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Campus and Camp: A Study of College-Age Ramah Staff

CAMP RAMAH WAS DESCRIBED by the former chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), Dr. Ismar Schorsch, as “in terms of the number of lives affected . . . the most important venture ever undertaken by the Seminary” (Schorsch 1989, 185). By and large, the “lives affected” have tended to be thought of as those of the campers who attend Ramah programs. For example, whereas many of the discussions in the volume *The Ramah Experience: Community and Commitment* use the general term “youth” to describe the population served, in the preface, the noted educator Ralph Tyler states that Ramah “is a setting in which campers are responsible for planning and developing their activities in light of their group deliberations on purposes and consequences, guided but not directed by adult personnel” (1989, vii). Although the extent to which campers engage in this deliberative planning process is debatable, few today would refer to the personnel with the most direct camper contact as “adults.”

In fact, recent trends in developmental theory emphasize the age range of the staff members with the most direct camper contact as a period of “emerging adulthood” (Arnett 2004). Arnett, a leading theorist and researcher in this area, describes the span from roughly the age of eighteen through the mid-twenties as a transitional period of identity exploration.

In many segments of American society, including those from which many Ramah staff members emerge, this period of being “on hold” is far more frequently the norm than having one’s career and life trajectory fixed (or at least relatively set) upon graduation from college at age twenty-one. College

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itself, as described by Arnett, has shifted away from a focus on vocational preparation to become one vehicle for exploring different possibilities for one's identities, for example, as one's search for a major (and switching between majors) comes to be related to the question of one's goals and competencies. Early employment experiences, too, are coming to be seen by emerging adults as temporary waypoints on the journey to one's final destination, rather than strategic steps toward a predetermined goal. Alongside this understanding of the college years and beyond as a context for identity exploration has come a heightened appreciation of the potential of experiences in this period to have an impact on one's Jewish identity. More attention has been given to the college years as a crucial time span for the forging of a strong Jewish identity (e.g., Keysar and Kosmin 2004a; Yares, Elias, and Kress 2000).

Perhaps due to such trends, a growing appreciation is emerging that “[s]taff are essential members of the camp community who need to be considered as a target audience in their own right.” (Sales and Saxe 2004, 33). The bulk of staff members—at least those with the most direct contact with campers—sit at the intersection of the two important identity-exploring contexts discussed above: they come from college to be employed at camp. This points to the potential of staff experiences in one's college years to be particularly important to one's developmental pathway. Moreover, work by Kosmin and Keysar as part of their groundbreaking longitudinal studies (Kosmin and Keysar 2000; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a) indicates that the sub-sample of participants in their research that attended Camp Ramah are, in their college years, “more observant of Jewish ritual, more positive about Jewish and Zionist identity, more inclined to date and marry Jews, and more active in Jewish life on campus” (Keysar and Kosmin 2004b, 6). Such results were intriguing and, as they were based on a relatively small sample in a study not focusing specifically on issues related to the camp experience, provided the impetus and interest for the current study, the purpose of which is to provide an in-depth portrait of Ramah college-aged staff members.

Methods and Respondents

The survey upon which this report is based was developed by the author, with significant input from a variety of sources (including the National Ramah director, the directors of the various Ramah overnight camps, and several Ramah staff members). Efforts were made to create a form that could be completed in fifteen to twenty minutes. To streamline distribution, a Web-based survey was created. An e-mail message from the National Ramah director was forwarded by the various camp directors to their staff (often

accompanied by a note from the camp director as well). This note, as well as a note from the author, invited participants to complete the survey, stressed the voluntary nature of the project, and ensured confidentiality of participation and results. The Web link to the survey was included in the note from the National Ramah director. Periodic reminders were sent by the camp director and by the author. The survey consisted primarily of Likert-type rating scales indicating agreement or disagreement with the statements provided. However, for several points, participants were asked to fill in possible “other” responses aside from the choices provided. Also, two “essay” questions were included, one regarding the impact of Ramah and one regarding Jewish behavior in college.

