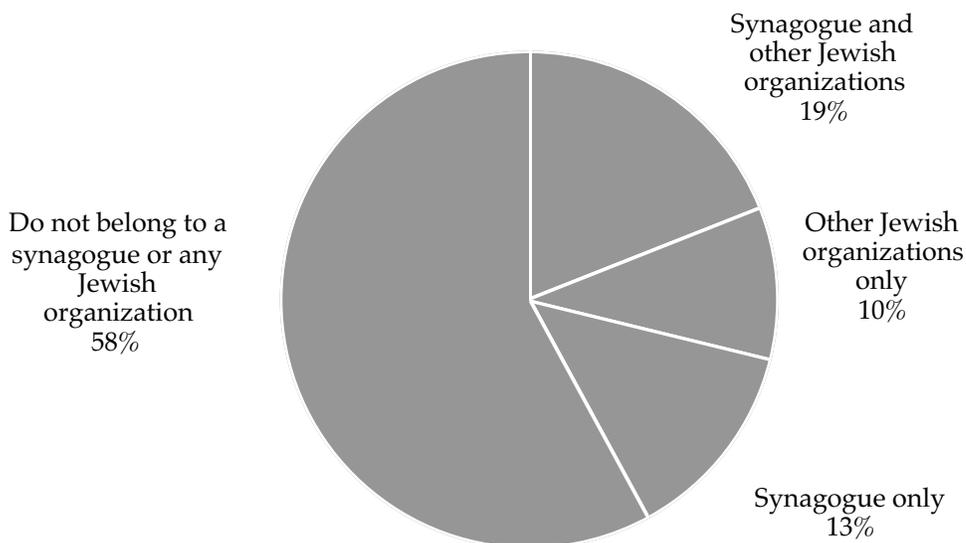
### **Synagogue Attendance**

Synagogue attendance, while sporadic, is at a higher level than synagogue membership. Twenty-six percent of survey respondents say they never attend synagogue, 46% say they attend on special occasions such as weddings or bar mitzvahs and/or on the High Holidays, 11% say they attend services less than once a month and 17% say they attend at least once a month (see Figure 10).

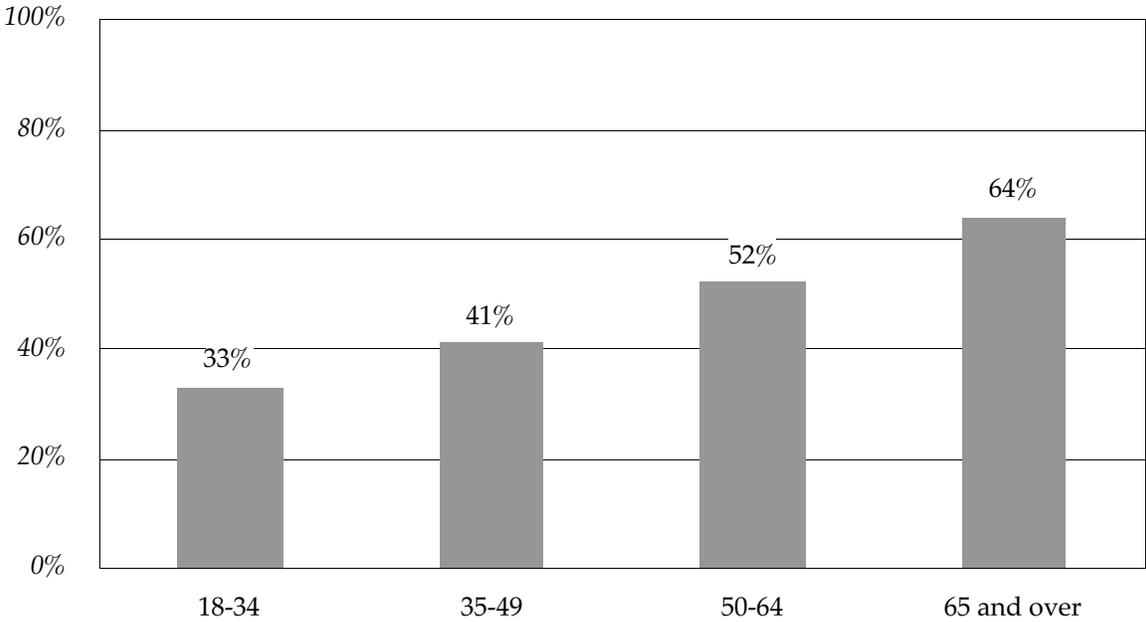
While younger Jews are less likely to belong to a synagogue, almost 60% still attend on High Holidays or special occasions. While older Jews are more likely to maintain a membership, they are less likely to attend

**Figure 8**

### **Membership in Synagogue and/or Other Jewish organizations**

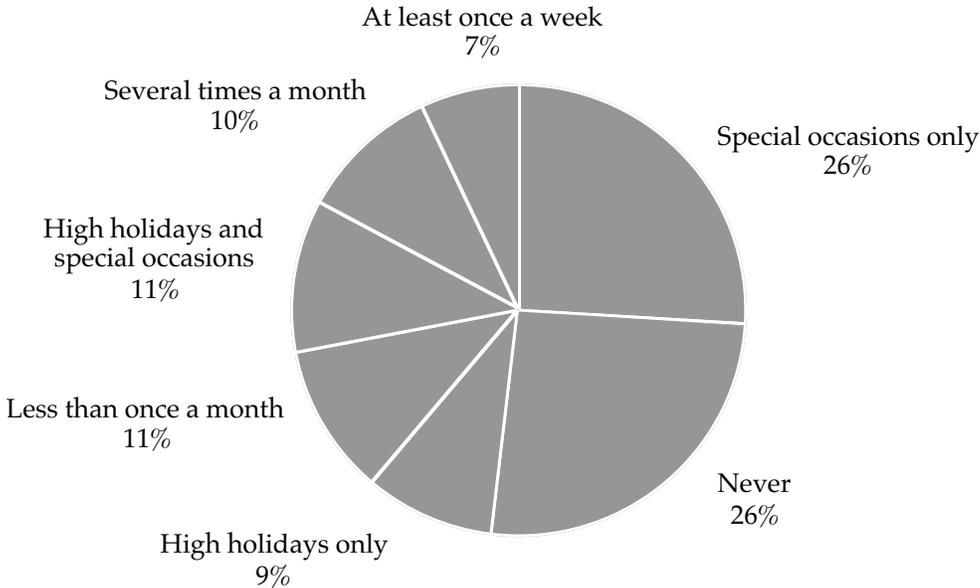


**Figure 9**  
**Percent Reporting Membership in a Synagogue and/or Other Jewish Organization by Age**

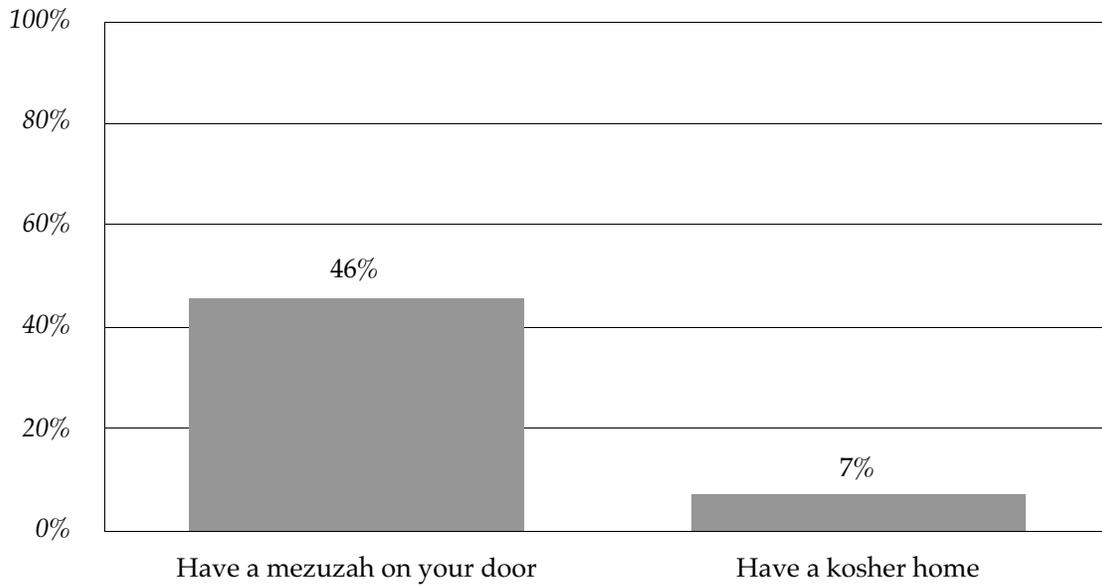


**Figure 10**

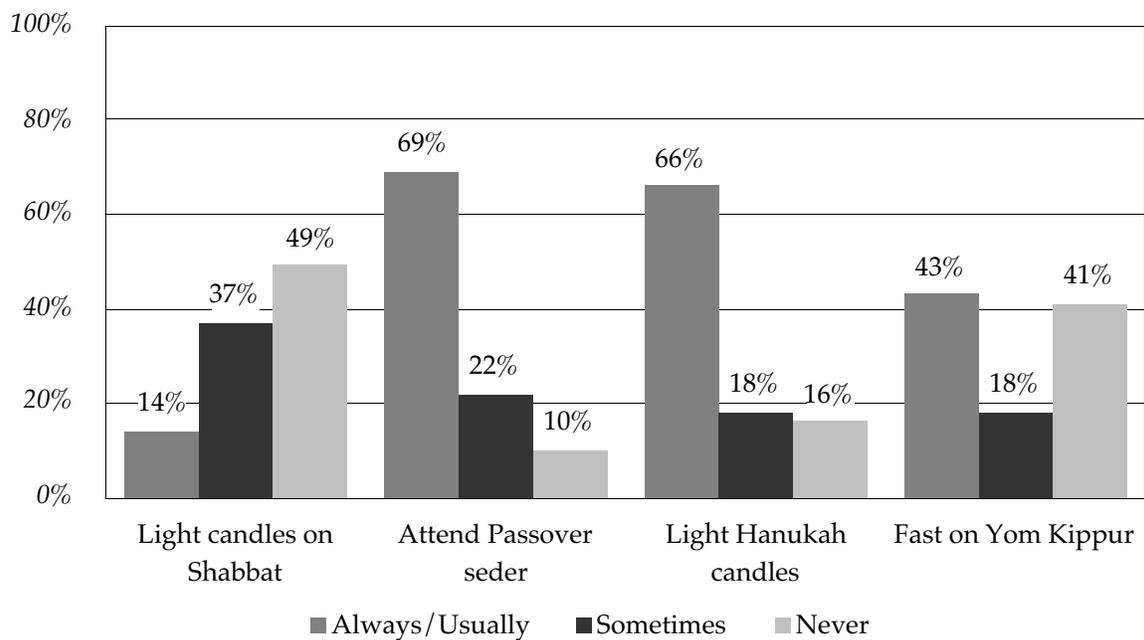
**Attendance at Religious Services**



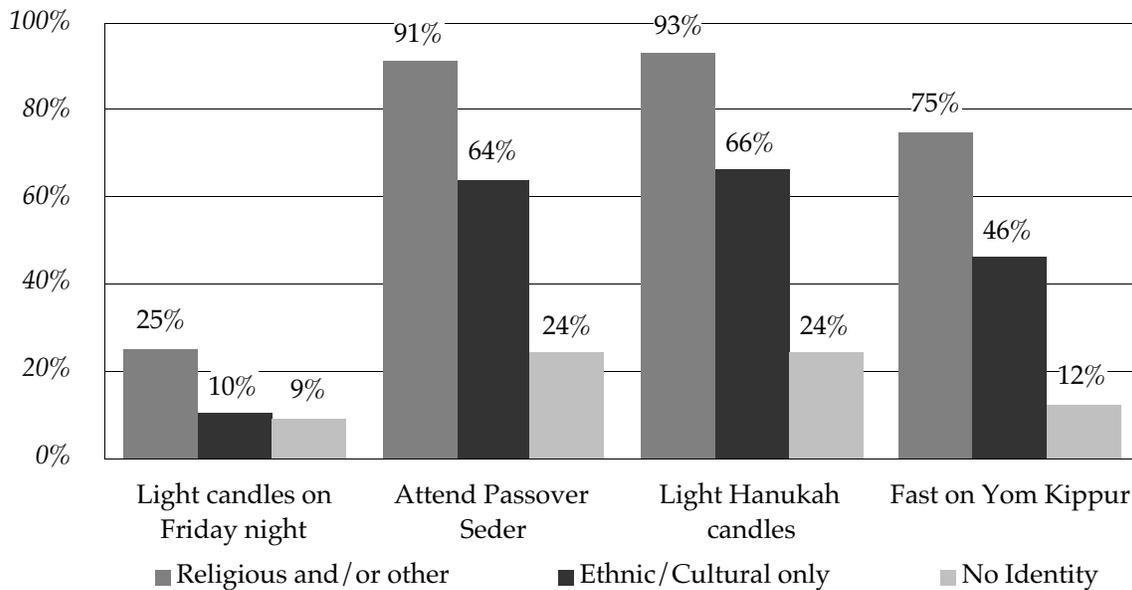
**Figure 11**  
**Percent of Respondents Who Keep a Kosher Home or Have a Mezuzah on Their Door**



**Figure 12**  
**In general, how frequently do you participate in Jewish holidays?**



**Figure 13**  
**Percent of Respondents who Always or Usually Participate by Jewish Identity**



services. For example, 40% say they never attend synagogue and only 31% say they attend on High Holidays or special occasions.

**Religious Practice**

It is clear that traditional observance is not the primary form of everyday expression of being a Jew for most of the respondents. However, nearly everyone has some involvement in traditional religious practice. Seven percent of respondents say they keep a kosher home. Forty-six percent say they have a mezuzah on their door (see Figure 11).

More respondents, however, did participate in other forms of traditional religious practice. Sixty-six percent say they always or usually light Hanukah candles, 69% say they always or usually attend a Passover Seder, 43% always or usually fast on Yom Kippur and 14% say they always or usually light candles on Shabbat (see Figure 12).

Levels of ritual observance are quite low across age groups, especially among those younger than 35 and older than 65. Passover is less observed among younger Jews. Older Jews are less likely to light candles on Hanukah or Shabbat than all other age groups. Younger Jews as well as older Jews are less likely to fast on Yom Kippur. Levels of religious practice may also contribute to how one identifies oneself as a Jew. Those respondents who do not identify as religious Jews have lower levels of traditional observance when compared to those who identify as religious Jews. Whether one keeps kosher or attends synagogue may be more important to these individuals in defining themselves as a religious Jew than other religious practices. Three percent of this group keeps kosher compared to 20% of those who do identify as a religious Jew. Of those who say they are not religious, 20% say never attend synagogue and 7% say they attend

once a month or more, compared to 9% and 44%, respectively, of those who say they are religious (see Figure 13).

One woman from our focus groups disagreed with the findings about the low levels of observance that was found among Bay Area Jews:

“I would say most of us come from places where we are way more observant than the way we were raised. Almost everybody I know is way more observant than the way they were raised. Not everybody, but many of them were raised with no Judaism, no practice in their homes and they’re just desperately seeking it.”

### **Importance of Being Jewish**

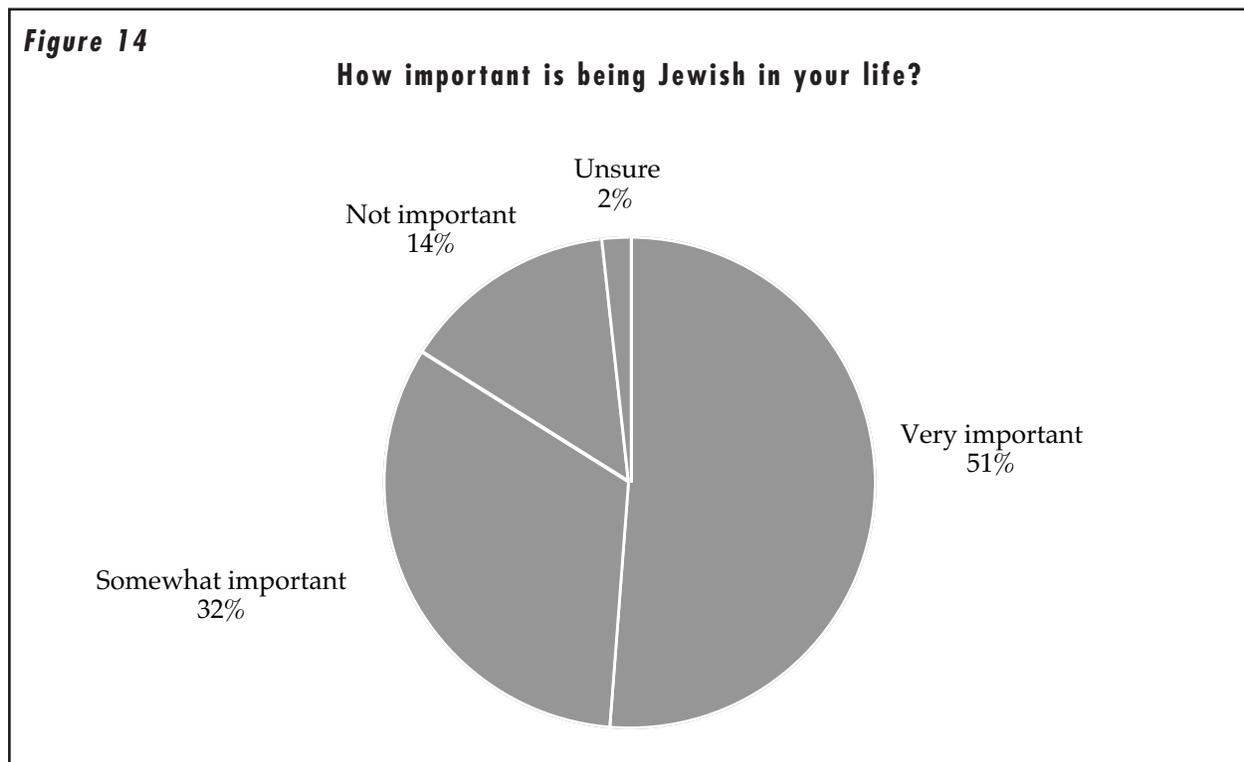
Fifty-one percent of respondents say that being Jewish is very important, 32% say it is somewhat important, 14% say it is not important, and 2% are unsure (see Figure 14).

Survey respondents were also asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a variety

of questions about their connection to the Jewish community. Forty-five percent of respondents strongly agree and 43% agree with the statement, “I feel connected to Jewish people.” Forty-five percent of the respondents strongly agree and 33% agree with the statement, “I feel a special connection to my Jewish friends.” Fifty-eight percent of respondents strongly agree and 33% agree with the statement, “I feel really good about being Jewish.”

