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PREFACE

During the conversations we had in the course of the approval procedure for this research project, Semy Kahan mentioned to me almost casually that for half a century now, the intermarriage rate of Jews living in Finland has been approximately 90%. Startled, I asked: "If so, how is it that the community continues to exist?". Semy replied: "Yes, that was what the elder generation told us, fifty years ago: if this tendency continues, the community will disappear. But – it hasn't!". What's more, not only does the community continue to exist, but it continues to operate a school of its own, and (as noted in this research paper, below): "the percentage of children in the school is approximately 70% of all children from families who are members of the congregation".

Clearly, we at the Rappaport Center decided, such a phenomenon is well worthy of research, and the findings of such a research project could be of significance for very many communities in today's Jewish world, where intermarriage rates are higher than ever – and increasing. At the advice of Mr. Kahan, it was determined that this study would focus on the school and the school's student body, as representing the future generation of Finland's Jews and the degree of success of the community's educational endeavors. It is my pleasure to now bring before you the product of this research project.

Semy Kahan is uniquely fit to conduct this project and to sum up its findings. Born in Finland, he completed his MA degree in Social Science at Helsinki University in 1958, and worked as the secretary general of the Jewish Community in Helsinki for a year, until coming to Israel in 1959. After taking an additional degree in Social Work at the Hebrew University, he filled a variety of positions in the field of Social Work, and between 1970 and his early retirement in 1990 served as a National Supervisor in the Ministry of Welfare, with responsibility for Policy and Planning in the area of Services for Children and Youth. Since 1990, he has been working as a journalist, writing about Israel and the Middle East for a number of Newspapers in Finland and Sweden.

Semy Kahan has written two books, one about exemplary Israeli personalities, the other about Jerusalem. Both were published in Finland and Sweden. Currently, he is working with two co-authors on a third book, devoted to the Jews of Finland.

The present study by Semy Kahan is an important contribution to our knowledge of contemporary Jewish life. It creates an awareness of the characteristics and qualities of this exceptional Jewish community, and challenges conventional notions regarding the necessary grounds of Jewish continuity. It is a privilege for the Rappaport Center to be able to include this important study among our publications and thus to facilitate processes which are at the heart of our Center's concerns.

This publication is a typical product of the Rappaport Center at Bar Ilan University, insofar as research and analysis can serve as a basis for critique of contemporary Jewish realities, and as ground for planning alternatives for the future of the Jewish People in the 21st century. As we at the Rappaport Center understand it, assimilation is not an inexorable force of nature, but the result of human choices. For many Jews, maintaining Jewish involvements and affiliations seems less attractive than pursuing the alternatives open to them in the pluralistic societies of contemporary Europe and America. We are convinced that the tendency of many Jews to disassociate from Jewishness reflects real flaws and weaknesses existing in various areas and institutions of Jewish life today. However, such weakness itself is man-made; having understood current dynamics, it is important to move beyond analysis, in the direction of mending and repair. These two

aspects are reflected in our name: The Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality, founded in Bar Ilan University in the spring of 2001 at the initiative of Ruth and Baruch Rappaport, who, through the manifold activities of the Rappaport Center, have made an important contribution to ensuring the future well-being of the Jewish people worldwide. May G-d grant them and their family much health and well-being, and may they continue to derive a justified sense of pleasure and accomplishment from their manifold philanthropic activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those whose efforts have enabled the publication of this paper: Ms. Iris Aharon, organizational co-ordinator of the Rappaport center, who was also in charge of paging, proofreading and co-ordination with the press, and Mr. Yehonatan Chipman, the text editor.

Zvi Zohar, Director
The Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research
and Strengthening Jewish Vitality

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was born as the result of a discussion about Finnish Jewry which I had with my colleagues in the course of writing a book about the subject. We found that this small Jewish community in Northern Europe had certain unique characteristics, and I was convinced that the Jewish day school in Helsinki plays a significant and interesting role in the unique profile of Finnish Jewry: namely, notwithstanding the extremely high rate of intermarriage, a high percentage of the children are enrolled in this school.

I presented Prof. Zvi Zohar, head of the Rappaport Center at Bar-Ilan University, with the idea of conducting a sociological study of Jewish education and identity in Finland, focusing on students in the Jewish school in Helsinki and their parents. He welcomed the idea and accepted my research project as part of the studies of the Jewish world conducted and supported by the Rappaport Center. The Center's financial support facilitated the conduct of this study in a suitable scope and structure.

I owe a debt of gratitude and appreciation to many people who assisted me in different ways in the process of planning, implementing and analyzing this research project. First and foremost, I wish to thank Dr. Shlomo Egelstein, former head of the Research Department of the Israeli Ministry of Welfare. In addition to undertaking the data analyses of the research material, he served as a guide and a source of encouragement from the very outset of the study, which has been very helpful for me.

I wish to thank the American sociologist, Prof. Steven Cohen, for his one-time advice; The Danish Professor of Social Psychology, Lars Dencik, for his advice and for his interest in my study; The head of The American Jewish Committee in Israel, Dr. Eran Lehrman, who advised me of suitable sources of material; Dr. Svante Lundgren of the Abo Akademi University in Finland, for allowing me to use some of the questions he used in his study of Finnish Jews in 2001; My colleagues in our planned book project about the Jews in Finland, Eva Odrischinsky-Garfin and Serah Beizer, for their valuable feedback during the writing of this report.

I owe a warm debt of gratitude to the staff of the Jewish school in Helsinki for their interest in the study and their positive and effective cooperation in implementing the research. I wish to express my special appreciation to the principal of the school, Riitta Nurmi, and to the head of Jewish Studies, Daniel Weintraub, without whose warm support and practical assistance it would have been difficult to conduct the study. My thanks also go to the head of the Jewish congregation in Helsinki, Roni Smolar, and to the head of the school board, Kaj Wardi, who supported the project; to the secretary general of the congregation, Dan Kantor, for his support and practical assistance; and to the secretary of his office, Arja Silberstein, for her administrative aid. The representative of the Israelis living in Helsinki, Gilad Sperling, assisted me in my contacts with Israelis, for which I want to thank him.

Semy Kahan

Jerusalem, July 2008

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The special characteristics of Finnish Jewry, as described in detail in this report, were a major incentive for my decision to conduct this sociological study. Despite its location in the colder, northern part of Europe, Finland's small Jewish community is warm in many respects. This is so, both because of its strong will to remain Jewish, and its warm relationship with Israel.

The Jewish community is unusual in its having one of the highest rates of intermarriages in the Jewish World, but, despite this, in that most of the children attend the Jewish Day School in Helsinki. The central aim of our research was to explore the reasons for this unique phenomenon and to study the Jewish identity of the school children and their parents, as well as several other related aspects.

In the context of this study I conducted a comparative analysis regarding the issues in this research. I wished to understand how issues related to Jewish education, identity, assimilation and intermarriage are dealt with in Jewish communities in other countries. I will summarize my observations in the following chapter, with the intention of providing a broader frame of reference to my study. I will then give an introduction to the Jews of Finland, with the aim of providing readers with some background knowledge concerning that population which is the focus of our study, in order to facilitate a better understanding of the results of our findings.

ISSUES OF JEWISH IDENTITY, CONTINUITY & EDUCATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

"Before the onset of modernity, Jews lived in self-contained communities. Their inner and outer lives were regulated almost exclusively by Jewish teaching, and their identity was clear: They were Jews because they followed the laws of Moses. Survival may have been a problem in such a world, but identity posed no difficulties", Thus writes Steven Bayme, National Director of the Department of Contemporary Jewish life of the American Jewish Committee. He continues: "In a society that welcomes the participation of Jews, Jewish identity becomes a matter of choice. Does Jewish tradition have a role in a world governed by modern values? Why should Jews remain faithful to Jewish tradition if modern culture itself is so powerful and attractive? This controversy has raged in Jewish life ever since the Emancipation. What then are the compelling reasons for leading a Jewish life?". Bayme replies by presenting a number of justifications for Jewish continuity.

A soul-searching debate is taking place today focused on this very important question and other vital issues concerning the present and future existence of the Jewish people. Underlying this discussion are two developments that place in question the very continued physical survival of the Jews: the one relates to the exceptionally low birthrate among Jews in all countries, with the exception of Israel; the other to the accelerating process of assimilation world-wide.

The second half of the twentieth century has simultaneously been a period of growing Jewish assimilation and of increasing acceptance of Jews as equal citizens in the countries where they live. One of the most striking expressions of these developments has been the growing tendency of individual Jews to marry outside the framework of faith and nationality. A survey of Jewish population in the United States conducted in 1990 reveals that 52% of all marriages involving Jews during the years 1985-90 were mixed. This tendency has led to serious concern for the future of the Jewish people and a growing debate, both in the US and in Europe, where in many countries the rate of intermarriage is even higher.

Issues Studied and Debated

Various questions related to these issues have been studied by researchers, serving as incentive for intensive debate among Jews in many countries. The foremost questions in this debate are: Is it worthwhile reaching out to intermarried families in an effort to prevent them from moving further away from Judaism? Would it be preferable to concentrate on those people who have not yet taken the step of intermarriage so as to attempt to weaken this phenomenon? Or is it best to work simultaneously in both directions?

Sociologist Prof. Steven M. Cohen is an ardent defender of the in-reach approach, claiming that, given the limited resources available, preference should be given to strengthening the Jewishness of those who have not yet intermarried, but are potential candidates to do so. He is alarmed by the increasing gap between the in-married and the inter-married regarding Jewish identity and way of life, referring to studies affirming a 90% probability that an in-married Jew will raise his children in the Jewish faith, whereas the corresponding likelihood for an intermarried Jew is less than 40%. He does not object to outreach to those who have already "crossed the lines", but asserts that a clear preference should be given to in-reach activity.

By contrast, Paul Golin, associate director of the Jewish Outreach Institute, strongly advocates outreach work among those who have intermarried, but are potentially prepared to receive an outreach message.

Another question widely debated is how to effectively teach Judaism to the younger generation in order to break the tendency to assimilation. Growing assimilation has led to greater investment in this area, with an increasing number of Jewish day schools and other forms of Jewish education. Sociological research has been conducted in the United States and other countries as to the spread, structure and influence of intermarriages. Some researchers have also estimated the effectiveness of Jewish education.

At the same time a more basic question is asked, in the spirit of Steven Bayme: What does it mean to be a Jew in the 21st century?

A SURVEY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

It what follows, I attempt to present selected data and conclusions from a number of researches and studies conducted in the United States and other countries. To illustrate the subjects with which we are dealing, I will show data about Jewish population, mixed-marriage and Jewish education in a number of countries.

Some years ago, Prof. Sylvia Barack Fishman conducted a study of intermarried families, entitled *Jewish and Something Else*, based on 254 interviews conducted with 68 intermarried, 36 in-married and 23 conversionary families. Her main conclusions were the following:

1. Jewish mothers, overall, create more strongly Jewishly-defined intermarried households than do Jewish fathers.
2. Most intermarried participants in the study received little or no guidance from their parents about dating and religion while they were still living at home.
3. A majority of intermarried families incorporate substantial Christian celebrations into their family lives, as compared to those families in which both spouses are Jewish.
4. Extended family members, including non-Jews, exert an important influence on children growing up in intermarried households.
5. Hanukkah and Passover were almost universally celebrated among the participating intermarried families.

In a study among college freshmen conducted by Prof. Linda Sax at UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, the main finding was that the majority of college students whose parents are intermarried don't consider themselves Jews. The research tracked down 235,000 Jewish freshmen at 1200 colleges. Of students with two Jewish parents, 93% identified themselves as Jews. This number was much lower among students from mixed-marriages. If the mother was Jewish, 38% identified themselves as Jews, whereas when the father was Jewish the corresponding datum was only 15%. This difference between intermarried Jewish mothers and fathers can be found in other studies too.

A study conducted on children from conversionary marriages shows a rather different picture of the Jewish identity of those children. Most of these considered themselves Jewish, in contrast to only a quarter of those from intermarried families, who constituted a control group. The children with a converted parent were more likely to receive intensive Jewish education, celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and observe Jewish holidays, but their attitude toward participation in organized Jewish life was more similar to that of children from intermarriages.

A survey by the Jewish Outreach Institute yields a more optimistic picture. It shows that, among young adults from intermarried families aged 22–30, while only 30% considered themselves "Jewish" by religion, almost 70% affirmed that "being Jewish" is either "somewhat important" or "very important" to them. More than half had

attended a Jewish cultural event during the past two years. Nevertheless, Steve Bayme and others question whether a Jewish identity rooted primarily in Jewish culture is viable over time.

A study conducted in Philadelphia in 1984 indicates that not a single grandchild of intermarried parents, with the exception of those who converted to Judaism, identified themselves as Jews.

Egon Mayer, in his book *Children of Inter-Marriage*, claims that intermarriage is a disaster for Jewish identity by the third generation. He holds that, left unchecked, intermarriage will weaken both the quality and quantity of the Jewish community.

