Report on Key Informant Interviews conducted as part of CASJE’s Study of the Associations between Jewish ECE and Jewish Engagement
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March 2020

Submitted to: Crown Family Philanthropies

Submitted by: Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education

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Acknowledgments

Exploring Associations Between Jewish Early Care, Education and Engagement reports on the Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE) Early Childhood Education Project funded by Crown Family Philanthropies. Wendy Newberger, Rachel Giattino, Leslie Matsa, and Jaré Akchin provided valuable feedback throughout the project. The CASJE Early Childhood Education Project Team would like to thank the many participants in this research project from across the country, and the Jewish Federation staff from Greater Washington, DC, Chicago, IL, and Seattle, WA for their partnership and support, especially Sharon Sherry, Sabrina Townsend, Anna Hartman, and Noa Guter. CASJE would like to thank Janet Aronson, Mara Bier, Bill Robinson, Cynthia Krug and Anna Hartman for their expert consultation and review of specific aspects of our project work as well as the CASJE Advisory Board for their guidance on the development of this project.

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Abstract

This report describes findings from a series of interviews on the topic of Jewish engagement among families with young children. The research team conducted 35 interviews with 44 professionals who work in Jewish early care and education (ECE) and related fields and 10 interviews with parents raising Jewish children. Professionals were reluctant to identify any distinct behaviors as indicative of Jewish engagement and said that Jewish engagement varies depending on the individual. They defined Jewish engagement as involving connecting with others, engaging in a variety of behaviors, and attributing Jewish meaning to those connections and behaviors. Professionals typically measure Jewish engagement as attendance at programs and events but consider these measurements of engagement to be of limited use. Professionals and parents enumerated several barriers to engagement, including cost, parents’ lack of time, the location of Jewish organizations relative to where families live, and negative feelings about religious organizations based on parents’ childhood experiences. Parents spoke about their Jewish life before having children and their family’s Jewish life since having children. Professionals and parents also named several facilitators of engagement, including specific times in a family’s life, organizations having a relationship-based approach to engagement, and parents becoming involved through and in support of their children. Discussion addressed the ways in which the current definition of Jewish engagement differs from definitions used by Jewish organizations in the past, the fact that Jewish ECE centers are well positioned to encourage Jewish engagement, and challenges researchers face when attempting to measure changes in families’ Jewish engagement over time. The findings from this report informed other aspects of the research project, including the development of an online survey of parents and the development of protocols for site visits to Jewish ECE centers.
Introduction

In February 2017 a research team began work on the CASJE project entitled “Exploring the Associations between Jewish Early Care and Education and Jewish Engagement: Research to Inform Practice.” The first research goal of this project was to undertake conceptual and methodological work to learn how to define and measure “Jewish engagement” within families and ECE programs (see text box for more information on the study). In order to help accomplish this goal, the research team carried out key informant interviews with parents and professionals in order to characterize how engagement has been measured in the past and to identify any gaps in measurement that future research may address. This report summarizes the findings of 45 key informant interviews conducted with parents raising young Jewish children (n=10) and Jewish professionals, many of whom work in the field of Jewish ECE and related areas (35 interviews with 44 professionals). The research team conducted interviews in the spring and summer of 2017. In each interview, the respondent answered a series of questions designed to elicit their views on Jewish engagement. The professionals offered definitions of Jewish engagement, described how they measure engagement, and discussed the limitations of those measurements. The parents reflected on their Jewish involvement before and after having children. Both types of respondent offered their opinions about barriers to and facilitators of Jewish engagement among families with young children.

The CASJE Early Childhood Project

In November 2016, the Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE) launched a major research initiative, funded by Crown Family Philanthropies, to explore the ways in which Jewish early care and education (ECE) may serve as a gateway for greater, long-term involvement in Jewish life. This mixed-methods, multi-year study addresses three questions:

1. What does "Jewish engagement" mean to Jewish families with young children and to Jewish early childhood professionals?
2. How do Jewish ECE programs engage parents with young children, and what are the barriers to parental or family engagement?
3. How does Jewish engagement change over time for Jewish families with young children, and do these patterns differ for families who do and do not enroll their children in Jewish ECE?

Each of these three research questions corresponds to a primary research component of the project:

1. Conducting a literature review and key informant interviews to develop a more precise definition of "Jewish engagement" with a specific focus on a wide range of Jewish families with young children.
2. Conducting site visits in three target communities to identify best practices utilized by Jewish ECE for engaging parents with young children, as well as barriers to engagement.
3. Conducting a survey of Jewish families with young children to examine changes in engagement over time.

Three metropolitan areas were targeted to address the latter two research questions of the study: Chicago, IL, Seattle, WA, and Greater Washington, D.C. These represent communities with diverse Jewish populations, and range from large and well-established, to highly transient, to small but rapidly growing.

This project was led by Dr. Tamara Halle and Dr. Elizabeth Karberg at Child Trends, together with Dr. Mark Rosen of Brandeis University. The initiative aimed to contribute rigorous research findings on Jewish ECE to the field to inform future research and practice.
This report begins by explaining how respondents were selected and interviewed and describing how the interview transcripts were coded. Next, findings are presented in four sections. The first two sections (“Defining Jewish Engagement” and “Measuring Jewish Engagement”) are based on the interviews with professionals. The latter two sections (“Barriers to Jewish Engagement” and “Facilitators of Jewish Engagement”) are based on the interviews with professionals and parents. Finally, a discussion puts these findings in context and addresses their implications for the other research activities associated with this project.

The research team has used this series of interviews to inform the design of other components of the project, including protocols used during subsequent site visits to ECE programs and an online survey of parents raising Jewish children (see text box for further information about the overall study). Findings from later phases of the study will be presented in future reports.

**Methodology**

**Sample**

The project leaders identified Jewish professionals from across the United States and sent them an invitation to participate in a 30- to 60-minute, semi-structured interview. The professionals included those with academic experience as well as those with expertise gained through years of practice. Many were drawn from the field of Jewish ECE, but others work with Jewish college students and young adults -- people who are not yet parents but may become parents in the near future. In total, 44 Jewish professionals agreed to be interviewed between May and August 2017. While the majority of the interviews with professionals were one-on-one (n=32), two were conducted as group interviews with two informants each and one as a group of eight individuals.

Table 1 summarizes the professionals’ fields of work. For purposes of analysis, the professionals who work primarily within the field of Jewish ECE were at times considered separately from those professionals who do not work specifically within the field of Jewish ECE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Work</th>
<th>ECE Professionals</th>
<th>Not specifically ECE Professionals</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local or national leadership position</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation or foundation officer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of Jewish ECE center</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ Library</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the interviews with professionals, parents raising Jewish children were also interviewed in July and August 2017. The children ranged in age from one and a half to six and a half. Seven parents had children who currently attend or previously attended Jewish ECE and three parents had children who do not attend Jewish ECE. Five of the six Jewish ECE directors that were interviewed referred a total of 11 parents; of these, 9 were contacted and 7 completed interviews. In addition, three of the parents with children in Jewish ECE each referred a friend with a child not in Jewish ECE; all three of these parents completed interviews.

Among our interviewees, all but four were female. Additional demographic information for the sample can be found below in Table 2.

**Table 2 Age and Religious Affiliation of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious affiliation</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstructionist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culturally Jewish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Jewish</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measures

Two semi-structured interview protocols were developed, one for professionals and the other for parents. The study’s research questions were used as a basis for the development of these protocols, which are attached at the end of this report (see Appendices). Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Analysis

Jewish Professional Interviews

Thematic codes were developed through an iterative process that involved three people from the research team including members who identify as Jewish and those who do not. All coders read a selection of the interview transcripts to develop and review the codes and ensure that they encompassed all of the major themes that arose in the interviews. The coders then conducted open coding of recurring themes using Dedoose, an online qualitative research and mixed methods application. The coders worked to reach consensus on the codes by meeting on a regular basis to discuss and revise the codes as needed. The final codebook is attached at the end of this document.

Once consensus was reached on the codes, pairs of two coders began applying codes to the same transcript to establish interrater reliability. Each member of the pair coded a transcript independently, and then a third individual calculated percent agreement and Cohen’s Kappa for the pair’s codes to determine the level of interrater reliability (IRR) for each interview. To ensure reliability of coding across team members, IRR was calculated for 10% (n=4) of the interviews. Once Cohen’s Kappa was calculated for the selected interviews, the team then met as a group to discuss potential differences in interpretations of excerpts or codes and clarified how the codes should best be applied or whether modification to the codebook was needed. This process continued several times from October 2017 to December 2017 until the two coders reached a Cohen’s Kappa of .8 or higher, indicating an acceptable level of IRR. A third coder joined midway through the process and achieved acceptable IRR (K>.8) with the other two coders on the selected 10% (n=4) of interviews that had previously been chosen to double-code to establish IRR. After IRR among all three coders was reached, all remaining interview transcripts were coded by individual coders.

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1 See https://www.dedoose.com/
Parent Interviews

The process of developing codes for the parent interviews was very similar to that of developing codes for the Jewish professional interviews. The team developed codes through an iterative process. One team member, with a culturally Jewish background, read through the interviews and developed codes. Other team members reviewed the coding structure to ensure that it captured themes heard across the 10 interviews. Team members met five times over the course of one month to refine the coding structure, establish IRR, and code the interviews. Since there were only 10 parent interviews, a Cohen’s Kappa of more than .8 on 10% of the interviews (i.e., 1 interview) was chosen as the marker for reliability between coders. Interviews were coded by two reliable coders (K=0.85) in Dedoose.

Findings

The findings will be presented in four sections: defining Jewish engagement, measuring Jewish engagement, barriers to Jewish engagement, and facilitators of Jewish engagement. The first two sections are based on the interviews with professionals, and the latter two sections are based on interviews with both professionals and parents.