The survey was posted from December 2004–January 2005. This span of time was chosen to (a) allow for first-year students to have completed one full semester and (b) provide an opportunity to complete the survey either during a vacation span or during the course of the semester (with the belief that some participants would prefer to do one or the other). This means that respondents in the “second-year student” cohort had been about to enter their second year of college during the summer of 2004 (the summer from which this sample was drawn) and were mid-way through their second year of college when completing the survey. The population of Ramah college-age staff is approximately 1,000 (M. Cohen, personal communication), and 408 respondents were included in this sample.

Throughout this report, the numbers in the figures indicate percentages of those responding to a particular item. When statistical analyses were performed, significant findings are reported along with brief statistical information. When possible, responses from the current sample are juxtaposed with a relevant comparison group. Detailed information about this comparison group of Conservative Jewish respondents was reported by Kosmin and Keysar (Kosmin and Keysar 2000; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a).¹

Participants represented each of the seven overnight Ramah camps plus the Nyack day camp. With the exception of Ramah in the Poconos, which was underrepresented, the camps reflect roughly an equal share of the respondents. The respondents were overwhelmingly bunk staff, perhaps reflecting the proportionately large numbers of such staff at camp, particularly for college-age staff. The vast majority had not worked at a non-Ramah overnight camp.

A quarter of the respondents had not been campers at the Ramah camp at which they worked, 18% had never attended a Ramah camp as a camper, and 45% had attended their current camp for six or more years. The impact of this distribution (with sizable numbers never having attended as campers or having attended for many years as campers) on the life of staff members should

be explored further. How are new staff members “socialized” into the camp routine? What is the social experience of new staff members as compared to staff who were campers?

There were more female respondents than male (55.7% and 44.3%, respectively), and the largest percentage of respondents (approximately 41%) were raised in the Northeast. The average age of respondents was nineteen years at the time of completing this survey. The percentage of respondents decreased with each successive year in college. Both genders were proportionately represented in each year.

On the Job: Working at Ramah

Because relatively little is known about Ramah college-age staff, we begin by reporting basic findings regarding how staff members think about their work, what draws them to work at Ramah, or alternatively, what pressures them to consider leaving.

By and large, respondents seem to agree with the educational mission of the camp, sensing not only the potential for them to be an influence on their campers, but also the potential for their own growth. Large majorities of respondents agreed that Jewish education (86%) and developing a connection to Israel (90%) should be part of a camper’s experience (female respondents showing more agreement than males with the latter statement).²

Overall, respondents acknowledged their impact on campers’ Jewish lives (93% agreeing³ that “at camp, I have an impact on how my campers develop Jewishly”) and even more so on their campers’ social and emotional development (98% agreeing). Analyses were conducted to compare the responses of bunk and educational staff (including counselors, junior counselors, *rashei edah*, and teachers) with those of specialists (sports and aquatic staffs and other specialists). The former group reported more agreement regarding their Jewish impact on campers than the latter group. Female respondents also indicated stronger agreement regarding their Jewish impact on campers. The groups did not differ in their assessment of their social and emotional impact. Also, those who had been campers at Ramah did not differ from those who had not been in terms of their perceptions of their impact on campers.

Respondents generally agreed (78%) that they themselves should be involved in Jewish learning over the summer (with female respondents agreeing more than males). Fewer respondents (45%) agreed that someone in their position must speak Hebrew competently. Interestingly, no differences were found in the importance of staff learning or of Hebrew competence based on position (bunk/educational staff vs. specialists) or whether one had or had not been a Ramah camper.

Considerations for attending Ramah

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of various factors in their decision to work at camp the previous summer. Also, they were given the opportunity to insert other reasons aside from those options provided. Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents reporting that each option was “very important.” As demonstrated by these findings, the socio-affective elements (including issues of Jewish community) dominate the decision to come to work at camp.