According to a census sponsored by the Avi-Chai Foundation conducted in American Jewish day schools during the 2003-4 school year, there were 205,000 students in Jewish elementary and secondary schools. This represents an increase of 11% compared with a similar census made five years earlier, and a further increase is predicted. However, the percentage of children studying today in Jewish day schools is still rather low. It was 29% in 1999 and is now slightly over 30%, albeit 79% of all Jewish children receive some sort of Jewish education. Among those children in Jewish day schools, 80% are enrolled in Orthodox schools. From this fact we may conclude that a very low percentage of children identified with the Conservative and Reform movements attend Jewish day schools.

High tuition fees limit the number of families who see themselves as financially able to send their children to Jewish schools. In a survey among parents whose children are enrolled in non-Jewish schools, a third said that high tuition fees was among the reasons for their decision not to send their child to a Jewish school. Thus, economics seems to be an obstacle hampering children from lower social strata from receiving a Jewish education. This was confirmed in conversations with American Jewish leaders attending a conference in Jerusalem, who said that regrettably little is being done to cope with this problem.

Bruce Phillips, in his study *Re-examining Intermarriage*, divides intermarried families into six categories, based upon the degree of religious commitment of the parents and the relative weight of Jewish and Christian influences. He uses a differential approach to these families, asserting that those parents closer to the Jewish pole on the scale of religious commitment are better prospects for successful outreach attempts.

In the above-mentioned study, Phillips claims that not only Jewish day school education, but all Jewish education during the adolescent years, whether formal or informal, is crucial. He stresses the importance of dating patterns in predicting a young person's decision to intermarry. Those who dated Jews during the high-school years are more likely to do so as adults. Other studies affirm this observation and recommend that parents be more aware and concerned about the dating patterns of their adolescent children.

Jewish education in the United States has developed in scope and become more pluralistic in terms of educational models and philosophy. A considerable number of studies and surveys have been conducted concerning different aspects of Jewish education. I will briefly survey a few of these:

In a study entitled *The Current Moment in Jewish Education*, conducted by an unidentified source, a correlation is shown between parents having attended Jewish day school and their children's enrolment in a similar educational framework. Over 90% of these parents have their children studying in a Jewish day school.

Teen-age education is receiving far more attention now. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is seen far less than as before as an "end station" on the track of Jewish learning, and new and creative post Bar/Bat Mitzvah programs are being developed.

Parents are increasingly being seen as partners in the Jewish education of their children. Some parents are introducing Jewish rituals at home, in response to their children's experiencing of them in school. According to this study, many parents are willing to engage in adult Jewish education in order to address questions posed by their own children.

In another summary study about American Jewish education, the widely held assumption that a single type of institution can meet the diverse educational needs of all Jewish families is challenged. It is claimed instead that a cluster of educational choices can reinforce Jewish identification. It is held that parents and their children mutually reinforce one another's Jewish engagements. Such a multi-faceted educational approach is also supported by Bruce Phillips in his above-mentioned research. According to him, day school or afternoon religious school education should be combined with different types of non-formal Jewish education, such as day and summer camps, community center youth programs, and Israel group programs. He claims that this multifaceted approach is also effective in diminishing motivation for intermarriage.

A study conducted by PEJE (Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education) addresses an issue of vital importance for American Jewish parents when deciding about a school for their children. A comparison was made between those students who attended Jewish day school and those who attended different types of non-Jewish schools. Findings show that, when studying in college, those students with a Jewish day school experience succeeded well in all subjects and some of them performed even better than other students. Only in mathematics and science were their achievements lower than those of other students.

STUDIES ABOUT OTHER COUNTRIES

Canada

The tendency towards intermarriage is on the rise in Canada and, according to the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute (JPPPI) assessment, was 35% in 2002. This is still considerably lower than in the United States.

There is a heavy focus on day school education. 78% of Jewish children are enrolled in Yeshiva/day schools and 22% in supplementary Jewish education, meaning that all Jewish children receive some sort of Jewish education.

In contrast to the US, day schools in Canada receive communal financing, which has contributed to the development of Jewish education.

France

51% of the Jewish population is of a religiously observant orientation and 7% are strictly Orthodox. 5% belong to the Conservative and Reform synagogues.

In 2003, 30% of Jewish pupils aged 3–18 received education in Jewish schools and community centers. 60% of France's Jews see Jewish schools as the most effective means of preserving Jewish identity, while 40% fear the separation and "ghettoization" to which Jewish schools may lead.

The government finances the general studies in Jewish schools.

England

In 2002, according to JPPPI figures, the intermarriage rate was 40–45%.

The proportion of Jewish children aged 5–17 receiving any type of Jewish education increased from 50% in 1992 to over 75% in 2002. Among these, those attending Jewish day schools increased from 58% in 1992 to 78% in 2002.

The success of British Jewish day schools stems in part from their high academic achievements. Most of the schools are financed by the state.

Australia

The intermarriage rate in Australia is relatively low, being 22% in 2002 according to JPPPI figures.

A study conducted in Melbourne in the 1990's by Goldlust found that people are more likely to intermarry if they have not attended a Jewish day school and if they classify themselves as Jewish but not religious.

The rate of enrolment in Jewish schools is as high as 65%, according to JPPPI figures.

The Czech Republic

A publication of the Rappaport Center of Bar-Ilan University presents Tereza Foltynova's study of two Jewish day schools (elementary and secondary) in Prague belonging to the Lauder Foundation.

In defining the Jewish character of the schools, the initiators of the project faced the question how to define it, taking into consideration the fact that contemporary Judaism is a multifaceted culture. The Czech Jewish community is secular, but contains a distinct group of observant Jews.

The Jewish character of the schools was based on Jewish school subjects and on creating a school environment in which Jewish practice and values are promoted. The school schedule follows the Jewish calendar and provides kosher food.

The classes have less than 20 students in order to facilitate one-to-one contact between students and teachers.

Regarding parental involvement: a group of parents attend occasional lectures on Jewish topics offered by the school. In the assessment of its achievements, the researcher concludes, among other things, that "The schools create a very important social milieu in which the children meet and create social bonds with one another".

There is no tuition fee. 62.5% of the budget is covered by the Jewish community, 30% by the Czech government, and 7.5 % by the Lauder Foundation.

I have somewhat elaborated on the Czech case because the elementary school in Prague resembles that in Helsinki in many respects.

TABLE 1. WORLD JEWISH POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, BY FREQUENCY OF CURRENT OUT-MARRIAGES, 1930s, 1980s, 2000s

% Jews now marrying non-Jews ^a	1930s			1980s			2000s		
	Country ^b	Jewish pop.		Country ^b	Jewish pop.		Country ^b	Jewish pop.	
		N 000	%		N 000	%		N 000	%
0-0.9%	Total	16,500	100.0	Total	12,979	100.0	Total	12,950	100.0
	Poland ¹ , Lithuania ¹ , Greece ² , Palestine ² , Iran ⁴ , Yemen ⁴ , Ethiopia ⁴	4,130	25.0	Israel ¹	3,659	28.2	West Bank-Gaza (Judea, Samaria and Gaza) ¹	215	1.7
1-4.9%	Latvia ¹ , Canada ¹ , United States ² , Latin America ⁴ , United Kingdom ⁴ , Spain-Portugal ⁴ , Other Asia ⁴ , Maghreb ² , Egypt ¹ , Libya ⁴ , Southern Africa ⁴	6,600	40.0	Mexico ¹ , Africa not else stated ⁴	57	0.5	Israel ¹ , Yemen ⁴	4,879	37.7
5-14.9%	Switzerland ¹ , France ² , Austria ¹ , Luxembourg ¹ , Hungary ¹ , Romania ² , Czechoslovakia ¹ , USSR ¹ , Estonia ¹ , Belgium ⁴ , Bulgaria ⁴ , Yugoslavia ⁴	5,340	32.4	North Africa ⁴ , Asia (besides Israel) ⁴	46	0.3	Mexico ¹ , Gibraltar ⁴ , China ⁴ , Iran ⁴ , Syria ¹ , North Africa ⁴	60	0.4
15-24.9%	Italy ¹ , Germany ¹ , Netherlands ¹	385	2.3	Southern Africa ³	120	0.9	Bahamas ⁴ , Costa Rica ⁴ , Guatemala ² , Venezuela ¹ , India ³ , Japan ¹ , Singapore ⁴ , South Africa ³	101	0.8
25-34.9%	Australia ² , New Zealand ⁴ , Scandinavia ²	45	0.3	Canada ¹ , Australia ¹ , New Zealand ⁴ , United Kingdom ⁴ , Brazil ² , Other Latin America ³ , Europe not else stated ⁴	936	7.2	Canada ¹ , Chile ² , Latin America not else stated ⁴ , Turkey ² , Africa not else stated ⁴ , Australia ¹ , New Zealand ³	535	4.1
35-44.9%				Argentina ³ , Italy ⁴ , France ² , Belgium ⁴	818	6.3	Argentina ³ , Brazil ² , Uruguay ² , France ¹ , United Kingdom ⁴ , West Europe not else stated ³	1,176	9.1
45-54.9%				United States ² , USSR ² , Austria ¹ , Switzerland ¹ , Netherlands ³	7,186	55.4	United States ¹ , Italy ² , Netherlands ¹ , Switzerland ¹ , Asian FSU ³	5,400	41.7
55-74.9%				Scandinavia ³ , West Germany ¹ , Eastern Europe (besides USSR) ¹	156	1.2	Austria ¹ , Germany ¹ , East Europe (besides FSU) ³	194	1.5
75% +				Cuba ³	1	0.0	European FSU ² , Cuba ³	390	3.0

^a Not Jewish at time of marriage. Out-marriage figures are countrywide or regional estimates. This table ignores variation in out-marriage frequencies within countries.
^b Data quality rated as follows: 1 Recent and reliable data; 2 Partial or less recent data of sufficient quality; 3 Rather outdated or incomplete data; 4 Conjectural.
 Source: adapted from DellaPergola (1972; 1976; 1983; 1989), Linfield (1942), Schmelz and DellaPergola (1990), DellaPergola (1995; 2003), and respective references.

This table was published in an article, "World Jewish Population 2007", written by Prof. Sergio Della Pergola

THE JEWS OF FINLAND

Until 1809 Finland was an integral part of Sweden. As a result of its war with Russia, Sweden lost its Finnish territory and Finland became an autonomy within the realm of the Tsarist Empire. The rights of the Jews in Finland continued, however, to be based on Swedish law, meaning that Jews were allowed to settle in Finland only if they were ready to convert to Christianity.

The first Jews permitted to live in Finland as Jews were soldiers who had served in the Russian army as "Cantonists" who performed their military service in Finland. Tsar Nikolai I created the concept of Cantonists, meaning that Jewish boys were forced at an early age to enroll in the army for a period that in many cases lasted twenty-five years. The intention was to make them convert to the Christian faith, yet a considerable number managed to remain Jews. Thus, the roots of Finnish Jewry stem from the Cantonists, a fact unique in the Jewish world.

An amendment introduced by the Tsar overruled the former Swedish law, enabling the ex-soldiers to settle in Finland, to marry Russian-Jewish women, and to bring them with them to Finland. This was the beginning of Finnish Jewry. They were only allowed to sell handicrafts and used clothes, and their civil rights were limited. They stayed together, forming informal Jewish congregations.

In 1870, the question of the status of the Jews was brought before the Finnish Diet by a leading liberal statesman, but his initiative was rejected by the Diet.

The Jews led a traditional Jewish life, establishing prayer houses in private homes, as at this stage they were forbidden to erect synagogues. They taught their children in small religious learning places, "heders".

The Jews earned their living at a market place set up especially for them in the cities where they lived, known by the Russian name *Narinkka*. There they sold the goods they were permitted to market.

Their first rabbi was the well known Naftali Amsterdam, a disciple of the famous Rabbi Israel Lipkin Salanter.

When Finland became independent in 1917, the Jews were granted full citizenship rights. This was a turning point in the life of the Finnish Jewry, and they climbed rather quickly up the socio-economic ladder, opening shops, and the younger generation gradually chose academic professions, becoming physicians, lawyers, economists, managers, etc. Some of them attained important positions. There is a very influential Jewish member of Parliament and some well known artists and authors. The Finnish UN ambassador of Jewish origin, Max Jakobson, would almost have been elected Secretary General of the UN, were it not for the Soviet veto.

The community is considered Orthodox, although very few of its members are observant. They have a rabbi from Israel, and the community has all the organizations belonging to the network of an Orthodox community.

Finnish Jews identify strongly with Israel and the Aliyah rate has been high. During World War II Finland fought the Soviets alongside Germany, but was not occupied by it. The Finns withstood Hitler's attempts to have the Jews deported to Germany.

The rate of intermarriage in the country is close to 90%, yet most of the mixed families send their children to the Jewish day school. Some of the non-Jewish spouses are active in the community.

Since 1990 Jews, particularly from Israel but also from Russia, have moved to the country, contributing to a not inconsiderable growth of the small community in Helsinki, which presently has 1500 members.

THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL IN HELSINKI

The Jewish day school has around 100 pupils in 9 classes; for high school, the students go to a non-Jewish school. There is a preschool framework offering children two years in a Jewish atmosphere prior to entering school. According to figures provided by the congregation, the percentage of children in the school is approximately 70% of all children from families who are members of the congregation.