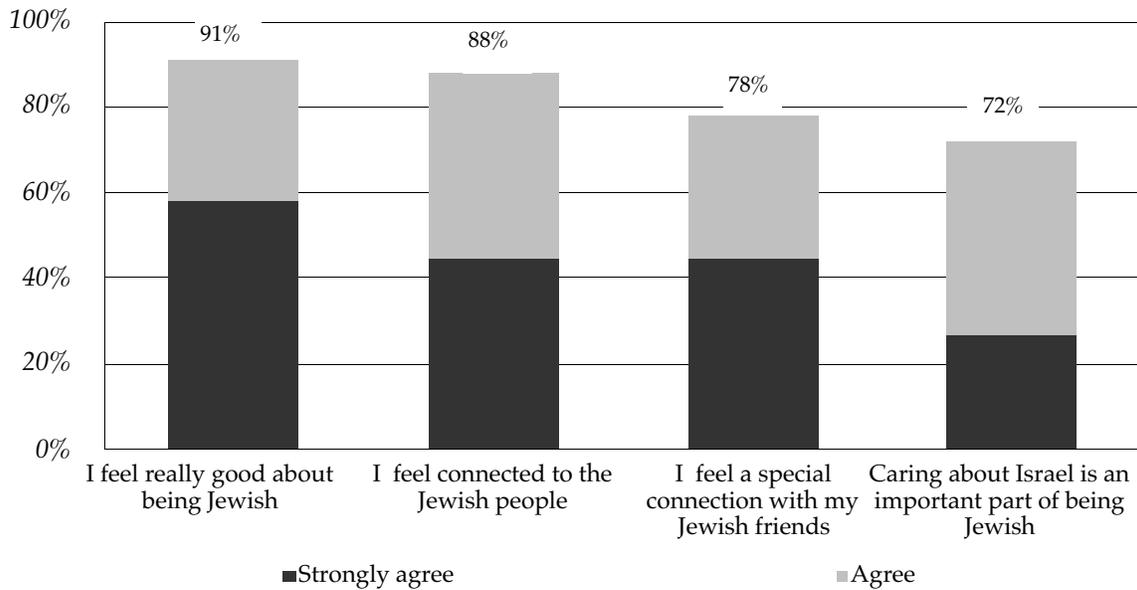
We also asked respondents how about their relationship to Israel. Twenty-seven percent of respondents strongly agree and 45% agree with the statement “Caring about Israel is an important part of being Jewish.” Forty-two percent said they had been to Israel (see Figure 15).

Many of those in our focus groups elaborated on the special connection that they feel with other Jews:



**Figure 15**

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements ....**



“I like to read books written by Jews and this may sound very strange, but I read the obituaries every day and when I see a Jewish name in there, I feel very sad. I really do.”

They expressed their pleasure in “owning” prominent Jews, even if one did not like them:

“I mean you can criticize Woody Allen, but he’s great. Aren’t you proud that we have so many great Jews...no matter what you do in art, film, science, religion.”

Or conversely, non-Jews cannot even understand Woody Allen, because he belongs only to the Jews:

“I could never understand how Christians could really appreciate Woody Allen but they do. Because for me, it just seems like it’s a connection with my cultural background, so I can really relate to the humor and I adopt it as my own. I’m very proud that, you know, despite what a creep he is

in other ways, you know, that the guy has that sense of humor which is one of the best things about Judaism as far as I’m concerned.”

Like the focus group above, Jews who produce culture are a source of pride. They are representatives of Jewish intelligence and creativity:

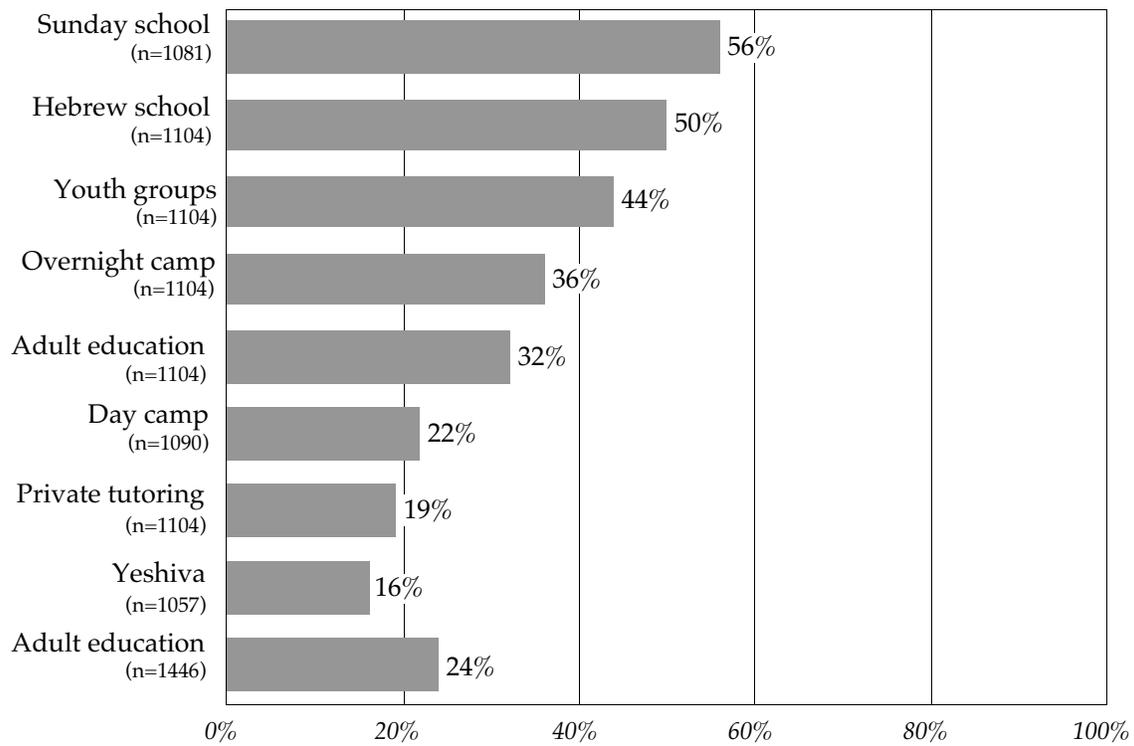
“We went to visit an artist in Oakland and I had to buy something from her and I bought a piece of her art. I felt very good about this menorah. She did something. I have it hanging in the hallway, but it was a very rewarding thing to meet an artist. My cousin’s an artist. There was a musician. There is a lot of talent that you come across within the Jewish community ... intellectually, scientifically, musically, [and] in dance.”

Similarly, Jews feels a connection through culture by being with other Jews:

“I remember walking by the UC Theater and seeing this huge line of people

**Figure 16**

**Type of Jewish Education Received**



Adds up to more than 100% since individuals may have had more than one type of Jewish education.

standing out there. I was like what’s going on and somebody said it’s the Jewish Film Festival and you think wow — it must be happening.”

Older Jewish respondents exhibit the strongest emotional connections to being Jewish. Sixty percent of respondents 50-64 and 56% of respondents 65 and over say that being Jewish is very important, compared to 40% respondents younger than 35 and 49% of those 35-49. Additionally, older respondents, especially those 65 and over are more likely to say they have a special connection with Jewish friends or feel really good about being Jewish, compared to other age groups. Seventy-one percent of those 65 and over say they strongly agree with the statement, “I feel really good about being Jewish,” compared

to 47% of respondents 18-34, 56% of those 35-49, and 63% of respondents 50-64.

Additionally, 73% of respondents 65 and over say that they strongly agree with the statement, “I feel a special connection with Jewish friends,” compared to 39% of those 18-34 and 35-49, and 47% of respondents 50-64.

**Jewish Education**

Seventy-six percent of respondents say they have had some type of Jewish education. The majority of respondents attended Sunday school or Hebrew school, while less than half participated in Jewish youth groups, attended Jewish overnight or day camp, Yeshiva, or had adult education or private tutoring. Participation in Jewish education is higher for younger Jews, especially the likelihood of Jewish day school. The data, unfortunately,

do not inform us about the quality or the impact of the Jewish education that people received (see Figure 16).

**Philanthropy**

Philanthropy to Jewish organizations has also been used as a measure of communal involvement. The data are stark. Almost three of every five Jews give nothing to Jewish philanthropies. Fifty-eight percent of respondents say they did not contribute money to Jewish organizations in the past year and another 17% say they gave less than \$250. Therefore, a total of 75% gave either nothing or less than \$250 in the past year. About 8% say they gave between \$250-\$500, 5% reported giving between \$500-\$1000 and 11% reported giving over \$1000 in the past year. In comparison, 39% of respondents say they did not contribute anything to non-Jewish causes. Twenty-one percent gave less than \$250, 11% gave between \$250-\$500, 11% gave between \$500-\$1000 and 18% say they gave over \$1000. Clearly, Jews are more likely to

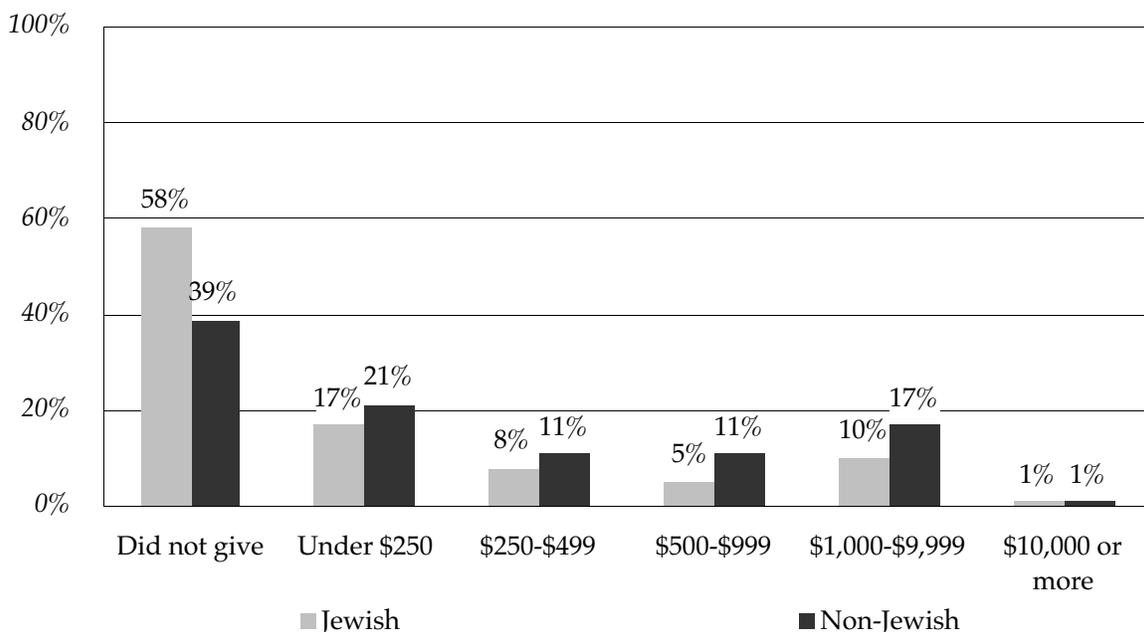
give to non-Jewish organizations, and most Jews are giving more to non-Jewish organizations than to Jewish organizations (see Figure 17).

**Volunteerism**

Volunteerism follows the same patterns. Jews are more likely to volunteer and to spend more hours volunteering for non-Jewish organizations than for Jewish organizations. Twenty-six percent of respondents report volunteering at Jewish organizations; 15% who say they volunteer one to five hours per month and 11% who say they volunteer six or more hours a month. In comparison, 47% of respondents say they volunteer at non-Jewish organizations, 25% of whom volunteer one to five hours and 22% who say they volunteer six or more hours a month. Together, the philanthropy and volunteerism data show a significantly higher communal involvement in the secular community than in the Jewish community (see Figure 18).

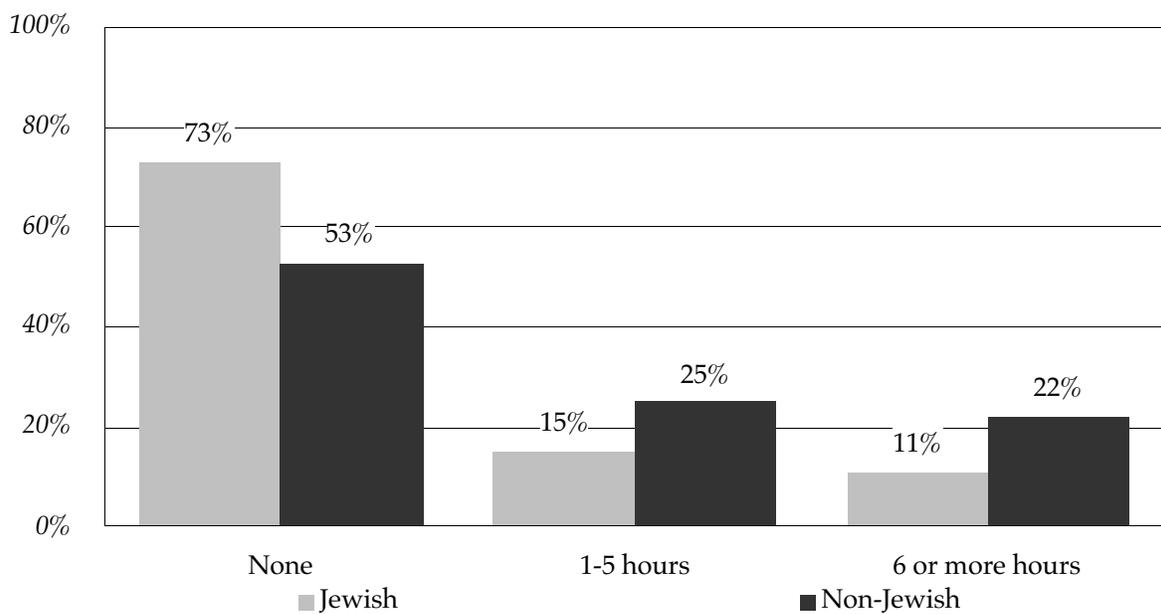
**Figure 17**

**Giving to Jewish and Non-Jewish Causes in 1999**



**Figure 18**

**Volunteering at Jewish and Non-Jewish Organizations**



**Importance of Jewish Traditions**

Responses to survey questions indicate a strong sense of Jewish tradition among Bay Area Jews. Working for social causes, celebrating Jewish holidays, and raising children as Jews were rated very important or important by over 70% of the respondents. The survey used in this study was one of the first to ask about the importance of attending Jewish culture in relation to other Jewish traditions. The importance of attending Jewish cultural events was rated as highly as having a connection to Israel, giving children a Jewish education, and giving money to Jewish organizations. Sixty-two percent of respondents say it is very or

somewhat important to attend Jewish cultural events and to participate in Jewish study (see Figure 19).

While the importance of participating in Jewish culture is ranked lower than celebrating Jewish holidays, it appears that individuals participate in Jewish culture as often as they celebrate Jewish holidays, and more frequently than they attend synagogue. Ninety-percent of respondents say they attended a Jewish cultural event in the past year, compared to 94% who say they celebrate Jewish holidays sometimes, usually or always, and 73% who say they ever attend synagogue (see Figure 20).

*While the importance of participating in Jewish culture is ranked lower than celebrating Jewish holidays, it appears that individuals participate in culture as often as they celebrate holidays, and more frequently than they attend synagogue.*

The importance of participating in Jewish cultural activities was also affirmed by focus group participants:

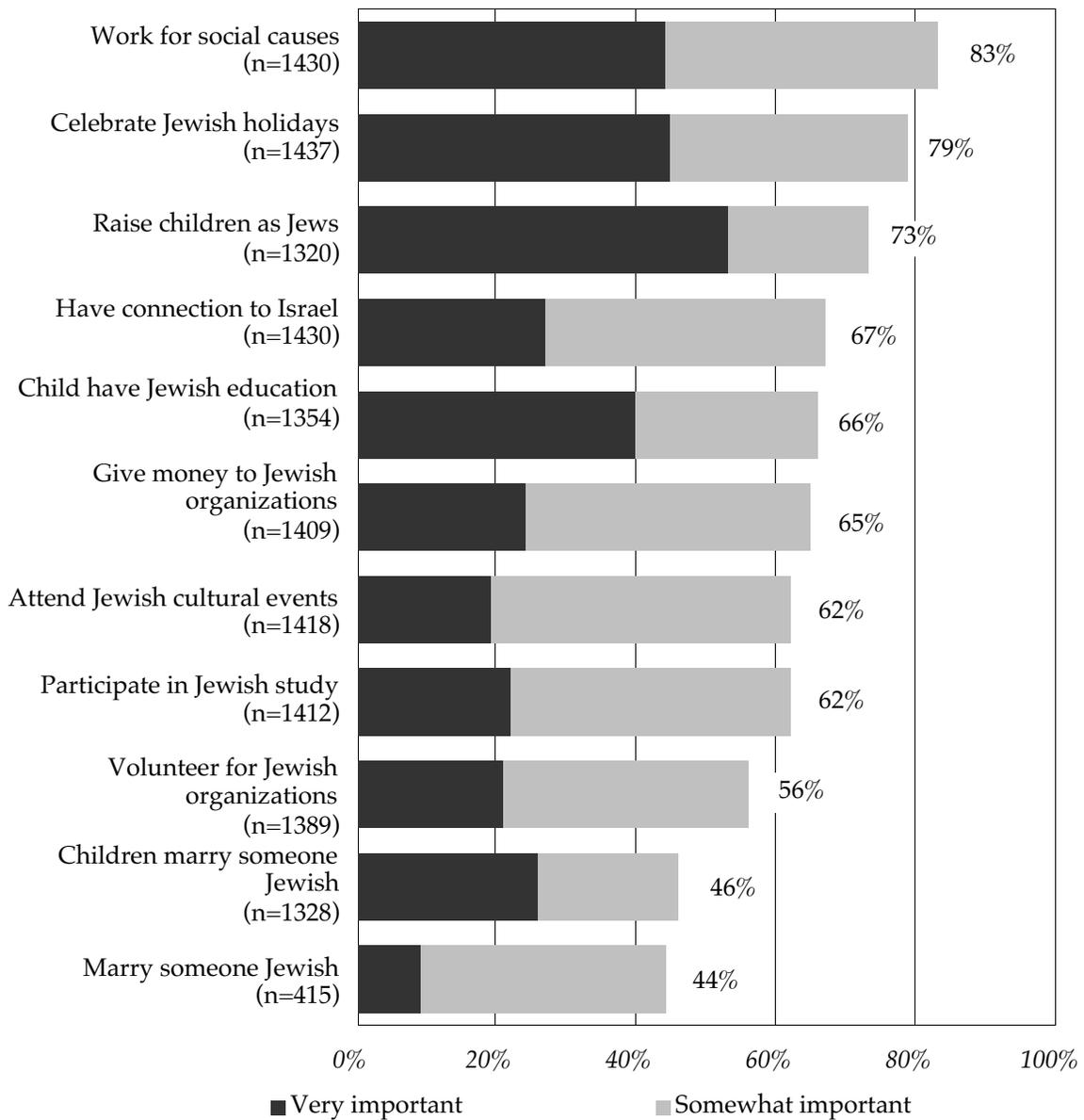
“My relationship to culture is that I really was raised with a particular sense of pride in a very high percentage or proportion of Jewish people who [not only place a high value on] education, ... but also [on]

involvement in the arts and the support of the arts.”