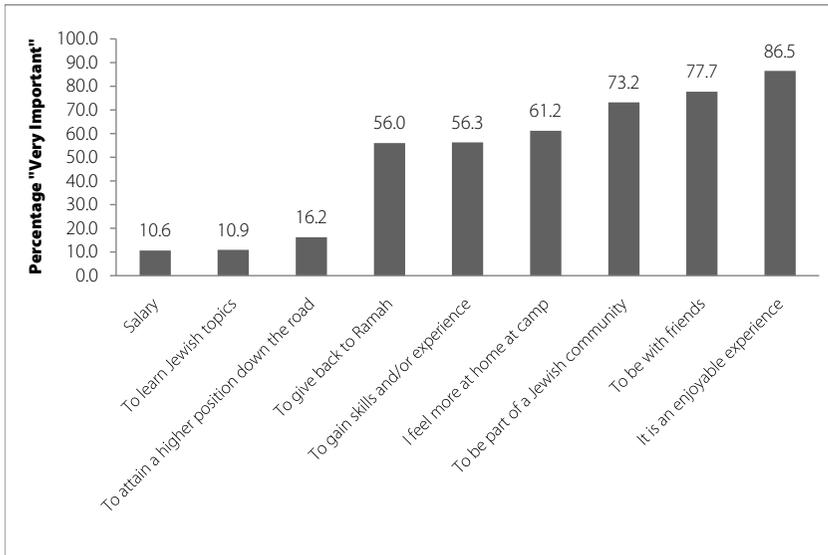


Figure 1. Reasons for coming to camp

Respondents also were asked to insert other reasons that were important in terms of their considerations for attending Ramah during summer 2004. Responses were categorized by similarity of theme. The two most commonly endorsed categories were, in order of decreasing frequency:

1. A desire to give the campers positive experiences, learning, and so on, or simply to be with the campers. A representative response is “We owe it to the kids to provide them an education and experience that will guide them in their lives as Jews and members of the human race. Therefore, I work with campers at Camp Ramah. I don’t do it for the director, my *rosb*, or even myself. I do it for the campers.”

2. Positive feelings about camp, for example, “Because it is the best place in the world and I would never trade my experiences at camp for anything else in the world.”

Respondents also were asked if they had strongly considered not coming to work at Ramah, and 31 percent indicated that they had. The percentage of respondents that considered not attending Ramah was related to one's year in college. Notably, there is a sizable jump in the numbers of those who considered not attending between those who were first-year students *prior* to summer 2004 and those who were second-year students (as shown in fig. 2).⁴ For those who were third-year students prior to summer 2004, the numbers that considered not attending decline somewhat, possibly because some of those less committed to returning have already “dropped out.”

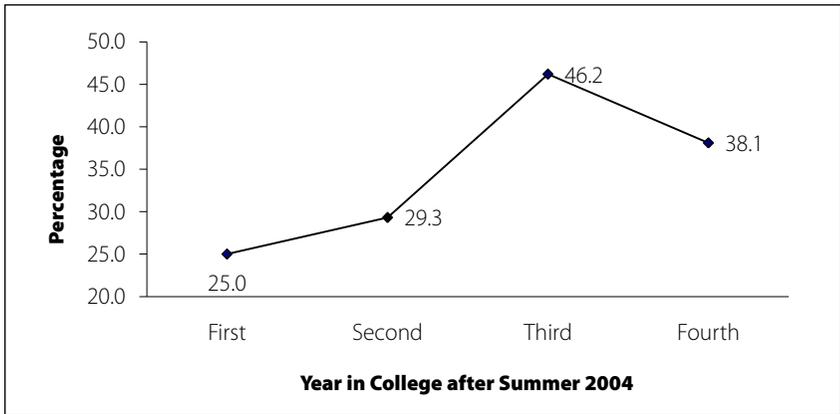


Figure 2. Respondents who considered not attending, by year in college

Respondents who considered not attending were asked to indicate the importance of various reasons in their consideration and to insert other reasons. Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents that reported that each factor was “very important.” It appears that career concerns are of crucial importance here.