The school is financed mostly by the government. In addition to the general Finnish school curriculum, the school offers programs in Jewish History, Religion, Torah and Hebrew. The Jewish holydays are "prepared" for in school. Morning service (*Shaharit*) is compulsory, but the Jewish subjects are taught without an attempt to impose religious observance. The aim is to give the children a broad knowledge and understanding of Jewish mitzvot and values. The community considers the school as the most important factor in preserving its Jewish character and heritage.

The school in Helsinki was established in 1918. The language of instruction was initially Swedish, that being the tongue of the Swedish-speaking minority with which the Jews were more familiar. In the 1930's the teaching language was changed to Finnish.

The profile of the school's students has become significantly more heterogeneous as several families have joined the community, mostly from Israel, but also from Russia and several other countries. This has to some extent led to changes in the curriculum. The principal and most teachers are non-Jews. They are, however, aware of the Jewish aims of the school and are supporting them.

During the last ten years the board of the school has initiated a more systematic evaluation of the curriculum. The board and the principal of the school have expressed their interest in this study. They wanted to gain a better understanding about the Jewish identity of the students, comparing it with the Jewishness of their parents at home. There were also other questions related to the Jewish objectives of the school that were on the wishing list of the school, which I will mention in the following chapter.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND THE POPULATION STUDIED

Our study covered the following items and issues:

Concerning the students:

1. Their Jewish identity and the Jewish elements in their life.
2. Their attitudes towards and expectations of Jewish education in the school.
3. Their relation to the non-Jewish environment (friends, Jewish self-esteem, the attitudes of the surrounding world).
4. Their contacts with non-Jewish parent's family.
5. Their attitude towards Israel.
6. The influence of the home in comparison with the school education, especially concerning points 1 and 2 – a conjectural estimate, given the difficulty of isolating the influence of the family from other influences.

Concerning the parents

1. Their reasons for choosing the Jewish school for their children.
2. Their own Jewish identity and way of life.
3. Their expectations from Jewish instruction at the school (limited, as the school will conduct its own larger survey concerning this issue).
4. Their attitude towards their children's friends.
5. Their willingness to participate in a study program of Jewish topics.
6. Their contacts with their non-Jewish spouse's family.
7. Their attitude towards Israel.
8. Comparison of the data from Finnish-Jewish families to those families which have migrated to Finland.

In this study, we have defined the concept of Jewish identity as composed of elements from the realms of religious observance, Jewish traditional values and customs, belongingness to the Jewish people and links to its history, closeness and identification with Jewish culture, and Jewish nationhood and statehood.

The Population Studied

The study was conducted among pupils from the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th grades and their parents, as well as among pupils and parents in the 12th grade who, after completing studies in the Jewish school, had been in a non-Jewish high school.

The total number of students in the Jewish day school included in the study was 62 and their parents numbered 64.

I included the 12th grade in the study in order to examine the influence of three years of education in a non-Jewish environment.

Those members of the Jewish community who were enrolled from first grade in non-Jewish schools – both children and their parents – were included in this study. They were intended as a control group for the children in the Jewish School and their parents.

In addition, I interviewed some members of the community at large, our purpose being to get their views and attitudes to a number of issues dealing with Jewish identity and education and with the present and future situation of the Jewish community in Helsinki.

I was asked by the community to add a few questions about the respondents' community membership and expectations from the community.

Among the staff of the Jewish school, I interviewed the principal, her deputy, the head of Jewish studies, a teacher of Hebrew and the social worker.

RESEARCH METHOD

A questionnaire was distributed anonymously to school pupils, and another to their parents. The pupils answered the questions at school, the parents at home.

The 12th grade students and their parents, as well as the children in non-Jewish schools and their parents, received the questionnaire by mail and replied anonymously.

All questionnaires were returned to the researcher. A special code system was used in order to match the questionnaires of parents to those of their children. Those parents that had emigrated to Finland – mostly from Israel and some from Russia – were given additional questions about their background and special needs as immigrants.

The interviews with members of the community were conducted personally.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A. STUDENTS IN THE JEWISH SCHOOL

Introduction

The students spend between 9 to 11 years (if they attend pre-school) of their childhood and early adolescence in a Jewish environment, until they leave to continue in a non-Jewish high school. This is a meaningful period in their young life, during which their patterns of behavior, norms and values, and Jewish and broader identity are developing. In addition to the core body of knowledge and skills and educational tasks taught in any school, the Jewish school aims to give its students knowledge and experiences about Judaism in its various aspects. It was my aim to find out how they relate to and assess both the Jewish part of the school program as well as to the more general part of its program.

The Jewish aspects of their life experience until now are referred to in a number of different areas. I chose to focus on the following aspects:

1. Their attitude and assessment of the Jewish subjects (Jewish history, Jewish religion & Hebrew) and other Jewish elements of the school program;
2. their Jewish identity;
3. their attitude to Israel;
4. their relations with non-Jewish members of their family;
5. their expectations from the Jewish community in Helsinki.

Research Population

The number of students is 62. These are divided among the different classes as follows:

5th grade - 9

6th grade - 13

7th grade - 13

8th grade - 11

9th grade - 16

Gender:

28 boys

30 girls

4 didn't reply to this question

Country of birth:

Finland - 35

Israel - 14

Other countries - 1

Didn't reply - 12

Religious/Ethnic status:

Both parents Jewish - 22

Only father Jewish - 20

Only mother Jewish - 14

Other answer (converted or in process of conversion) - 4

Didn't reply - 2

Research Data

1. Attitudes and Assessment of Jewish Studies in the School Program

We present here the students' responses to the questionnaire.

1. How important are the Jewish school subjects for you? Please rank according to degree of importance:

82% say that Jewish history is an important or very important subject

69% say that Religion is an important or very important subject

70% think that Hebrew is an important or very important subject

2. What level of skill would you wish to have in Hebrew?

62% consider knowing how to speak Hebrew fluently as important or very important

75% think that making themselves understood in Hebrew is at some level important or very important

61% think that reading prayers fluently is important or very important.

73 % think that being able to understand a Hebrew text is important or very important

Students who have moved from Israel and whose home language is Hebrew were asked:

2A. What does studying Hebrew give you?

75% think that it improves their knowledge

21% think that it doesn't improve their knowledge

3. What do you think about the number of lessons in the subjects Religion, Jewish History and Hebrew?

82% consider the number of lessons in religion sufficient

12% would like more hours

6% would like fewer hours

71% consider the number of lessons in Jewish History sufficient

21% want more hours

8% want fewer hours

68% think the quantity of lessons in Hebrew is sufficient

24% want more hours

8% want fewer hours

The presence of students who came from Israel did not influence the answers about Hebrew in a decisive way.

To judge from the data, 20% of the students want more lessons in Jewish History or Hebrew, which at least partly indicates their interest in those subjects.

4. What do the Jewish subjects give you?

13% think they strengthen their Jewish feeling

69% think they give them knowledge that they as Jews ought to have

13% were unable to answer the question

5-6. Concern what was missing from the Jewish subjects taught at school and what could be omitted:

16% saw a need to add to the existing program

13% thought that there were parts that could be omitted

They suggested that the following be added to the subjects taught in school:

- Judaism in our days and explaining prayers

- Israel-born students wanted more spoken Hebrew

- Only one student wanted something omitted from the program; his wish was not to study Hebrew

7. In order to get an impression as to how the students evaluated both Jewish and other subjects in the curriculum, we asked them to rate seven subjects according to their degree of importance to them:

98 % rated English as important or very important

93% rated Mathematics as important or very important

90% rated Finnish as important or very important

79% rated History as important or very important

72% rated Hebrew as important or very important

71% rated Jewish History as important or very important

66% rated Religion as important or very important

Although the Jewish subjects received a lower rating than the other subjects, their rating was also rather high.

22. What is most important to you out of all you have been taught in Jewish subjects? (This question could be answered in own words)

Ten subjects were mentioned, of which four got the highest ranking:

- Jewish history (12)

- Understanding the meaning of the holidays (10)

- Religion (8)

- Hebrew (7)

Jewish history, considered by many as the most important subject they had been taught, reflects the high ranking this subject received (see Q. 3 above).

8. The day in school begins with Morning Prayer. What does Morning Prayer mean to you?

29% said that it strengthens their Jewishness

7% said that it has a religious meaning for them

36% said that it has no meaning for them

29% would rather give it up

The outcome of this question shows that no less than 2/3 of the students are unhappy with the morning prayer. This suggests the question: Are they dissatisfied with the idea of having morning prayer, or is it an expression of dissatisfaction with the prayer service in its present form?

2. Jewish Identity

Question 8 above could belong to this category, but we preferred to link it with the question related to the students' attitudes to the Jewish contents of the school program.

In questions 10 & 11, the issue of Bar/Bat Mitzvah and its meaning for them is being raised:

10. What meaning does it have for you that you are Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

45% think that it meant having a nice day of celebration

53% think that it has strengthened their Jewish identity

15% think that it has strengthened their ties with the Jewish Community

11% think that it no special meaning for them

In this question, it was possible to choose more than one alternative. This explains why the total percentage is greater than 100%. This will be the case in all the questions with more than one alternative.

11. Did something change for you from a Jewish point of view after you became Bar/Bat Mitzvah? (This was an open question, and here are some of the answers)

- More responsibility for my Jewishness

- I feel more as a Jew

- I have the right to decide by myself in religious matters

Only 7 students replied

In analyzing the responses to questions 10 & 11, we discovered a clear tendency on the part of many students to ascribe to this event in their life an interpretation connected with Jewish identity.

12. In school you are taught about the Jewish holidays and their meaning. What does it mean to you? (more than one answer allowed)

17% are of the opinion that due to this teaching, they experience the spirit of the holidays

82% get to know the purpose of the holidays

5% didn't gain anything special from it

This shows that the school succeeds in transmitting the meaning and contents of the holidays to the students.

13. Why do you attend the Jewish school (more than one answer allowed)

80% referred to the decision of their parents

18% wanted to be together with Jews of their own age

34% thought that, being a Jew, it is natural to attend a Jewish school

19% wanted to learn about their people's history and religion

It is clear that most of them replied with "the voice of their parents".

In expressing their own opinion their replies had a "flavor" of Jewishness.

14. Do you consider yourself more Jewish than Finnish?

32% say they feel themselves as much Jews as Finns

25% feel more as Finns than as Jews

28 % feel more as Jews than as Finns

15. How often do you attend the synagogue?

38% attend the synagogue seldom or not at all

48% attend a few times a year (the major holidays, special occasions)

10% attend once a month

5% attend every Shabbat or more often

The frequency of synagogue visits may say something about their religiosity, but in many cases perhaps even more about their Jewish bonds in the wider sense.

In those cases of intermarriages in which the mother is not Jewish, the parents are asked, when sending their children to the Jewish school, to commit themselves to the child being converted to Judaism before reaching the age of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Hence, we asked the question:

17. What did the conversion mean to you?

36% felt themselves becoming a part of the Jewish community

29% felt themselves being a Jew like all the others

14% defined it as a meaningful step

43% said the conversion had no special meaning for them

The high percentage of those who didn't experience any special feeling may perhaps be explained in light of the fact that they had already spent many years in the Jewish atmosphere of the school. Hence, this lessened the feeling of change that the conversion usually implies in other circumstances.

18. Mention two Jewish holidays with a special meaning for you.

Pesah was chosen by most students: 29

Hanukkah: 13

Yom Kippur: 11

Purim: 7

Most students explained their choice of Pesah because it symbolizes the freedom of our people from the Egyptian slavery.

Yom Kippur was seen by many as the holiday of forgiveness and contemplation.

Hanukkah was seen by some as a nice candle lighting holiday, and others saw it as a day for getting gifts.

Purim was seen by most as a day of joy.

19. Among the next five expressions of Jewish religious observance, which do you maintain?

85% always fast on Yom Kippur, 48% sometimes

98% say they have a mezuzah on the door

69% say that Shabbat candles are lit at home always, 36% sometimes

38% eat kosher at home, 48% eat partly kosher

88% celebrate the Seder on Pesah every year, 68% sometimes

20. How do Jews differ from other people? (more than one answer allowed)

22% didn't think Jews differ

42% referred to the history of the Jewish people

57% referred to the religion of the Jewish people

18% thought Jews differ from others because many don't like them

To a certain extent, the way Jews see themselves in comparison to other people can also be seen as a part of their identity.

21. What kind of Jew would you like to be when you grow up?

14% - as one that fulfils the religious commandments (mitzvot)

29% - as one that keeps Jewish traditions (customs, Jewish food etc.)

18% - as one that knows Jewish culture and benefits from it

22% - as one that is just like any other people, not particularly caring for the fact of being Jewish

27. How many Jewish friends do you have?

23% say almost all their friends are Jewish

23% say about half of their friends are Jews

28% say less than half of their friends are Jewish

Considering the fact that most of the students live far from each other in the large urban area of Helsinki, the percentage of Jewish friends is very high. This can most probably be explained as a sign of the strong influence of being together in a Jewish environment during the long school period.