Defining Jewish Engagement

Early in the interviews with professionals, after some introductory questions regarding the respondent’s professional role and responsibilities, the interviewer asked the respondent whether “Jewish engagement” was a term they used or whether they preferred a different term. The interviewer then continued with a series of questions about the definition of Jewish engagement, characteristics of engaged Jews, and what it means to be more or less engaged in Jewish life. This section of the report will describe how professionals reacted to the term “Jewish engagement,” how they feel Jewish engagement varies from person to person; what they think Jewish engagement means, doesn’t mean, and used to mean; and how they see families exhibiting Jewish engagement currently.

Because “Jewish engagement” is a technical term used by professionals but not by parents, questions about the definition and measurement of Jewish engagement were not included in the interviews with parents.

The professionals were comfortable using the term “Jewish engagement,” although they noted that it was a term they typically used with other professionals and not with families, who might find it impersonal. Several professionals (n=15) said they would prefer a different term, but there was little agreement on what that other term should be. The professionals suggested twelve possibilities; of these “family engagement” was the one mentioned most frequently, by five respondents. One respondent questioned the validity of the concept of Jewish engagement altogether, asserting that it is meaningful only within the non-Orthodox Jewish
community, since the premise of Jewish engagement hinges on Jewish observance being voluntary rather than obligatory. As will be shown, most of the respondents considered Jewish engagement to be a broad construct that includes more than observance. Furthermore, several aspects of Jewish engagement that were identified by the key informants are applicable to all Jews, regardless of denomination or ritual observance levels.

The respondents noted that the term “Jewish engagement” can be used in two different ways. First, Jewish engagement can refer to individuals’ and families’ connections with others, their behaviors, and their intentional attribution of meaning to those behaviors. Second, Jewish engagement can refer to strategies that organizations and professionals use in their interactions and activities with families. So in one sense Jewish engagement is a set of behaviors and intentions on the part of families, while in another sense it is a set of actions taken by organizations. The interviews focused more on engagement as exhibited by families, although professionals did discuss their engagement strategies as well.

In order to encourage professionals to elaborate on the construct of Jewish engagement, they were asked to describe any general characteristics of an “engaged Jew.” This prompt did not lead to a consistent verbal portrait of a person with a set of characteristics or observed behaviors that marked them as “engaged.” On the contrary, many professionals asserted that Jewish engagement varies depending on the individual (n=23).

“. . . it’s so different for every individual that I don’t think you could say one thing that applies to every engaged Jew.” (PJ Library professional)

This emphasis on individuality was particularly pronounced among the professionals whose work is not solely within ECE; it came up in all but one of their interviews (n=13), and in half of the interviews with ECE directors and professionals (n=10). One rabbi coined the expression “ISP - Individual Spiritual Program” to describe the work he does with young adults. This is a nod to the education term “IEP - Individualized Education Program,” which is a program designed to meet the particular needs of a student eligible for special education services.

The professionals reported that individual differences are also observable when people change their level of engagement. As people become more Jewishly engaged, the changes in their behavior occur in individualized ways. Different people are comfortable with and attracted to different aspects of Judaism, and there is not a single, typical way that people engage with Judaism.

“For some people mikvah [a ceremony of immersion in a ritual bath] is one of the first things they do because it is private and no one has to know about it; for some people mikvah is [the] last thing because they find it intrusive into their marriage. So there’s no real first steps.” (Jewish ECE director)

In addition to pointing out the fact that engagement varies from one individual to another, in about half the interviews (n=17) one of the professionals made a point of mentioning what
Jewish engagement is not as well as what Jewish engagement is. They also used the question about what engagement is as an opportunity to talk about how engagement today is not the same as what engagement was in the past. According to respondents, engagement is not something that can be captured by certain key behaviors like lighting Shabbat candles or joining a Jewish organization.

“I’ll start by saying what engagement is not. In my mind, engagement is not behavioral, it’s not based on behavioral outcomes. You don’t need to light Shabbat candles to be engaged in Jewish life.” (Director of Jewish organization for young adults)

“. . . it doesn’t mean the traditional things about joining a temple, or going to day school, or doing a certain program.” (Professional at Jewish community organization)

Despite the fact that many professionals’ initial remarks focused on what engagement is not, respondents did generate several different indicators of Jewish engagement. These fall into three primary domains -- connecting with others, behaviors, and meaning. In addition, two other aspects of engagement -- frequency of behaviors and directionality -- that is, when a family becomes more engaged over time -- were mentioned less frequently (in six-seven of the interviews with professionals) but are important for researchers interested in studying engagement.

Connecting with others
Professionals mentioned connecting with others in 26 out of 35 interviews. Connecting with others can involve:

- Desiring a Jewish community and feeling comfortable in it
- Being part of a Jewish social network
- Being in a relationship with other Jewish people, including clergy (this was more likely to have been mentioned by Jewish professionals whose work is not solely within ECE)
- Having Jewish friends (this was more likely to have been mentioned by ECE directors and professionals)

Connecting with others is a key feature of relationship-based engagement, a practice described by the author Ron Wolfson that has been adopted by Jewish organizational professionals, especially within the Reform movement. Respondents noted that relationship-based engagement may involve a change from how organizations have operated in the past, and that it may not be easy:

“What we spent a lot of time organizationally on is the question how do you build an organization that has the capacity to do relationship-based engagement, that doesn’t in

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a wholesale way offer programs to people and just think they’re gonna show up and come, but in fact to know each student by name and by story, and to know how to make the right invitations, make the right connections to them, and then to offer the right activities that they might want to participate in.” (Professional at Jewish organization for college students)

ECE educators are trained to focus on each child’s individual developmental needs, which may provide them with natural opportunities to create individualized relationships with families.

“That’s what our good preschools do so well. They greet these people. They bring them in and they meet them one-on-one. They greet them one-on-one and they get to know them one-on-one and they meet their needs one-on-one.” (Director of national Jewish ECE organization)

Respondents speculated that real relationships are becoming even more vital in today’s world in which social media promotes “unreal” relationships.

“We’ve never been more enveloped in each other’s personal or family experiences than we are now, and yet, I haven’t experienced as many people feeling alone as they do now. . . [just because] I get a lot of ‘likes’ [on Facebook], doesn’t mean I actually like the people who ‘like’ my ‘likes.’” (Professional at Jewish foundation)

Behaviors
The second domain professionals mentioned when defining engagement -- also in 26 out of 35 interviews -- was behaviors. There is a connection between the first domain -- connecting with others -- and this domain, because most of the behaviors take place with other people -- family, friends, or the community. Respondents named a wide range of behaviors that could be indicators of engagement. Before considering the specific behaviors that they named, it is worth restating that the majority of respondents indicated that engagement varies from one individual to another, thus it is not the case that respondents would expect all engaged individuals to behave in similar ways. Furthermore, in 12 out of 35 interviews, the professionals said that any behavior -- religious or secular -- could indicate Jewish engagement when done with Jewish intention. For example, one of the professionals described how her family created a lemonade stand to raise money for a secular cause, and how she used the Jewish term “tzedek” to explain the project to her children; for her, this activity was a way to engage her family in Jewish life.

That being said, the following behaviors were named most often as indicators of engagement:

- Celebrating Jewish holidays and/or Shabbat (n=18)
- Participating in Jewish activities/programs/experiences (n=16)
- Enrolling children in Jewish education (n=10; this was mentioned more by ECE directors and professionals)
• Taking a leadership role; creating activities/programs/experiences on one’s own (n=12)
• Participating in Jewish learning (n=4; this was mentioned only by Jewish institutional professionals whose work is not solely within ECE)

To clarify, the behaviors named above may indicate engagement but are not a necessary part of engagement. In fact, some respondents were critical of an approach that focused on specific behaviors.

“So, for example, I don’t really care if someone lights Shabbat candles and says the brachot [blessings] and eats challah, right? But if a family is able to, through a Jewish engagement activity, if a family is able to mark Shabbat in some way, whether an hour for dinner on Friday night or 24 hours, whatever it is, but consciously makes a conscious decision to recognize the value of the idea behind Shabbat, that it’s meaningful to them, that would be what I would consider a positive outcome of Jewish engagement.” (Jewish ECE Director)

Meaning
This leads to the third domain respondents mentioned when defining engagement -- that of meaning, which was mentioned in 20 out of 35 interviews. According to professionals, families were engaged when activities or behaviors, whether overtly Jewish or not, had Jewish meaning for the family. Interviewees saw meaning as distinct from ritual practice, and it was not necessary for meaning to arise through ritual practice. For example, one professional told a story of a Jewish camp counselor who was hiking with campers when they saw a rainbow. The professional was satisfied with the fact that the counselor pointed out to the campers that the rainbow was a natural phenomenon worthy of Jewish acknowledgement. The fact that the counselor did not say the correct bracha (blessing) was unimportant.

“[The counselor] didn’t say, ‘Here, let me say mechanically these words that I don’t know what they mean.’ But . . . with this profound curiosity and sharing and a presumption that this is a meaningful Jewish moment . . . that counselor said, ‘It’s my job to tell you, ‘Wow, there’s a rainbow,’” and that’s a Jewish thing, and I think there’s something Jewish we’re supposed to say about that.’ I don’t even need them to know the bracha. It’s like the last hit of the hammer at the end to make it 100% but still, that’s 99% of the way there.” (Professional at Jewish foundation)

Thus, meaning was conceptualized as something that is universally accessible to the individual and available for Jewish recognition and labeling, rather than as something needing to be explicitly taught and developed. In essence, meaning as a domain of engagement involves
putting a Jewish “spin” on something that might not have been seen in a Jewish light previously.

Other Prominent Aspects of Engagement
In addition to these three domains of engagement (connecting with others, behaviors, and meaning) two other aspects of engagement were mentioned as well. One has to do with the **frequency of behaviors** in time and the importance of repetition, habit, and routine as an indicator of engagement. The other is the idea of **directionality**, of movement toward more engagement and more Jewish choices; this was sometimes voiced as “climbing a ladder.” For researchers studying Jewish engagement, these aspects of engagement offer a way to assess a family’s Jewish engagement and whether it is changing over time. For instance, it is possible to measure how frequently behaviors are occurring (one family attends *Tot Shabbat* once a month while another attends *Tot Shabbat* every week) and to observe that behaviors are changing over time (an individual at Time A did not have a leadership role but at Time B does).