Ramah and Judaism: A Staff Apart

Jewish education is a *raison d'être* of Camp Ramah, and college-age staff members are the front-line foot soldiers of this effort. What do the data tell us about the Jewish lives of Ramah college-aged staff? On a variety of Jewish indexes, it appears that the “norm” for college-age Ramah staff differs from the overall sample reported by Keysar and Kosmin (2004a), and is consistent with their findings of high levels of Jewish engagement among Ramah participants (Keysar and Kosmin 2004b). It is important to keep in mind that a study of this nature does not imply causality; that is, it cannot be discerned from this study whether or not working at Ramah caused these

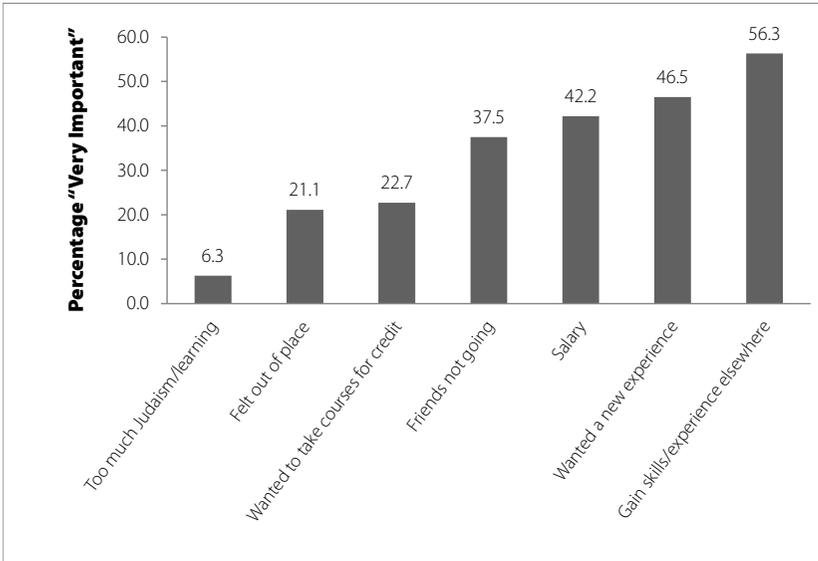


Figure 3. Reasons for considering not attending

high levels of Jewish engagement. Even so, the idea that the staff of Ramah looks different from the general population is a significant observation.

Involvement of Jewish students on campus

Respondents reported high levels of involvement with Hillel or Jewish student unions, particularly with regard to religious (80.7%) and social (78.3%) activities. Although these survey responses do not tell us the extent of the involvement, it is notable that 42.2 percent of respondents reported involvement in leadership activities at Hillel or Jewish student unions. Almost 90% of respondents were involved in at least one aspect of Hillel or a Jewish student union. Although not a perfect comparison, 68% of *Eight Up* respondents reported that they “belonged” to Hillel (Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 11).

Responses were split regarding joining kosher meal plans. More than half of respondents reported either joining such a plan or that they would join if it were offered, whereas 46% said they had not joined such a plan. Interestingly, approximately a quarter of the respondents reported that they had wanted to join a kosher meal plan, but that such a plan was not offered at their school.

More than half of the respondents reported that they had taken at least one Jewish studies course, and close to a quarter were either majoring or minoring in Jewish studies. In comparison, 7% of the *Eight Up* respondents reported that they were Jewish studies majors, with 63% reporting that they had taken no Jewish studies courses (Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 13). Approximately 10%

of the current respondents “placed out” of their college language requirement with their knowledge of Hebrew, and almost half of the respondents had taken at least one Hebrew language course. In terms of Jewish cultural involvement on campus, “reading Jewish-themed literature” was the most common activity, whereas “attending Jewish music concerts” was the activity least frequently engaged in.