29. Do you tell other people about your being Jewish?

17% avoid telling it, if possible

15% are ready to tell under exceptional circumstances

17% are ready to tell under some circumstances

47% are ready to do so without reservation

To expose one's Jewishness to people that don't know it, means that I don't feel any need to hide this fact.

As we have seen from the answers, the way to behave in such a situation varies considerably among the students. About half of them undoubtedly have difficulties in being open on this issue and prefer to hide their Jewishness, if possible, or to reveal it only under special circumstances.

30. How do non-Jews behave if they know you are a Jew?

- 66% behave well
- 21% behave well in most cases
- 3% don't like me because I am a Jew
- 10% gave another reply

31. Have you experienced anti-Semitism?

- 5% have experienced anti-Semitism frequently
- 9% have experienced anti-Semitism sometimes
- 31% have experienced anti-Semitism only seldom
- 55% have never experienced it

If we analyze questions 29–31 as a unit, the conclusion is that, judging how non-Jews behave towards them, according to the students' own evaluation, the supposed difficulties in exposing their Jewish identity does not seem justified. But this "gap" between their behavior and their own experience can be explained by the fact that, in emotionally loaded issues, people's behavior is not always dictated by reason.

3. Attitude to Israel

The students in grade 9 had participated in the traditional visit to Israel open for the students in the two last classes. They were asked:

25. What impression did you get about Israel on this visit? (more than one answer allowed)

- 60% said it enabled them to know Israel better
- 28% said it helped them to identify with Israel
- 24% felt that it strengthened their Jewish awareness
- 56% were ready to consider moving to Israel in the future
- 22% didn't experience any special influence

This clearly shows the strong influence of this kind of visit as a factor in strengthening bonds with Israel among these young people.

This question was for all the students:

26. What meaning has the State of Israel for you? (more than one answer allowed)

64% said it is important as the state of the Jewish people

26% said they are attracted to Israel

46% said they are interested in Israel

12% said they don't have any special interest in it

4. Contact with Non-Jewish Relatives

For those students who have non-Jewish relatives, the question about their relations with them indicates the possibility of their being influenced by those relatives.

23. How much contact do you have with the family of your Non-Jewish or converted parent's? (more than one answer allowed)

50% meet often with them

82% meet now and then

25% said that their relatives participate in the celebration of Jewish holidays

36% said that they participate in the holidays of their non-Jewish relatives

15% sometimes join them in going to church

31% meet with them seldom

17% have almost no contact with them

The replies indicate that, in most intermarried families, there is a multi-faceted network of contacts with the non-Jewish relatives. It may be assumed that these contacts exert a certain influence on the parents and perhaps even more so on the children.

24. Have you any connection with patterns of Christmas celebrations?

22% have a Christmas tree at home

36% have a Christmas meal at home

55% send Christmas gifts

Elements of Christmas celebration are an expression of non-Jewish influence in their life. The data in Q. 24 show a considerable involvement in different patterns of celebrating Christmas, the most widely practiced being gift-giving, which is, at least from the Jewish point of view, the most religiously "neutral" celebration pattern.

5. Expectations from the Jewish Community in Helsinki

36. What do you expect from the Jewish congregation in Helsinki? (This was an open question)

Only 17 students answered this question. Most of them expressed their wish for more activity for children and especially for youth.

The two following questions do not belong to this category.

28. Do you participate in leisure activities in your home quarter?

36% do participate

27% do it sometimes

9% don't, because the free time activities of the Jewish school and community are sufficient for them

24% don't have time for it

This question was intended for students who have moved to Finland:

32. Do you get enough knowledge about Finland, its culture and history, from the school?

94% say that they are satisfied with the knowledge they get

B. PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN THE JEWISH SCHOOL

Introduction

There are no clearcut answers to the question as to why families in the Jewish congregation of Helsinki decided to enroll their children in the Jewish school, in light of the fact that, in the overwhelming majority of families, one of the parents is not a born or even a converted Jew. Our aim was to find out the motives of the parents for their decision to choose this school for their children.

We also wished to explore how parents evaluate both the Jewish and the general part of the school program. We wanted to know, among other things, whether, in their judgment, there was any conflict between the Jewish or non-Jewish life pattern and substance experienced by the children at home, and what they were taught in school in the Jewish part of the curriculum.

We also wished to learn about the parent's willingness to participate in studies arranged by the school with the aim of enriching their own Jewish knowledge.

One of the aims of the study was to find out to what extent the Jewish identity and behavior-patterns of the parents and their children in the school were similar or different.

As most of the families, being intermarriages, had non-Jewish relatives, the question concerning the parent's and children's contacts with these relatives was meaningful.

The attitude to the State of Israel has, in our generation, become a part of Diaspora Jewish identity. Hence this issue is in place in a study dealing with Jewish identity.

Similarly, the question as to how the respondents see their membership in the local Jewish congregation and what their expectations are from the congregation may be seen as an element of their Jewish identity.

We have organized these themes in five categories:

1. The attitude of the parents to the school and their expectations from it;
2. Their Jewish identity and living patterns;
3. Attitude to Israel;
4. Relations with their non-Jewish relatives;
5. Their view regarding membership in the Jewish congregation and their expectations from it.

Research Population

64 parents participated in the study. Taking into consideration that ten families had at least two children in the school classes that were included in the study, and that in five families there was only one parent, this meant that about 65% of the total number of parents of the 62 students in the study filled the questionnaire given to them.

Gender:

29 fathers

33 mothers

2 parents didn't reply to this question

Age:

above 60 - 2

50–60 - 11

40–50 - 44

30–40 - 2

5 didn't reply

Education:

3 - Elementary education

8 - Vocational school

16 - High school

20 - Poli-technical education

14 - Academic education

1 - Other education

2 - No reply

Country of birth:

Finland - 40

Israel - 6

Russia - 3

Other countries - 8 (most of them Israelis born in other countries)

7 Didn't reply

Religious/ethnic status:

25 - Born Jewish

18 - Converted Jews

19 - Non-Jews

2 - Didn't reply

Research Data

1. Attitudes and Expectations from the School

Regarding the following question, the parents had to choose among five answers, which they ranked by degree of importance (more than one answer allowed):

1. Why did you prefer the Jewish school?

94% considered it important or very important that their child be a part of the Jewish education of the school

91% saw it as important or very important that their child be strengthened in its Jewish upbringing and identity

73% saw as important or very important that this choice was natural, them being Jews

74% saw as important or very important that the school and its classes are small

From these replies we were able to conclude that the parents' desire to give their children Jewish knowledge and a Jewishly-strengthening experience was a strong factor behind the decision to enroll the child in the Jewish school.

The reasons for a certain decision are sometimes seen in a different light when viewed from the perspective of time that has passed. The parents were asked:

2. How do you see your decision to enroll your child in the Jewish school today?

81% said the decision had fully answered to their expectations

19% said they were rather satisfied with the decision

No one regretted the decision

To summarize: the parents thought that the results clearly answered to the expectations and aims that had directed them in their initial decision.

22. How do you evaluate the teaching of the school in Jewish history and religion?

56% think that the teaching is very good

36% are more cautious in their evaluation and define it as satisfactory

8% think that more time should be given to the Jewish subjects

23. How do you evaluate the teaching of the school in general subjects?

71% think that the teaching is on a good level

21% think that the teaching is on a satisfactory level

24. How important is it for you that your child learns Hebrew?

71% think it is important or very important that the child know how to speak fluently

75% give the same importance to a passable knowledge in Hebrew

81% give the same importance to understanding Hebrew text

As we see, the number of parents who attribute importance to Hebrew knowledge is smaller for each higher degree of knowledge needed (81%-71%).

A question we saw as specially important was:

25. Does the school's instruction about Jewish holidays, traditions and customs stand in conflict with the child's home experience?

76% said there were no problems

24% said there were problems to some extent, but not disturbingly

This means that what could have been foreseen as becoming a problem, due to a gap between what the children learn in school about Judaism and the Jewish contents of the families, did not create problems, at least not to the extent that it would have disturbing effects.

33. Are you ready to participate in studies arranged by the school with the aim of giving you additional knowledge in Jewish subjects?

33% are willing to take part

39% would participate if it is not too time-consuming

20% said they are not in need of additional knowledge

This indicates that almost 75% of the parents are interested in additional Jewish learning and are willing to take part in such a program.

34. What would you like to focus upon in such studies?

31 parents replied to the question, covering a wide scale of subjects, three of them received the most choices:

- Jewish holidays (6)

- Jewish history (6)

- Judaism in general (6)

Some of them explained their learning preferences: "because I wish to be able to reciprocate at home what the child learns in school".

Among the subjects chosen by at least three parents, were prayer and synagogue ritual, Jewish traditions & customs, Jewish food making.

35. How much time are you willing to invest for this purpose?

68% were willing to study a few days a year

31% were willing to study once a month or even more often

We may conclude from questions 33-35 that there is a substantial interest among parents to enrich their Jewish knowledge and that they are ready to invest time for this purpose. Some of them mentioned their desire to be on "the same wavelength" with their child in terms of Jewish knowledge.

2. Jewish Identity

Born or converted Jews were approached with this question:

3. How do you experience your Jewishness? Which of the following describes best your feelings?

30% replied that they are very conscious of their Jewishness and it is very important to them

51% feel quite strongly about being Jewish but other aspects of their life are also important

11% said they are aware of being Jewish but don't think about it much

4% said that although they have a Jewish background, they don't feel Jewish in any way

4. Do you identify yourself more as Jewish or as Finnish?

5% feel themselves more as Finns

72% feel themselves as much Finnish as Jewish

23% feel themselves more as Jews

Thus, almost a quarter express their preference for Jewish identity.

5. Participants were asked about their interest in and exposure over the past year to various modes of Jewish culture. This yielded the following picture:

87% have, during the past year, watched a film because it had a Jewish theme

53% listened to a lecture about a Jewish subject

29% have seen a theatrical performance because it had a Jewish theme

66% read a book because it had Jewish content

49% made a trip connected with Jewishness

We can see that those modes of culture that were easier to realize, such as watching a movie or reading a book, were chosen by a higher percentage of parents.

6. How much of your free time do you devote to Jewish matters?

17% use about half of their free time for this purpose

33% use less than half of their free time for this purpose

39% use very little of their free time for this purpose

6% use none of their free time for this purpose

The fact that 50% use half or less than half of their free time to Jewish matters is a sign of considerable interest in this kind of activity.

7. How many of your closest friends are Jewish?

16% say all or nearly all of their friends are Jewish

14% say more than half of their friends are Jewish

35% describe their circle of close friends as half Jewish

33% say they have less than half or very few Jewish friends

A Jewish circle of friends seems to be very common among these parents, as almost 50% say at least half of their friends are Jewish and among 16% nearly all of their friends are Jews.

The next two questions were addressed to born Jews only. We asked for a description of the Jewish elements in their childhood home and in their own home today.

8. How do you describe the Jewishness of your childhood home?

19% stated that it was not religious at all

39% said that it was generally speaking Jewish

39% told that it was traditional, but not Orthodox

4% defined it as Orthodox

9. How does the observance of Jewish customs and traditions in your childhood home compare with that in your own home today?

32% said they followed Jewish traditions and customs then more than they do today

39% said it was as Jewish then as it is now

29% said that they have more Jewish customs & traditions today

It is interesting to note that almost 30% define their own home as more Jewish than was their childhood home. We do not know from these statements how this stronger Jewishness is realized, but the fact that nearly 1/3 of them define their present Jewishness as stronger than that in their parental home is interesting.

A question that Jewish parents today cannot ignore is:

10. How would you react if your child wished to marry a non-Jew?

54% would not have any trouble accepting it

4% would accept it, but without joy

30% would accept it, but would prefer a Jewish marriage-partner for their child

12% would try to persuade the child to abandon the idea

42% of the parents would actively or passively prefer a Jewish marriage-partner for their child. This may be a somewhat surprising response, given that most of them have themselves chosen a non-Jewish spouse.

11. What is your opinion about the reasons for the high rate of intermarriage among Jews in Finland? (This was an open question)

47 parents responded

75% explained that the reason for the high rate of intermarriage was the small number of Jews in Finland

Among other explanations we find: strong assimilation, intimate relations with non-Jews, a weak Jewish upbringing by parents.

In the following questions (12–21) our aim was to get an understanding about their attitude to a number of Jewish religious laws (mitzvot).

12. Did you celebrate your Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Only 49% had celebrated their Bar/Bat Mitzvah

This number is misleading, as none of the women had celebrated Bat Mitzvah, this being a rare celebration when the mothers were young. If we consider only the fathers, only two did not have a Bar Mitzvah celebration. Thus, the correct percentage is not 49%, but 93% of the fathers who celebrated their Bar Mitzvah.