Another participant noted that Jewish culture might keep a Jewish identity alive, even if the identity is dormant:

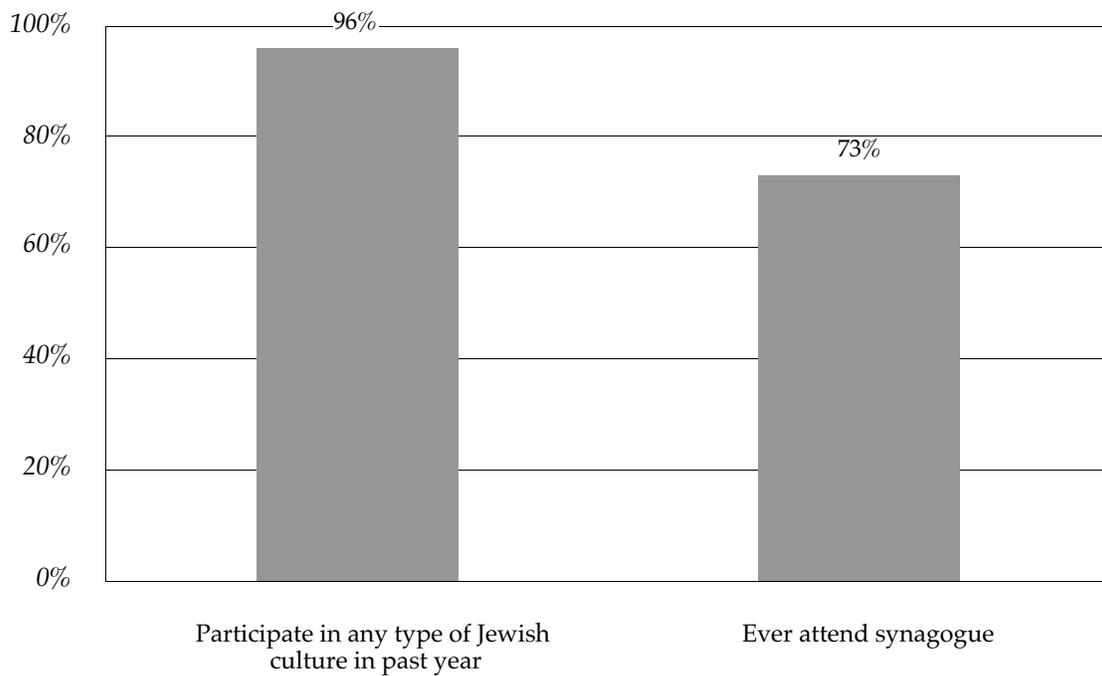
“...Jewish culture kind of provides a spark, maybe, that when ... feelings may lay

**Figure 19**  
**Importance of Participating in Jewish Culture as Compared to Other Jewish Traditions**



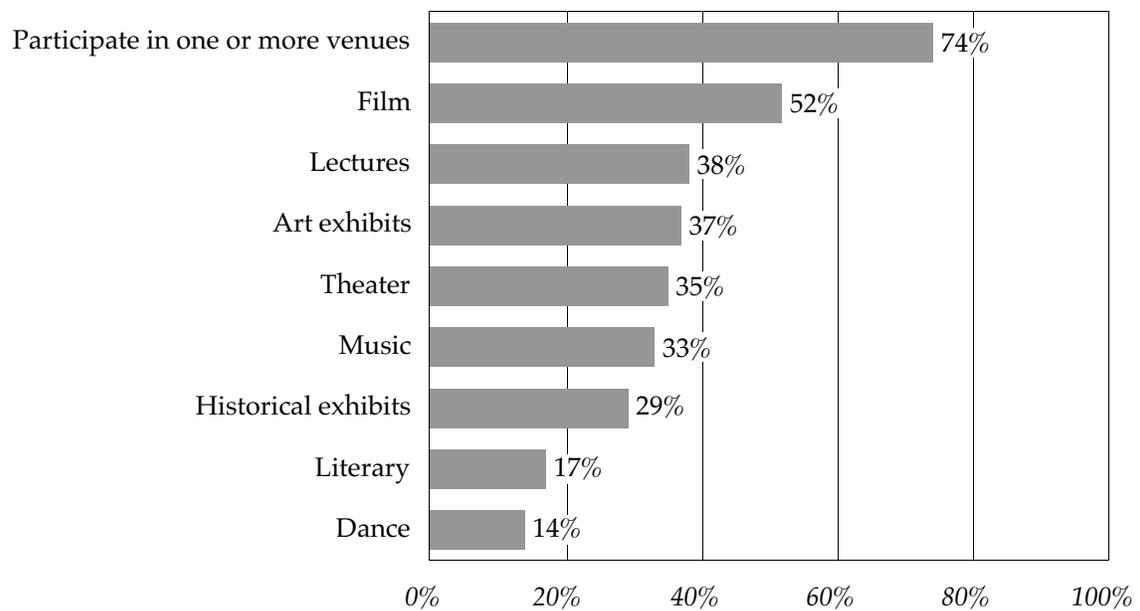
**Figure 20**

**Participation in Jewish Culture Compared to Jewish Religious Practices**



**Figure 21**

**Have you attended any of the following Jewish events in the past year?**



dormant or ideas may lay dormant, ... kind of ignites a reawakened interest in Judaism later in life.”

We also asked participants what they liked about Jewish culture. Many had answers, but the following is particularly telling. The participant finds something special in Jewish music:

“And the music really has a broad range and because it’s maybe a minor key which identifies it to [the Middle East], it gets you moving and you start tapping your foot and you’re nodding your head and you’re moving your body like when you go in for your folk dancing. So, we enjoy the food, we enjoy the music very much.”

#### **Attendance at Specific Types of Jewish Art and Culture**

Nearly all survey respondents reported participating in some form of Jewish culture in the past year both inside and outside the home. Almost three-quarters of respondents attended events in the community, while 90% participated in activities in their home.

Arts are an acquired taste that are influenced by childhood and other life experiences that shape the types of activities that people like to participate in. According to the 1997 Survey of Participation in the Arts (SPPA), movies and art exhibits are the two most popular forms of arts participation. Two-thirds of respondents to that survey reported attending movies while 35% reported visiting an art museum in the past year (Jack Faucett Associates Inc. 1998). Attendance at art museums was slightly higher among San

Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland residents who responded to that survey, 48% said they attended art museums in the past year. Similarly to the SPPA survey, films and art exhibits were the most popular form of Jewish art and culture that individuals participated in. Slightly more than 50% of respondents reported attending at least one Jewish film in the past year, while 37% said they went to an art exhibit (including both museums and galleries). Less than half of all respondents also say they attended Jewish lectures, Jewish theater, Jewish musical events, Jewish historical exhibits, Jewish literary events or Jewish dance events. We did not assess the frequency of attendance at events during the past year (see Figure 21).

Jewish themes and content is not limited to certain forms of artistic expression; it is found in all forms of visual and performance art. Neither are Jewish artists limited to certain forms of expression. One man said,

*“Jewish culture provides a spark that when feelings or ideas lay dormant, can ignite a reawakened interest in Judaism later in life.”*

“I’ve noticed that some of the best dancers are Jewish which I never really expected... and some of the best teachers

and that took me completely by surprise. I thought I was going into foreign territory.”

The types of events that are most attended by individuals do not match the types of events that are most offered in the Bay Area. Over 300 Jewish art and cultural events were identified in our content analysis. Over half the art and cultural events were presentations, mostly in the form of lectures and literary readings. The remaining events included music, theater, films, and art exhibits. The forms of Jewish art and culture include both

**Table 3**

**Types of Jewish Art and Culture in the Bay Area**

**Art Exhibits**

50/50: Israeli Art from Bay Area Collections  
 Ancient Glass from the Holy Land  
 Chag Sameach: Children's Perspectives on Jewish Holidays  
 Envision Israel: The Land, The Heart, The People  
 Four Centuries of Holy Land Maps  
 Images of Israel  
 In Celebration of Passover: Contemporary Judaic Images  
 Jewish Pictorial Carpets from the Anton Feldon Collection, London  
 Jews Among the Berbers  
 Jews/America/A Representation: Photographs by Frederic Brenner  
 Kristallnacht  
 L'Chaim! A Kiddush Cup Invitational  
 Life on the Streets: Israel at 49 1/2  
 Monotypes  
 My Shoes, My Soul, My Heart  
 No More Scapegoats  
 Oil paintings by Ruth Askren plus Judaica sculptures by Rosenthal Collection of Maryland  
 On The Streets of Israel, 1996  
 Paintings and sculptures by Jewish artists Annette Bird and Olga Seem  
 Paintings by Michelle Waters  
 Remember the Children, Daniel's Story  
 Samuel Bak: Metaphors of Experience  
 Sensitivity Over Sense  
 Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland  
 Starry Nights  
 The Bible: Marc Chagall exhibit  
 The Passionate Search: Building the Collections of the Magnes Museum, 1962-1997  
 The Road to Jerusalem  
 Tobi Kahn  
 Varian Fry: Assignment Rescue, 1940-1941  
 Visions of Jerusalem  
 Winter Lights: Teachers of Art in Synagogue and Day Schools Show Their Work  
 Women's Work: Original Works on Paper and Canvas by Ten Israeli Women

**Film**

A Jumpin' Night in the Garden of Eden  
 An American Tail  
 Anou Banou: The Daughters of Utopia  
 At the Crossroads

Bubbeh Lee and Me  
 Chants of Sand and Stars  
 Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter  
 Cup Final  
 Europa, Europa  
 Everlasting Joy  
 Fictitious Marriage  
 Fiddler on the Roof  
 Fragments \* Jerusalem  
 Half the Kingdom  
 Hannah  
 In Our Own Hands  
 Jews of Poland -- 5 Cities  
 K  
 Kiss or Kill  
 Late Summer Blues  
 Mendel  
 Next Year in Havana!  
 Not In Our Town  
 Oh God!  
 Overture to Glory  
 Passover  
 Passover Fever  
 Saint Clara  
 Shattered Dreams  
 The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz  
 The Artists' Schindler  
 The Courage to Care  
 The Exiles  
 The Golden Age of Second Avenue  
 The Long Way Home  
 The Producers  
 The Summer of Aviya  
 Voices of the Generations  
 Yiddish: The Mama Loshn

**Presentations/Lectures**

A Hoo Ha History of the Yiddish Theatre  
 A Jewish Look at Life After Death with Rabbi Hecht  
 A Jewish Perspective On Time and Aging  
 A Jewish Thread in the American Tapestry  
 A Walker in Jerusalem  
 Abba Eban talk  
 Accordion workshop for Klezmer, Gypsy and Balkan music  
 Amichai's Israel: An Alternative Perspective  
 Anti-Zionism: The Mask for Anti-Judaism  
 As a Driven Leaf  
 Ashkenazic Jewry: Who We Are and Where We

Come From	Jewish Military Experience in WWII
Awakening Intuition and Wisdom Through the Kabbalah	Jewish Multiculturalism Today
Bearing Witness: Reflections on a Zen Retreat at Auschwitz	Jewish Mysticism: Doorway to the Soul
Benjamin Wilkomirski	Jewish Mysticism: Recovering Our Spirituality
Building Bridges: A Workshop for African American and Jewish Women	Jewish Roots of Christianity
Chana Bloch: The Song of Songs; The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai	Jewish/Palestinian Program
China Dreams -- Growing Up Jewish in Tienstin	Jews and Christians in a Secular World
Contemporary Judaism: Is It Good For the Jews?	Jews in Germany after the Holocaust: Memory, Identity, and Jewish-German Relations
Conversion and Peace: Is There a Connection?	Jews in Ireland
Cooking the Jewish Way: Purim and Passover Foods	Jews in Small Towns: Legends and Legacies
Covering Israel	Jews in Twentieth Century Ireland
Doing the work of Tikkun Olam	Jews: The Essence and Character of a People
Doors to Madame Marie	Josef Mengele: Search, Discover, Identification
Echoes of Gold: How the Song, Jerusalem of Gold, Draws on Love and Lamentation in Biblical and Talmudic Literature	Judaism and the Religious Right
Educating for Spirituality: A New Look at the Jewish Continuity Crisis	Judaism at the Crossroads
Family Conflict in the Bible	Leading the Passover Haggadah
Feast of the Family of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah	Living Kabbalah: Unlock the Keys to the Ancient Mysteries
From the Tree of Knowledge to the Tree of Life	Looking Backward to Move Forward: The Impact of the Holocaust Today
Godtalk	Love Stories in the Talmud: Prepare for Surprises
Gospel of the Beloved Disciple	Magic and Folk Beliefs in Jewish Tradition
Haggadah: A Celebration of Freedom	Meetings with Remarkable Souls: Legends of the Baal Shem Tov
Havdallah and History	Messages and Motives of our Ancient Prophets
Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust	More Stories of Our Lives
Hollywood's Image	Mouse-made Midrash: Jewish Life in a High Tech World
Holocaust - A Personal Story of Survival	My Journey to Judaism
Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration	My Name is Asher Lev
Holocaust Survivor's Story	Mystic Tales From the Zohar
Howard Addison: The Enneagram & Kabbalah	Nazi Doctors: Why Did They Do It?
In Our Image: Queer Jewish Identity	Neo-Nazi Movements Under Scrutiny
In the Land of Israel	New Women's Writing From Israel
Infusing Our School and Synagogue with Sacredness	Of Prophets and Rebels: A New Look at Jonah and the Whale
Introduction to Kabbalah	On Winning the Noble Prize: My Journey from Brooklyn to Stockholm
Israel	Once We Were Slaves
Israel and Egypt: A Shared Journey	One Day Hebrew
Israel at 50 and 5000	Oy, Gay!
Israel at 50: Yesterday's Dreams, Today's Challenges	Padi Selwyn
Israel on Our Minds	Parallels Between Modern Cosmology and Ancient Jewish Kabbalah
Israel: From Holocaust to Haven	Passover in a Day
Jewish Genealogical Society discussion	Passport Israel
Jewish medical bioethics panel discussion	Paul Hamburg
	Pioneer Jewish Cemeteries of the Gold Rush
	Politics Lecture
	Politics, Jewish Politics, Jewish Values
	Prophecy in the Book of Esther

- Reading of Megillah Esther  
Receiving Torah: A Spiritual Approach to Learning Wisdom Texts  
Reclaiming the Power of Blessing: An Inclusive Approach to Jewish Prayer  
Recovering our Spirituality  
Redefining Israel - Where Does the Peace Process Lead?  
Reintroduction to Judaism Seminar  
Rekindling the Light: Women of Return  
Researching Family History with Rabbi Alan Lew  
Resurgent European Fascism - The Beast Reawakens  
Roommates: My Grandfather's Story  
Russian Jewish composers Mikhail Gnesin, David Maggid and Sophie Maggid  
Russian Jewish musician Moshe Beregovsky  
Sex, Racism, and the Rabbis: What Happened to Shem, Ham and Japhet?  
Shades of Relating  
Shuk: For Learning and Traveling in Israel  
State and Religion in Israel  
Striking Back  
Surviving the Holocaust  
Symposium on Birobidzhan  
Taking Hold of Torah: The Prospects of Jews and Judaism in America  
Teach Me the Wisdom of the Torah While I'm Standing on One Foot  
Teaching Human Rights  
The Art of Jewish Storytelling  
The Book of Job  
The Changing Role of Women in the Middle East  
The First Step: A Beginner's Guide to Judaism  
The History of Israeli Art and Its Reflection of Israeli Society  
The Iron Tracks  
The Jewish Poetic Voice: An Evening of Readings  
The Jewish Way in Death and Grieving  
The Jewish Way of Death and Mourning  
The Jews of Poland  
The Kabbalah: Doorway to the Soul  
The Kabbalah: Opening the Inner Gates  
The Life and Thoughts of Abraham Joshua Heschel  
The Memoirs of Pauline Wengeroff and the Crisis of Jewish Modernity  
The Message of the Dead Sea Scrolls  
The National Jewish Music Movement in Russia Today  
The Philosophy and Rituals of Jewish Death and Mourning  
The Power of Kabbalah  
The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South  
The Real Reason Solomon and not David Built the Holy Temple  
The Rise and Fall of Oriental Idealism in Israeli Art  
The Rise of Nazism Through a Child's Eyes  
The Rising of the Women: The Poetry of Jewish Women's Lives  
The Sacred Bridge  
The Second-Temple Period  
The Sexual Politics of the Hebrew Revival  
The Situation in the Middle East Approaching Israel's 50th Anniversary  
The Song of Songs  
The Spiritual Path of Judaism  
The Struggle for Equality and Recognition in the Jewish State: A Reform Movement Perspective  
The Temple Bombing  
The Thirteenth Hour  
The True Story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba  
The Voyage of the St. Louis  
Torah and Dharma  
Transforming Enemies: Israel and Its Arab Neighbors  
UAHC Jewish Literary Initiatives  
Update on Political Situations in Israel  
Was the Pope's Visit Good for the Jews? Life in Jewish Cuba  
Welfare Reform-A Jewish Response for SF  
What was Hebrew School all about Anyway?  
Why Read Jewish History?  
Witness to Jewish History  
Words of His Own  
Yair Dalal, Israel's Multi-Ethnic Music  
YESHA at 30: The Jewish Pioneers of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza and the Growth of Their Communities  
Yiddish Literature in the New World  
Yom Ha'Shoah with Dr. Ruth Gruber
- Music**  
A Concert of Jewish Art Song  
A Jewish Voice for Peace  
A Program of Jewish Music  
An Evening of Choral Psalms  
Bay Area Jewish Chorale Fest  
Ben Goldberg Sextet  
Cantor Wally Schachet-Briskin

Cantors Sing Music of Tikkun Olam  
 Concert and Benefit for veterans' hospital in  
 Haifa with Judy Frankel  
 Davka  
 Eleanor Reissa: Yiddish Music  
 Ensemble Parnassus: Salamone Rossi  
 French Love: French cabaret with Sylvie  
 Braitman  
 Hoffman-Lewicki Klezmer  
 It Takes Two  
 Jewish Folk Chorus of San Francisco  
 Jewish Humor from Oy to Vey & The Ruined  
 Maid  
 Jewish singer/songwriters Michael Friedman  
 and Rick Bockner  
 Klezmer in Concert  
 Klezmer Shabbat  
 Kumzits: A Jewish Sing-Along  
 L'Chayim Klezmer Seder  
 Lisa Wanamaker  
 National Kibbutz Artzi Choir of Israel  
 Noa in Concert  
 Political Rock Music with Jewish singer-song  
 writer Trevor Levine  
 Rebbe Soul  
 Renaissance music by Jewish composers  
 Resistance, a Program for Families  
 Richard Kaplan & Olga Talroze  
 Robbo  
 San Francisco Klezmer Experience  
 Second Annual Ada Felson Zimriyah  
 Second Avenue Klezmer Ensemble  
 Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs)  
 Solo piano concert by Rami Bar-Niv  
 Songs My Father Taught Me  
 Sweethearts of the Radio  
 Voice of the Turtle  
 Voices of Israel: Israel at 50  
 Yom Ha'Shoah Memorial Recital  
 Za'atar: Music of the Jews of Arab and Muslim  
 Lands

**Theater**

2.5 Minute Ride: Lisa Kron  
 Acts of Reconciliation  
 Anne Frank and Me

Bridges  
 Chicken Sunday and other Grandparent tales  
 Come Blow Your Horn  
 Crossing Delancey  
 Dad Fought Hitler, the Bottle, and Me  
 Esther's Boys  
 Family Secrets  
 Guaranteed Giggles  
 I Got Haggadah  
 Jake's Women  
 Josie and the Women of Tombstone  
 June Bride  
 Kindertransport  
 Kvetch  
 Love Sick on Nana Street  
 Megilla Madness  
 Old Wicked Songs  
 Play It Again Sam  
 Red Morton Herrings  
 Taking Sides  
 The Third Wave: Authoritarian Discipline and  
 Indoctrination  
 We Are Witnesses