Jewish ritual involvement

The majority of respondents came from Conservative Jewish backgrounds and considered their religious observance to be about the same as their parents. However, about one-third considered themselves to be more observant than their parents (compared with 13% of *Eight Up*; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 32), and 12% considered themselves to be less observant than their parents (compared to 46% of *Eight Up*; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 32). More than three-quarters of the respondents grew up in homes that had separate dishes for meat and milk. More than 50% either would only eat in a kosher restaurant or would not order meat that is not certified kosher. Respondents to the *Eight Up* survey were asked a similar question, “Do you eat meat and milk when you go out?” Although the comparison with the current data is not perfect, 28% of those respondents indicated that they did not order meat and milk (Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 31).

Approximately 47% of respondents reported attending services more than twice a month, and 71% reported attending at least once a month (in comparison, 25% of the *Eight Up* sample attend at least once a month; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 30). More than 40% of respondents either did not ride in a motor vehicle on Shabbat or tried to limit their riding, and approximately 38% either did not write on Shabbat or tried to limit their writing. Nearly all respondents reported attending Passover seders, lighting Hanukkah candles, and fasting on Yom Kippur “yearly” while in college (97%, 94%, and 93%, respectively), and more than three-quarters reported eating at least one meal in a sukkah. In comparison, *Eight Up* respondents were asked about fasting on Yom Kippur (though they were given different response options), and 78% indicated that they did (Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 31).

Jewish leadership aspirations

As shown in figure 4, more than three-quarters of respondents reported considering volunteer or lay leadership. Notable numbers reported considering careers in Jewish education and in Jewish communal service. Smaller percentages reported considering careers as rabbis or cantors. Although these results indicate only “considerations,” and it is unlikely all of these will materialize

into actual careers in these areas, it is clear that many respondents can envision for themselves a future that includes professional or lay involvement in the Jewish community.

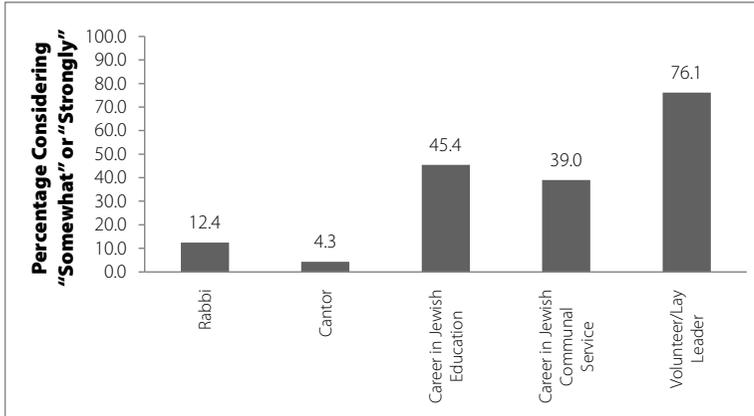


Figure 4. Jewish career and lay aspirations

Results in this section can be compared, albeit imperfectly, with responses from *Eight Up* in which participants were asked “Do you see yourself becoming . . .” various Jewish roles. In that study, 53% respond affirmatively for “Volunteer activist for Jewish institution,” 26% for “Professional in Jewish institution,” 21% for “Jewish educator,” and 13% for “Lay leader of a synagogue” (Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 22).

Jewish educational background

Almost half of respondents attended Jewish day school for eight years or more of elementary school, and more than 66% attended such a school for at least one year. Approximately 29% reported attending Jewish day school for four years of high school (and approximately 47% of the current sample attended post-bar/bat mitzvah religious school for four or more years). Finding comparisons for data regarding percentage of the population engaged in particular forms of education is difficult. However, in Kosmin and Keysar’s previous work (Kosmin and Keysar, 2000), only 9% of respondents were in day school in 1995 (seventh to ninth grades) and 3% in eleventh to twelfth grades in 1999 (Kosmin and Keysar 2000, 25). In the same study, approximately 5% were included in the Jewish day school category, indicating those “who had attended a Jewish day school during their high school years” (Kosmin and Keysar 2000, 37). Again, although the comparison measures are not exact, the current sample does seem to represent higher levels of day school attendance.