13. Did your son/s over 13 celebrate Bar Mitzvah?

64% said yes

4% said no

32% do not have sons in this age

14. Did your daughter/s over 12 celebrate Bat Mitzvah?

66% said yes

3 % said no

31% do not have daughters of this age group

15. Do you have a mezuzah on the door post of your home?

84% said yes

16. Do you light Shabbat candles?

28% every Shabbat

50% sometimes

20% no

17. Do you celebrate a Passover Seder?

75% yes

11% most of the time

11% only now and then

3% no

18. Do you eat kosher food at home?

21% yes

45% partly

34% no

This question was of a more general character:

19. How would you describe your relationship to Jewish religious practice?

5% say they don't practice religion at all

42% say they are Jews in a general way

51% are traditional, but not Orthodox

2% are Orthodox

20. How often did you go to synagogue last year?

4% usually go every Sabbath or more often

16% go about once a month

56% go a few times a year (major holidays, "Yahrzeit" etc.)

23% go rarely, only on special occasions

2% don't go at all

As we mentioned in connection with the students' questionnaire (see Q. 15 on pages 24), visiting the synagogue is not necessarily an indication of religiosity, but may indicate Jewish bonds in the wider sense. The replies given confirm the impression that the synagogue is usually sparsely populated, except for the major holidays.

21. How important do you consider the following issues for your Jewishness?

The answers were to be graded according to their degree of importance.

93% saw the feeling of belonging with other Jews as important or very important

80% saw the Jewish home as important or very important

42% saw religious practice as important or very important

91% felt belonging with Israel as important or very important

74% saw Jewish culture as important or very important

74% felt loyalty with Jewish tradition as important or very important

98% saw feeling Jewish inside as important or very important

The feeling of belonging with Jews, feeling Jewish inside, and a feeling of belonging with Israel got high rating. The attitude to religious practice got a rather low rating, which was to be expected when considering other answers regarding adherence to religious practice (see Q. 19 & 20 on page 35).

26. What kind of friends would you prefer for your children?

69% would prefer Jewish friends

27% want both Jewish and other friends

That nearly 70% prefer Jewish friends for their children seems to be a reflection of their priorities in choosing their own friends (see Q. 7 on page 33).

The next three questions were directed to parents in mixed marriages. The first one was directed to the Jewish-born or converted spouse.

28A. What are your expectations from your child's identity as an adult?

5% have no special expectations

30% hope that their children will decide according to their own conviction

3% will accept it if their children chose a Christian or another non-Jewish identity

3% as the previous answer, but not happily

58% hope they will adopt a Jewish identity

This question was directed to the non-Jewish spouse:

28B. What are your expectations from your child's identity as an adult?

9% have no special expectations

74% hope the children will decide according to their own conviction

13% will accept it if they choose a Jewish identity

4% hope they will adopt the identity of the non-Jewish spouse

Significant differences emerge when comparing the preferences of the two spouses. Almost 60% among the Jewish spouses hoped that their children would choose their

own identity, whereas only 4% among the non-Jewish spouses preferred a similar outcome. This difference may be explained by the fact that many of the non-Jewish spouses are secular Finns whose own religious identity is rather weak, making their children's religious identity less important to them.

This question was directed to the Jewish-born or converted spouse:

30. Do you speak with your children about what it means to grow up in a family where the other parent is not Jewish?

64% said yes

36% said no

Those who answered "no" were given an opportunity to explain the reason for their negative answer, but no one did so.

39. Do you consider Finnish Jews to be foremost a religious group in Finland or foremost a part of the Jewish people?

17% think that they are foremost a religious group

45% think that they are foremost a part of the Jewish people

26% think that they are equally both

Comparison with another Study

I was permitted to use some of the parents' findings of Svante Lundgren in his 2001 study about Jews in Finland above the age of 18. I have chosen three of the questions about Jewish identity in order to compare the results.

	S. L's study	My study
- Do you feel more as a Jew or as a Finn?		
Feel more as Finn	14%	5%
As much a Jew as a Finn	50%	72%
Feel more as Jew	34%	23%
- Do you celebrate Seder on Pesah?		
Yes, every year	70%	75%
- Do you eat kosher food at home?		
Yes	16%	21%
Yes, part of the time	26%	45%
No	59%	34%

There is a somewhat stronger feeling of both being Jewish and being Finnish in Lundgren's study.

Regarding the Passover Seder, there is no difference between the two studies.

As to kosher eating, there is a significant difference in the percentage of people eating kosher, which is much larger in my study.

As my population is not a representative sample but has been chosen according to the targets of the study, this difference may be by chance. But on the other hand, it cannot be excluded that it reflects an increase over time in the number of people eating kosher food.

3. Attitude to Israel

The attitude towards Israel is expressed in three questions in this study.

37. What does the State of Israel mean to you? (more than one answer allowed)

60% declare that Israel is important as the state of the Jewish nation

35% feel themselves attracted by Israel

55% have interest in Israel

5% say that Israel has no meaning for them

To these we must add that, in connection with Q. 38 below, about their expectations from the Jewish congregation, 35% hold that more weight should be given to Israel-related activity.

Like in Q. 7 above, regarding various elements connected with their Jewish identity, the feeling of belonging to Israel is seen by 91% as important or very important.

The picture received when summing up these answers shows the strength of the feelings of solidarity and belongingness to Israel on the part of the respondents.

4. Connections with Non-Jewish Relatives

A part of a family's life consists of connections with extended family. For the intermarried couple, a portion of their relatives are not Jewish.

31. How much does the family of the non-Jewish or converted parent participate in the life of your family? (more than one answer allowed)

58% meet often with them

63% meet now and then

25 % meet seldom

21% tell that their non-Jewish relatives participate in their Jewish holidays

37% participate in the non-Jewish holidays

10% go with them sometimes to their church

3% have no contact with them

The replies indicate that in most mixed-marriage families there is a complex network of contacts with the non-Jewish relatives. It may be assumed that these contacts have a certain influence on the parents and perhaps more so on the children

32. To what extent are you involved in Christmas celebrations?

18% have a Christmas tree at home

34% have a Christmas dinner

54% give Christmas gifts

2% light candles in anticipation of Christmas

As mentioned in our analysis of the questionnaire of the students, those behavior patterns that have a religiously more neutral character, such as sending Christmas gifts, are more common than other types.

Those who have converted to Judaism were asked:

27. Have there been Jews in your family or among your friends prior to conversion?

6% say that their father was Jewish

67% were married to a Jew

11% had some close person that was a Jew

17% had no Jewish friends or relatives

From the above data we learn that most of the converts had meaningful Jewish relations prior to conversion.

Those parents who hadn't converted were asked:

29. How do you feel about the possibility of conversion?

63% said that they wanted to remain in their faith or that conversion didn't interest them

11% said that they were prepared to consider the idea of conversion

16% would agree to such a step if suitable conditions existed

Thus, 27% consider conversion under suitable conditions.

36. Have you experienced anti-Semitism in Finland during the last five years?

73% have not experienced it

20% felt it once

5% experienced it several times

These data confirm the impression that anti-Semitism is a marginal phenomenon in Finland.

5. Expectations from the Jewish Community in Helsinki

38. Regarding the activities of the Jewish congregation, what should be emphasized more and what less in the future? (This question included 17 items; we give here the results of some of them)

65% think that the religious activity was sufficient

Regarding the delivery of kosher food products, only 37% think the activity of the congregation is sufficient, and 41% asked for greater achievement on this issue

40% expect more activity in the social field

73% of the parents expect more from the congregation in terms of activity for children and youth

53% give the congregation a satisfactory verdict, while 44% ask for more what?

54% expect more in the area of supplementary Jewish education for adults

In the field of culture, 41% are satisfied, but a similar percentage of parents expect more to be done

35% want more activity in connection with Israel, while 46% think enough is done

40. Are you a member of the congregation?

67% told us they are members

5% said they intend to apply for membership

If answer is "No":

42. Why aren't you a member?

11 parents replied. Most answers were from non-Jews, who said that their non-membership was due to their religious status. Others explained that they are not interested in belonging to a religious framework.

43. What are your expectations from the congregation?

25 replied to this question, including parents with children in 12th grade & parents with children in non-Jewish schools. Their answers encompassed a wide range of expectations. Items expressing needs and wishes of those who had joined the Jewish community in Helsinki, either by immigration or by marrying a Jew, were chosen more than other items:

- A warmer relationship to Israelis
- More information about rules and behavior concerning children in mixed-marriages
- More balanced relationship to non-Jews

Some of the other suggestions included:

- A rabbi living here and open to various needs of the members
- Cheaper kosher food
- Strengthening the Jewish identity of children and youth

C. IMMIGRANT PARENTS

A number of questions were addressed to those parents who had moved to Finland, directed specially at their position as immigrants. These constitute an increasing number of members in the Jewish congregation in Helsinki. Today their children number about half of the students in the Jewish school.

Population

There were 24 immigrant parents in the study

Gender:

11 fathers

7 mothers

Age:

30–39 - 1

40–49 - 9

50–59 - 4

60 - 1

Country of Birth:

Finland - 4

Russia - 5

Israel - 3

Other countries - 5 (4 of them Israelis born in other countries)

Schooling:

Vocational - 5

High school - 3

Polytechnic - 3

Academic – 8

There were 5 who didn't reply to the above questions

Religious/Ethnic status:

Jews - 12

Converted - 3

Non-Jews - 3

Data

1. How have you adapted to life in Finland?

9% say it has been easy

35% say it has been quite easy

44% say there have been some difficulties

13% say there have been big difficulties

The number of immigrants who report some or even major difficulties is significant.

Nature of Difficulties:

- about language and culture
- to find work

2. Why did you move to Finland?

A considerable number of reasons were given. The most common were:

- Economic reasons
- Marriage
- Change of environment

The next three questions were addressed to those parents who have children in the Jewish school:

3. How have your children adapted themselves to the school?

33% think the children adapted very well to the school

38% think the children adapted well

13% think the children adapted quite well

17% think the children had some difficulties in adapting to the school

Nature of Difficulties:

- Learning difficulties
- Finding friends

4. How have they been welcomed in school?

By the teachers:

57% think they have been treated very well

17% think they have been treated well

17% think they have been treated quite well

9% think they have not been treated so well

By other students:

30% think they have been treated very well

26% think they have been treated well

30% think they have been treated quite well

13% think they have not been treated so well

5. How are your relations with the school staff (teachers, social workers, others)?

4 said they are excellent

6 said they are good

1 said they are weak

According to the parents, their children were treated not so well or quite well by 43% of the children in school and by 26% of the teachers. This indicates that to a certain degree, the immigrant children faced problems in their human relations in school. We are aware of the possible subjectivity of the feelings of these children, but seen from their point of view, the issue is real.

6. On what level of learning was the school abroad, where your children previously studied?

15% think it was higher than the Jewish school in Helsinki

30% think it was on the same level

30% think it was on a lower level

25% gave another answer

7. Who is in your circle of friends in Finland?

10% say they have only Israeli/Russian friends

42% say they have mostly Israeli/Russian friends

42% say they have half Israeli/Russian friends

6% say they have Finnish friends

It is not surprising that for immigrants, all or most of their friends are their fellow countrymen. It would be worth evaluating this information according to how long the immigrants have been living in Finland. Unfortunately, we lack the necessary information, because most of the respondents didn't reply to the question when they arrived in Finland.

Questions 8–10 were directed to those who had joined the Jewish congregation.

8. Why did you join the congregation? (Reasons)

– Being a Jew, it was natural

– To enable my children to attend the Jewish school

9. What are your expectations from the congregation?

- Strengthening Jewish life
- Strengthening contacts with Israel
- more social, religious and sport activity

10. How has the congregation treated members who have moved to Finland?

- 25% think the treatment has been good
- 50% think the treatment has been quite good
- 25% think the treatment could be better

How to improve the treatment:

- More information about the congregation
- Better acceptance of all the members

In a study of Israeli emigrants abroad conducted by Lilach Lev Ari, the conclusion was that the first generation of Israelis abroad tend to put their children in Jewish educational frameworks, because they want the children not to lose their Jewish identity, even though most of these parents define themselves as secular Jews. Another finding in her study indicates that Israelis of Sephardic ethnic background, once abroad, were more inclined than their Ashkenazi counterparts to maintain a Jewish pattern of life. She also found that the social contacts of the first generation of Israelis abroad were mostly with other Israelis. These findings are similar to our own findings about the Israelis in Finland.

D. TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS

The reason for including graduates of the Jewish School now in Twelfth Grade in this study was to get an impression as to how, after three years of studies in a non-Jewish high school, former students of the Jewish school relate to their earlier school experience; how moving to an entirely different school environment affected them; and how the period spent in a non-Jewish school environment has affected their Jewish identity.

Taking into consideration that, due to the small size of this group, the data received from their questionnaires lack statistical significance, I will only focus upon those questions relating to the points mentioned above.

Population

Out of 11 ex-students of the Jewish school studying this year in 12th grade, 10 replied to our questionnaire.

Gender:

- 3 boys
- 7 girls

Religious/Ethnic status:

- 1 had two Jewish parents
- 2 had a Jewish father only
- 1 had a Jewish mother only

Country of Birth:

- 4 were born in Finland
 - 6 didn't reply to the question on parent's religion and their own country of birth
- From other information I conclude that almost all of them were born in Finland

Data

1. How did you anticipate that moving to high school would be?

- 30% thought it would be easy
- 30% thought it would present some difficulties
- 10% thought it would be very difficult
- 30% found it difficult to imagine how it would be

2. Did this step materialize according to your expectations?

- 40% said yes
- 50% said that it had partly been according to their expectations
- 10% said that it had not fulfilled their expectations

3. What was most difficult for you at the beginning of high school?

- Most of them said: the need to be organized in a different way

4. How did the teachers receive you?

- 50% said they were very well received
- 20% said they were received well
- 20% said they were received rather well or slightly negatively

5. How did the students receive you?

- 40% said very well
- 40% said well
- 20% said they were received rather well or slightly negatively

Questions 4-5 indicate that the students were on the whole well received in the non-Jewish school.