**Other**

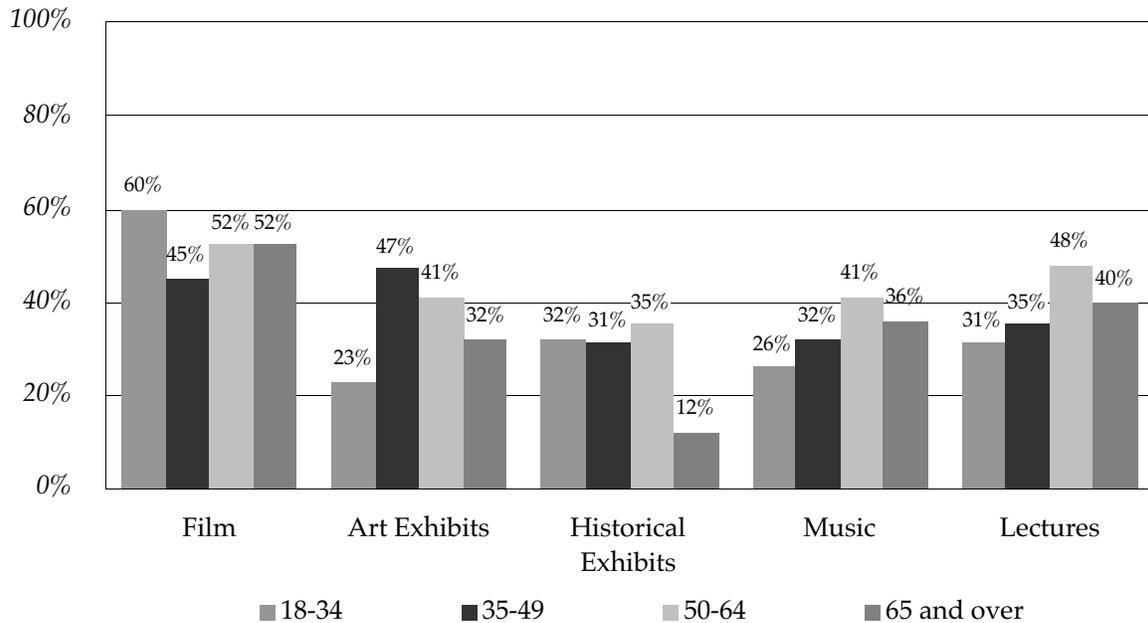
A Day of Hope and Remembrance Workshop  
 Axioma 7  
 Beyond Tel Aviv  
 Celebrating Israel's 50th  
 Folk music and dance performances  
 Giants celebrate Israel's 50th  
 Havdalah Beneath the Stars  
 Holocaust Memorial  
 Israel's 50th celebration  
 Israel Independence Day celebration with  
 Shabbat La'am  
 Israel: The Dual Challenge of Being a Democracy  
 Israeli Folk Dancing  
 Israeli Independence Day: Jewish-Palestinian  
 program  
 Jewish Arbor Day Celebration  
 Jewish women in service and leadership  
 conference  
 Take a Tour of Israel  
 Virtual Israel Festival

popular and high culture and ranged from Hollywood studio productions to alternative performance art. They also ranged from traditional expressions of art and culture to cutting edge performance art. The Jewish art

and culture found in the Bay Area is by no means exhaustive and may not be typical of the types of events that are offered in other Jewish communities in the United States. Differences exist in the form and genre of

**Figure 22**

**Attendance at Jewish Events by Age**



programs that are offered between Jewish communities due to the organizations that exist in each community, the resources that are available to support art and cultural programming and the facilities that exist to present the programs.

Younger Jews are as likely as all other age groups to attend Jewish cultural events. Seventy-two percent of those under 35 say they attended Jewish cultural events in the past year, compared to 73% of respondents 35-49, 70% of respondents 50-64 and 76% of respondents 65 and over. However, a number of differences were found in the type of Jewish events that individuals attended by age group. In general, respondents younger than 35 were less likely to attend most types of Jewish culture events, except for film. Age differences were found for attendance at the following types of Jewish events (see Figure 22).

- Sixty percent of respondents between 18 and 34 reported attending Jewish films in

the past year, compared to 45% of those age 35-49, 52% of respondents age 50-64 and 52% of those age 65 and over.

- Twelve percent of respondents 65 and over reported attending Jewish historical events, compared to 35% of those 50-64, 31% of respondents 35-49, and 32% of respondents age 18-34 years old.
- Forty-eight percent of respondents between the ages of 50 and 64 report attending Jewish lectures, compared to 40% of respondents 65 and over, 35% of respondents 35-49, and 21% of respondents 18-34 years old.
- Twenty-six percent of respondents age 18 to 34 reported attending Jewish music, compared to 32% of respondents age 35-49, 41% of those 50-64 and 36% of respondents 65 and over.
- Twenty-three percent of respondents age 18 to 34 attended Jewish art exhibits, compared to 47% of those 35-49, 41% of respondents 50-64 and 32% of respondents 65 and over.

### **Interest in Attending Jewish Art and Culture**

Seventeen percent of respondents are very interested in attending more Jewish culture and 53% are somewhat interested, a total of 70%. This represents a huge potential market for additional Jewish cultural activities, at both Jewish and non-Jewish venues (see Figure 23).

Interest is high across age groups. Sixty-five percent of respondents 18-34, 72% of those 35-49, 74% of those 50-64, and 71% of respondents 65 and over are somewhat or very interested in attending more Jewish cultural events. Seventy-seven percent of respondents 18-34, 59% of respondents 35-49, 65% of respondents 50-64 and 67% of respondents 65 and over are somewhat or very interested in meeting other Jews with similar interests.

### **Reasons for Attending Jewish Art and Cultural Events**

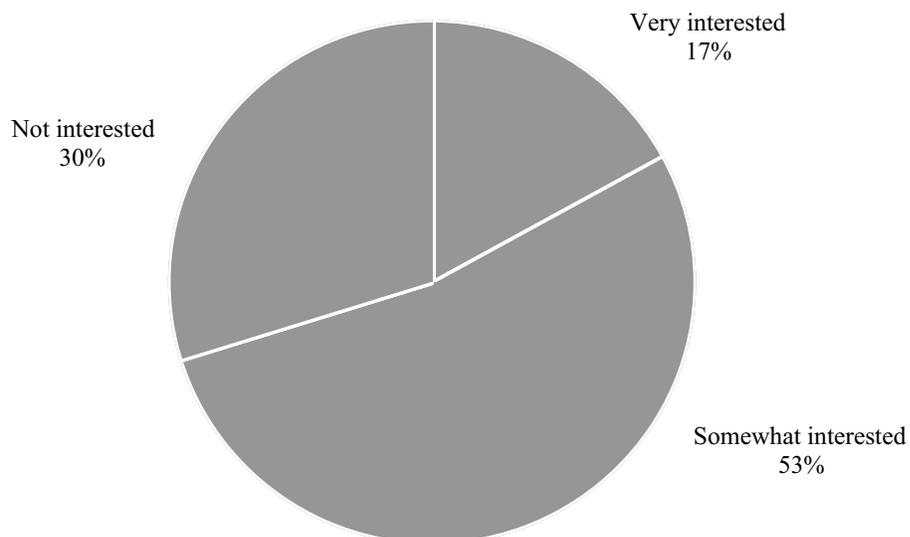
A variety of factors that influence an individual's participation in leisure activities have been identified including: feeling comfortable and at ease in one's surroundings; being with people for social interaction; doing something worthwhile; the challenge of new experiences; and the opportunity to learn. There are also a whole host of more practical reasons, such as price, geographic location, availability of parking, day of the week, time of the day, size of the venue.

Today, audiences are harder to reach and please, they have hectic lives and have more choices than ever before for how to spend their leisure time.

So if people are interested in attending more, what keeps them from doing it? According to

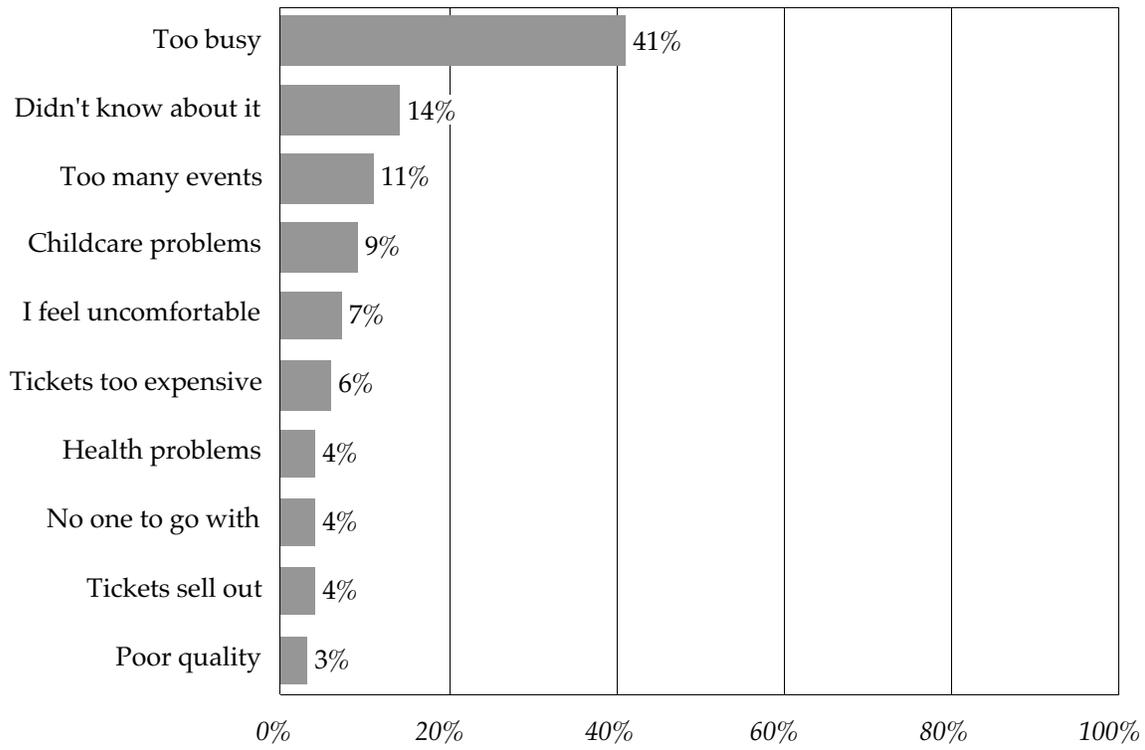
**Figure 23**

**How Interested are you in Participating in More Jewish Culture?**



**Figure 24**

**Reasons for Not Attending Jewish Cultural Events**



the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, making time to go out was seen as the biggest barrier to greater participation in the arts (Jack Faucett Associates Inc. 1998). This is also true of the Bay Area sample. Regardless of age, being too busy is the most important reason that respondents gave for not attending more events. Other reasons cited for not attending more events include: not knowing about the event, too many events to choose from, and child care problems (see Figure 24).

Only three percent of survey respondents cited poor quality as a reason not to attend a Jewish cultural event. Quality, however, is the most important reason for focus group participants to attend an event. Note the following dialogue, where the issues of quality and Jewish content are discussed. It becomes

clear that quality is an issue of critical importance (see Figure 24).

- “I find that when it comes to cultural events of the arts, the quality is still going to be the dominant determination for me. Because it’s not the only way in which I express my being Jewish. I can afford to sort of say, ‘Well, if this is a good movie, I’ll go to see it. If it’s a movie with Jewish content, but it isn’t a particularly well-made movie or well done or something, I’m not going to go.’ So quality is sort of the determining factor rather than because it’s Jewish. I think one of the things I have difficulty with is something that is just there for nostalgia’s sake. I went to a klezmer concert a few years ago and I’d say most of the bands were terrible, but everybody was eating it up because it was all schmaltzy and nostalgic. And musically, it wasn’t terribly good, so I was sort of bored.”

- “For me, it’s a combination of quality, if I’m going to learn something, if it’s going to be sort of fun.”
- “If the films are boring, it doesn’t matter to me if they’re made for Jewish people or a Jewish Film Festival. If mean, if it’s a good film, it doesn’t really matter to me.”
- “I think that the answer is selectivity at the Jewish Film Festival. There’s a big audience there and yet there are small audiences where certain people go and pick and choose. Obviously, the fact that it has Jewish subject matter, as everything in it does is an attractive factor in the choice. But then they’re not going to every one of them. They’re choosing quality, interest, along with the fact that it is...has a Jewish theme or Jewish subject matter.”
- “I’m on about twelve mailing lists relating to Jewish activities here. There is much, much more offered to the Jewish community than there ever has been. You have to be selective in quality.”
- “It’s quality first, but there’s so much going on in the Bay Area, in terms of good cultural things, that you’ll tend to be drawn to things for a reason. So there might be two good movies out there, but I might go to the Jewish Film Festival because I have more of an interest in that subject matter than some other film.”

Practical issues that were discussed among participants were cost, timing, and location. Individuals will not come to Jewish cultural events if they are not high quality:

“I would say that I thought [the Jewish Writers Conference] was a little expensive myself. We probably would have gone or attempted to go to more events if the price was lower. And also, obviously, I can’t go to stuff during the week — during the day. I have to go at night and in some cases the stuff I wanted to do was in the daytime.”

Like all businesses, cost, availability, and location always play a role. Since San Francisco is no longer the center of Jewish life, in addition to the increased traffic in the Bay Area and difficulties and cost of parking near many venues, many individuals prefer to attend events closer to home. Two participants discussed the ease of getting to an event:

(F): Well, we try to go to the ones on the Peninsula because it’s more convenient for us than coming into the city and...

(M): Trying to find a place to park.

(F): And I mean it is very difficult.

(F): I was going to say it’s small at the Jewish Museum.

(M): It’s so small and it’s so hard to park in there, I’ve only been there once.

(Moderator): What about the Magnus Museum?

(M): The parking is better there.

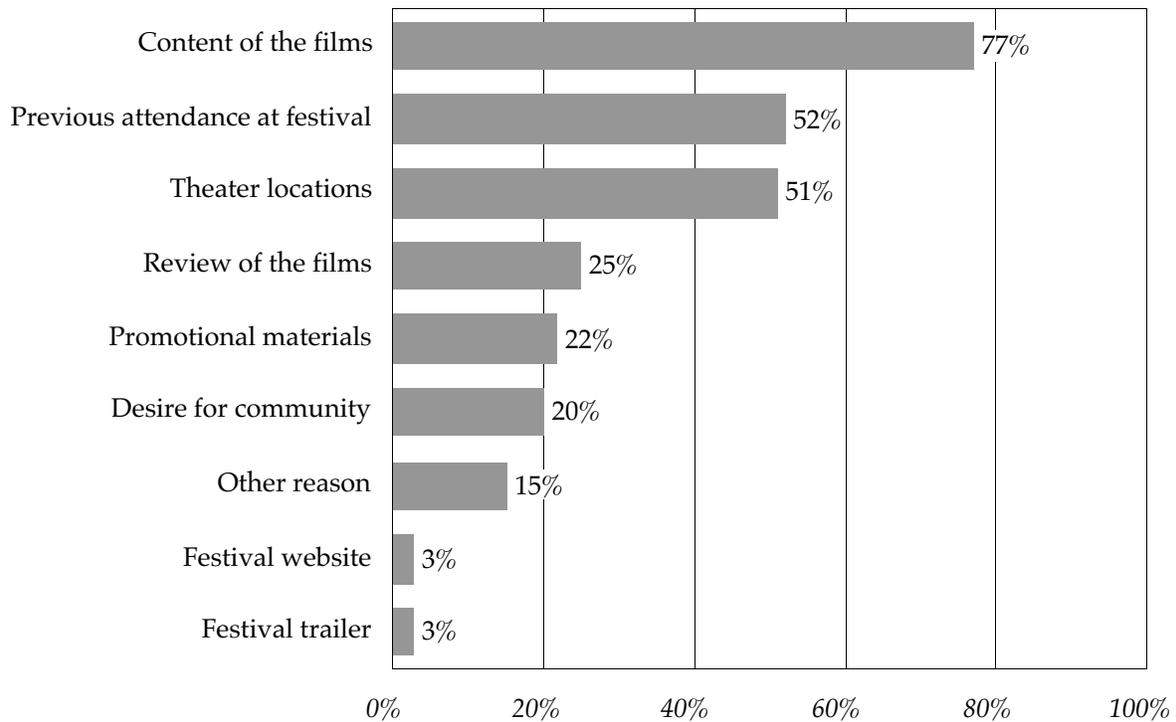
(M): Once you can find your way in.

Other surveys have shown that content is an important factor in influencing attendance at Jewish cultural events. Among individuals who completed the evaluation for the 2000 San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, over 50% say that the content of the films, previous attendance at the festival, and the locations of the theaters were important in influencing their decision to attend the festival. It is important to note that the festival is held at a variety of locations throughout the Bay Area, which makes it accessible to individuals throughout the region (see Figure 25).

Therefore, making the events more compelling, in order to compete with other

**Figure 25**

**Which of the following influenced your decision to attend this year's festival?**  
*(Asked of attendees at the 2000 San Francisco Jewish Film Festival)*



activities is vital. They must also be publicized better.

**The Relationship Between Participation in Jewish Culture and Other Measures of Jewish Identity**

Most surveys of Jewish identity only assess religious practices and beliefs. These surveys have found, not surprisingly, that individuals who have a strong connection to their Jewish identity, as defined by involvement in the Jewish community or Jewish religious practices, also show a high level of participation in Jewish culture. Previous studies, however, do little to shed light on the Jewish identity among a large segment of the Jewish community. The strength of this study is that the data indicate that participation in Jewish culture is also found among those individuals who would not be considered by some as

having a strong Jewish identity as measured by other studies. For example, among those respondents who say that being Jewish is either very or somewhat important, 100% report attending Jewish cultural events in past year, compared to 59% who say that being Jewish is not important. Among those who participate in any form of Jewish religious practices, 74% say they also attended or participated in Jewish cultural events. Among those who do not participate in any religious practices, 46% say they attended or participated in Jewish cultural events in past year.

For individuals who do not belong to any type of Jewish organization, Jewish culture also provides a link for them to the Jewish community. Among those individuals who do not belong to any type of organization, 86% say they participated in some form of

Jewish culture in the past year, compared to 100% of those who belong to a synagogue and/or other Jewish organization. One hundred percent of respondents who belong to a synagogue and other Jewish organizations say they attended a Jewish cultural event in the community in the past year, compared to 82% who belong to other Jewish organizations only, 89% who belong to a synagogue only and 58% of

respondents who do not belong to either a synagogue or other Jewish organizations. The inclusion of the participation in Jewish culture along with synagogue membership, philanthropy and education may mean higher levels of involvement in the Jewish community than is commonly acknowledged.

### VENUE-BASED TAXONOMY

Our second way of organizing Jewish culture is a taxonomy based on venues. One category of venues comprises the different kinds of cultural institutions within the organized Jewish community that sponsor public culture. A second broad category would be the mainstream institutions in which Jewish culture is frequently or regularly presented. A third category would encompass those non-institutional venues through which people can encounter and engage with Jewish cultural expressions, such as participation at home through television, videos, and music. A typology based on venues forces attention to issues of access and use, that is, audiences, users, and consumers of Jewish cultural expression. This, in turn, makes this typology

more obviously relevant and useful for many key constituencies.