For example, 29% of the current sample attended Jewish day high school for four years. Approximately 27% of the *Four Up* sample graduated from Hebrew high school after attending for four years (Kosmin and Keysar 2000, 37). Although graduation rates of the current sample are not known, approximately 47% of the current sample attended post-bar/bat mitzvah religious school for four or more years.

It is also interesting to consider these results and their implications for staffing and staff development at Ramah. For example, although almost half of the respondents attended Jewish day elementary school for at least eight years, and approximately a quarter attended *both* four years of Jewish day high school and eight or more years of Jewish day elementary school, a third of respondents had no day school education at all (elementary or high school). In planning staff learning opportunities in Judaica and Hebrew language, care must be taken to account for such a wide range of formal Jewish educational background. Interestingly, specialists were more likely to have attended Jewish day high school than bunk/educational staff (no difference was found for the likelihood of attendance at Jewish day elementary school), whereas bunk/educational staff were more likely than specialists to have attended post-bar/bat mitzvah religious school. Finally, close to 85% of respondents were involved in some form of youth group (mostly USY) while in high school.

Jewish social connections

Overwhelmingly, respondents reported having Jewish friends. Close to three-quarters of respondents reported that most of their friends were Jewish (compared to 28% of *Eight Up* respondents; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 35). Over 93% reported that at least half of their friends were Jewish (compared to 53% in *Eight Up*; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 35). Respondents also generally agreed that they look at the entire Jewish world as their extended family (81%) and that they relate to Jews more easily than to non-Jews (84%).

Approximately 70% of respondents reported that they prefer to date only Jews (a rate that appears higher than that for the *Eight Up* sample),⁵ and 93% indicated that it is “very important” for them to marry someone who is Jewish (compared to 51% in *Eight Up*, Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 36). Finally, more than 90% of respondents (compared to 55% of *Eight Up*, Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 27) reported that being Jewish was “very important” in their lives, and almost all considered it at least somewhat important (similar, but still higher than the 90% of *Eight Up* respondents who endorsed this; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 27). Although the comparison is not exact, 18% of *Eight Up* respondents reported that they “date only Jews” (Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 37; the current study phrased this in terms of preference).

Connections to Israel

Respondents overwhelmingly considered Israel to be “very important” to them (81%, compared to 66% of *Eight Up* respondents; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 17). Close to 90% of respondents had been to Israel (compared to 60% of *Eight Up* respondents; Keysar and Kosmin 2004a, 18). Of these, 46% had been there three or more times (primarily, the longest visits were in the two-week to two-month range). Ramah Seminar was the Israel experience most frequently attended by participants, with almost a third having participated in that trip. More than half spent, or planned to spend, a semester in Israel during college.

Of the survey respondents, 40% were at least “considering somewhat” making aliyah, and 12% were considering it strongly. Two-thirds of respondents were at least “considering somewhat” living in Israel for a period of time (not permanently), and more than a quarter were considering it strongly. Although these numbers merely indicate “consideration,” and it is of course unlikely that all who consider actually will follow through, this does indicate that many participants desired to be connected with Israel in a significant way.

The Perceived Impact of Ramah

Although the direct impact of the Ramah experience cannot be ascertained from a study of this sort, it is possible to explore the opinions held by respondents regarding the nature of the impact of Ramah. Respondents overwhelming agreed that Ramah has had a major impact on their lives in general (close to 92% agreeing or strongly agreeing that “My life would be completely different if I had never gone to Ramah), and specifically, in terms of their Jewish practice (over 88% agreeing or strongly agreeing that “Ramah has had a significant impact on my Jewish practice”). Not surprisingly, respondents who had been campers at Ramah reported stronger agreement regarding general and Jewish impact. Also, female respondents reported greater impact Jewishly than did male respondents.

The reported friendship networks of respondents contain many fellow Ramahniks. Approximately 40% of respondents reported that at least half of their friends are Ramahniks. The Ramah social network appears to extend to college as well, with more than a third of respondents reporting that at least “some” of their friends at college were also Ramahniks, and fewer than a quarter reporting that they had no Ramahniks among their college friends. Again, not surprisingly, those who were not Ramah campers reported fewer friends who were Ramahniks. Interestingly, the differences in the percentage of friends at college that were Ramahniks between those who had and had

not been to Ramah as campers approached, but did not achieve, significance. There were no gender or staff position (bunk/education vs. specialist) differences in friendship patterns.