6. How was high school different from the Jewish school?

Most of them said that the main difference was in the larger choice of courses and of friends

7. How was it to move from small-sized classes to larger ones?

70% thought it was somewhat unfamiliar

30% thought it was easy

8. Was the knowledge acquired in the Jewish school enough?

50% said it was enough

50% said it was more or less enough

9. Did you experience signs of anti-Semitism?

20% had some feeling of it

70% did not

10. Did the teachers and the students show interest in your Jewishness?

40% said they showed interest

30% said they showed some interest

30% said they did not see any interest

Those who answered that they were an object of interest mentioned the Jewish religion as the issue that aroused the greatest interest.

11. If you experienced interest, how did you feel about it?

50% said it didn't feel like anything special

50% said it strengthened their feeling as a Jew

12. Did you have enough knowledge to respond to questions on your Jewishness?

78% said yes

22% said that they mostly knew enough but sometimes didn't know

13. How did you feel as a Jew in a non-Jewish school environment?

70% said they felt well

30% said they felt rather well

14. How has the period in high school influenced your Jewish identity?

10% said it has weakened

80% said it has not changed

10% said it has become stronger

15. When you think now about your time in the Jewish school, how does it appear?

40% think it was a very positive experience

50% think it had both positive & negative aspects

10% see it now in a more negative light

These replies show that, after three years in another environment, their assessment of the period spent in the Jewish school is quite similar to that made by students still in the Jewish school.

16. How do you evaluate the influence of the Jewish school on your Jewish identity?

10% think it had no influence

30% think it had influence to some extent

40% think it had a considerable influence

17. How do you now see the teaching of Jewish subjects in the Jewish school?

40% think it was of a high standard

60% think it was rather good

18. How do you see now the teaching of other subjects in the Jewish school?

50% think it was of high standard

50% think it was rather good

These replies show that, after three years in another environment, their assessment of the period spent in the Jewish school is quite similar to that made by students still in the Jewish school.

19. Do you suggest changes in the curriculum of the Jewish school?

70% say no

20. What has been most important to you out of what you were taught about Jewish subjects? (answer with own words)

Two items were mentioned:

– better knowledge made the understanding of Judaism easier

– understanding of the meaning and purpose of Jewish holidays

21. What do you think about the program of continuing your Jewish studies while in high school?

70% think it is a good idea

10% doubt if it is necessary

20% would prefer not to participate in such a program

25. Who is in your present circle of friends?

10% say they don't have Jewish friends

20% say they have a few Jewish friends

70% say they have both Jewish & non-Jewish friends

As expected, the composition of friends has clearly changed in a non-Jewish direction, compared to the profile of friends of students in the Jewish school.

34. When you marry and have children, would you send your children to the Jewish school?

60% say they would do so

30% say they are not sure

10% say they would not

35. What is your opinion about intermarriage?

All of them answered that it didn't matter to them whom they would marry

43. What are your expectations of the Jewish congregation?

The suggestions made were:

–a non-prejudiced attitude to the congregation members

–to continue the present activity

E. PARENTS OF TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS

Just as in the study of students in grades 5–9, we were also interested in including the parents of the 12th graders in the study. Taking into consideration that, due to the small size of this group of parents, the data from their questionnaires is not statistically significant, I will focus on those questions addressed to the parents relating to their opinion and evaluation of different aspects connected with their children's move to the non-Jewish high school.

Population

12 parents, or 63% of the total, replied.

Gender:

5 mothers

6 fathers

1 didn't reply

Religious/Ethnic status:

7 - Jews

2 - converted Jews

2 - non-Jews

1 didn't reply

5 of the parents are immigrants. Their answers to the special questions they were asked as immigrants were added to the answers received from immigrants in all groups of the study (see the chapter "Immigrant Parents" above).

The Data

22. What was your opinion of the teaching of Jewish subjects in the Jewish School?

83% thought it was excellent

17% thought it was satisfactory

23. What did you think about the level of teaching of other subjects?

50% thought it was on a high level

17% thought it was on a satisfactory level

33% thought it was not satisfactory

24. How important was it for you that your child should learn Hebrew?

55% thought that speaking Hebrew fluently was important or very important

88% thought that speaking Hebrew reasonably well was important or very important

All of them thought that to understand Hebrew text was important or very important

25. Does the teaching of the school about Jewish holidays, traditions and customs stand in conflict with what the child experiences at home?

86% didn't experience any conflict

14% said there were some problems, but not disturbingly so

36. Would you have preferred that your child's high school studies would have also been in a Jewish framework?

3 would have preferred, referring to it as the best solution for preserving Jewish identity and small classes

4 are satisfied with the move, referring to the need for change after many years in a rather closed Jewish environment

37. How did your child react to moving to the non-Jewish high school?

8 said that the move went positively

3 said that he/she was a bit hesitant

1 said that the child felt unsure

38. In what mood did your child come home from high school?

6 returned in a good mood

4 returned in a bit of a gloomy mood

39. What did your child think about the teaching of Jewish subjects in the Jewish school?

3 were very satisfied

7 were satisfied

1 were not satisfied

40. How do you think the period in high school influenced your child's Jewish identity?

33% think that it has weakened his/her Jewish identity

67% think that it had not weakened it

41. Has your child's circle of friends change since leaving the Jewish school?

14% say their child has only non-Jewish friends

72% say their child has more non-Jewish friends than before

14% say their child has an unchanged circle of friends

F. CHILDREN IN NON-JEWISH SCHOOLS AND THEIR PARENTS

Introduction

Although most members of the Jewish community send their children to the Jewish school, there are some whose children are studying in non-Jewish schools. According to the information from the community, their percentage is around 30% of the entire number of members' children in school age. Our decision to include them in our study

was based on the desire to make a comparative analysis of the data received from both groups. The group with children studying outside the Jewish framework was thus seen as a control group to the main population of the study.

The fact that we received a very small number of replies – 11 parents out of the list of 28 families we received from the congregation – prevents us from engaging in comparative analyses as was intended, as the data received is not statistically significant. The same holds for the children – 7 replies out of a total number not known by the congregation.

Notwithstanding, we have decided, concerning the parents, to present all the questions asked, because this group of respondents was intended as a comparing control group. Thus, it is possible to receive the full profile of this group, although we are aware of the limits due to its small size.

P a r e n t s

Population

There were 11 parents who replied to the questionnaire, or 22% of the total.

Gender:

3 fathers

6 mothers

2 didn't reply to this question

Religious/ethnic status:

7 - Jews

1 - non-Jew

3 didn't reply

Data

1. Why did you decide to send your child to a non-Jewish school?

The three most commonly mentioned reasons:

– Lack of Finnish language

– The Jewish school was too religious a choice

– the non-Jewish spouse was opposed to sending the child to a Jewish school

2. What do you think about your decision now?

36% are very satisfied

18% are satisfied

46% are rather satisfied

This doesn't reflect a high degree of satisfaction about the decision.

3. What do you think of the fact that the Jewish congregation maintains a Jewish school?

90% think it is an important task

4. What positive aspects do you see in Jewish children having a school of their own?

The three mostly mentioned reasons were:

- Creating a stronger Jewish identity
- More knowledge of Judaism
- Company with same-aged Jewish children

Even those who gave strong reasons for not enrolling their child in a Jewish school mentioned many positive functions fulfilled by the school, but they did not necessarily see these as relevant to their own children.

5. What negative aspects do you see in Jewish children having a school of their own?

The two mostly mentioned choices were:

- a too religiously centered program
- separation from the wider society

6. How do you experience your Jewishness?

75% said they feel quite strongly about being Jewish, but other aspects of their life are also important

25% said they are very conscious of their Jewishness and it is very important to them

7. Do you identify yourself more as Jewish or as Finnish?

13% feel more Finnish

38% feel as much Jewish as Finnish

38% feel more Jewish

8. Have you, during the past year:

- Watched a film because it had a Jewish theme – 82%
- Listened to a lecture about a Jewish subject – 40%
- Seen a theatrical performance because it had a Jewish theme – 29%
- Read a book because it had Jewish content – 73%
- Made a trip connected with Judaism – 30%

9. How much of your free time do you dedicate to things connected with Judaism?
- 18% - about half of their free time
 - 9% - less than half of their free time
 - 73% - very little of their free time
10. How many of your friends are Jews?
- 9% have all or nearly all Jewish friends
 - 46% more than half of their friends are Jewish
 - 27% less than half of their friends are Jewish
 - 18% none or very few of their friends are Jewish
11. How do you describe the Jewishness of your childhood home?
- 38% see it as Jewish in general
 - 50% see it as traditional
 - 12% see it as Orthodox
12. How does your observance of Jewish traditions in your childhood home compare with that in your life now?
- 50% said they followed Jewish traditions and customs more than they do today
 - 38% said it was as Jewish then as it is now
 - 13% said they have more Jewish customs & traditions today
13. How would you react if your child were to marry a non-Jew?
- 64% would have no problem in accepting it
 - 36% would accept it, but would prefer a Jewish marriage-partner
14. What, in your opinion, is the reason for the high frequency of mixed-marriage among Jews in Finland?
- All parents gave the same reply: the small number of Jews
18. Do you have a mezuzah on the door post of your home?
- 73% said yes
19. Do you light Shabbat candles?
- 18% said yes
 - 27% said sometimes
 - 55% said never

20. Do you have a Passover Seder?

90% said yes

10% said often

21. Do you eat kosher food at home?

18% said yes

27% said yes, partly

54% said no

22. How would you describe your relation to Jewish religious practice?

50% say they are Jewish in a general way

38% say they are traditional

13% say they are Orthodox

23. How often did you go to synagogue last year?

18% usually go every Sabbath or more often

45% go a few times a year (major holidays, "Yahrzeit" etc.)

27% only go rarely, on special occasions

9% do not go at all

24. How important do you consider the following things for your Jewishness?

75% think that the feeling of belonging with other Jews is important or very important

75% think that Jewish culture is important or very important

All think that feeling Jewish inside is important or very important

25. Would you like to receive instruction in Judaism?

30% say yes

70% say no

26. What kind of friends would you prefer for your children?

9% would prefer Jewish friends

82% would prefer both Jewish & non-Jewish friends

9% say it doesn't make any difference

27A.-B. What are your expectations of your child's identity as an adult?

50% of the Jewish partners in a mixed marriage hope that the child will chose a Jewish identity

35% of the non-Jewish partners in a mixed marriage would prefer their own non-Jewish identity

28. How does the non-Jewish spouse feel about conversion?

Too few answers received to be meaningful

29. Do you speak with your children about what it means for them to grow up in a family in which one of the parents is not Jewish?

78% say yes

Those who have converted were asked:

30. Did you have Jews in your family or among your friends prior to conversion?

No replies were given

31. How much does the family of the non-Jewish or converted parent participate in the life of your family? (more than one answer allowed)

57% meet with them often

57% meet now and then

14% say that their non-Jewish relatives participate in the Jewish holidays

57% say that they participate in the non-Jewish holidays

32. To what extent are you involved in celebrations of the Christmas holiday?

50% have a Christmas tree at home

56% have a Christmas dinner

80% give Christmas gifts

12% light candles in anticipation of Christmas

33. Have you experienced anti-Semitism in Finland during the last five years?

All said no

34. What does the State of Israel mean to you? (more than one answer allowed)

72% declare that Israel is important as the state of the Jewish nation

45% feel themselves attracted by Israel

45% have interest in Israel

9% say that Israel has no meaning for them

35. Which activities of the Jewish congregation should be emphasized more or less in the future?

I give here only the most favored replies:

25% think that availability of kosher food should be more emphasized

14% think that continuing Jewish education should be more emphasized

36. Do you think that your child has lost something of value because he/she didn't attend a Jewish school?

36% say yes

64% say no

37. Do you think that a child who attends a Jewish school has a stronger Jewish identity than those who don't attend it?

The replies are equally (50%) divided between yes & no

38. Do you think that your child's Jewish identity has been influenced by the fact that he/she has attended a non-Jewish school?

40% say yes

60% say no

43. What are your expectations from the Jewish congregation?

Only four parents replied to this question. Suggestions made included:

- Less religion, and cancel Orthodox label
- Avoid segregation from wider society
- More broad-sightedness

C h i l d r e n

Population

7 children (the total number of children in those families was not known)

Gender:

4 boys

3 girls

Religious/Ethnic status:

4 with Jewish father only

3 with Jewish mother only

All were born in Finland

Data

1. Why did your parents decide to send you to a non-Jewish school?

Reasons given were:

- distance of home from Jewish school
- one parent Christian
- don't know enough Finnish (language spoken at home is Swedish – Finland's second language - or foreign)
- I am not circumcised

2. If you could have decided for yourself, would you have chosen a Jewish or a non-Jewish school?

17% would have chosen a Jewish school

83% would have chosen a non-Jewish school

3. Have you had the opportunity to study Jewish subjects in some framework?

29% say yes

71% say no

If answer is Yes, how?