**Measuring Jewish Engagement**

Like defining Jewish engagement, measuring Jewish engagement was a topic that interviewers discussed with professionals but not with parents. Following the initial discussion of the definition of Jewish engagement, the interviewer asked the professional whether Jewish engagement was something they or their organization measured or tracked. This section of the report summarizes respondents’ comments about what aspects of Jewish engagement they typically measure as well as their thoughts on what they wish they could measure instead.

Professionals in 11 out of 35 interviews expressed frustration or dissatisfaction when asked about measuring Jewish engagement. Professionals were frustrated because they felt that the indicators of engagement that they had the capacity to measure were not the indicators that they considered most important to measure. The more abstract aspects of engagement are difficult to measure, which has led some professionals to focus on behaviors that are easier to count. This focus on countable behaviors results in a conceptualization of engagement that is overly simplified, as this researcher pointed out:

“. . .there’s really a qualitative difference between someone who uses Jewish ideas or practices as a moral compass when navigating in a complex society, versus someone who attends a pizza party in a Jewish youth group.” (Academic professional)

Additionally, four of the ECE directors said that they don’t undertake any measurement of Jewish engagement because they don’t have time.

“No. Informally, extremely informally. Anecdotally and through conversations but no.” (Jewish ECE director)
When respondents do measure engagement, they do so most frequently by counting attendance at programs \( n=14 \). Repeat program attendance is a variant that can be used as a proxy for deeper engagement \( n=6 \).

Some Jewish institutional professionals outside the realm of ECE have developed more sophisticated ways to measure intensity of engagement. For instance, a respondent who worked for Hillel\(^7\) stated that in addition to tracking attendance, Hillel has identified “high-impact activities” that are sustained or immersive; six or more standard activities were equivalent to one “high-impact” activity in terms of outcome. A respondent who worked for the Jewish parenting website Kveller\(^8\) explained that Kveller identifies highly engaged visitors as those who visit the site five or more times in a month. Finally, a respondent who worked for the Jewish video website BimBam\(^9\) defined more engaged viewers as those who watch videos all the way to the end rather than dropping out mid-view.

In addition to discussing what they actually measure, some respondents offered comments about what they wished they could measure. Some would like to measure relationships or social networks \( n=4 \). Two ECE directors wished they could measure the number of new synagogue memberships that could be attributed to ECE participation, as they felt that knowing this number would help them justify their program needs to their synagogue boards.

The need to meet institutional imperatives determined by an organization or funder sometimes defines what gets measured. Respondents spoke of the tension between measuring one behavior, like attendance at programs or affiliation with an organization, in order to demonstrate impact, while at the same time not measuring another behavior that they felt more accurately reflected Jewish engagement, as this organizer of programs for young families noted:

“Affiliation, synagogue membership, is like a cheap and easy way to measure what’s happening with engagement. And I can’t completely write it off, right? It’s important for boards. It’s important for rabbis. That’s the number that we looked at and reported to our Rabbi and our board when we were looking at if some programs that we had started were effective. And the numbers were impressive but that’s not what gives me joy. What gives me joy is a picture of families getting together when we didn’t make them do it. And making latkes.” (Professional at national Jewish ECE organization)

Barriers to Jewish Engagement

Both professionals and parents weighed in on the topic of barriers to Jewish engagement. Interviewers asked the professionals about barriers in several ways. They asked what keeps families from being engaged in Jewish life, what are the biggest barriers for engaging families

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\(^7\) See [https://www.hillel.org/](https://www.hillel.org/)

\(^8\) See [https://www.kveller.com/](https://www.kveller.com/)

\(^9\) See [https://www.bimbam.com/](https://www.bimbam.com/)
with young children, and what challenges their organization faces in engaging Jewish parents with young children. Interviewers asked parents about barriers by discussing whether they were as involved in Jewish life as they wanted to be, and if not, what kept them from being more involved; they also asked parents whether anything had ever happened to them that “turned them off” to Jewish life.

The professionals and parents agreed about four of the main barriers to engagement. Other barriers to engagement that professionals mentioned came up less often among the parents interviewed for this study. Table 3 lists the barriers and shows the number of professionals and parents mentioning each. A discussion of each barrier as well as examples follow.

**Table 3 Barriers to Jewish Engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers mentioned by professionals and parents</th>
<th>Number of Professionals Mentioning this Barrier (out of 35 interviews)</th>
<th>Number of Parents Mentioning this Barrier (out of 10 interviews)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost to families</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families’ lack of time</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Jewish organizations relative to where families live/work</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ negative feelings about religious organizations based on childhood experiences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Cost**

Financial cost to families was the number one barrier to Jewish engagement according to both professionals and parents. Cost was a major barrier to synagogue membership, and one of the reasons why parents planned to defer membership as long as possible. Parents anticipated joining synagogues only when they would “have to,” typically when their elementary school age children would be old enough to begin religious school. Cost also played a role in families’ selection of Jewish ECE, which some families reported as more expensive than secular ECE.
(n=2). Cost affected families’ participation in one-time Jewish programs and activities as well. Interestingly, although families were aware of the existence of scholarships and special membership rates, they failed to take advantage of them when the details were not readily available online, as the parent quoted below notes:

“And also it’s mysterious. Our synagogue offers something like a disclaimer at the bottom of their membership fees page which says, ‘If you need financial assistance, email so-and-so for more information.’ It’s really vague and mysterious, and it’s like, ‘Well, how do I know if I need financial assistance? How do I know if I qualify for financial assistance? What does financial assistance mean?’ So it’s very vague and very mysterious and it makes people feel uncomfortable, like, ‘Should I call? I’m sure I won’t qualify.’ There’s all these questions and in our world, it has to be black and white.” *(Parent of child in Jewish ECE)*

Lack of time

Professionals and parents also both mentioned families’ lack of time, especially families with two working parents. Some families may not have time to expand their Jewish involvement.

“I don’t know how much more capacity we have at this point.” *(Parent of child in Jewish ECE)*

Having time to take part in Jewish programs is something that families with a stay-at-home parent may experience differently than families with two working parents. For families with a stay-at-home parent, a Jewish program may provide a destination and an opportunity to get out of the house and meet other parents. For families with two working parents, a Jewish program held at a time when they cannot attend due to work obligations may be a guilt-inducing reminder of what they are not able to offer their child.

“I mean there’s a lot of stuff going on during the day that I’d like to go to but I can’t ’cause I’m working. They have playground meet-ups, and go to different zoos and stroller walks. And I got to do that all before I was working and I know I’d like to do a lot of that now.” *(Parent of child in non-Jewish ECE)*

Location of Jewish Organizations Relative to Where Families Live/Work

Another barrier mentioned by both professionals and parents was the location of Jewish organizations relative to where families live and/or work. Parents who said their families lived far from centers of Jewish population found it harder to access Jewish ECE programs and synagogues, and harder to make Jewish friends, as this parent who moved to a suburb far from other Jewish families related:

“So it was very difficult because nobody would come to our house and we were willing to host Shabbat dinners . . . It made us pretty sad and it was deflating.” *(Parent of child in Jewish ECE)*
The parent quoted above and her husband chose the location of their home following a cross-country move before they fully understood the Jewish landscape of their new city. At other times, however, parents do understand the Jewish geography of the area where they live, and nonetheless choose to live far from Jewish organizations. One of the professionals noted that in such cases, location as a barrier to Jewish engagement is a consequence of the choices that parents make, such as seeking a particular suburb for its housing prices or proximity to work.

Parents’ Negative Childhood Experiences
The final barrier to engagement in Jewish life mentioned by both professionals and parents was that one or both parents may have lingering negative feelings about religious organizations based on their childhood experiences. Interestingly, even when the feelings originated in non-Jewish religious organizations (e.g., Catholic school) the parent may generalize their discomfort to Jewish organizations, as was the case in the family quoted below, with a Jewish mother and non-Jewish father.

“Well, my husband grew up Catholic, so that’s a big turn-off... He went to a Catholic school his entire K through 12. He likes to say that the nuns beat it [religion] out of him.”
(Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

The remaining four barriers were mentioned by a number of professionals, but not by many of the parents. This could be because they did not happen to be barriers for the particular 10 parents who took part in this project; alternatively, they could be barriers that professionals recognized more readily than parents did.

Parents’ Feelings of Discomfort in Jewish Organizations
The first of these barriers was parents’ feelings of discomfort in Jewish organizations. Professionals said that some parents feel uncomfortable and even inadequate in Jewish organizations, particularly synagogues. The professionals noted that individuals may experience feelings of religious discomfort, for example because they don’t know Hebrew or lack familiarity with the prayers, as well as feelings of social discomfort, because they feel like the other people attending the program or event are not like them. As explained earlier, professionals consider connecting with others to be an important aspect of Jewish engagement; however, when parents feel uncomfortable in Jewish organizations, they may fail to connect with one another. The parent quoted below described feeling “foreign” at a Jewish event even though no one was overtly “making” her feel that way:

“I don’t think that I can pinpoint any one situation. It’s more of just going to France and everyone’s speaking French and you just don’t fit in... It could just be my perception and maybe no one else is looking at me like that, as though, ’You non-Jew, you don’t fit in.’ [chuckle] To me, it comes off as the other people there are much more Jewish than I am, so I just don’t feel like I fit in.”
(Parent of child in Jewish ECE)
Families’ Assimilated, Secular Focus
Jewish professionals explained that another barrier to families becoming involved in Jewish life was that some families have an assimilated, secular approach to life rather than a Jewish focus. That is, they feel positively toward programs and activities that are secular or multicultural in nature, and reject programs that are solely Jewish in focus. As with negative feelings toward religious organizations based on childhood experiences, in families with two parents, either one or both parents might exhibit an assimilated, secular focus. The parent quoted earlier, who hoped to invite friends to travel to her home for Shabbat, had a spouse “who thinks that religion separates people.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