Ramah's impact: In their own words

Respondents were asked to describe, in their own words, the impact, if any, that Ramah has had on them. Close to three-quarters of the participants provided a response to this item. The major categories (those encompassing at least 20% of the respondents to this item; not including the "Other" category) are discussed here in order of decreasing frequency, and sample responses are given.

1. Jewish impact: This broad category includes discussion of the impact on one's Jewish life ranging from the very general ("It impacted on me Jewishly.") to the very specific (for example, deciding to begin a new Jewish observance, such as "I became kosher because of camp."). Responses in this category had to do with learning about Judaism, developing a Jewish identity, and positive feelings toward Judaism.

I attended Jewish schools for my entire childhood. While I had learned about Judaism, Ramah exposed me to a living Judaism that I could never have imagined. It ignited in me a passion about Judaism and education that I have carried with me in everything I do.

Camp Ramah has had more of an impact on me than any other single thing I have ever done in my life. It has influenced me to become shomer Shabbat, to eat kosher, and to strongly consider making aliyah. Through Ramah, I met role models that encouraged me to [pursue Jewish studies in college].

Ramah has let me find my own Judaism rather than just accept my parents' Judaism. While I am at home at my parents' synagogue, I consider it my parents' community. Camp Ramah is my Jewish community. At camp I learned about Judaism, and I learned to make it my own.

2. Friendships: This category was applied when a respondent mentioned the importance of Ramah in the development of friends or relationships.

Some of my greatest and most valuable friendships I have made through Ramah, and I only wish to continue my involvement with Ramah in the future.

The friends I have at Ramah are my best friends and have been for many years.

3. Personal growth: Responses in this category had to do with the impact of Ramah on one's general identity (other than Jewish identity, which is coded into the "Jewish Impact" category), well-being, adjustment, self-

confidence, or social-emotional competence; leading one to learn about one's self, or helping one develop a sense of morals and ethics.

Ramah has truly created the person I am today, as a strong individual with a very clear sense of morality.

It has made me a more outgoing, take charge type of person. I have become more of a leader in my community and am more comfortable speaking in front of groups.

Ramah also helped me “come out of my shell” because I was very shy my first year, got the lead in the play, and gained the confidence to sing and speak in front of a crowd.

Discussion

The present report is meant as a descriptive overview. Although it may be tempting to read causality into the current data and to say that attendance at Ramah is responsible for any observed outcomes, such conclusions should not be inferred. For such information, the reader is referred to studies of the impact of the Ramah experience (e.g., Cohen 1999; Keysar and Kosmin 2004b). Further, because the total population of potential participants in this survey is not known, the percentage represented by this sample cannot be specified (though we can assume it is somewhere in the range of 40%). The current methodology does not allow the comparison of respondents and non-respondents. This means that we do not know how well the self-selecting group represents the population as a whole. There is, of course, reason to believe that this sample represents a portion of the staff with more positive attitudes and connections to camp. After all, they have agreed to complete a lengthy survey online. Therefore, care should be taken in drawing inferences about the college-age staff as a whole. To validate and extend the current findings, future studies should be conducted using more sophisticated methods that would allow for better understanding the representativeness of the sample, to create an on-going database, and even to track staff members over time.

So, if causality cannot be inferred and if this sample may not be representative, then what can we learn from this study? The process of research, even in the face of questions of generalizability, can result in a description of the possible, what *may be*, or *could be*, as opposed to what *will be* (Schofield 2002). That is, even without extending the data to non-respondents, it is safe to say that in coming to work at Camp Ramah, staff members encounter an environment that they are unlikely to encounter in college or in other work settings. This environment contains a sizable portion of individuals of the same age-cohort who share a commitment to Judaism and to their work as agents of Jewish socialization.