- Privately
- Through religion lessons at my school

4. If answer is No, do you wish you could have studied these subjects?

40% say yes

60% say no

If answer is Yes, why?

- to know more about Jewish culture
- to know Hebrew, having relatives in Israel

5. Do you think that your Jewish identity would have been stronger if you would have attended a Jewish school?

29% say yes

71% say no

6. Would you like to have more knowledge about Judaism?

43% say yes

57% say no

7. If you answered yes to Q. 6, what could you do in order to get more knowledge about Judaism?

- I would like to have a course in Hebrew
- I would ask adults how

30. After you marry and have children, will you send your children to a Jewish school?

- 14% say yes
- 57% are not sure
- 29% say no

31. What do you think about marriages between Jews and non-Jews?

- 14% want to marry a Jewish partner
- 86% say it doesn't matter

36. What do you expect from the Jewish congregation?

- No one replied to this question

CORRELATIONS AMONG VARIABLES

During their earlier years, children are influenced by their home environment and the school they attend, although there are also other factors which increasingly contribute to molding their maturing personality. We wished to explore possible home influences by the parents on the Jewish identity of their children in school.

Another question that interested us was the possible influence of country of birth on various aspects of Jewish identity. The fact that parents of students in the Jewish school can be divided into three categories in terms of their religious and national/ethnic status motivated us to explore possible differences on the Jewish identity scale.

Parents and children

We chose a number of questions which reflect elements of Jewish identity as we defined it. We wanted to see how parents and children differ with respect to such items as synagogue attendance and eating kosher food. Other questions about which we searched for correlations related to: feeling more as a Jew or as a Finn; attitude towards Israel; contacts with non-Jewish relatives in the case of intermarried families.

Our findings show that the replies of parents and children had a similar distribution in almost all the questions. Only with regard to eating kosher food was there a

statistically significant difference. We present below the cross tabulation tables on some of our findings.

Synagogue attendance

Cross-tabulation

	1	2	3	4	5
Children	2 3.5%	9 15.8%	32 56.1%	13 22.8%	1 1.8%
Parents	3 4.9%	5 8.2%	29 47.5%	16 26.2%	8 13.1%

The distribution of answers for parents and children is quite similar

Mezuzah

Cross-Tabulation

.00	I 1.00	Total
Sp parents count 6	I 54	60
% within sp 10.0%	90.0%	100%
<hr/>		
children count 0	I 48	48
% within sp 0%	I 100%	100%
<hr/>		
Total count 6	I 102	108
% within sp 5.6%	I 94.4%	100%

The parents use of the mezuzah is evidently underreported by the children

eating kosher

Crosstab

			kosher			Total
			1.00	2.00	3.00	
sp	parents	Count	12	25	19	56
		% within sp	21.4%	44.6%	33.9%	100.0%
	children	Count	23	29	8	60
		% within sp	38.3%	48.3%	13.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	35	54	27	116
		% within sp	30.2%	46.6%	23.3%	100.0%

(Chi square = 8.12, df=2, p<0.02)

The state of kosher eating at home is reported by parents and children with significant differences

Passover Seder celebrated at home

Crosstab

			seder				Total
			1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	
sp	parents	Count	43	6	6	2	57
		% within sp	75.4%	10.5%	10.5%	3.5%	100.0%
	children	Count	41	13	7	0	61
		% within sp	67.2%	21.3%	11.5%	.0%	100.0%
Total	Count		84	19	13	2	118
	% within sp		71.2%	16.1%	11.0%	1.7%	100.0%

The distribution of the answers by parents and children is quite similar

The results of our cross tabulations show strong positive relationships between attitudes and behaviors of parents and of children, with the exception of eating kosher. We interpret this as a sign of possible influence of the parents on their children.

As for kosher eating, we don't have a facile explanation for the unexpected results, in which the children behave in a manner opposite to the behavior of the parents.

Religious & National/ethnic status

To the question "How would you react if one of your children wanted to marry a non-Jew?" there were significant differences in the attitudes of the parents belonging to different family types. In families in which both parents were born as Jews, or those in which one was born a Jew and the other was a converted Jew, the parents preferred a Jewish marriage-partner for their children, whereas families with one non-Jewish parent were much less concerned about the possibility of their children marrying out. A one-way analysis of differences (ANOV) was performed and found significant differences ($F=3.91$, $df+2/58$. $p<0.05$).

marry a non-Jew

	Mean
Jewish family	2.4
Converted family	2.3
Mixed-Marriage family	1.3

Likewise, regarding lighting Shabbat candles ($F=3.91$, $df+2/58$. $p<0.05$) and kosher eating ($F=3.80$, $df+2/51$, $p<0.05$) we found significant differences. The families with one non-Jewish parent were much less observant than the other two family types.

Shabbat candles

	Mean
Jewish family	1.9
Converted family	1.7
Mixed-Marriage family	2.3

Eating kosher

	Mean
Jewish family	2.1
Converted family	1.8
Mixed-Marriage family	2.5

The high mean for the intermarried family indicates the higher percentage of those who do not light Shabbat candles and do not eat kosher food.

The findings show that there is a very small difference in religious observance between Jewish and converted families (i.e., one parent converted). This phenomenon is affirmed in many studies made in the United States regarding the Jewish identity and degree of observance among converted Jews.

In terms of synagogue attendance, we did not find any significant difference in comparing the three family types.

Native born and immigrant parents

A significant difference between Finnish-born and immigrant parents appeared only in the question about the parent's reaction to his child marrying a non-Jew. Parents born in Finland were much more ready to accept an intermarriage of their offspring than were those who had moved to the country from Israel. The mean percentage was 1.6 versus 2.9 for the Israeli parents on the reply scale on Q. 10 to parents of students in the Jewish school, when there were 4 alternative replies to this question (see page 34).

A STUDY OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTERMARRIAGE IN SCANDINAVIA

We will present here some results from a study made by Lars Dencyk concerning Jewish mixed marriages in Sweden, Finland and Norway.

Attitudes to Mixed Marriage

"A Jew should marry another Jew"?

	Sweden	Finland	Norway
		(percent)	
Agree completely	20.6	20.7	18.3
Agree by and large	30.0	29.2	31.9
Disagree in part	12.4	24.5	11.8
Disagree completely	17.8	14.4	15.1

What is the attitude among Jews in those three countries towards this statement, directed to a child marrying a non-Jew: "I would do everything in my power to prevent it"?

	Sweden	Finland (percent)	Norway
Agree completely	12.2	8.9	5.7
Agree by and large	13.9	14.6	9.6
Disagree in part	15.4	18.8	18.8
Disagree completely	42.0	41.4	41.8

The percent of those who disagree that a Jew must marry a Jew is highest in Finland (39%). The percent of those who do not agree that they should do everything in their power to prevent their child from marrying a non-Jew is very high in Finland and Norway (60%). If we compare it to the replies to this question among the parents in our own study, the result is similar: i.e., 58% would disagree to try to prevent such a marriage.

INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION IN HELSINKI

With the aim of seeing the questions with which I dealt in my research in Helsinki in a broader light, I decided to interview nine members of the Jewish congregation. I chose persons who, in my judgment, would be able to contribute a variety of views to the issues of the research.

I asked questions (see below) which served as a starting point for a more open discussion, enriching the content of those interviews.

The persons interviewed were of different ages and professional background, and among them was a converted Jew and an immigrant.

The questions asked:

- Is membership in the Jewish congregation important for the Jews living in Helsinki, and why?
- Do you feel better in the company of Jews or of non-Jews?
- What are the reasons why some of the Jews are not members in the congregation?
- Which, in your opinion, are the factors that have the most important influence in assuring the continuity of Jewish consciousness and identity among the younger generation?
- Do you support the continued existence of the Jewish school in Helsinki?
- In view of the exceptionally high rate of mixed-marriage in Finland, how do you see the situation of the Jews there in the next generation?
- How is it possible to strengthen Jewish identity?
- What are your expectations of the Jewishness of your grandchildren?
- How can Israel contribute to strengthen Jewish life in Finland?

- What is your opinion about the religious status of the Helsinki congregation?
- What do you think about the influence of converted Jews' contribution to Jewish life in Helsinki?
- What do you think of the role of the Chabad representative in Helsinki?
- If you were able to decide about a change in the congregation, what would be your decision?

A summarized report about the interviews

Importance of Congregational Membership

Membership enables social and religious participation, which is difficult to realize outside the congregation.

Membership is linked with "a feeling of being part of a 'flock' that gives a feeling of security and belongingness". With growing age, this need and the need for Jewish identity grow.

Reasons for remaining outside the congregation

There may be various reasons, such as the absence of religious motivation and unwillingness to pay the fees that are linked with membership.

"In some academic circles you can still find remnants from the era of Leftist ideology of the 1960's when religiosity was considered an inferior element of human life".

Factors influencing Jewish continuity among the young generation

"The Jewish school is an identity-preserving and knowledge-strengthening factor which needs complementary support from the families of the children in school".
 "There is a need of a 'package' which contains religious elements without a coercive message and which offers young people Jewish elements and values, which are able to compete with the multitude of incentives of the outside world".

The Justification for the continued existence of the Jewish school

"The school is very strongly linked with the continued existence of our community. What makes it so important is the children's being together during many formative years, in addition to the Jewish material taught". These statements reflected a view held by many respondents, expressing the important role of the school in guaranteeing the future of the Jews in Finland.

The future of the Jews in Finland considering the high rate of Mixed-Marriage

"As part of the broader phenomenon of mixed marriage, conversion to Judaism is a factor with a preserving influence on our Jewishness".

"Our 'shrinking' world enables us, more so than in earlier times, to broaden our options for marriage partners. Nowadays we see that the world we live in has become

more 'Judaistic' and in this environment assimilation doesn't necessarily always lead to Jewish disappearance".

"Facing the question of the Jewish future here means, among other things, giving young people a reason to be interested in Judaism and its values and its wisdom".

"The Jews having moved from Russia expected to be warmly received, which has happened to some extent. The older people among them have faced problems due to the language problem, the different mentality, and difficulties in finding work. They are encouraged by the new, welcoming approach by the leaders of the community to those who have moved here from abroad".

Hopes about the Jewish identity of our grandchildren

Almost all the interviewees said that they hope their grandchildren would have a stronger Jewish identity than they have themselves, or at least not less than that of their grandparents.

The Religious Status of the Helsinki Jewish Congregation

Although some of the respondents were not happy about certain aspects connected with the congregation being an Orthodox community, most of them held the opinion that it is preferable not to change its religious "label". There were different reasons given for this position, but the most strongly underlined motive given for this opinion was the importance of ensuring that conversions made in Finland be recognized by the rabbinical authorities in Israel. Another statement was: "We know what we have now, but we may be unaware of what might be the consequences of a changed status".

Chabad's role in Finland

Most of the people I spoke with felt great appreciation for the work done by the Chabad emissary, Benjamin Wolff, and his wife, but some of them didn't agree with the Hasidic ideology and the life pattern associated with it. They viewed his work as important, partly as a facilitator for a renewed responsibility taken by the congregation for work, especially with children and youth.

What would I decide if....

There were, as was expected, various different opinions as to what each one would do if he/she could make what was, in their opinion, an important decision about the future of the community.

"To invest more in youth work" was a decision agreed upon by many. Among other "decisions" were: to have a fulltime rabbi, to make Jewish messages more intellectually attractive, to show a greater openness and warmth in relation to Jews moving to the country and to newcomers at "the gates" of the community.

SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Reliability of the Study

The response rate of the main target of my study, students at the Jewish school in Helsinki and their parents, was high: 100% of the students and 65% of the parents. This fact lends a measure of reliability to the results.

The former students of this school, now in 12th grade in high school, also responded well to the study – 83% of the students and 63% of the parents. However, due to the small size of the group, the data lack statistical reliability. They do give, however, a certain idea concerning those aspects that we wanted to illustrate regarding the 12th grade students after three years in a non-Jewish school environment.

Parents whose children study in a non-Jewish primary school and the children themselves were meant to serve as a control group, but the low rate of response made reliable comparison impossible. It can only provide a limited picture of parents' motivations in choice of school for their children and a cautious comparison between responses to the identical questions as made by the research and control groups of parents and children.

Some General Observations

The influence of intermarriages on the possibilities of Jewish continuity is an issue debated throughout the Jewish world, the phenomenon having reached very noticeable dimensions during the last half century.

In the middle of the twentieth century this development was seen mainly as an expression of a far reaching will to assimilate and distance oneself from Jewish aspects of life, not only in the religious but also in the broader sense. During recent decades the steps that lead to intermarriage are not necessarily seen as reflecting a decision to abandon one's Jewishness. From a Jewish viewpoint, however, this has not significantly reduced the fears regarding the negative influence of the increased frequency of intermarriage. This phenomenon is also reflected in that part of this report where I deal with the international debate concerning this issue (pages 7-8) and the question as to what can be done to cope with it.