Families’ Interests Other Than/In Addition to Judaism
Another barrier to engagement that professionals mentioned was the fact that a family may have interests other than or in addition to Judaism. One parent who was very engaged in her children’s Jewish ECE center, serving as a teacher and volunteer, explained that when it comes to summer camp, her son would not be attending a Jewish program:

“But for a sleepaway camp – we actually just selected a sleepaway camp for my older son, which we anticipate the other two [children] following along, and it is not a Jewish sleepaway camp. Although we did consider [Jewish camps], there were other priorities for us when it came to sending our children away for multiple weeks at a time. And so the camp that we chose is not a Jewish camp. There are lots of Jews that go to this camp, but it is not a Jewish affiliation.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

Social Barriers
Finally, the professionals noted that social barriers inherent to an individual’s personality could limit parents’ engagement in Jewish life. The parent who earlier described being at a Jewish gathering and feeling like the other parents were speaking French explained how her feelings of not fitting in caused her to hold back from developing friendships with the other parents at her son’s Jewish ECE center:

“Maybe I’m just not very social or I’m uncomfortable to be social with people that I don’t feel like I fit in with, so I stay to myself or I ask my other friend to go so I can talk with her, and then I put up a blockade from having to talk with anyone else.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

Facilitators of Jewish Engagement
Both professionals and parents were asked about facilitators of Jewish engagement. With professionals, the interviewers began by asking whether there are particular times in a family’s life when they are open to becoming more engaged; interviewers also asked professionals what influences lead to families’ increased engagement. For parents, interviewers began by asking what kinds of things bring their family closer to Jewish life. As follow-up questions, interviewers asked parents what they have done recently that enhanced their Jewish life, either
alone, with their partner, or as a family. Finally, interviewers asked parents whether a particular individual, organization, or event had a strong impact on their family’s Jewish life.

Before describing the findings with respect to facilitators of Jewish engagement, it is worth pointing out that professionals did not clearly distinguish between indicators of engagement and facilitators of engagement. For instance, “having Jewish friends” may be considered an indicator of engagement; Family A, with many Jewish friends, is more engaged than Family B, with few Jewish friends. However, “having Jewish friends” may also be considered a facilitator of engagement; Family A’s friends may invite them to a Chanukah party at their home or suggest that they join them at a Tot Shabbat gathering at their children’s Jewish ECE center. This duality creates complexity for the researcher interested in studying Jewish engagement, because the same condition (having Jewish friends) is both outcome and input.

The professionals and the parents spoke about three types of facilitators that are important for families with young children:

- Specific times in a family’s life
- A relationship-based approach
- Parent involvement through and in support of their children

Specific Times in a Family’s Life
The professionals acknowledged that there were particular times in a family’s life that were opportune moments for increased engagement. These included the birth of a child (n=25); the child’s entry into Jewish ECE (n=19); the preparation for and celebration of b’nai mitzvah (n=10); and times of personal loss or crisis, such as a death, an illness, or having a child with special needs (n=9). In addition to these times, Jewish institutional professionals and researchers also mentioned weddings (n=4) and holidays (n=4), and ECE directors also mentioned pregnancy (n=5).

Interestingly, three professionals remarked that another important time in a family’s life is when the family leaves Jewish ECE upon graduation of their youngest child. One of the parents commented that this would be a sad time in the life of her family. She spoke of “us” graduating from nursery school, making it clear that the school had an impact not only on her children but also on her as an individual and her family as a whole:

“When we don’t still have a child in the nursery school, that’s gonna be a really sad day for us, a really sad day. We’re so invested in that nursery school, it’s such a part of who we are, part of who I am. And that’s gonna be really sad for us to graduate from nursery school.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)
Relationship-based Approach

The time when a family has a child enrolled in Jewish ECE can be especially important when the ECE center (and its synagogue, if it is associated with one) has a relationship-based approach. The professionals and parents noted three aspects of a relationship-based approach that mattered to them: (1) relationships between families and educators or clergy members; (2) friendships between parents; and (3) support for families in times of need.

When children attend ECE, they develop relationships with their teachers and with other children. Parents also develop relationships with educators and with the parents of their children’s classmates. According to parents, family events held at the ECE center served as occasions when educators and clergy could strengthen relationships with parents (n=3). One parent described a family education program at her child’s ECE center at which a senior rabbi spoke about how his family observed Passover when his children were younger. The rabbi deepened his relationship with the parents by telling them a story from his past when he was -- like them -- a parent of young children. The parent recalled:

“I’ll never forget our former senior rabbi talking to us about when his children were little and setting up the table-cloth on the floor and sitting down on the floor together and eating snacks during the first part of the Passover celebration at home. It was him giving us permission to be creative, to be innovative, to be non-traditional, to make it work for our family . . . That the important thing was that we told a story and how we told it was not as important as telling it. And that dialogue and that openness, it was just so inspirational.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

The parent quoted above notes how this interaction with the senior rabbi both strengthened her relationship with the rabbi and also was an occasion for learning specific Judaic content. The formal relationship between the “senior” rabbi and the “junior” parent was reformulated as a relationship of equals in which the rabbi recalled being a parent seated on the floor with his children just as the parents in the ECE center typically interacted with their children. At the same time, the rabbi conveyed content-specific information when he explained that parents’ duty at Passover was to tell the story of the Exodus to their children in a way that worked for their family. One professional explained this notion of a single experience strengthening both relationships and content knowledge by using the metaphor of people gathering around a campfire. The content provides the focal point -- the campfire -- around which engagement takes place.

Relationships between clergy and parents were also strengthened outside the context of the ECE center. A parent whose child attended a Chabad\textsuperscript{10} preschool mentioned that the rabbi visited her husband at his workplace, just to talk.

In addition to the relationship between families and educators or clergy members, friendships between parents were also of central importance. Eight out of ten parents interviewed spoke

\textsuperscript{10} See \url{https://www.chabad.org/}
about the ways that friendships with fellow parents had contributed to the growth in Jewish
engagement they experienced after having children.

“I think the biggest thing that we’ve gained is the sense of community. We’ve made a
lot of friends, we love it, we’re very connected to it, I am like a walking poster child for it,
and I’ve recruited so many people there . . . And it’s cool now because, I told you, you
asked me before, I didn’t have a lot of Jewish friends and now I have a lot of Jewish
friends and I really like that.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

For seven of the ten parents, before they had children, their main connections to Jewish life
were celebrating holidays with their extended family. Most attended services only on High
Holidays (n=6), were not synagogue members (n=8), and didn’t celebrate Shabbat very often,
either in their own homes or in others’ homes (n=8). After having children, the focus of their
Jewish life shifted. Six of the ten parents reported spending more time socially with other
Jewish families. Some of these friendships developed naturally as parents met each other at
drop-off and pickup or at ECE events. Other times ECE staff acted as “matchmakers” and
encouraged friendships between families based on the young children’s developing friendships,
as this ECE director describes:

“I say, ‘Oh Jordan, did you know your daughter loves playing with Josie,’ and then I make
sure I connect them up.” (Jewish ECE director)

Parents acknowledged that their friends involved them in Jewish life in ways that would once
have been unthinkable to them:

“The only reason we’re there [at the synagogue] on a Friday night is because now all of
our friends are there and our kids are there, but pre-kids, I was like, ‘You’ve gotta be
kidding me.’ . . . So that was definitely something that was not appealing to me,
previously.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

A final example of how a relationship-based approach facilitates engagement is that families
with children in Jewish ECE receive support from members of the community when they need
it, whether it is when a new baby is born or when someone in the family becomes ill or dies.
This type of support was mentioned by six of the ECE professionals. One ECE director pointed
out that all families with children who attend her ECE center receive the same pastoral care
from the clergy, regardless of whether or not they are members of the synagogue.

Parent Involvement Through and in Support of Their Children
The third category of facilitators consisted of parent involvement through and in support of
their children. Professionals and parents reported that parents became more involved through
participation in ECE center and synagogue Shabbat celebrations, through Shabbat observance
at home, and by volunteering within the ECE center.
Before elaborating on ways that families become involved in *Shabbat* observance, two related points are in order. First, everything professionals and parents said about *Shabbat* observance could be applied to holiday observance as well, but because *Shabbat* occurs every week there are more opportunities for educators to make it a focus of classroom life and for parents to make it a habit of home life. Second, respondents differed in terms of whether they emphasized families’ observance of *Shabbat* as part of a community or within their individual homes. It is not the case that all professionals felt that community observance was more important or that all parents felt that home observance was more important. Rather, within both groups there were some individuals who spoke more about community observance and others who spoke more about home observance.

Families mentioned many ways to engage in Jewish life through participation in ECE center and synagogue *Shabbat* celebrations. All of the parents mentioned participating in Tot *Shabbat* with their children (n=10). Sometimes Tot *Shabbat* was a daytime gathering on Friday when parents joined their children at the ECE center. At other times it was on Friday evening or Saturday morning. One ECE director was savvy about using the children to promote Tot *Shabbat* to their parents:

> “Like Tot *Shabbat* now, all the kids talk about it. So they’ll say, ‘Oh, mom, am I coming?’ So because I’m so good at marketing with the kids, they’re all talking about it.” (Jewish ECE director)

Parents acknowledged that their children inspired them to become involved in things that they never thought they would do.