Noted sociologist Peter L. Berger (1967), in discussing the importance of maintaining (on an individual and a societal level) structures of meaning in life, claims that “[t]he world is built up in the consciousness of the individual by conversation with significant others (such as parents, teachers, ‘peers’). The world is maintained as subjective reality by the same sort of conversation, be it with the same or with new significant others” (16–17). Such social validation provides a “plausibility structure” that allows for the maintenance of a meaningful worldview. It is not simply that others model beliefs for us, but that external realities make our beliefs plausible. The challenge, writes Berger (1967, 127), is that “secularization has resulted in the widespread collapse of the plausibility of traditional religious definitions of reality.”

In a similar vein, but coming from a different theoretical standpoint, psychologists (e.g., Markus and Nurius 1986) speak of the importance of “possible selves,” or a sense of the opportunities and pathways that one’s own identity can take. Maintaining the possibility of a particular future self can be motivating; seeing an identity outcome as implausible can be stultifying (e.g., if I think that “me as a triathlete” is possible, I can work toward this goal; if I think that “me as a triathlete” is not in my range of possibilities, motivation to achieve the outcome is dampened).

College-age staff are at an “age of *possibilities*, when hopes flourish, when people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives” (Arnett 2004, 8). Berger’s analysis, along with the discussion of “possible selves,” implies that not all *possibilities* exert the same influence; possibilities differ in their plausibility. That Ramah can add a layer of positive experiences and memories to Jewish engagement is only part of the story. Ramah adds to the list of plausible possibilities the potential for sustained Jewish engagement. There are data to suggest that Ramah staff are acutely aware that such engagement is not the norm on campus; that their engagement is in a sense “counter-cultural.” In data from this project not reported here, respondents were asked to describe the most important thing they do as a Jew on campus. Along with the expected themes (e.g., attend Hillel and services), many respondents expressed the importance of representing Judaism — and specifically, Israel — in a positive light. The following responses are representative:

I answer my non-Jewish friends when they ask about different things I do. I am one of the only Jews they know and am the only religious Jew most of them know and so I feel that I represent Judaism for them and want to do it well.

At college, the most important things that I do as a Jew are try and educate and open closed minds to new ideas and thoughts to show them that the Jewish people aren’t as bad as is depicted in the media.

Being president of the local Israel Alliance on campus because I have the opportunity to affect students of all walks of life and present Israel accurately and in a positive light.

It is possible to read such responses as reactions against a prevailing social structure and worldview that calls into question the plausibility of perceived possibilities. Given this, it is not surprising that Hillel activities or other opportunities, as one participant puts it in responding to the above question, to “surround myself with Jews” are attractive as they resurrect the possibilities for a Jewish future.

Though this study deals with camp staff, this line of thinking could be extended to campers as well. Campers also are exposed to Jewish relationships and forms of Jewish engagement that they may perceive or experience differently than in the past. For these campers, as with staff members, Ramah may serve to make ongoing engagement with Judaism a part of a plausible Jewish future.

Notes

¹Throughout this report, Keysar and Kosmin 2004a will be referred to as *Eight Up* and Kosmin and Keysar 2000 as *Four Up*.

²All reported inferential analyses are significant to at least $p < .05$. Complete statistical information is available from the author. However, statistical comparisons between the current sample and the Kosmin and Keysar samples are not possible at this time. All comparisons between these groups are reported only as trends.

³Agreeing includes responses of “agree” and “strongly agree” unless otherwise indicated.

⁴Recall that those in the “third-year” cohort, which shows the jump in percent considering not attending, were actually second year students at the time they considered not attending.

⁵The comparison is not exact, 18% of *Eight-Up* respondents reported that they “date only Jews” while the current study phrased this in terms of preference. However, 41% of the *Eight-Up* respondents reported that they prefer to date Jews but will also date non-Jews (compared to 25% here; wording was the same), and 35% report that they do not care if their date is Jewish (compared to 3% here; wording was the same).

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