### Jewish Venues

The organized Jewish community supports and sponsors numerous kinds of organization, many of which engage in public cultural activities. Among the most prominent and most accessible agencies are:

---

*The study indicates that participation in Jewish culture is found among individuals who would not be considered as having a strong Jewish identity by other studies.*

---

- Jewish Community Centers: As venues of Jewish culture, the JCCs offer a wide variety of programs--festivals and celebrations, lectures and symposia, screenings and exhibitions, book fairs, dance, music, and

drama, continuing education (with field trips), and other projects.

- Jewish Museums: In addition to exhibitions of Judaica and fine arts, Jewish museums offer a variety of historical and cultural exhibitions, often accompanied by lectures, tours, workshops, symposia, screenings, publications, and special events.
- Synagogues: Aside from programs on religious culture, many synagogues present lectures, concerts, and films, commission visual artists, and sponsor scholars and artists-in-residence.
- Hillels: In addition to offering cultural programs to students at many universities and colleges, some Hillel chapters are the leading presenter of cultural programs to adjacent or host communities. Hillels are often important venues for emergent artists and scholars and for generational cultural programs aimed at youth.
- Other Jewish Organizations, such as Schools, Libraries, Bureaus of Jewish Education, and Jewish Cultural

Organizations: A variety of special events and public programs are offered by Jewish educational agencies and cultural programs, either as part of their curriculum, for outreach, or as part of marketing/development strategies.

The Bay Area is home to a number of well-known Jewish cultural organizations, including Jewish community centers, Jewish museums, a Jewish theater group and film festival. Religious, educational, and communal organizations are also very involved in the Jewish art and culture scene.

### **Jewish Community Centers**

The six Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) in the Bay Area all sponsor art and cultural events. JCCs are open to the public and focus primarily on non-denominational programming. The Bay Area JCCs present a wide variety of Jewish and non-Jewish art, cultural and educational programs. JCCs support their programs through membership fees, private donations and grants from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

In March of each year, the Berkeley-Richmond Jewish Community Center sponsors an annual Jewish Music Festival. The festival is held over number of days and performances take place at different locations around the Bay Area and showcase different Jewish musical traditions. In 1998, the festival included programs such as "From Bilgoray to Brooklyn to Broadway: An Evening of Yiddish Music" at Theater on the Square in San Francisco, "A Bisl This, A Bisl That!" at the Oakland Senior Center and "San Francisco Klezmer Experience," at the Berkeley-Richmond Jewish Community Center. The festival was supported by Agape Fund for Nonviolence and Social Change,

Arbeter Ring/Workman's Circle, the Milton & Sophie Meyer Fund, the Trio Foundation, the Zellerbach Family Fund, and numerous individual donations.

The Osher Marin Jewish Community Center in San Rafael sponsors Center Stage, a yearly series of arts and culture programming. The programming encompasses all forms of cultural programs and showcases both Jewish and non-Jewish artists and themes. Jewish programming during the 1998 season included two solo performances about Jewish family life, "2.5 Minute Ride" and "Family Secrets." The Center Stage program also presented "Conversations with Arthur Hertzberg," the co-author of *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People*. Center Stage also hosted the 6th Annual Marin Jewish Film Festival. Entitled "Growing Up Jewish in America" films were shown both at the Osher Marin JCC and the Lark Theater in Larkspur. Films included *An American Tail*, *Passover Fever*, and *Overture to Glory*.

The Osher Marin Jewish Community Center receives external support for their art and cultural programs from a variety of sources. For example, the film festival received financial support from Koret Foundation and the Whyman Family, among others. While the Center Stage program receives revenue from ticket sales, each program may also be supported by outside funders. Embassy Suites, the Marin Community Foundation, and the Koret Foundation were some of the contributors to the production of *Family Secrets*.

Programs presented at the other Jewish community centers around the Bay Area included a klezmer seder, a wide variety of lectures, and films.

### ***Jewish Museums***

There are also two Jewish museums in the Bay Area: The Jewish Museum San Francisco and the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Oakland. The Jewish Museum San Francisco is currently without a permanent home and rents gallery space from the Jewish Community Federation in downtown San Francisco. The lack of permanent space prohibits the museum from exhibiting a permanent collection, but they are able to sponsor one or two major exhibitions per year. Exhibits at the Jewish Museum in 1998 included: "L'Chaim: A Kiddush Cup Invitational," "50/50: Israeli Art from Bay Area Collections" and "Souvenirs from Israel, 1948-1998." The Magnes Museum is able to produce a larger number of exhibits, including an exhibit of their permanent collection, "The Passionate Search: Building the Collections of the Magnes Museum, 1962-1997," and "Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Homeland."

### ***Synagogues***

A large number of programs are also held at synagogues. These institutions not only provide opportunities for religious and educational growth, but recognize the importance of art and culture as a vehicle for strengthening Jewish identity among their congregants. Synagogues are supported primarily by membership fees and receive little outside support, therefore, they are constrained by a lack of financial resources and are able to host only a limited range of cultural programs. Lectures on religious issues are the primary type of cultural offerings that are available at synagogues. Some synagogues also sponsor cantorial concerts and art exhibits, while others highlight the musical component of their religious services, such as special Klezmer Seders or Shabbat services.

Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco is the home of the Elizabeth S. Fine Museum. During the time of our data collection, it exhibited works by participants in the Arad Arts Project, a six-month fellowship for foreign artists to live and work in Arad, Israel. Examples of lectures presented at synagogues are "Recovering our Spirituality" at Temple Beth Hillel in Richmond and "The First Step: A Beginner's Guide to Judaism" at Temple Beth Sholom in San Leandro.

### ***Hillels***

Hillels around the Bay Area were also active presenters of Jewish art and culture. For example, the Santa Cruz Hillel Foundation sponsored an Alternative Jewish Film Festival, while the UC Berkeley Hillel presented "Envision Israel: The Land, The Heart, The People," an art exhibit and "A Jewish Voice for Peace," a music and dance program to benefit organizations involved in promoting peace in the Middle East. Hillels are particularly important because they are able to attract larger number of younger Jews than many other Jewish community organizations.

### ***Other Jewish Organizations***

Other Jewish organizations that sponsored art and cultural programs included Jewish Family and Children's Services, Montefiore Senior Center, Bureau of Jewish Education, Jewish Community Library, and federations. The programs that are sponsored by these organizations portray traditional images of Jews and reflect the interests of their audiences. For example, the programs sponsored by the Montefiore Senior Center focus primarily on the Holocaust. The Jewish Community Federation presented a variety of programs including: lectures such as "Covering Israel," with Jerusalem Post reporter Sue Fishkoff and "Conversion and Peace: Is There a Connection," with Naomi

Chassan of the Israeli Knesset; and the documentary, "A Long Way Home". The Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay present the "Virtual Israel Festival," that included Israeli art, food, and music, "The Longing for the Land," a program of Zionist Yiddish songs, along with numerous lectures and workshops.

The role of smaller communal organizations in presenting Jewish art and cultural events is especially important, given the dispersion of the Jewish community around the Bay Area. The Jewish Community Agency of Sonoma County was a very active presenter of Jewish culture. This is especially important given that Jewish individuals in Sonoma

County are further from San Francisco, where most Jewish culture is presented. Programs presented by the agency include the film *Exodus*, an art exhibit, "Four Centuries of Holy Land Maps," a discussion by Arthur Hertzberg of his recent book *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People*, and "Take a Tour of Israel, from Sefat to Eilat," a festival with food, music, and art.

The Bay Area is also home to two nationally recognized Jewish cultural organizations: the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival and A Traveling Jewish Theater. Both of these organizations are widely praised throughout the United States for their involvement in innovative Jewish programming.

**Table 4**

**Jewish Venues**

**Jewish Community Centers**

Addison-Penzak Jewish Community Center  
 Albert J. Schultz Jewish Community Center  
 Berkeley Richmond Jewish Community Center  
 Contra Costa Jewish Community Center  
 Osher Marin Jewish Community Center  
 Peninsula Jewish Community Center  
 San Francisco Jewish Community Center

**Jewish Cultural Organizations**

A Traveling Jewish Theatre  
 San Francisco Jewish Film Festival

**Jewish Museums**

The Jewish Museum San Francisco  
 Judah L. Magnes Museum

**Other Jewish Organizations**

Center for Humanistic Judaism  
 The Friedman Center  
 Jewish Community Federation  
 Jewish Community Services of Oakland-Piedmont  
 Jewish Federation of the East Bay  
 Kabbalah Learning Center  
 University of California Berkeley Hillel  
 University of Santa Cruz Hillel

**Synagogues and Temples**

Ahavat Yisrael  
 Beth Jacob Congregation  
 Chabad of Greater South Bay  
 Chochmat HaLev  
 Congregation B'nai Israel  
 Congregation B'nai Tikvah  
 Congregation Beth Am  
 Congregation Beth David  
 Congregation Beth Israel-Judea  
 Congregation Beth Sholom  
 Congregation Beyt Tikkun  
 Congregation Emanu-El  
 Congregation Kol Shofar  
 Congregation Kol Shofar  
 Congregation Ner Tamid  
 Congregation Rodef Sholom  
 Congregation Sherith Israel  
 Congregation Shir Shalom  
 Or Shalom Jewish Community  
 Peninsula Temple Beth El  
 Peninsula Temple Sholom  
 Temple Beth Abraham  
 Temple Beth El  
 Temple Beth Hillel  
 Temple Beth Jacob  
 Temple Beth Sholom  
 Temple Beth Torah  
 Temple Isaiah  
 Temple Sinai

### ***San Francisco Jewish Film Festival***

The San Francisco Jewish Film Festival is held each summer at venues around the Bay Area. While the Castro Theater in San Francisco and until this past year, the UC Theater in Berkeley, were the primary venues for the festival, audience demand and the availability of outside financial support has enabled the festival to expand to venues in Marin and the Peninsula. Monthly screenings at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco are also presented throughout the year. Screenings included *Chants of Sand and Stars*, an exploration of Jewish music and *Half the Kingdom*, a documentary about Judaism, patriarchy, and gender equality. Since its inception, the SFJFF has tackled provocative subjects, and today, the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival is one of the few Jewish organizations willing to showcase programs that challenge accepted images of Jews. For example, the 1998 festival ignited a debate over its showing of films that were sympathetic to the plight of Palestinians. Even with this controversial programming, the festival is able to obtain financial support from a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish individuals, corporations, private foundations, and community organizations.

### ***A Traveling Jewish Theater***

A Traveling Jewish Theater (ATJT), based in San Francisco, produces a season of three to four works that include new plays, revivals and guest artist presentations. The work of ATJT also challenges traditional notions of theater and Jewish art. The 1998 season included *June Bride*, the story of Sara Felder's Jewish lesbian wedding and *Echoes and Postcards*, a tribute to small-town Appalachian life performed through an old-time radio variety show. While *Echoes and Postcards* would not be considered a Jewish cultural program under the definition used in

this study, it was presented as part of ATJT's dialogue about culturally specific theater groups and the role that they play in America. In 1998, ATJT also began sponsoring Jewish Music Wednesday, a weekly series that features a variety of Jewish musicians from different musical traditions, including the Ben Goldberg Sextet, Za'atar, and Davka.

### **Non-Jewish Venues and Mixed Auspices**

Jewish culture is often presented at non-Jewish venues, both mainstream institutions, such as museums, theaters, universities, and alternative cultural institutions. Many of these venues actively seek Jewish artists, patrons, funders, and audiences, and many have Jewish professional staff in management or programming positions.

Organizations that are considered under mixed auspices include Holocaust Centers and Jewish Studies Programs at Christian and secular universities. Holocaust Centers, including museums, resource centers, educational programs, and video and oral history projects related to the Holocaust have proliferated. There are now more than 100 such centers, many of which sponsor lectures, ceremonies, exhibits, and other public programs. The number of local historical societies, archives, and history projects are also increasing. More than 100 such organizations now network with the American Jewish Historical Society, many of whom sponsor lectures and symposia, exhibits, publications, and a variety of other public programs.

It is important to examine further the role that non-Jewish organizations and those under mixed-auspices have taken in promoting and disseminating Jewish art and culture. These organizations include for-profit institutions, such as art galleries, bookstores, and

**Table 5**

**Non-Jewish Venues in the Bay Area**

**Bookstores**

A Clean Well-Lighted Place for Books  
 Book Passage  
 Cody's Bookstore  
 Easy Going Travel Shop & Bookstore  
 Gaia Bookstore  
 Modern Times  
 Stacey's Bookstore

**Theaters and Moviehouses**

Altarena Playhouse  
 Artrise Theatre  
 Bus Barn Theatre  
 Cable Car Theater  
 California Conservatory Theatre  
 Exit Stage Left  
 Jon Sims Center for the Performing Arts  
 Kabuki Theater  
 Lark Theatre  
 Lincoln Park  
 Live Oak Theatre  
 Magic Theatre  
 Miramonte Little Theatre  
 New Conservatory Theatre  
 Noe Valley Ministry  
 Noh Space  
 Red Barn  
 Roxy Cinema  
 Theatre on the Square  
 Town Hall Theatre

**Clubs and Cafes**

Ashkenaz  
 Freight & Salvage  
 Little Planet Café  
 Paradise Lounge

**Art Galleries and Museums**

Berkeley Store Gallery Annex  
 Bucheon Gallery  
 George Krevsky Gallery  
 Yerba Buena Center for the Arts  
 M.H. de Young Memorial Museum  
 Meyerovich Gallery  
 MiLa Fine Arts  
 New Pieces Gallery  
 Peninsula Exposure Gallery  
 Scott Nichols Gallery

**Schools and Universities**

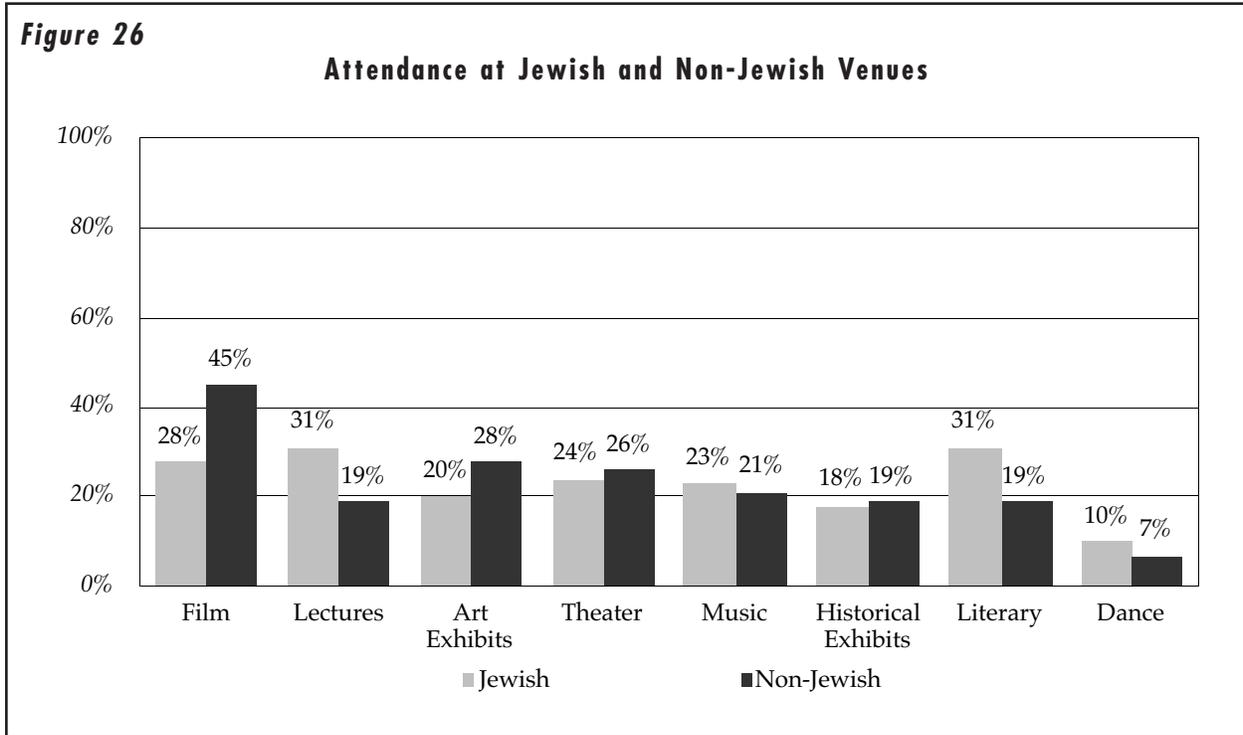
Cal State Hayward  
 California College of Arts and Crafts  
 California Institute of Integral Studies  
 Graduate Theological Union  
 Gunn High School  
 Lomas High School  
 New College of California  
 Presidio Middle School  
 San Francisco State University  
 Sonoma State University  
 Stanford University  
 University of California Berkeley  
 University of California Santa Cruz  
 University of California San Francisco  
 University of San Francisco

**Churches**

First Congregational Church  
 First United Methodist Church  
 Unitarian Universalist Center

**Other Non-Jewish Venues**

3Com Park  
 California Historical Society  
 Commonwealth Club of California  
 Cubberley Community Center  
 Dolby Laboratories  
 Fort Mason  
 Herbst International Exhibition Hall  
 Notre Dame Plaza  
 Nourse Auditorium  
 Oakland Public Library  
 Oakland Veterans Building  
 Santa Clara Convention Center  
 San Francisco Public Library  
 Sheehan Hotel  
 Sobrato Auditorium  
 Strybing Arboretum  
 The Learning Annex  
 The Sequoias  
 Urban Life Center  
 Westin St. Francis Hotel



nightclubs and non-profit and not-for-profit institutions, such as universities, museums, and libraries. Participation of non-Jewish organizations is important because they may bring a fresh perspective to Jewish art and culture and may be more willing to support innovative programming than Jewish organizations, which primarily favor more traditional fare. These organizations not only participate in popular cultural events, but are also highly involved in promoting Jewish music, theater, and other forms of Jewish high culture.