> “[My husband]’s not a fan of organized religion so he says that he’s doing it because he knows it’s important to me and it makes me happy and he clearly sees that it makes [our daughter] very happy.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

Sometimes the grandparents’ generation was moved to take part in Tot *Shabbat* services as well:

> “My mom kind of laughed at us at the beginning of, ‘Well, you’re going to *Shabbat*,’ and now she calls me and she’s like, ‘Can I come this Friday? I’d really like to come.’ . . . it’s really amazing how it spreads out like a web. It’s really great, you know? And it has this ripple effect on not just you and not just your kid . . . but then other generations too.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

Some ECE directors promoted home observance of *Shabbat* directly by sending children home with *challahs*, candles, and how-to instruction sheets (n=6). They also engaged families indirectly, for instance by incorporating *Shabbat* observance into classroom life with rituals including prayers and songs that children reenacted at home. One professional who is also a parent of a young child used the analogy of her daughter initiating a game of catch to describe the experience of her daughter requesting *Shabbat* observance at home:
“She’s throwing the ball to me and it’s the moment that I’ll catch the ball and throw it back to her. To me, that’s the moment [of] connection, of real engagement. She’s bringing a lot home. And at what point do I step up and say, ‘You’re right. It’s Shabbat now. Let’s go ahead and do something for Shabbat together that you’ll recognize.’ My heart opens in these moments, too, with her. . . She’s doing something to me to get me ready for I don’t know what, but it opens the heart and I think that makes a family more open to the possibilities before them.” (Director of community Jewish ECE organization)

As mentioned earlier, what is true for Shabbat is true for holidays as well. When children learned about Jewish holidays at their ECE center, that learning deepened the family’s typical holiday gatherings, as this parent related:

“Well, we still do the same stuff in terms of the holidays. I guess, more so, they just have a deeper understanding of it, and we have more conversation about it. Whereas before, my husband and I, we would show up, have dinner, go home. We wouldn’t be talking about the meaning of Rosh Hashanah and why we’re doing everything. And so with our kids, they wanna know. They’re learning these things. They’re asking questions. They’re teaching us things about it. So it just made us kind of have to put more thought into why we’re doing what we’re doing than we did before.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

Not all families were open to incorporating what their children were learning at the ECE center into their home life; for some parents the emphasis was more on the communal experience, as this parent explained:

“I can’t really picture us doing Shabbat [at home], we might if [my son] wants to do it one time ‘cause he’s learning about something in school, I’d be happy to, but I don’t see that becoming a regular occurrence here. Because I don’t feel like that’s what makes . . . I mean, everybody feels differently about their religious perspective. That doesn’t make me feel more Jewish . . .I don’t feel like you need to do that to be more connected with your Judaism. To me it’s about being part of a community, celebrating the holidays, making sure that you talk about what’s happened historically and how to make sure that it doesn’t happen again, making sure you’re raising Jewish children so that the bloodline continues to exist.” (Parent of child in Jewish ECE)

A third way that families became more engaged through their children was when parents volunteered in their children’s ECE center; this was mentioned by three parents and six professionals. The fact that they were doing something on behalf of their children motivated parents to step out of their comfort zone and try something new. This process led to parents partnering with educators in developing learning activities for the children. One parent spoke about how her child’s ECE center had a program before Passover called “Exodus Day” in which clergy, staff, and parent volunteers dressed up to reenact for the children the story of the Exodus from Egypt. For the parent, the experience of volunteering in this program deepened
her own and her family’s engagement in the holiday of Passover. Another parent explained that one of the times that she personally felt most Jewish was when she volunteered by reaching out to new families at her child’s ECE center.

Other Facilitators of Jewish Engagement Among Families with Young Children

Before concluding this discussion of facilitators, it is worth noting that participants also mentioned three facilitators that operate outside the realm of ECE. The first of these is **PJ Library**. PJ Library is a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation that sends free Jewish children’s books to families every month. It plays a similar role in family engagement as ECE centers do, in that it involves parents in Jewish life through their children. PJ Library books are storybooks for children, but they are printed with flaps providing parents with additional information that helps them learn alongside their children. PJ Library was mentioned by four parents and in ten interviews with professionals.

> “I love on the flaps that they give the explanations for the parents . . . Parents wanna learn with their children. They wanna be able to understand what their kids are learning.” (PJ Library professional)

The next facilitator is the **extended family** -- children’s grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The extended family is important because of the historical and ongoing role they play in the lives of families. Before having children, sharing holiday celebrations with extended family was the primary way in which the interviewed parents connected to Jewish life, mentioned by seven out of ten parents. After their children were born, the families added new friends to their lives (n=5) and also continued to celebrate holidays with their extended family (n=5). When parents spoke about the important influences on their Jewish lives, one credited her sister-in-law, who was raising Jewish children a little older than her own and got her interested in the Jewish ECE center where she later enrolled her own child. Another mentioned her grandfather, who taught her to use prayer as a means of emotion regulation in difficult times.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the importance of **employment by a Jewish organization**. Three of the parents referenced being employed by Jewish organizations currently or in the past. One had worked as a camp counselor, another had worked as a social worker at a JCC, and another had worked as an instructor at a religious school. Because so much of one’s adult life is spent working, working for a Jewish organization can affect one’s Jewish engagement. For instance, the parent who had been an instructor at a religious school talked about using classroom materials to enrich her children’s play space at home. Another parent recalled being a young adult and having friends who worked in Jewish organizations who would invite her to attend community events with them.

11 See [https://pjlibrary.org/home](https://pjlibrary.org/home)
Discussion

This report began by describing how Jewish professionals define Jewish engagement among families raising young children. The professionals stressed the fact that engagement varies from one individual to another and were reluctant to describe a “typical” engaged person or family. However, they did note three domains of engagement important for families with young children -- connecting with other Jewish people, engaging in behaviors that are Jewish or that the family imbues with Jewish purpose, and finding meaning in their Jewish involvement. Connecting with others on a one-on-one level is something that Jewish ECE centers may excel at because they have day-to-day contact with families and a focus on meeting the needs of the individual children they serve. In addition, early childhood is an opportune time for families to try out new behaviors, because parents are motivated to try new things in support of their children’s development.

Although they were interested in measuring Jewish engagement in order to assess program success or to plan for future programs, many Jewish professionals noted that engagement today should not be assessed in the same way that it was assessed in the past, through indicators such as lighting Shabbat candles or synagogue membership. They acknowledged the need to track program enrollment or attendance in order to meet institutional goals, but they wished they could also measure other aspects of Jewish engagement, such as what happens outside organizational walls. For example, a professional who planned programs for expecting parents discussed the dilemma she faced when her families, after giving birth, began getting together on their own outside of the professional’s planned programs. On the one hand she viewed their get-togethers as evidence of the program’s success -- the families were becoming friends and taking it upon themselves to plan social gatherings. On the other hand, as an organizer she no longer had a way of tracking and documenting the families’ developing relationships and behaviors over time.

Jewish ECE centers are well positioned for enhancing the Jewish engagement of families with young children, but they are less adept than other Jewish organizations when it comes to measuring engagement. ECE centers’ primary mission is to provide care to a group of young children, and though family engagement is a secondary priority for some centers, most centers do not evaluate the efficacy of family engagement programming. Other Jewish organizations, particularly those whose content is delivered online, have devoted more resources to tracking the ways that the families they serve engage in Jewish life through their content.

One issue that arose with respect to measuring the engagement of families over time is the tendency on the part of practitioners and researchers to conflate indicators of engagement with facilitators of engagement. As discussed earlier, a single behavior -- having Jewish friends -- can be both an indicator of a family’s current Jewish engagement and a facilitator of their future Jewish engagement. Thus, in a conceptual model of engagement, the same construct can be both input and outcome. This poses a challenge for researchers who wish to identify factors leading to change in engagement over time.
Jewish professionals and parents of young Jewish children agreed on several barriers to engagement. They remarked on the high financial cost to families of taking part in Jewish life and the fact that leading a Jewish life requires spending time on Jewish activities rather than on other activities families consider important, such as children’s sports. They noted that Jewish organizations may be located far from where some families live, making it more difficult for those families to enroll in Jewish ECE or take part in family activities held on-site at Jewish organizations. They agreed that some parents have lingering negative feelings about organized religion based on childhood experiences. Professionals (but not parents) also remarked that some parents feel uncomfortable in Jewish settings or among Jewish people whom they perceive to be “more Jewish” than they are, resulting in social barriers to becoming more involved. In addition, some families have an assimilated, secular focus rather than a Jewish focus, and as a result may have little interest in becoming involved in Jewish life.

In addition to these barriers to a deeper engagement in Jewish life, professionals and parents also described times and circumstances that facilitate families’ Jewish engagement. The birth of the first child in a family and a child’s entry into Jewish ECE are both important “windows” when a family may become more engaged in Jewish life. Why is enrollment in Jewish ECE such an auspicious time for increased Jewish engagement? The experience of having a young child can create for parents a feeling of openness to new experiences. Parents see their children develop and change and can use their children as models of making new friends and learning new skills. When the content that the children are learning is Jewish content, some parents will be inspired by their children and want to learn alongside them.

Another facilitator of Jewish engagement that parents and professionals noted is when organizations adopt a relationship-based approach. Professionals explained that with a relationship-based approach to engagement, creating and supporting relationships is of equal or greater importance than providing particular content. In practical terms this could mean making sure families have time to get to know one another during programs, and time to get to know educators and clergy as well. This is not to say that content doesn’t matter. Recall the analogy of content being like a campfire, providing a focal point around which engagement takes place.

A third facilitator of Jewish engagement that professionals and parents mentioned was parent involvement through and in support of the child, for example when families increase their Shabbat observance at home or in the community due to a child’s interest. Increasing Shabbat observance at home may be an attractive option to families who are eager to try things out on their own, or who find it logistically difficult to bring their young children to community events. Other families may find that taking part in Shabbat programs at a synagogue or Jewish ECE...
center is more appealing because they feel unprepared to lead their family’s Shabbat observance themselves.

It is notable that professionals gave equal weight to home observance and community observance of Shabbat; this may reflect the fact that many Jewish organizations are in a period of transition with respect to the physical location of the programs they offer. There is a growing recognition that Jewish life can and should take place outside organizational walls. Sometimes this means encouraging participation in Jewish life within families’ own homes; alternatively, it can mean sponsoring Jewish activities in public spaces like parks and bookstores. Either approach can attract new participants who might not have ventured into a more typical Jewish setting like a synagogue or JCC. One ECE director pointed out that in her conversations with parents she avoids using the word “synagogue” and says “community” instead, in an attempt to rebrand her organization as a community – a word those prospective families may find more appealing.

Conclusion

This report presents the findings of a series of interviews with Jewish professionals who work in the field of Jewish ECE and related areas and parents who are raising Jewish children on the topic of Jewish engagement. It reviews the definition and measurement of engagement according to professionals, and describes what professionals and parents consider to be barriers to and facilitators of engagement.