The replies we received to the question as to the reasons for the high rate of intermarriage among Jews in Finland clearly illustrate the special circumstances that have served as an incentive to this phenomenon among Finnish Jews. 75% of the respondents referred to the tiny size of the Jewish community in Finland as the main reason for the high rate of intermarriage. It need not, however, be an indicator of a will to abandon Jewishness. This observation, in my opinion, gains convincing confirmation in this study.

Generally speaking, we received positive replies to those questions expressing a rather strong will to guard vital elements of a Jewish identity.

In this study, we have defined Jewish identity as composed of elements belonging to the sphere of religious observance, Jewish traditional values and customs, feelings of belongingness to the Jewish people and links to its history, closeness and identification with Jewish culture, and Jewish nationhood and statehood.

We may assume that the desire among Finnish Jews to preserve vital elements of their Jewish identity is made easier by the fact that many of the non-Jewish spouses in intermarried families are secular Finns whose own religious identity is rather weak, making it easier for them to cooperate with the wishes of their Jewish spouse to preserve his or her Jewishness.

This, however, is not in itself a guarantee for Finnish-Jewish continuity in the future. A number of researchers, among them the known sociologist Steven Cohen, claim that Jewish content is becoming thinner and weaker among third and fourth generation children of mixed-marriage, leading ultimately to a dissociation from Jewish identity, particularly if those children do not receive a thorough Jewish education. As to the Jewry of Finland, it is still too early to evaluate the Jewish identity among third generation offspring, because there are still very few who have reached this stage.

With this perspective, it appears that the importance of the Jewish school in Helsinki is to serve as a strengthening factor of Jewish identity among the community members, provided that a significant part of the community's children will in the future also enroll in this school. This opinion is shared by most of the community members interviewed for this study (pages 62-64).

If we assume that the continuity of Jewish life is dependent upon three main factors—the Jewish atmosphere and content of the home; the Jewish education of the children; and the social environment of the children—the school in Helsinki clearly plays an important role, providing the students with Jewish knowledge and milieu as well as with opportunities to create friendships within their own circle.

As for the functioning of the students' homes, many of the parents confront certain difficulties in the task of preserving Jewishness. This is partly due to their own lack of Jewish knowledge, and is partly an outcome of the fact that a large number of the children in school are growing up in families where one of the parents is not a Jew.

Our study reveals that many parents are aware of the need to enrich their knowledge of Jewish subjects and are ready to devote time to additional studies in those subjects, to be arranged by the school or by the community.

In various countries, including the United States, France and England, some of the schools are increasingly aware of the need to offer parents additional Jewish knowledge. Similarly, the interest among the parents to be part of such programs is slowly growing. This is primarily relevant in schools whose students come from non-Orthodox families.

Some researchers, among them Bruce Phillips (see “International Research Survey” above), and Rabbinical leaders, are convinced that dating patterns in adolescence are of crucial importance for the future choice of a marriage partner. Those youngsters

with Jewish dating patterns in adolescence married Jews more often than did others. They suggest that parents should pay attention to this fact.

In Finland, with its small Jewish community, the issue of dating patterns is of less importance, as there are limited possibilities for finding a Jewish marriage partner. Yet, as an interviewed community member said: "Our shrinking world is enabling better opportunities to meet Jews in other countries, making it easier for us than in earlier times to broaden our options for marriage partners".

Therefore, the issue of parental awareness of their adolescent children's dating patterns is not without importance for Finnish Jews as well.

Regarding the question of what is taught in the school about Jewish holidays, traditions and customs being in conflict with the patterns of home observance, most parents said that they didn't experience any conflict. A smaller part said that there has been some slight conflict over this issue, but not in a disturbing way. In this context it is worth mentioning that the school is not religious in the sense of trying to impose religious observance on the students.

If the parents do not keep Shabbat and holidays, at least not in the Orthodox sense, but are familiar with the content and meaning of the holidays, etc., the gap between what the children "bring" with them from school about Judaism and the Jewishness at home is less strongly felt.

Not considering ultra-Orthodox Jewry, where Jewish identity is seen first and foremost in its religious meaning, this concept is in our days given a wider interpretation, as we mentioned above when we defined Jewish identity for the purpose of our study.

On the other hand, a leading American Reform rabbi, Bill Burk, told me that there is a new development in some Reform Jewish communities in the US, which are to some extent drawing closer to halakhic aspects of Judaism.

Jewish Immigrants

Considering the size of Finnish Jewry, the rather large influx of Jews from outside, particularly from Israel and to a smaller extent from Russia, has left its mark on the community and particularly on the Jewish school where, according to the data we have received from its principal, about half of the students are from families who have moved from Israel to Finland (mostly Israelis married to Finns). These students, by increasing the scope of the school, have improved the prospects of its continuing existence. It has also, according to the principal and other members of the school staff, required certain changes in its teaching program.

The adaptation of these students to the school has in general been positive, judging from their parents replies to our questions, while the way the immigrant students have been treated by teachers and other students has in some cases been less satisfying. Due to the rather small number of students from Russia, we are unable to draw any conclusions about them.

Some of the parents said that, for their own part, the way in which they were received by the community could have been better. Yet, replying to the question in which they were asked to present their expectations from the congregation, they did not come with suggestions that were linked to their above-mentioned disappointment.

Lilach Lev Ari, in a study of Israeli emigrants abroad (page 44), concluded that the first generation of Israelis abroad tend to place their children in Jewish educational frameworks because they don't want the children to lose their Jewish identity. Yet most of these parents defined themselves as secular Jews.

Lev Ari's findings bear considerable similarity to our own findings about the Israelis in Finland.

Level of the Jewish School

The quality of teaching of both Jewish and other subjects was judged, by both students and parents, to be good, and in part even excellent. According to the data given by the principal, this school ranked very high on a nation-wide evaluation scale concerning the achievements of the students.

Today, parents attach much importance to the teaching level of a school when selecting a school for their children. This is particularly true of Jews, who generally attach vital importance to scholastic achievement. Surveys on this issue conducted in the United States reveal that parents give extremely high importance to the academic level of the school chosen, in order to ensure the future acceptance of their children to prestigious universities. As mentioned in our international survey about Jewish education, students from Jewish day schools competed very well with students from other schools in all subjects, with the exception of mathematics and science.

Other Noteworthy Results of our Study

- A surprising number of parents said that their home today is more Jewish than was the case in their childhood home.
- As expected, very few defined themselves as Orthodox Jews.
- We see that two-thirds of the parents in intermarried families do speak with their children about how they feel about growing up in a family where one parent is not Jewish.
- The amount and variety of contacts with non-Jewish relatives by parents and children in intermarried families is rather large. They are also considerably involved in celebrating Christmas, in various different ways. In a study made in the United States, Prof. Barack Fishman concludes that non-Jewish relatives have an important influence on children of intermarried families.
- We found that in intermarried families, it is much more important for the Jewish spouse that the children decide for a Jewish identity as an adult than it is for the non-Jewish spouse, who seems to care less that the children adopt his or her religious identity.

- Regarding the question as to what the students find most important regarding the Jewish studies in school, a considerable number mentioned Jewish history and the meaning and purpose of the Jewish holidays. This seems to indicate that the school has succeeded in giving them a meaningful knowledge of those subjects.
- The number of non-Jews in intermarriages who were willing to consider conversion to Judaism was quite considerable.
- Some cross-tabulations were made in order to discover possible influence of the parents on the Jewish identity of their children, and the possible influence of the country of birth on various aspects of this identity. We also wanted to see how Jewish identity was reflected among the three family types, regarding their religious and national/ethnic status.
- The results we got show that parents and children had similar distributions of replies to all questions, with the exception of eating kosher food. This may be interpreted as a sign of the parents influence on their children's Jewish identity.
- As to the different family types, there were similar replies by parents in Jewish married families and by parents in families in which one parent had converted. This tendency may be found in studies from other countries as well. On the other hand, those families in which the non-Jewish parent has not converted showed, in most questions, a less religiously observant attitude.
- Regarding country of birth: there were no significant differences in attitude between those born in Finland and immigrant parents from Israel, with the exception of the question as to how they would react if their children were to marry a non-Jew. In this case there was a significant difference, the Israelis clearly preferring a Jewish marriage partner for their children while the Finnish were more indifferent to this issue (see pp. 42-44).
- As expected, among both children and parents we found that their identification with Israel and their interest in the Jewish state is strong.

The Twelfth Graders and Their Parents

- Among the former students of the Jewish school we found a good adaptation to the non-Jewish high school, although a part of them experienced initial difficulties.
- Most of them held that the time spent in the non-Jewish setting hadn't weakened their Jewish identity, while most of them admit that the Jewish school influenced their Jewish identity to some or even to a considerable extent. We also found that their circle of friends has become more non-Jewish, which is not surprising.
- 70% said that continued Jewish studies during the high school period with their teacher from the Jewish school would be a good idea.
- 60% were ready to put their future children in the Jewish school and only 10% were against it.
- All of them stated that it didn't make any difference to them if they marry a Jew or a non-Jew.
- Among the parents, opinions were divided as to what was preferable: a Jewish high school or the present system, with the students moving after the 9th grade to a non-Jewish school setting.

- The parents differed from their children on the issue of the high school period's influence on their Jewish identity: one-third of the parents saying that it had weakened their children's Jewish identity.

Parents and Children in Non-Jewish school

As mentioned in the report, the low participation of parents and children from this group made it impossible for us to use them as a comparison control group. I will limit myself to presenting a few questions which were specially given to this group and make a short and cautious comparison of some questions which were also given to the research population.

- The three most-frequently mentioned reasons for putting the children in a non-Jewish school were:
 - Lack of Finnish language
 - Jewish School too religious a choice
 - Because of non-Jewish spouse

While a third of the parents are very satisfied with the choice of school, almost half of them are only “rather satisfied”.

- A third think that their children have lost something valuable because they didn't attend a Jewish school.
- 40% think that the children's Jewish identity has been influenced by not attending a Jewish school. This question is affirmed by half of the parents, who believe that children in the Jewish school have a stronger Jewish identity.
- 17% of the children would have chosen a Jewish school if they could have decided for themselves.

Comparing answers on identical questions:

	<i>Parents with children in non-Jewish school</i>	<i>Parents with children in Jewish School</i>
Free time Jewish activities	73% no time	46% no or little time
Acceptance of intermarriage for their child	36% prefer Jewish partner	42% prefer Jewish partner
Mezuzah	73% yes	84% yes
Shabbat candles	55% no	20% no
Kosher food	54% no	34% no
Traditional Judaism	38% yes	51% yes

This comparison of data shows a clear difference, indicating a stronger Jewish identity among parents with children in the Jewish school. However, due to the small number of respondents among parents with children in non-Jewish schools, we need to be cautious regarding our conclusion.

Expectations from the Jewish Congregation in Helsinki

Less than half of the parents replied to this question, but almost all parents responded to the question about what activities of the congregation should be emphasized.

Their answers about the expectations covered a wide range of suggestions. Items expressing needs and wishes of those who had joined the Jewish community in Helsinki, either by immigration or by marrying a Jew, were chosen more than other items. These included:

- A warmer relationship to Israelis
- More information about rules and behaviors concerning children in intermarriages
- More balanced relationship to non-Jews

Some of the other suggestions included:

- A rabbi living here and open to various needs of the members
- Strengthening the Jewish identity of children & youth
- Cheaper kosher food

About the preferred activities of the congregation, the strongest rate of dissatisfaction was focused on the issue of kosher food delivery and the lack of child and youth work. A clear message about a desire for activity was given about additional education in Jewish subjects for parents, especially those with children in the school.

Concluding Remarks

In this study we have covered a wide range of items relating to the area of Jewish education in connection with the school and to Jewish identity as we have defined it in our study.

Many of the respondents in our study confirmed views held by members of the community, but the confirmation of those views by the findings of this systematic study has a certain importance.

Students in the Jewish school have not previously been studied in this kind of research. This more systematic picture of their attitudes and positions is valuable and may serve as complimentary data within the framework of information that the school is gathering periodically about various aspects of its curriculum and other activities.

Some of the findings in this study contain, in one way or another, less expected and less known information.

The Helsinki congregation is currently involved in a debate focusing on re-evaluating important areas of its activities and institutions. I hope that the findings of our study will be debated in this context in a constructive way.

I do not see the presenting of recommendations as one of the goals of research of this kind. If, however, I were to focus attention on one aspect of this study, it would be on the need to create a program with the aim of strengthening Jewish knowledge among parents with children in the school and parents who are potential candidates for putting their children in this school. Such a program should be presented in an

attractive way and contain different subjects, with the purpose of widening and deepening the Jewish identity and reservoir of Jewish knowledge of the parents.

Enrichment work with the parents should preferably start when the child is in pre-school and in the lower classes of the school. Within the framework of this program, attention should also be paid to the needs of two categories of parents: Immigrants and non-Jews, as both have special needs which were also expressed by the parents in our study.

Another issue which seems to me to be important to study in the future is the identity of the third generation of intermarried families.

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