In the Bay Area, cultural events that contain Jewish characters, issues, and situations are found almost as frequently at non-Jewish venues as they are at Jewish venues. These venues included theaters, universities, public

libraries, bookstores, and galleries. The availability of programs at non-Jewish venues provides avenues for participation in Jewish life for many Jewish individuals, especially those who are unaffiliated or marginally affiliated. Events at non-Jewish venues focus on

themes such as Jewish politics, history, travel, Israel, the Middle East and other topics that are more likely to appeal to a wider audience. For example, numerous lectures on Kabbalah were held at non-Jewish venues around the Bay Area, including the California Institute

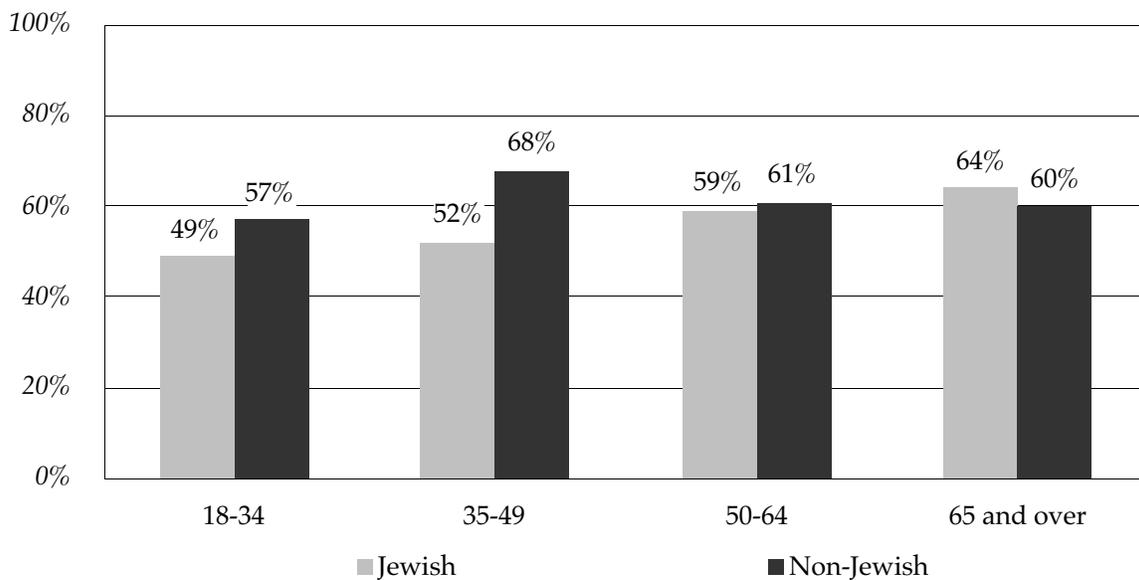
for Integral Studies in San Francisco and Gaia Books in Berkeley.

Why is Jewish art and culture available so frequently at non-Jewish spaces? Many of the programs have become so popular that

*Support of Jewish cultural events by non-Jewish organizations is important because they may bring a fresh perspective to Jewish art and culture and may be more willing to support innovative programming than Jewish organizations.*

**Figure 27**

**Attendance at Jewish and Non-Jewish Venues by Age**



the available facilities at Jewish organizations are simply not large enough to hold events or are not equipped for the specific type of performance being put on. Some organizations want to reach out to individuals who would not feel comfortable in 'Jewish space.' For example, an event held at a synagogue may be a barrier for some individuals.

Certain venues will attract specific audiences, for example, audiences that attend events at a campus Hillel will mostly be comprised of young adults, at a Jewish library they may be seniors, at a federation they may be professionals, at a Jewish community center they may primarily be families with children. Individuals who attend events at Jewish spaces will probably have a stronger Jewish

identity and feel comfortable attending events at these venues.

The data also shows that Jewish art and culture is no longer confined to a geographic

location or urban center. Unlike other communities around the country, there is no geographic center of Jewish life in the Bay Area. Jewish cultural activity is found all around the Bay Area, in urban and suburban area, in residential

and business areas. This mirrors the assimilation of Jews into all areas of American life.

Differences also exist in where different forms of Jewish art and culture are presented. For example, Jewish theater is more likely to be held at non-Jewish venues, while presentations and music are more likely to be held

*Unlike other communities, there is no geographic center of Jewish life in the Bay Area. Jewish cultural activity is found all over, in urban and suburban, residential and business areas.*

**Table 6**

**Non-Institutional Sources of Bay Area Jewish Art and Culture**

*TV/Radio*

Channel 48  
 KCSM-TV Channel 60  
 KOFY Channel 20  
 KPIX Channel 5

KQED-TV Channel 9  
 KTEH-TV Channel 54  
 KUSF Radio 90.3  
 Odyssey / Bay Area cable

at Jewish venues. A further examination of the facilities available at both Jewish and non-Jewish venues may prove fruitful for cultural planners.

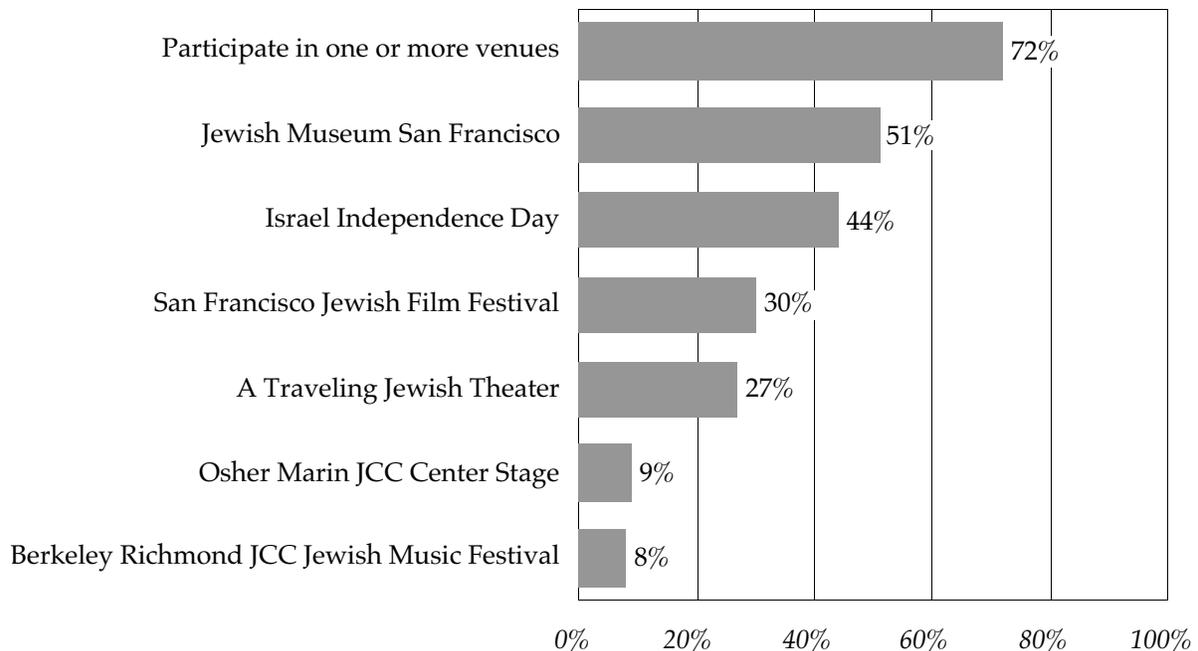
Little is known about where individuals attend programs, yet this is an important question for cultural planners. While large numbers of people are participating in Jewish culture, more appear to be doing it at non-Jewish venues than at Jewish ones. Fifty-five percent of respondents report attending events at Jewish venues and 62% say they attended events at non-Jewish venues in the past year. Films (45% vs. 28%) and art

exhibits (28% vs. 20%) are more likely to be attended at non-Jewish venues. Lectures on Jewish topics are more likely to be offered under Jewish auspices and were more likely to be attended at Jewish venues than non-Jewish (31% vs. 19%). There were no differences found for other types of events. These differences, however, may be influenced more by where certain types of events likely to be held than where individuals prefer to attend (see Figure 26).

These differences may also be related to the age of the respondent and may be especially important for attracting younger Jews, who

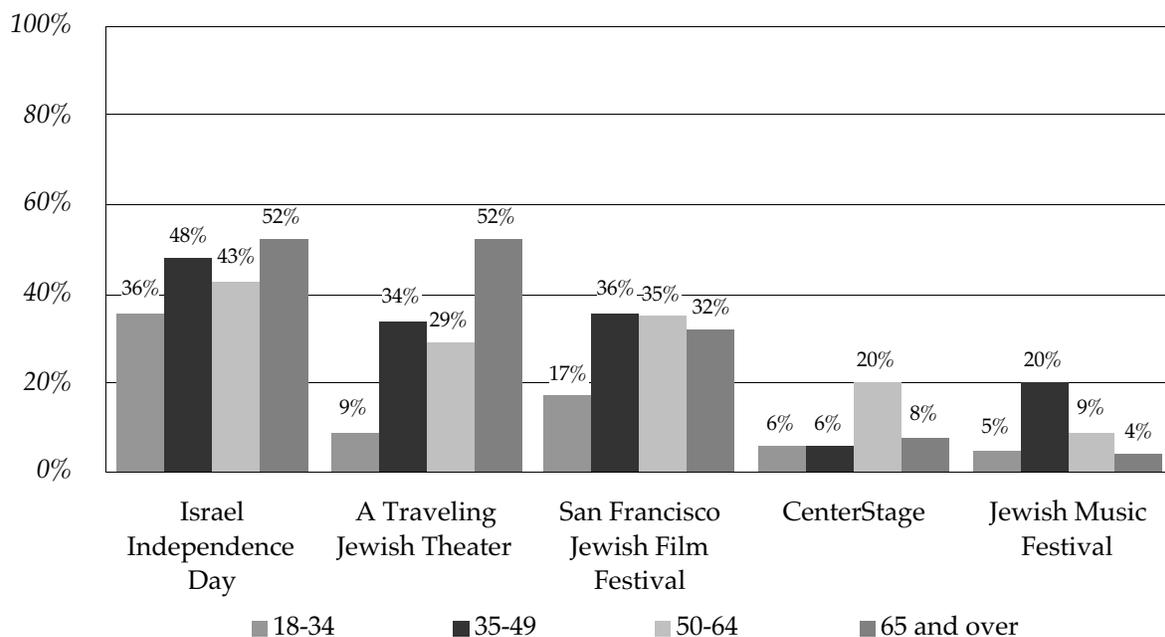
**Figure 28**

**Ever attend any of the following...**



**Figure 29**

**Ever Attend Jewish Events by Age**



may be more willing or comfortable attending events at non-Jewish venues. Additionally, events at Jewish and non-Jewish venues may be advertised differently, thereby attracting different audiences. Our data shows that younger Jewish respondents are less likely to attend Jewish events at Jewish venues than older respondents. This is not surprising given their lower affiliation rates. Less than 50% of respondents 18-34 say they attended Jewish events in the past year at Jewish venues, compared to 52% of those 35-49, 59% of respondents 50-64 and 64% of respondents 65 and over. No consistent differences were found among attendance at non-Jewish venues (see Figure 27).

Participation in annual events or at institutional settings is quite high. Seventy-two percent attended at least one institution or event. Almost half of respondents reported ever attending an Israel Independence Day celebration, a performance by A Traveling Jewish

Theater, the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, or a program at the Osher Marin Jewish Community Center Center Stage or Berkeley Richmond Jewish Community Center Jewish Music Festival. Forty-four percent say they ever attended an Israel Independence Day celebration, 30% reported ever attending the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, 29% say they attended a performance of A Traveling Jewish Theater; less than 10% reported ever attending a Center Stage event or the Jewish Music Festival (see Figure 28).

Respondents younger than 35 are also less likely to have ever attended any of these events; 31% of respondents 18-34 report ever attending, compared to 51% of respondents age 35-49, 63% of those 50-64 and 56% of respondents 65 and over. Younger respondents are more likely to have ever attended an Israel Independence Day or been to the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival than any

of the other annual events (see Figure 29). A number of young people expressed their interest in the Jewish Film Festival:

“I want to express that I go to the Jewish Film Festival every year. It’s a real festival for me. I go to at least five films every year and I look forward to that. It’s not always done by Jewish people, but it does relate to Jewish issues that we all bring up here in forum.”

Jewish museums are also attracting big proportions of the Jewish community. Forty-five percent of respondents report ever visiting The Jewish Museum San Francisco or the Judah L. Magnes Museum. These findings are similar to results for Bay Area museum attendance in general. A third of respondents say they have been to The Jewish Museum San Francisco and 27% say they have been to the Judah L. Magnes Museum. Respondents younger than 35 were also less likely to have ever visited either of the museums; 23% say

they had ever been to either of the museums, compared to 68% of those 65 and over, 57% of respondents 50-64, and 46% of respondents 35-49.

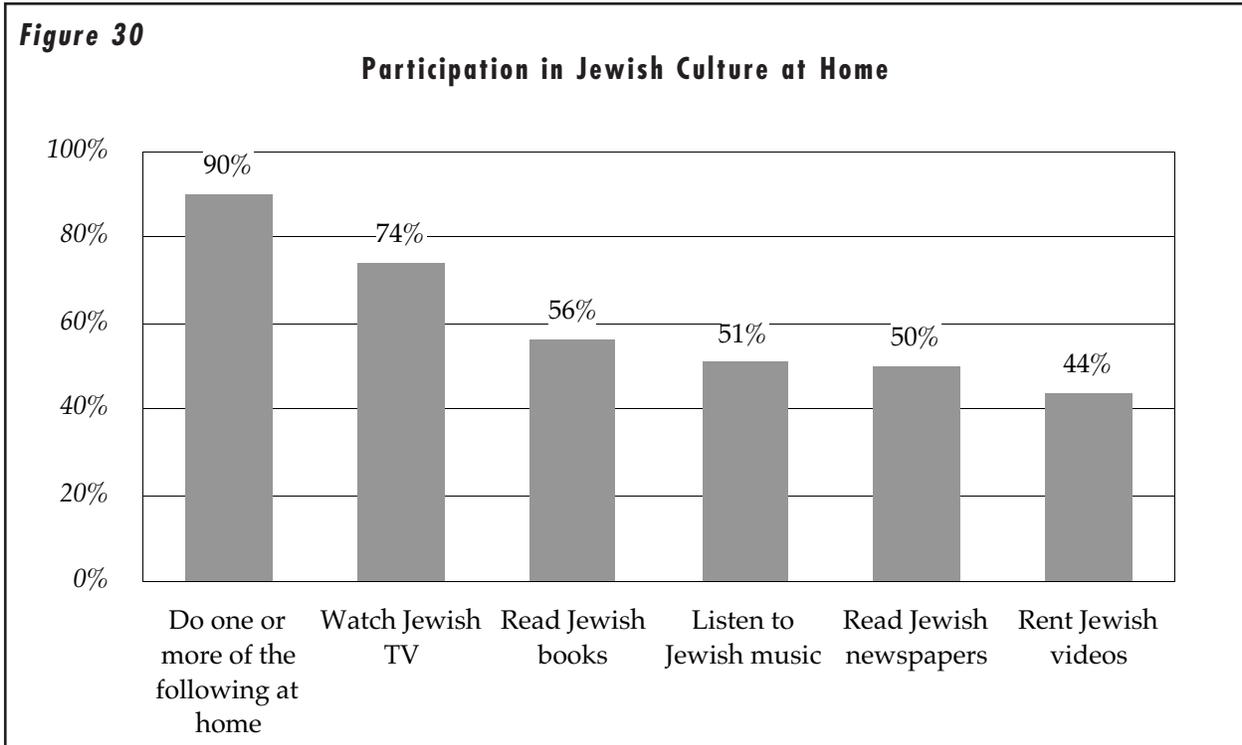
Others are particularly attracted to Jewish museums:

“I regularly go to The Jewish Museum in San Francisco and Magnes. Jewish culture is so rich, I participate.”

**Non-Institutional Sources**

Jewish cultural expression is also encountered in numerous non-institutional settings, among them books, compact disks and audio tapes, periodicals, newspapers, radio, film, television, and, increasingly, on-line.

Local programming of Jewish art and cultural programs found on Bay Area radio and television include the television programs *Brooklyn Bridge*, a fictionalized series about growing up in Brooklyn, and *Children of Terezin*, *Anne Frank Remembered*, and *Diamonds in the Snow*, all programs about the



Holocaust. The *Northern California Jewish Bulletin* provides a weekly listing of weekly radio and television programs with Jewish themes or content (see Table 6).

The mass media clearly attract the most Jewish participation. Seventy-four percent of respondents say they watched television with Jewish content in the past year, between 50% and 55% say they read Jewish books, newspapers or magazines, or listened to Jewish music in the past year, and 44% say they rented Jewish videos. Over 60% of respondents went to a film with Jewish content. These numbers equal or exceed those who fast on Yom Kippur, have a mezuzah, light candles on Friday night, or belong to a synagogue or other Jewish organization (see Figure 30).

Participation in Jewish culture at home occurs among all age groups. Eighty-five percent of respondents under 35 say they participated in Jewish culture at home in the past year, compared to 92% of respondent 35-49, 87% of those 50-64 and 96% of respondents 65 and over. Patterns of participation at home were similar among all age groups. However, younger Jews are less likely to listen to Jewish music and more likely to rent Jewish videos than other age groups.

### **CONTENT-BASED TAXONOMY**

Because American Jewry is a pluralist community, engaged with an open, diverse society, no single trope, no central theme, no encompassing ideology, can embrace the variety of Jewish cultural expression visible in the contemporary landscape. Indeed, observers of the contemporary cultural landscape can identify a multiplicity of simultaneous cultural conversations. Some are going

on within the Jewish community, others outside the Jewish community, and still others between the Jewish and general communities. All three types of conversation are described in the literature, and each conversation is an important vehicle for self-examination. Conversations with Jewish tradition help to situate American Jewry in the continuum of Jewish history. The Jewish-American conversation also places the community in history, but more specifically within the cultural, social, and political contexts of contemporary America. Jewish participation in mainstream cultural conversations brings Jewish perceptions, values, and sensibilities into American culture.

### **Jewish Conversations**

In a recent essay, Nessa Rapoport suggests that American Jewry has reached a point of maturity and confidence that will enable writers (and other creative figures) to enter into an informed dialogue with Jewish tradition and to create new forms of Jewish culture grounded in Jewish civilization (Solataroff and Rapoport 1992). This form of “internal” conversation links contemporary American Jewry with predecessor Jewish communities and cultures spanning time and geography. A recent colloquium, convened at the Jewish Theological Seminary, calls attention to the centrality of these kinds of conversations within the Jewish tradition. Jack Wertheimer asserts that efforts to retrieve the past through reappropriation, reinvention, evocation, reinterpretation, and mythologization express a continued yearning for rootedness and authenticity, even when they legitimize novel behaviors and beliefs. “In most accounts,” Dr. Wertheimer says, “dynamic transformations, if not convulsive ruptures, are hallmarks of Jewish modernity.” These

accounts emphasize Jews who broke with their past in order to live in the modern world. But Wertheimer insists that such interpretations ignore the persistence of conversations with tradition in modern Jewish life (Wertheimer 1992:IX-XIII).

### **Jewish-American Conversations**

In contrast to those conversations which are primarily internal, some current conversations reflect what Ellen Schiff calls “the imperatives and difficulties of dual identity.” Unlike Yiddish culture, which in America faces inward, “revivifying not only roots, but the places where roots once flourished,” American Jewish culture, in contrast, faces outward to the challenges of life in a pluralist society, concerned with the representation of those who feel conflicted, alienated, and vulnerable. In Dr. Schiff’s view, American liberty, as well as its prejudices, are “exactly what provoke American Jews to ponder what being Jewish means.” Like internal Jewish conversations, American Jewish culture is composed of expressions that relate directly and overtly to Jewish experience and life. However, the condition of living in two worlds rather than living solely within the Jewish tradition is the overt content of this conversation (Schiff 1995:XXX and XXVf).