Notable among the findings is the lack of professional consensus about a definition of engagement and a conflation of indicators of engagement with facilitators of engagement. This suggests that engagement is a multi-faceted construct. Furthermore, Jewish professionals express frustration with the difficulties they face when attempting to measure engagement. Professionals and parents agree about numerous barriers to engagement as well as conditions that facilitate engagement; it is clear that professionals understand families’ needs even if they can’t always meet them.

The research team has used the findings from these key informant interviews in the design of subsequent phases of the study. They guided the development of protocols for site visits and the creation of an online survey of parents. In both these endeavors the research team has taken steps to address multiple aspects of Jewish engagement, including different types of behaviors (taking part in celebrations, reading books, enrolling in Jewish ECE) and different settings (the home, the ECE center, the synagogue). The meaning of Judaism to parents and its relational aspects were two important constructs that were included in the development of the online survey. The findings of these continuing research activities will provide more clarity about the role of Jewish ECE in families’ Jewish engagement.
Appendix A: Professional Key Informant Interview Protocol

INTRODUCTION

Hello, may I speak with [NAME]? Hi, my name is ___ and I’m calling from Child Trends/Brandeis University to learn about your perspective on Jewish engagement for a study we are conducting for the Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE). (______) is also on the line, to help with note-taking during our call. Is this still a good time for you?

[Purpose:] On this call, we want to learn about your perspectives regarding Jewish engagement with a particular focus on parents with young children. The intent of this interview and other interviews we are conducting is to refine and enhance how Jewish engagement is measured when doing research on families. Please feel free to stop me at any time if the wording of a question doesn’t make sense or you need more information.

[Time and voluntary:] This interview should last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. During that time, I’ll be asking you to respond to a series of questions. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering and can stop the interview at any time.

[Confidentiality:] Also, we are not going to identify you by name in our reports, and your individual responses will not be shared with anyone outside of the study team. Reports will only describe findings in general terms. If you agree, the interview will be audio-recorded for the purpose of note-taking. Recordings will be destroyed once the notes have been cleaned and transcribed.

[Contact.] If you have any questions about the study you may contact the principal investigator – Tamara Halle – at (240) 223-9234. If you would like to speak with someone else, you can contact the Child Trends’ Institutional Review Board, a group that reviewed this study for your protection, by mail (7315 Wisconsin Ave Suite 1200W, Bethesda, MD 20814), by phone (855-288-3506), or via email (irbparticipant@childtrends.org).

Do you have any questions?

[Request for permission to digitally record:] Before we get started, do we have your permission to record our conversation?
[Wait to ensure that you receive a verbal YES from the participant before starting the recording.]

And can you affirm that you are willing to participate in this interview?

[Wait to ensure that you receive a YES from interviewee.]
We are going to be covering many different topics on today’s call. We will be asking you about your views regarding Jewish engagement, examples of Jewish engagement that you have observed among families with young children, and circumstances that you believe enhance or create barriers to young families’ involvement in Jewish life. If you don’t have much to say in response to a particular question, a short response is fine. However, if a particular question resonates with you, please take as much time as you need to answer it.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE
First, I’d like to know a little bit about you.
How long have you been working as a Jewish professional?
What is your job title, and what do you do?
How long have you been in this position? With this organization? In this community?

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT – GENERAL VIEWS
Okay, now, I want to know more about your general thoughts about Jewish Engagement.

Is the term Jewish engagement a term that you use regularly, sometimes, rarely, or not at all?
Is there a term you prefer to use other than Jewish engagement?
Are there any aspects of engagement that are particularly relevant to your organization?

[Note: If the interviewee prefers to use another term, you may use it instead of “Jewish engagement” throughout the rest of the interview protocol.]

How would you define Jewish engagement?
In your mind, what are the general characteristics of an engaged Jew?

[Allow respondent to answer freely, but also probe:] Public and/or personal behaviors, attitudes, affiliations, identification, etc.

Interviewer: Note whether any of these characteristics are mentioned:
• Identifying publicly as a Jew
• Having Jewish ancestry (parents, grandparents, ancestors)
• Choosing to raise children as Jews
• Referencing history of the Jewish people/Holocaust
• Feeling part of the Jewish people/Jewish peoplehood
• Having Jewish beliefs (separate from Jewish practice)
  o about God
  o about Jewish ethics or morals
• Engaging in Jewish rituals or practices
  o at home during the week or on Shabbat
  o at home on Jewish holidays
- **with family**
- **in a synagogue**
- **in other communal settings**

- **Having meals with other Jews**
- **Involvement with Jewish culture**
  - **cooking and cuisine**
  - **visual arts/theater/books/music**
- **Jewish appearance – clothing, jewelry**
- **Choosing Jewish education for children—pre-school, day school, summer camp, religious school, college courses, other**
- **Participating in adult Jewish education**
- **Being involved with social justice/repairing the world (tikkun olam)**
- **Connection/interaction with other Jewish families**
- **Connections to Israel**
- **Jewish institutional attachment**
  - **Connections with synagogues**
  - **Connections with JCCs**
  - **Connection with informal Jewish organizations/groups**
  - **Connections with Jewish cultural organizations**
  - **Connections with moral/ethical/political Jewish organizations**

When you hear someone describe a person as being “on the periphery (or margins) of Jewish life” what does this mean to you?

Do you have another term that you prefer to use to describe this type of person?

**[Note: If the interviewee prefers to use another term, you may use it instead of “on the periphery (or margins) of Jewish life” throughout the rest of the interview protocol.]**

In your mind, what are the general characteristics of a Jew who is on the periphery (or margins) of Jewish life?

**[Allow the respondent to answer freely, but also probe:]**

Would you imagine a person “on the periphery of Jewish life” would have Jewish friends they socialize with?

Would you imagine they identify personally as Jewish?

Would you imagine they have little or no contact or affiliation with Jewish institutions?

Would you imagine they would care about their child’s Jewish education?

Etc.
With respect to Jewish engagement, would you say that Millennials are different than older generations? If so, how would you describe the differences?  
[IF RELEVANT:] How, if at all, is your organization responding to these differences?

Does Jewish engagement differ depending on whether someone is a parent or not? Please explain your reasoning. 
What evidence or data are you using, if any, on which to base your reasoning?  
[IF RELEVANT:] How, if at all, is your organization responding to these differences?

MEASURING JEWISH ENGAGEMENT
Now, I'd like to ask specifically about how Jewish Engagement is measured.

Is Jewish engagement something that you or your organization measures or tracks? If so, how?

[Probe to identify particular metrics they use for “engagement” and whether they track separately based on age, gender, family status, etc.]

If you had to pick two or three things that you’d like to see someone who is more “on the periphery” of Jewish life to do to become more engaged, what would those two or three things be?

Is there some sort of minimum threshold that would distinguish between someone who is engaged in Jewish life vs. not engaged?  
[Probe on each type of threshold:]
  - Frequency: number of times they attend Jewish cultural events each year; number of institutions to which they are affiliated; etc.
  - Duration: Consistently have kept kosher their entire lives; attended Jewish summer camp for 3 or more years, etc.
  - Regularity: Attend religious services weekly/monthly; lights Shabbos candles each week, wears jewelry with a Jewish star every day, etc.
  - Intensity/Magnitude: Strong support for Israel, cumulative number of different types of behaviors/activities, etc. The interviewee may have mentioned several characteristics of an “engaged Jew” – do all of these characteristics need to be present, or is just one or two characteristics enough?

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT FOR FAMILIES - SPECIFICS
Okay, now I’d like us to focus on Jewish parents with young children.

To what extent does your work put you in direct contact with Jewish parents of young children?  
[If involved with families with young children] How many years have you been working with Jewish parents of young children?
In your opinion, which family activities or behaviors are the most significant indicators of Jewish engagement? In other words, what specifically makes a family Jewishly engaged?

[Allow respondent to answer freely, but also probe:]

Public and/or personal behaviors, attitudes, affiliations, identification, etc.

Interviewer: Note whether any of these characteristics are mentioned:

- Identifying publicly as a Jew
- Having Jewish ancestry (parents, grandparents, ancestors)
- Choosing to raise children as Jews
- Referencing history of the Jewish people/Holocaust
- Feeling part of the Jewish people/Jewish peoplehood
- Having Jewish beliefs (separate from Jewish practice)
  - about God
  - about Jewish ethics or morals
- Engaging in Jewish rituals or practices
  - at home during the week or on Shabbat
  - at home on Jewish holidays
  - with family
  - in a synagogue
  - in other communal settings
- Having meals with other Jews
- Involvement with Jewish culture
  - cooking and cuisine
  - visual arts/theater/books/music
- Jewish appearance – clothing, jewelry
- Choosing Jewish education for children—pre-school, day school, summer camp, religious school, college courses, other
- Participating in adult Jewish education
- Being involved with social justice/repairing the world (tikkun olam)
- Connection/interaction with other Jewish families
- Connections to Israel
- Jewish institutional attachment
  - Connections with synagogues
  - Connections with JCCs
  - Connection with informal Jewish organizations/groups
  - Connections with Jewish cultural organizations
  - Connections with moral/ethical/political Jewish organizations
- Family tragedies
• World events (i.e., terrorist attacks involving Jews)
• Having a child with special needs/ disabilities

Is Jewish engagement as a family at home different than Jewish engagement as a family in communal or social settings? How would you characterize the differences?

Have you observed any differences between what families do Jewishly – parents and children together -- and the what parents do Jewishly separate from their children? Please elaborate.

To what extent does your work put you in touch with interfaith families?

What are the most significant ways that Jewish engagement seems to differ between interfaith families and Jewish families in which both parents are Jewish?

What do you observe Jewish families with young children being most concerned about Jewishly? What’s on their minds these days?

Interviewer: Note whether any of these are mentioned:
• Jewish identity
• Jewish ritual and practice – home practice
• Jewish ritual and practice- communal practice
• Jewish education – pre-school, day school, summer camp, religious school, college courses, other
• Jewish ethics and morals
• Jewish institutional attachment
• Connection/interaction with other Jewish families
• Connection with informal Jewish organizations
• Connections with Jewish cultural organizations
• Connections to Israel – history and customs
• Connections with moral/ethical/political Jewish organizations
• Safety and security

In your opinion, to what extent and in what ways do these concerns affect their engagement in Jewish life, if at all? Please elaborate.

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT – FACILITATORS
Now, I want to switch gears to think about the circumstances that might enhance or facilitate engagement as you have defined it.
Are there particular times in a family’s life that you consider to be optimal times or “windows” for engagement? (Listen for pre-marriage, birth of first child, preschool, etc.) Why do you think this is the case?

Has your organization tried to reach individuals during these “windows”? If so, how?

With respect to Jewish engagement, what changes, if anything, when a couple has their first child? [PROBE FOR: What do they start to do that they didn’t do before? What Jewish activities do they take on?]

Besides life cycle events such as getting married or having a child, what specific influences get families to become more Jewishly engaged? [Probe both for specific influences – people (i.e., having Jewish friends), events, experiences, organization, etc.]

Thinking about your work with parents of young children, what behavioral or attitudinal changes have you observed when they become more involved with Jewish life? 

Listen for: PJ Library, enrollment in Jewish early childhood education, synagogue participation, informal Jewish settings outside of a synagogue, JCC, Jewish friends, a specific rabbi/Jewish educator/Jewish role model, grandparents

**BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT**

Okay! Now, I want to switch gears again to ask about circumstances that might hinder engagement among Jewish families with young children as you have defined it.

In your observations of families with young children, what keeps them from being engaged in Jewish life?

What, in your opinion, are the biggest barriers for engaging families with young children?

Listen for: Time, age of children, ideology, cost, geography, availability of secular programs, insensitivity to interfaith families, quality of Jewish programs in comparison with secular programs, new to the area, lack of friends/community, concerns about judgement due to being unfamiliar with Judaism or not speaking Hebrew.

What challenges does your organization face in engaging Jewish parents with young children?

Do you have any other thoughts about what defines Jewish engagement that you haven’t mentioned yet?

Is there any literature or research that you would recommend we look at to understand this topic further?

**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS**

This final set of questions is to get a little more background on you to help us summarize our findings across all our interviews.

What is your gender? (male, female, other)
How old are you? (RECORD EXACT AGE BUT THEN ALSO NOTE CATEGORY: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, etc.)

What is the highest level of schooling you have completed?
(less than high school diploma, high school diploma or equivalent, some college or technical school, associate or technical degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, doctorate or professional degree, other)

With which branch of Judaism do you currently identify, if any? (Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, Renewal, Secular/Culturally Jewish, Just Jewish, Other)

FOR DIRECTORS OF ECE ONLY: RECRUITMENT OF PARENTS:
Now, in addition to speaking with you, we are also hoping to speak with Jewish families with young children who may have become more Jewishly involved since their child started attending Jewish preschool. We would greatly appreciate if you could refer us to two families who fit this description whom you think might be interested in sharing their thoughts with us about their Jewish life. Could you share the names and email addresses of two such families? We will contact them via email about this opportunity. There is no obligation to participate in the interview, but if they do, we will give them a gift card as thanks for their participation.

[WRITE DOWN NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESSES: ________________________________]

Thank you so much for your time in helping us to answer these questions!
Appendix B: Parent Key Informant Interview Protocol

INTRODUCTION

Hello, may I speak with [NAME ]? Hi, my name is ___ and I’m calling from Child Trends/Brandeis University to learn about your perspective on Jewish family life for a study we are conducting for the Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE). (______) is also on the line, to help with note-taking during our call. Is this still a good time for you?

[Purpose:] On this call, we want to learn about your thoughts and experiences of Jewish family life. Your perspective as a parent of young children is very valuable. Please feel free to stop me at any time if the wording of a question doesn’t make sense or if you need more information.

[Time:] This interview should last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. During that time, we’ll be asking you to respond to a series of questions.

[Voluntary:] This interview is completely voluntary, and you may skip any questions that you don’t feel comfortable answering and can stop the interview at any time.

[Confidentiality:] Also, we are not going to identify you by name in our reports, and your individual responses will not be shared with anyone outside of the study team. Reports will only describe findings in general terms. If you agree, the interview will be audio-recorded but only for the purpose of note-taking. Recordings will be destroyed once the notes have been cleaned and transcribed.

[Contact.] If you have any questions about the study you may contact the principal investigator of the study – Tamara Halle – at (240) 223-9234. If you would like to speak with someone else, you can contact the Child Trends’ Institutional Review Board, a group that reviewed this study for your protection, by mail (7315 Wisconsin Ave Suite 1200W, Bethesda, MD 20814), by phone (855-288-3506), or via email (irbparticipant@childtrends.org).

Do you have any questions about this interview before we begin?

[Request for permission to digitally record:] Before we get started, do we have your permission to record our conversation?

[Wait to ensure that you receive a verbal YES from the participant before starting the recording.]

And can you affirm that you are willing to participate in this interview?

[Wait to ensure that you receive a YES from interviewee.]
[Intro prompt:] We are going to cover a few different topics on today’s call. I’ll ask you to reflect on your Jewish life before you had kids; to tell me about what your Jewish family life is like today; and to think a little bit about what kinds of things make it easier to raise a Jewish family and what kinds of things make it harder. First, however, I’d like to know some of the basics about you and your family.

[Respondents are pre-screened so there is no need for further screening at this point.]

How many children do you have and how old are they?

BEFORE KIDS

I’d like you to think back to the time before you had children, and tell me a little bit about your Jewish life then. Before you had children, what did you (and your partner, if relevant) do to take part in Jewish life?

[Allow respondent to answer freely, but can also prompt with:]

Did you take part in Jewish holiday celebrations with family or friends? If so, which holidays?
Did you attend services at a temple, synagogue, or minyan? If so, what type of temple, synagogue or prayer group?
Did you belong to any Jewish organizations or groups? If so, which ones?
Did you attend Jewish or Israeli cultural activities or events? If so, which ones?

Were most of these activities things that you and your partner did together, or were they things that you did as individuals?

Would you say that many of the friends with whom you socialized at that point in your lives were Jewish?

What did you generally do with friends at that time in your life?

[Allow respondent to answer freely, but can also prompt with:]

Did your time with friends ever have a specific Jewish focus? Tell me more about that.

At that time, were you as involved in Jewish life as you wanted to be?

[If no] What do you think kept you from being more involved?
AFTER KIDS

Now I want to switch gears and talk about what happened after you became parents. Has your Jewish life changed since becoming a parent? In what specific ways did it change?

Were these changes expected or unexpected? Were they things you were hoping would happen?

Since becoming parents, what does your family do to take part in Jewish life?

[Allow respondent to answer freely, but can also prompt with:]

- Do you take part in Jewish holiday celebrations with family or friends? If so, which holidays?
- Do you attend services at a temple, synagogue, or minyan? If so, what type of temple, synagogue or prayer group?
- Do you belong to any Jewish organizations or groups? If so, which ones?
- Do you attend Jewish or Israeli cultural activities or events? If so, which ones?
- Do you spend more time socially with other Jewish families than you did before?

Are most of these activities things you do together as a family, or separately?

If you had to pick one thing that makes you feel most Jewish as a family, what would that be?
- How often do you get to do that?

If you had to pick one thing that you do individually that makes you feel most Jewish, what would that be?
- How often do you get to do that?

Is your family’s Jewish life expressed mainly through your children, or do you and your spouse/partner experience Jewish life in ways that do not include your children?

[Ask all parents] Do any of your children attend a Jewish preschool, playgroup, or other program for young children?

[If yes, follow up with the following questions:]
- Which type of program?
- When did you begin to think about sending your children to that program?
- Was that program something you wanted for your children from the start?
- How did you make the choice?
- What do you think your children gain from taking part in that program?
- What, if anything, does your family gain?

[If no, follow up with the following questions:]
Did you ever consider sending your children to a Jewish preschool, playgroup, or other program? Why or why not?

[Ask parents with school-age children] Do any of your children attend a Jewish educational program such as day school, Hebrew school, congregational school, or Sunday school?

[If yes, follow up with the following questions:]
  - Which type of program?
  - When did you begin to think about sending your children to that program?
  - Was that program something you wanted for your children from the start?
  - How did you make the choice?
  - What do you think your children gain from taking part in that program?
  - What, if anything, does your family gain?
  - Through what age or grade do you think your children will continue in this program?

[If no, follow up with the following questions:]
  - Did you ever consider sending your children to day school, Hebrew school, congregational school, or Sunday school? Why or why not?

[Ask parents with school-age children] Do any of your children participate in other organized Jewish youth programs, such as Jewish youth groups, Jewish day camp or sleep away camp, or other activities?

[If yes, follow up with the following questions:]
  - Which type of program?
  - When did you begin to think about sending your children to that program?
  - Was that program something you wanted for your children from the start?
  - How did you make the choice?
  - What do you think your children gain from taking part in that program?
  - What, if anything, does your family gain?
  - Through what age or grade do you think your children will continue in this program?

[If no, follow up with the following questions:]
  - Did you ever consider sending your children to Jewish youth groups, day camp or sleep away camp? Why or why not?
  - What types of formal or informal Jewish educational programs, if any, would interest you for your children in the future?

[Ask respondents who do not have school-age children] As your children get older, do you think they will attend a Jewish educational program such as day school, Hebrew school, congregational school, or Sunday school?
[If yes] Which programs are you considering?

[If no] Why not?

[Ask respondents who do not have school-age children] As your children get older, do you think they will participate in other organized Jewish youth programs, such as Jewish youth groups, Jewish day camp or sleep away camp, or other activities?

[If yes] Which programs are you considering?

[If no] Why not?

Now I have a few questions for you about your friendships since becoming a parent. Do you usually socialize as a family -- that is, with your children and your friends’ children -- or just as adults?