### **American Conversations**

Yet another ongoing conversation concerns itself with the American condition, filtered through Jewish lenses and sensibilities. Stephen Whitfield, for example, argues that “American Jewish culture cannot be found at its most impressive in the perpetuation or rejuvenation of the Judaic heritage of biblical Israel or of the Old World. Instead that culture yields its most formidable images in those expressions of Jewish sensibility that

can be located in the arts of the wider society. The proper way to grope toward a definition of American Jewish culture is to ask the following questions: What are the special features of the works of those Jews who have been creative figures within American culture? What do creative Jews do that differentiates them from other creative Americans? What kinds of cultural expression are representative of American Jews, so that it becomes proper to speak of a Jewish sensibility? The most resourceful, the most original, the most gifted American Jews have generally attempted to burst the constraints of whatever has passed for a normative Jewish ambience, have instead breathed life into American culture generally. That is why the student of American Jewish culture cannot explore only how American Jews have addressed Jewish issues, or how they have attempted to situate themselves within the boundaries of Jewish history or sought to realize their own Jewishness. . . . in terms of assessing the creativity of American Jewry, such [Judaic] scholarship and resourcefulness have generally been marginal. Because of the velocity of assimilation and acceptance, they have constituted a sideshow, compared to what has been going on under the main tent” (Whitfield 1988:45f).

Content-based taxonomies such as this are valuable in calling attention to the emergence of Jewish culture in the American mainstream. Such a model also focuses on the rich complexity of Jewish cultural expression and would encourage a fine-grained, nuanced reading of the landscape. However, this kind of taxonomy would probably not drive home key questions about who accesses Jewish culture and how they respond to it—questions of audience that are of prime importance to producers, patrons, funders, advocates, and

**Table 7**

**Themes in Bay Area Jewish Art and Culture**

**Religion**

Kabbalah/Mysticism  
Holidays  
Traditions  
Spirituality  
Practices  
Bible  
Ethics

**Israel**

Gay/Lesbian  
Art and Music  
Politics  
Travel  
Israel at 50  
Contemporary Life  
Palestinians  
History

**Jewish Diaspora**

Ireland

Cuba  
Russia  
Poland  
Holland

**Jewish History**

Holocaust  
World War II  
Germans  
Nazism  
Emigration  
Yiddish

**Contemporary U.S.**

Race relations  
Women  
Family life  
Gay/Lesbian  
Politics  
Israel  
Communal issues

community leaders. The descriptive richness of such a study would appeal most to scholars and critics, but its intensity, duration, and cost might limit its feasibility. Finally, many key institutions and venues would be given short shrift in contrast to the content of their cultural programs and presentations.

**THEMES IN JEWISH ART AND CULTURE**

The focus of the study was originally on American Jewish art and culture. While many of the events are influenced by American culture and have strong American roots, is there an American Jewish art and culture that can be studied separately from Jewish culture at large? Much of the work that comprises this report contains themes that are not identifiable with American Jewry. These events, however, are interpreted

through an American ideology and experiences. Various writers have identified broad traditions in Jewish art and expression, including humor, social justice, “lifestyle” trends, ancestry and religious heritage, liturgy and the Holocaust (Dresser and Friedman 1993; Kleeblatt 1996). Kleeblatt also believes that mainstream, secular Jewish artists are no longer concerned with the shetls and ghettos of their grandparents but with suburban and middle-class American life. The Holocaust, for example, has become an artifact of American culture, not only for Jews but also for non-Jews (Flanzbaum 1999). Art and culture provide rich avenues for Jews, as individuals and as a community, to express their thoughts and feelings about the Holocaust in ways that are more powerful than language.

According to SPPA findings, the peak attendance rates for most types of arts participation are made up of visitors in the 45-54 year-

old range, followed by those adults 35 to 44 (Jack Faucett Associates Inc. 1998). It appears that the majority of art and cultural programming in the Bay Area is geared towards this age group, and in many ways may mirror the demographics of those affiliated with the Bay Area Jewish community. However, some programs also target other segments of the community, such as the unaffiliated, seniors, families, teens, young adults, women, and gays and lesbians.

On the surface, Bay Area Jewish art and culture represents the diverseness of the Jewish community and its relationship to American society at large. Closer analysis, however, reveals that these programs, in a large part, promote images that reflect the background of the majority of Jews in the U.S. — those of Ashkenazi or Eastern European background. While some of the programs do focus on Sephardic or Mizrahi themes — they more frequently represent the Ashkenazic experience — this may be in part because they are funded and sponsored by Jewish organizations which have been created and maintained by the Ashkenazic community. While Jewish artists have been marginalized in many respects by the American art world at large, Sephardic and Mizrahi artists in the United States have been further marginalized within the Jewish community. Many individuals probably would not even think that the event would be anything other than their experience, unless it specifically mentions its Sephardic or Mizrahi aspects. Even programs that deal with other Diaspora communities have strong leanings towards Eastern Europe. A female focus group participant specifically mentioned the desire for more Sephardic events. She said:

“The Sephardic melodies are beautiful and it would be nice if there were more concerts

to share them so that people could share this with [their families].”

Even if we only consider those events that reflect the Ashkenazi heritage, we find a diversity of the themes and a wide range of Jewish identities present in Jewish art and culture in the Bay Area. The diversity of themes and identities, for the most part however, represent the mission of the organizations that present them. Each organization as an institution decides the kind of mark they want to make in the Jewish community and the community at large. The programming that they sponsor typically reflects this long-range vision — the mission of the organizations. However, programming is also balanced by a number of shorter-term objectives, including the desire to attract new people, financial support, and the availability of programs from other institutions.

Religious themes were most prevalent in lectures and art exhibits. Examples of lectures include “Jewish Mysticism: Doorway to the Soul,” “The Spiritual Path to Judaism,” “How Families Celebrate Shabbat at Home,” and “Parallels Between Modern Cosmology and Ancient Jewish Kabbalah.” Art exhibits included “Chag Sameach: Children’s Perspectives on the Jewish Holidays” and “L’Chaim: A Kiddish Cup Exhibit.” Many of these programs, especially lectures, were held at synagogues.

Jewish history was also a popular theme of many programs. Most of these programs focused on Holocaust subjects, however, this may be related more to the time period of our data collection which included the Jewish holiday of Yom Ha’Shoah. According to scholars, American representations of the Holocaust provide the major link between the Jewish past and the American Jewish

present (Dresser and Friedman 1993; Horowitz 1999). Holocaust programs included personal recollections, documentaries, and dramatizations. *The Courage to Care* (film), *Anne Frank and Me* and *Kindertransport* (theater), "Kristallnacht" and "Varian Fry: Assignment Rescue, 1940-41" (exhibits), all incorporated personal recollections of the Holocaust. *Europa, Europa* was a major release film that received an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Film. Israeli author Aaron Appelfield read from his new novel, *The Iron Tracks* about a Holocaust survivor. Other historical themes included WWI and Jewish emigration and included programs such as the film *Hester Street* and the lecture "Pioneer Jewish Cemeteries of the California Gold Rush." Many Bay Area Jews have developed a renewed interest in Yiddishkeit and this theme was represented in films, lectures, and music including "The Golden Age of Second Avenue" and "Yiddish: The Mama Loshn," "A Hoo Ha History of Yiddish Theater," "Yiddish Literature in the World Today," and "Longing for the Land: Zionist Yiddish Songs."

Some argue that Israel has become the secular ethnic replacement for religion and that it also provides a major link between the Jewish past and the American present. Therefore, it is not surprising that Israeli subjects were a frequent theme in Bay Area events, especially since the data collection period coincided with Israel at 50. Abba Eban, former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, spoke about his role in the Israeli government. Israeli artists, musicians, and choreographers were showcased, including Israeli artist Calman Shemi, the National Kibbutz Artzi, and musician, Yair Dalal. Lectures included "The Struggle for Equality in the Jewish State," "Building Bridges for Peace," and "The History of Israeli Art and

its Reflection on Israeli Society." Films about Israeli life included *Fictitious Marriage*, *Late Summer Blues*, *Siege*, and *Fragments\*Jerusalem*. Other Israel at 50 events included "Beyond Tel Aviv," "Israel in the Park," and the San Francisco Giants celebrate Israel at 50. The programs presented on the Jewish Diaspora fit right in with the interests of Bay Area residents. The Bay Area is multicultural; Jews live among Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and numerous other racial and ethnic groups. They travel a lot; seek out new and exciting experiences with other cultures. Jews go salsa dancing, learn Spanish, eat Chinese food, and protest against human rights violations and military campaigns around the world. And they want to learn about Jewish life and culture around the world that is different from their own. Diaspora themes focused on Jewish life in Cuba, Ireland, China, and Eastern Europe. There were lectures on Jews in Cuba, Ireland and Eastern Europe and films such as *Next Year in Havana*, *Jews of Poland*, and *At the Crossroads*, both about Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. Art exhibits included "Jews among the Berbers" and "Birobidzhan: Making of a Jewish Homeland." Other performances with Diaspora programs included "China Dream: Growing up Jewish in Tienstin" and "Music of the Jews of Arab and Muslim Lands."

Jews also have an interest in their own culture. Many want to connect with the culture that their parents or grandparents left behind when they immigrated to the United States and then assimilated into the American mainstream culture. Contemporary North American Jewry, therefore, also figured prominently in the Jewish art and cultural events presented. Lectures, films, art exhibits, and theatrical events all showed different aspects of Jewish identity in North America. Events included lectures on Jewish women in

Hollywood and being gay, lesbian and Jewish. Julius Lester, a black radical in the 1960's, spoke on his own conversion to Judaism. Films about North American Jewish life included *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter*. Contemporary Jewish life was represented in a number of theatrical pieces including Sara Felder's *June Bride*, Sherry Glaser's *Family Secrets*, and Susan Sandler's *Crossing Delancey*. Contemporary North American Jewry programs also focused on relations with other ethnic groups, especially those between Jews and African Americans.

The wide variety of themes that we identified indicates that there is something for everyone. These themes highlight the wide interests of Jewish individuals and the wide variety of organizations and artists to meet those interests.

#### **ADVERTISING AND THE PROMOTION OF JEWISH ART AND CULTURE**

One area that is not covered in any of the taxonomies, and which we think is important, is advertising and the promotion of Jewish events. The media used to advertise and promote events is an important determinant of who will attend the event and our data provide information on how organizations communicate with different segments of the population. Jewish art and cultural events are widely advertised in the *Northern California Jewish Bulletin (Bulletin)*, the *Bay Guardian (Guardian)* and the *San Francisco Chronicle and Sunday Datebook (Chronicle)*.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, where events are listed has direct and indirect implications for reaching audiences.

Although there may be considerable overlap among readership, each of the study sources attracts different segments of the population.

The main source for arts and culture listings in the San Francisco Bay Area is the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the daily morning newspaper. The *Chronicle* has a daily circulation of close to 500,000 and is available all around the Bay Area. The *Sunday Datebook*, published jointly with the *San Francisco Examiner*, reaches an even wider audience given that it goes to readers of both the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*. The National Arts Journalism Program report found that unlike most other papers, the arts and culture section in the *Chronicle* is bigger than the business and sports sections (Janeway et al. 1999). The NAJP report also describes the *Chronicle's* approach to its art and culture section as combination of high and low culture, rather than choosing one type over another.

The *San Francisco Bay Guardian* is one of the free, weekly alternative newspapers that are widely available around the Bay Area. The *Guardian* is viewed as a political paper that takes on big political targets. It devotes more of its pages to coverage of art and culture than the other alternative papers. The *Guardian*, like the other alternative papers, is more likely to cover young and up-and-coming artists, those events that have political and cultural ramifications and those at alternative venues. Its weekly circulation is approximately 150,000 (Janeway et al. 1999:101).

The *Northern California Jewish Bulletin* is a weekly paper that is available by subscription or purchase at various Jewish and non-Jewish locations throughout the Bay Area. While the *Bulletin* has the most complete listing of Jewish art and cultural events and the easiest format, its circulation is smaller and more limited than the other two newspapers. As our data shows, individuals who read the *Bulletin*, for the most part, are already involved in Jewish life.

The majority of Jewish art and cultural events were found exclusively through the *Bulletin* listings. Listings in the *Guardian* and *Chronicle* lean towards those events that are held at more established venues; are produced by more established organizations; are believed to be of more interest to a wider audience; or are sponsored by non-traditional Jewish organizations. Examples of these include productions at A Traveling Jewish Theater and the Magnes and Jewish Museum, Holocaust programs, and those sponsored by the Kabbalah Learning Center. Listings in the *Guardian* also tend towards those that feature provocative subjects or would be of interest to younger individuals. These include almost all programs about or including Palestinians and those held at the UC Berkeley Hillel or International House. The vast majority of the events are found in the calendar listings rather than as paid advertisements. This is not surprising, given that the recent study by the NAJP found that 50% of the coverage of arts, entertainment and culture are mechanically generated listings (Janeway et al. 1999).

The calendar listings in all three newspapers are basic paragraphs of not more than a few lines that include the title of the event, its location and time, and a contact phone number. Some may include a brief description of the event, such as “The author talks about her book.” Others may be more detailed, like the listing in the *Guardian* for “Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story,” which says “This interactive exhibit for children ages eight and up explores the Holocaust from a nine-year old Jewish boy’s perspective” or *Family Secrets*, “Sherry Glaser performs her solo show about five members of a very funny Jewish family.” Some may have no description at all. Occasionally, there is a longer

listing that includes a review of the program, such as one for Sara Felder’s *June Bride* that was found in the *Guardian*. Listings may also vary between editions — one edition may include the long version, while another may only include a few lines.

Our analysis of the calendar listings and ads indicates three primary ways for identifying Jewish art and culture: the language used, the artist who created the work, and organization that is sponsoring it.

Language is an important part of Jewish culture. Since there is no single Jewish nationality, Jews use a number of different languages to express and communicate their Jewish identity. Even within the same language, there may be different accents and vocabularies. One must assume that there exist certain words or phrases — code words — that are used to express Jewish identity. Direct use of words such as Jew, Jewish, or Judaism make it Jewish art and culture easy to identify. Other words such as Kabbalah, Israel, Holocaust, and anti-Semitism, among others have been adopted as identifiers of Jewish life and identity. Non-Jews, especially those who live or have lived in areas with a large Jewish community may also recognize the meaning of these words. In the most cases, these words are easily identified in the title of the event. In some instances, however, it is the accompanying text that gives further clues to its Jewish identity.

Many events are identified through the use of the actual words Jewish or Judaism in the title. This was especially true for lectures, such as “From Ben-Gurion to Netanyahu: 50 Years of Jewish Politics,” “Chaim Potok: Jewish Identity and Written Expression,” “Pioneer Jewish Cemeteries of the Gold

Rush," or Julius Lester's talk on "My Journey to Judaism." Musical events also use this form of identification, such as "Music of the Jews of Arab and Muslim Lands," "A Concert of Jewish Art Song," "Bay Area Jewish Chorale Fest," and "Salamone Rossi and the Jewish-Italian Renaissance."

Titles may also include words that are associated with Jewish life, such as anti-Semitism, Israel, Yiddish, Holocaust, and Kabbalah. This is especially common for lectures, art exhibits and films. Examples include the lectures "Yiddish Literature in the New World Today," "Yair Dalal: Israel's Multi-Ethnic Music," and "The Kabbalah: Opening the Inner Gates." Art exhibits that were shown as part of Israel at 50 events frequently used words associated with Israel, such as "On the Streets of Israel" and "50/50: Israeli Art from Bay Area Collections."

Another way to identify Jewish art and cultural events is through the use of Yiddish or Hebrew words or phrases. Examples include "Kvetch" and "A Bisl This...A Bisl That." The use of Hebrew words (in transliteration) in a title is even less common, although it is frequently used to identify a holiday event or and event that contains a religious subject. Examples include "Haggadah: A Celebration of Freedom," "Chag Sameach: Children's Perspectives on the Jewish Holidays," and "L'Chaim: A Kiddush Cup Exhibit."

We wonder whether the particular use of language and words that are chosen influences who is interested in the event. For example, using the word Jewish or Judaism, easily identifies the event for both Jews and non-Jews, while using words such as Yiddish, Kabbalah or others with Jewish connotations will probably be recognizable to Jewish individuals and non-Jews with a familiarity with

Jewish life. The use of actual Yiddish or Hebrew words may be unfamiliar to some Jews and most non-Jews, making it difficult to identify the topic of the program. The choice of program name may be a contributing factor to audience and has been little studied.

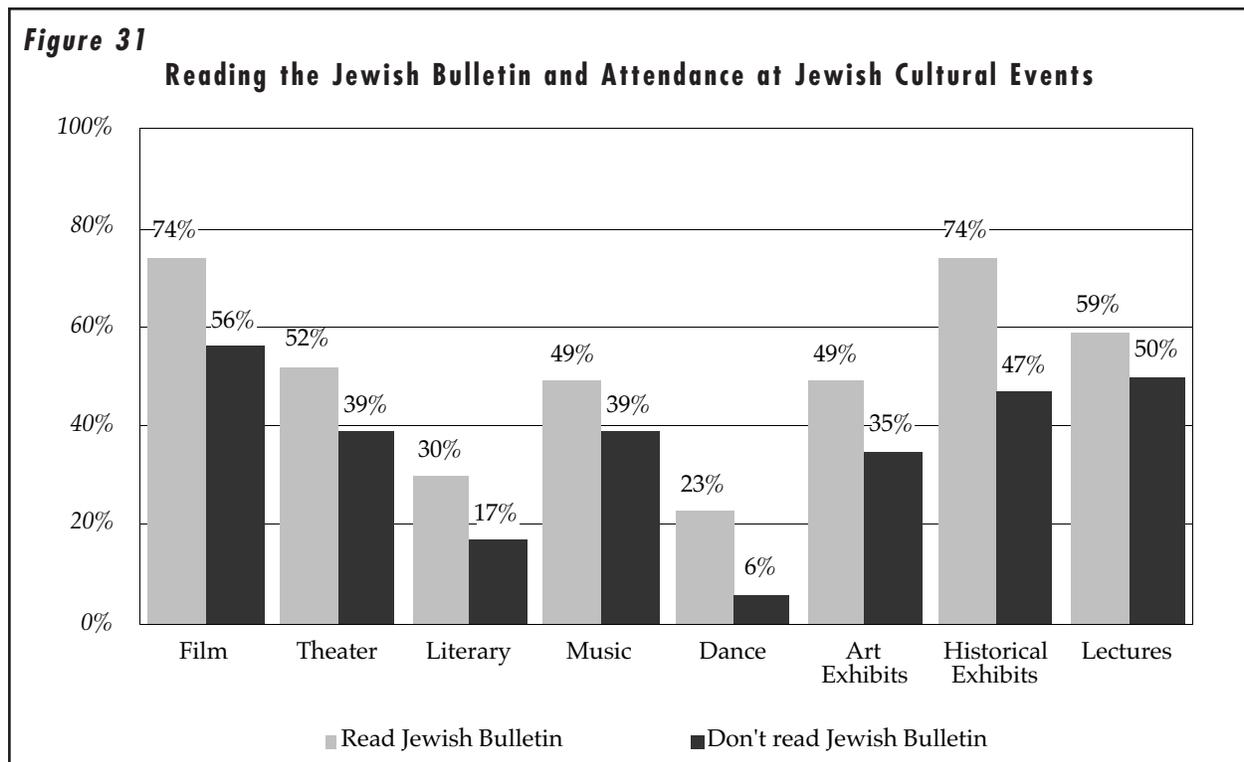
The second option of that through recognition of the creator or organization, may be more problematic. Many of the calendar listings simply say "Jewish singer/songwriter" or "Jewish performer" in either their title or description. As we discussed earlier in our examination of the definition of Jewish art and culture, does the mere use of these terms indicate that the program contains Jewish themes or content. Examples of this include listings in the *Bulletin* for "Opera Arias" by Jewish vocalist Sylvie Braitman at the Culinary Institute of America and a performance by Jewish actor Michael Tucker in "Love Letters" at the Marin Veterans Memorial Auditorium.