Have you developed new friendships since becoming a parent?

[If yes] Are any of your new friendships with other Jewish families?

[If yes] Does your time together ever have a specific Jewish focus? Tell me more about that.

[If yes] What sorts of activities do you do together as Jewish families?

**FACILITATORS OF JEWISH LIFE**

Next, I want to ask you to consider what kinds of things bring you and your family closer to Jewish life. In your opinion, what activities, organizations, or other influences help you and your family connect to Judaism?

What, if anything, have you done or experienced as a family recently that enhanced your family’s Jewish life?

What, if anything, have you done or experienced recently just with your spouse/partner that enhanced your family’s Jewish life?

What, if anything, have you done or experienced recently as an individual, without your spouse/partner or your children, that enhanced your own, personal Jewish life?

Can you think of an individual, organization, or event that has had a particularly strong impact on your family’s Jewish life?

[If individual] What was that person’s role? What did he or she do to help you feel connected?

[If organization] Were there particular programs or activities offered by this organization that helped you feel connected? What were those programs like? (frequency, time of day, structure, number of family members involved)
In what ways do you think Jewish organizations can better involve families of all backgrounds in Jewish life?

[If event] What about that event made you feel more connected?

**BARRIERS TO JEWISH LIFE**

Now I want to switch gears again to ask about circumstances that might make it harder for you and your family to take part in Jewish life.

Are you currently as involved in Jewish life as you want to be as a family?

[If no] What keeps your family from being more Jewishly involved?  
*Listen for specifics: time, age of participants, ideological differences, cost, location.*

Apart from your involvement as a family, are you and your partner currently as involved in Jewish life as you want to be as individuals, and as a couple?

[If no] In addition to your responsibilities as parents, what keeps you from being more involved as individuals or as a couple?

Has anything ever happened to you or to your family that “turned you off” to Jewish life?  
[If yes] What happened and what effect did it have?

Have you ever seen a flyer or advertisement for a Jewish event and thought to yourself, “I’d love to bring my family to that, but...” [ask respondent to finish the sentence]

Have you ever seen a flyer or advertisement for a Jewish event and thought to yourself, “Wow, that’s clearly not for us!” If so, Why?

**JEWISH ENGAGEMENT – GENERAL VIEWS**

How would you define Jewish engagement?  
In your mind, what are the general characteristics of an engaged Jew?

**CONCLUSION**

Do you see your family’s Jewish life changing in the future as your children grow older?  
[If yes] In what ways?

Do you have any other thoughts about Jewish family life that we haven’t yet covered?
**Demographic Questions**

*This final set of questions is to get a little more background on you and your family to help us summarize our findings across all our interviews.*

What is your gender? (male, female, other)

How old are you? (RECORD EXACT AGE BUT THEN ALSO NOTE CATEGORY: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, etc.)

What is the highest level of schooling you have completed?

(less than high school diploma, high school diploma or equivalent, some college or technical school, associate or technical degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, doctorate or professional degree, other)

What is your religion, if any? (Jewish, Jewish and something else, Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Christian, Mormon, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Atheist, Agnostic, Other)

If “Jewish and something else”: What is the other religion?

If “Other”: What is the other religion?

Aside from religion, do you consider yourself Jewish?  (Yes/No)

Were you raised: Jewish, Jewish and something else, no religion, other religion

If “Jewish and something else”: What is the other religion?

If “Other”: What is the other religion?

Did you have a formal conversion to Judaism? (Yes/No)

With which branch of Judaism do you currently identify, if any? (Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, Renewal, Secular/Culturally Jewish, Just Jewish, Other)

*Thank you so much for your time in helping us to answer these questions! I will be following up with an email to share your gift card with you.*

**SNOWBALL RECRUITMENT (if applicable):**

Now, as you know, we contacted you through a referral from [NAME OF PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR]. We are also hoping to speak with Jewish families like yourself but whose children do not attend Jewish preschool. We would greatly appreciate if you could refer us to two friends who fit this description whom you think might be interested in sharing their thoughts with us about their Jewish life. Could you share the names and email addresses of two such friends? We will contact them via email about this opportunity, just as we contacted you. There is no obligation to participate in the interview, but if they do, they will get a gift card as thanks for their participation, just like you.

[WRITE DOWN NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESSES: _________________________________]
Appendix C: Key informant interview Codebook - Professionals

Defining Engagement: How participants define Jewish engagement, and examples of this.
   a. Preferred term: If there is a term other than Jewish engagement that the participant would prefer to use
   b. Behaviors: Behaviors or actions that describe or attribute to engagement, for example: rituals, tradition, helping in the community or attending events
   c. Community: Descriptions that include community as a core description of Jewish engagement
   d. Identity: Identifying as Jewish religiously and/or as part of the Jewish people

Barriers: Descriptions of barriers to engagement (e.g. concerns that keep people from engaging, feeling uncomfortable in Jewish spaces, intimidation, lack of self-confidence, fear of anti-Semitism, fear of judgement, logistical details that make it difficult for families to engage, etc.)

Measuring: Ways to measure engagement
   a. Not measured: Do not measure engagement
   b. Satisfaction: Examples where professionals mentioned that they would like to look at individual-level satisfaction as a measure of Jewish engagement
   c. Behavior change: Examples where professionals mentioned individual-level behavioral change as a measure of Jewish engagement. For example, what behaviors they see or would like to see families partaking in.
   d. Attendance: Statement that engagement is measured based off general attendance of a given program or specific number of attendees at a given program.

Single parents: Descriptions of differences in engagement for single parents

LGBTQ: Description of differences in engagement for LGBTQ families

Millennials: Descriptions of engagement with millennials

Interfaith: Description of engagement in interfaith families

Non-traditional: Descriptions of differences in engagement with non-traditional families

Adult engagement: Descriptions of engagement with adults (both parents and non-parents, as long as children are not present)
a. *Non-parents*: Things adults without children do to engage Jewishly
b. *Parents*: Things parents do without their kids to engage Jewishly

**Minimally engaged**: How participants define minimally engaged
a. *Disagree with term*: If participants agreed with the term minimally engaged
b. *Preferred term*: If participants prefer a different term other than “minimally engaged”

**Background**: Background information about the participant such as their job title, religious affiliation, or age.

**Facilitators**: Activities/circumstances that enable (facilitate) engagement, these can be proposed activities, or current activities that individuals are involved in. Use code as a parent code with (1) Ways to engage, (2) Timing and (3) ECE-driven, or on its own when none of them apply.

a. *Ways to engage*: Things that organizations/institutions/schools/community leaders can do to engage families
b. *Timing*: Mentions of the timing of engagement, may include rites of passage, or other life events that trigger interest in being Jewishly engaged.

c. *ECE-driven*: Ways that ECE programs (i.e. “activities and/or experiences that are intended to effect developmental changes in children prior to their entry into elementary school”) specifically work to engage families
Appendix D: Key informant interview Codebook- Parents

**Background:** Number of children and ages of children, age of parent, education, and branch of Judaism parent identifies with

**Jewish life before kids:** Descriptions of Jewish life before having children (can include examples from interviewee’s childhood). For example, attending holiday celebrations, participating in Jewish organizations, and attending cultural activities.
   a. *Celebrating holidays:* A parent mentions that they celebrated Jewish holidays
   b. *Going to temple:* A parent mentions that they attend services or belong to a temple
   c. *Jewish organization/group member:* A parent mentions that they were a part of a Jewish organization or group
   d. *Other Jewish activities:* A parent mentions they participated in Jewish/Israeli cultural or religious activities before they had children. Examples of cultural activities include attending a reading by a Jewish author, baking *challah*, going to Israeli dance class. Religious activities can include examples of Torah study, but do not include celebrating holidays or going to temple for services.

**Jewish friendships before kids:** Descriptions of parent’s Jewish friendships before they had kids and/or activities they did with friends that had a Jewish focus

**Satisfaction with Jewish involvement before kids:** Descriptions of parent satisfaction with their Jewish involvement before they had kids

**Barriers:** Barriers to engagement

**Jewish life after kids:** Descriptions of ways Jewish life changes for parents after they have kids
   a. *Celebrating holidays:* A parent mentions celebrating Jewish holidays after they had children
   b. *Going to temple:* A parent mentions being a member of a temple or going to services after they had children
   c. *Jewish organization/group member:* A parent mentions they were part of a Jewish organization or group after they had children
   d. *Other Jewish activities:* A parent mentions they participated in Jewish/Israeli cultural or religious activities after they had children. Examples of cultural activities include attending a reading by a Jewish author, baking *challah*, going to Israeli dance class. Religious activities can include examples of *Torah* study, but do not include celebrating holidays or going to temple for services.
Most Jewish: Descriptions of activities that feel “most Jewish”
   a. As a family: Jewish activities that are most meaningful to the family
   b. Individually: Jewish activities that are most meaningful for the parent

Factors for Jewish preschool choice: Things that guide parents’ choice of Jewish preschool (code barriers if the parent did not select a Jewish preschool)

Benefits of Jewish preschool: Parent perceptions of what works about a Jewish preschool
   a. Child: How preschool benefits the child
   b. Family: How preschool benefits the family

Factors for selecting other Jewish educational or youth program: Things that guide parents’ choice/future choice of Jewish educational or youth program (code barriers if the parent did not/will not select a Jewish educational program). If a child attends a Jewish educational or youth program, also include any description of benefits to the child and family.

Jewish friendships after kids: Descriptions of parent’s Jewish friendships after they had kids and/or activities they did with friends that had a Jewish focus

Facilitators: Activities/circumstances that enhance engagement/Jewish life
   a. Ways to engage: Things that organizations/institutions/schools/community leaders do to engage families
   b. ECE driven: Ways that ECE programs (i.e. “activities and/or experiences that are intended to effect developmental changes in children prior to their entry into elementary school”) specifically work to engage families

Satisfaction with Jewish involvement after kids: Descriptions of parent satisfaction with their Jewish involvement after they had kids

Defining engagement: How participants define Jewish engagement

Jewish life in future: Future plans or intentions for family’s Jewish life