A number of the listings, especially those that come from the *Chronicle* are listed under an organization. Examples of this include a listing for the Magnes Museum's exhibitions that then goes on to briefly describe each exhibit or one under the Osher Marin Jewish Community Center for "Family Secrets," Sherry Glaser's comedy about her Jewish family. Other Jewish events, however, are listed under non-Jewish venues, such as a listing for the California Conservatory Theater's production of "Crossing Delancey," or the "Remember the Children" exhibit at the Presidio. Rather than simply being able to quickly scan the listings for Jewish programs, individuals must look at many more details to find any clue as to a program's Jewish identity.

Finding the listings of Jewish events may be even more confusing. In the *Guardian* and *Chronicle* they may be under the type of event, such as the music program “From Bigoray to Brooklyn to Broadway: An evening of Yiddish music with Eleanor Reissa”; the artist or speaker, such as listings for The Ben Goldberg Sextet, Za’atar, or Davka, which are part of A Traveling Jewish Theater’s “New Music Wednesday” program; or the venue or organization, as described in the preceding paragraph. Listings in the *Bulletin* are more consistent in that they are listed first by type of event, then in order by date, and finally, by title.

Paid advertisements are relatively rare in all three papers. In general, the paid advertisements are for large, community-wide events, such as the “Israel in the Park” the Israel at 50 exhibits at the Jewish Museum San Francisco. The paid advertisements were also more likely to come from larger Jewish

organizations, such as the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco or The Jewish Museum San Francisco. These advertisements are also primarily found in the *Bulletin*, although some were also found in the *Guardian*. Examples of paid advertisements are below. There are several similarities in each ad. The presenting agency is on top; the date is in the middle, and there is a description of who will be performing or speaking. Most include a picture, such as that of the performer Rebbe Soul, a chorus for the Bay Area Jewish Choral Fest, and a photo of Abba Eban. Many of the ads also appear to be programs that are jointly sponsored by a number of different organizations, such as an ad for “Three Wednesdays, Three Films and a Nosh,” sponsored by The Jewish Museum San Francisco, in collaboration with the Bureau of Jewish Education, and held at the Jewish Community Federation. The ads for Rebbe Soul and the Israel Independence Day Shabbat at Congregation Emanu-El are



unusual in that it is being sponsored by a synagogue on their own, rather than in collaboration with other synagogues or organizations.

The ad for “Beyond Tel Aviv” in the *Bay Guardian* is the least traditional of all the paid advertisements found for Jewish events. It features a man dressed in a space helmet, Hebrew lettering, and a list of musicians and performance artists that will be appearing. This event is clearly trying to attract a young, hip, Jewish and Israeli audience and it puts it right out there, saying “Celebrating Israel@50 with a South of Market flavor,” and “Four stages of Israeli and Jewish fringe entertainment.”

The listings from all three sources, while not exhaustive of all Jewish programming available in the Bay Area, do indicate that there is an enormous amount and variety of Jewish art and cultural activity. However, while the *Bulletin* has the most complete listing of events and the easiest format to comprehend, its circulation is smaller and more limited than the other two newspapers and makes it more difficult for many Jews to find out about them.

Among those who say they read Jewish newspapers in past year, 75% say they read the *Northern California Jewish Bulletin*. Across all types of events, more respondents who read the Jewish Bulletin attend Jewish events than those who don't read it. While younger Jews appear less likely than other age groups to read Jewish newspapers, among those that do, they are just as likely to read the Bulletin as respondents of other ages (see Figure 31).

The Internet may become an increasingly important resource for advertising Jewish art and culture events, across all age groups.

Forty-four percent of respondents report ever using the Internet for Jewish-related information. Respondents 65 and over are least likely to have used the Internet for Jewish-related information. Among those younger than 35, 40% say they have used the Internet for Jewish-related information, compared to 52% of those 35-49 and 52% of respondents 50-65.

Given the vast amount of arts and cultural activity, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that is available in the Bay Area, the means that people use to find out about events and the description of the actual event are both extremely important to attracting audiences. SPPA data indicate that almost 40% of respondents find out about arts events through a friend, neighbor, relative or co-worker (Jack Faucett Associates Inc. 1998). Whether or not respondents' read the Jewish Bulletin is influenced by one's affiliation with the Jewish community. Among individuals who belong to either a synagogue or other type of Jewish organization, 80% say they read the Bulletin, compared to 54% who do not belong to any type of organization. This is not surprising, given that a large percentage of the Jewish Bulletin's circulation goes to those who receive it as part of their membership in the Jewish Community Federation. And because the majority of Jewish art and cultural programming is advertised solely in the Bulletin, most unaffiliated or marginally affiliated Jews are unaware of the enormous variety of Jewish art and culture that is available. An additional source of information on Jewish cultural programming is through directed mailings, in the form of flyers, brochures, and newsletters. Again, unaffiliated or marginally affiliated individuals will have more difficulty learning about Jewish art and cultural programming through these traditional sources of information.

## CONCLUSION

This analysis leads us to both practical and ideological recommendations. On the one hand, the data indicate that most of the Jewish community in the Bay Area demonstrates its proclivity to participate in Jewish cultural activities. Practical recommendations on how to achieve the goal of increased cultural participation is the first part of this concluding analysis. On the other hand, we must also address the ideological issue of placing Jewish culture on the communal agenda in a way that provides rightful attention and resources.

To summarize the most important points of the report, Jews in the Bay Area believe that participating in Jewish culture is an important part of their Jewish identity. Over ninety percent of the respondents participate in some form of Jewish cultural activities. These include film, music, and lectures as the three most popular types of Jewish participation. Yet attending theatre, dance, and all other forms of Jewish culture are also important. Jews also participate in Jewish culture at home. Over seventy-five percent say that they read Jewish books, newspapers or magazines. Moreover, watching Jewish television programs and renting Jewish videos are also key venues for participating in Jewish culture. About 33% report using a computer for Jewish cultural participation. Just as importantly, 90% of the Jews in the Bay Area are interested in attending more Jewish cultural programs. They are most interested in film, art exhibits, and theatre. Both the current use and the potential use for involving Jews through Jewish cultural activities is enormous.

As pervasive as participating in at least one activity in Jewish culture may be, the

potential for individuals to enrich their Jewish lives by having access to more cultural opportunities, both outside and inside their homes, are sound goals to strengthen Jewish identity and communal involvement. To achieve this goal, some changes are recommended in the way that many Jewish cultural opportunities are presented to the public. In terms of the print media, most of the advertisements that we examined were both small and unattractive, and unlikely to be noticed by the vast majority of consumers. Furthermore, many use code words, Hebrew or Yiddish expressions that are probably unknown to many if not most Jews, especially younger Jews. Often Jewish cultural events appear as one or two lines in the *Datebook* section of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and often are even more obscure than that. Small, unattractive and hard to find, forms of communication in the print media are an ineffective approach to involving people in more Jewish cultural activities. Furthermore, many of the promotional ads that we discovered for many cultural events were limited to the *Jewish Bulletin of Northern California*. While it reaches a significant number of Jews in the Bay Area, it does not reach most. More use of suburban newspapers, *The Guardian*, and a host of other local newspapers, magazines, and internet web sites are critical to increasing people's access to Jewish cultural events. Making those ads more understandable and visually appealing is also important.

We also discovered that Jewish cultural events are sometimes in isolated or in particular geographic venues that people do not know about, or may seem to distant from them. It is critical that Jewish cultural events follow the model of the Jewish Film Festival in holding its activities in multiple venues. The more widely dispersed cultural events are the more likely they are to be attended.

Given the enormous geographic dispersion of Bay Area Jews, bringing cultural events to where people live is essential.

The most obvious way to bring cultural events to Bay Area Jews is through radio, television, video, and internet. It is clear from these data that there is a widespread proclivity to utilize media in the home (and in the office) to participate in Jewish culture. Furthermore, the data show that television is the most widely utilized medium for reaching most Jews. Therefore, this analysis indicates the need for a Bay Area Jewish cable television network, a Jewish radio station, sections in video stores for Jewish-related material are all essential ways for more Jews to participate in Jewish cultural activities.

In general, individuals are deterred from participating in Jewish cultural activities by: (1) lack of parking. Of course there is little one can do about this issue, other than to hold Jewish cultural events where there is a maximum amount of parking or to provide shuttle services to bring people to Jewish cultural events. (2) Understanding what the program is really about. As indicated before, ads are difficult to find, but they are also difficult to understand. While some may be obvious, such as the Jewish Film Festival, lectures, and music, others often convey unclear themes. (3) Quality is a key issue. Just because a program is offered under Jewish auspices does not mean people will come. They must be assured that the quality is excellent, or else they will not attend the first time or return for future involvement. (4) The activity must be fun. Individuals participate in Jewish cultural activities as part of their social and recreational lives. It should not always be serious and heavy and burdened with themes of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.

Most of all, the data indicate that competition with secular cultural events, work, and ordinary life are the primary reasons individuals do not participate more in Jewish cultural activities. Therefore, the attraction must be compelling and the product delivered of superior quality. People need incentives to participate and to continue to participate. Jewish cultural events can merge with the secular in terms of sports, for example. Programs like Maccabee should be more widely publicized and marketed as an obvious way for many Jews who are interested in that form of cultural life to connect it to their Judaism. Given individuals' participation in everyday life, which is largely non-Jewish, we suggest that most Jewish cultural events be in non-Jewish venues. This would be more likely to attract younger Jews, as well as people in specific geographic areas. Holding cultural events primarily in synagogues, for example, may attract those who are part of the congregation, and occasionally those who belong to other congregations, but for the most part would limit attendance to fairly specific audiences. Holding more events in non-Jewish venues would attract individuals who are not so attached to Jewish institutions.

All of these recommendations are directed towards increasing the frequency of Jewish involvement in Jewish culture. We recognize that most Jews are already involved to some degree. We believe that by improving the marketing and the access to Jewish culture this participation could increase dramatically. These recommendations pay tribute to the already successful programs, with the belief that the capacity for increasing Jewish cultural consumption has hardly been tapped.

The ideological issues are much more challenging. For some analysts in Jewish life, the cultural arts are seen as peripheral, trivial, or poor substitutes for *real* Jewish identity, which expresses itself through synagogue attendance, observance of Kashrut, and strict ritual observance. While these are important aspects of Jewish identity for some Jews, they are not the main expression of Jewish identity for most Jews. The vast majority of Jews in the Bay Area define themselves as ethnic, cultural, or secular Jews. They do not see themselves as religious, at least as defined by the standards of synagogue and Kashrut. Yet

they are proud to be Jews, want to participate in Jewish life, and cultural activities are a key element, and for many the primary element in their Jewish expression and lives.

Traditional Jewish education vis-a-vis supplemental schools and day schools, adult learning largely through synagogues, and more recently JCC's federations and other organizations, are important in their own right. But they are not the only forms of Jewish education for building Jewish identity. Learning through film, theatre, music, and literature, are effective means for conveying feeling, ideas, and facts. Furthermore, participation in Jewish culture is not on the fringe of Jewish identity. Encouraging participation in Jewish culture is not a means to an end, that is, more synagogue attendance, more ritual observance, and so on, but rather a form of Jewish identity in itself. It stands in its own right as an expression of one's Jewishness. Of course,

the two are not mutually exclusive, nor should they be. One should not assume that individuals interested in Jewish film are not interested in synagogue participation or vice versa. They can be mutually enforcing and should be. But each are important aspects of Jewish life and should be respected as such.

Jewish community funders, including federations, foundations, and private philanthropists should vastly increase their support of Jewish cultural organizations, institutions and programs in the Bay Area. Currently, such activities lag far behind other identity

and community building efforts, especially when capital campaigns are put into the equation. This is a serious communal error. This study definitively shows that investing in Jewish

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***Jewish culture reaches all age groups, crosses gender, education, income, and geographic boundaries, and is the key to Jewish identity in the Bay Area.***

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cultural activities in the Bay Area will touch most Jewish lives. The question is can they be touched more often, through more venues, with the highest quality to build upon the already significant set of cultural activities in the Bay Area. Investing in Jewish culture should become one of the most important funding priorities. Jewish culture reaches all age groups, crosses gender, education, income, and geographic boundaries, and is the key to Jewish identity in the Bay Area. Jewish culture should take its rightful place in both the ideology of the Jewish community and practically as the partner it should be in building the Jewish community of the future.

## APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected from a mail and a telephone survey, focus groups and content analysis of documents.

### Survey Data

The instrument used in both the mail survey and the telephone survey was developed by the Institute for Jewish & Community Research and was guided by the 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (Jack Faucett Associates Inc. 1998).

The mail survey utilized a convenience sample. Names and addresses were obtained from a random sample of the mailing lists from a number of Jewish organizations. The survey was mailed to 8,693 households in the summer of 1998. We anticipated that 20% of the surveys were not deliverable. This estimate is based on the number of returned as undeliverable that were received after mailing the focus group invitations (see below). The return rate on the survey was 23%, which we believe is high given that the return rate for mail surveys is typically 5-10%. The total number of surveys included in the analysis is 1276.

This type of sampling method was chosen because of the ease with which it can be obtained. However, the downside of using this type of sample is that results cannot be considered representative of the Jewish population in the Bay Area because it would include a higher percentage of affiliated Jews than is actually found in the population

under study. Therefore, we also conducted a telephone survey to increase the likelihood of unaffiliated respondents.

This part of the study consisted of a 20-minute telephone interview using a sample of approximately 3500 Distinctive Jewish Names, which was obtained from Affordable Samples. In order to obtain a more representative sample of Bay Area Jews, we developed quotas for the telephone survey based on age and gender. These quotas were developed using the 1999 U.S. Census figures for the nine Bay Area counties under study combined with estimates of the Jewish population that were extrapolated from the 1987 demography study of Bay Area Jews (Tobin 1988).

The fieldwork was managed by CfMC of San Francisco, California. Interviews conducted by Merrill Research and Associates of San Mateo, California and supervised by CfMC. Interviews were conducted between July 18, 2000 and August 7, 2000. The sample was dialed between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. Each number was dialed three times before being resolved.

In order to identify Jewish individuals, respondents were asked the following questions:

QS5. In terms of your ethnic or cultural identity, which of the following best describes how you identify yourself? Do you identify as...

- 01 Latino, Hispanic or Spanish
- 02 Black or African-American
- 03 Asian or Asian American, such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean or other Asian
- 04 Italian or Irish American or other European group
- 05 Native American
- 06 **Jewish**
- 07 **Jewish and Something else**
- 08 Other

QS6. In terms of religion, which of the following best describes how you identify? Do you identify as....

- 1 Catholic
- 2 Protestant
- 3 **Jewish**
- 4 Agnostic or No Religion
- 5 More than one religion
- 6 Other religion

QS7. If Agnostic or no religion or more than one religion, are you...

- 1 **Jewish and Something else**
- 2 Not Jewish

QS2. Did you have a Jewish mother?

- 0 No
- 1 **Yes**

QS2a. Did you have a Jewish father?

- 0 No
- 1 **Yes**

QS2b. Did you have any Jewish grandparents?

- 0 No
- 1 **Yes**

QS2c. To your knowledge, do you have any Jewish ancestors?

- 0 No
- 1 **Yes**

For the purposes of this study, respondents were considered Jewish if they responded to one of the above answers that are highlighted in bold. A total of 170 completed interviews were obtained.

The data from the mail and telephone surveys were merged and weighted to form the sample for our analysis (n=1446). While we have done our best to control for selection bias, the sample may still underrepresent some segments of the Bay Area Jewish community, including new Jewish immigrants, especially those who do not speak English, and Orthodox Jews.

### Focus Groups

Qualitative data was collected through focus group interviews conducted with Jewish and non-Jewish individuals. In the focus group research, participants were recruited to share their thoughts and feelings about a particular topic. The data that were obtained complement the survey data because they enabled researchers to obtain information that could not be obtained through surveys. Participants were recruited through use of the same lists that were utilized in the mail survey.

Five focus groups were held in June 1998; 45 people participated in the sessions. These sessions were similar in content to the mail survey and covered religious upbringing, Jewish identity and participation in Jewish culture. Each session lasted approximately two hours and was audiotaped and transcribed.

## **Content Analysis**

In order to describe the breadth of Jewish culture, we also conducted a content analysis of Jewish art and cultural events available in the San Francisco Bay Area. Content analysis is a series of analytical tools that are used to transform the information collected in text form to a series of variables that can be examined more easily. This type of analysis combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This research examined the types of art and cultural events that are available in the Bay Area, including the form and content of the events. We did not address issues of artistic merit or quality of the programs. Because the focus of this research was on the role of local organizations in the promotion of Jewish art and culture, we chose to omit programs that were available at the national level, such as network TV programs, feature films and Jewish literature.

The content analysis on the Bay Area Jewish cultural scene was conducted through the analysis of cultural listings and paid advertisements in local newspapers and through the collection of flyers, brochures and bulletins from a variety of organizations. Listings are a good source for describing the breadth of public events that take place. However, they are not a complete source for finding out about events. There are a number of factors that go into the editorial process and they are different at each publication. The editorial commitment to certain audiences sometimes drive the listings (Janeway et al. 1999). Newspapers with a civic sense will focus on local and regional art and culture activity, while those aimed towards mass entertainment will focus on Hollywood and celebrities. Additionally, there are other events that are never advertised, such as

exclusive events for patrons or members only.

Because this study focused on Jewish art and culture, we also had to consider each source's editorial policies and attitudes towards ethnic art. In many cases, the identification of art and culture with a specific ethnic or racial group, or sexual orientation, ghettoizes the artist and diminishes the importance of their work (Li 1994). This label may work to keep the event from being advertised in certain media. For example, are some forms and content more acceptable to non-Jewish media than others?

The newspapers chosen for the study represented the mainstream (*San Francisco Chronicle and Sunday Datebook*), alternative (*Guardian*), and Jewish (*Northern California Jewish Bulletin*) press and are some of the main sources for art and cultural listing in the Bay Area. Materials were collected from February 1998 through May 1998 (Since the data for this study were collected, the ownership of the *San Francisco Chronicle* has changed. Subsequently, this change may have impacted the editorial policies of the paper's art and culture section.).

Each edition was reviewed for Jewish art and cultural events. These included the visual and performance arts and popular culture as well as those that reflect Jewish intellectual life or the preservation of historical Jewish artifacts. They included those that reflect a Jewish style, those with overt Jewish themes and content, and those created by Jews and non-Jews. Data was collected and analyzed on a number of variables, including form, topic, venue, sponsoring organization, and source.

Again, this analysis is by no means exhaustive of all the Jewish art and cultural events available in the Bay Area. We collected materials for only a short period of time. We may also have missed events that were listed in synagogue bulletins, and mailings, flyers and brochures from Jewish and non-Jewish

organizations that we did not receive. However, we believe that the materials collected represent a good proportion of Jewish art and cultural events available in the Bay Area and provide reliable information for this type of study.

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## THE INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH & COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Dr. Gary A. Tobin, *President*

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