

# VOICES FROM THE DESERT: CONCERNS OF TUCSON'S JEWISH YOUTH

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*A study of the concerns of Jewish youth in Tucson revealed both an inner directedness, evident in their highest-ranked concern for "looks and appearance," and great concern for such global issues as the "homeless and hungry," Soviet Jewry," and "nuclear destruction." The percentages of youth indicating particular concerns increased with age, and girls indicated concerns with greater frequency than boys. To counteract destructive societal forces that affect the Jewish family, the Jewish community must address these special concerns of its youth.*

Expressions of concern for the future of the Jewish family are being voiced in Jewish communities throughout the United States. Societal forces over the past several decades have radically altered the character, structure, and dynamics of American families, and these changes have penetrated the Jewish community as well (Heilman, 1984; Waxman, 1982; Woocher, 1983). Yet, these changes in Jewish family life need not mean disaster for either Jewish youth, Jewish families, or the Jewish community. If properly addressed, they can serve as units of strength and linkage between Jewish children and youth, their families, and Jewish institutions and organizations.

Programs, projects, and services that deal directly with the needs of Jewish youth and their families may be successful in mitigating some of the negative impacts of the changing patterns of Jewish family life. The Jewish community has a responsibility to provide a strong support network of services to ensure the well-being and continuity of the Jewish family.

The study described in this article identified the personal concerns and needs of Jewish youth in grades 4-12 in Tucson, Arizona. The availability and use by youth of Jewish community resources were also assessed. Its purpose was to provide a baseline of information about the concerns

and needs of Tucson Jewish youth and their families in the hopes that such data would guide future community planning efforts.

## METHODS

### Sample

The study was conducted in Tucson, one of the fastest-growing urban areas in the United States. The Tucson metropolitan area spreads over 495 square miles and had a population of 624,300 in 1985, a number that is expected to reach one million by the year 2000. Rapid growth has occurred in Tucson's Jewish community as well, which in 1988 was estimated to number 20,000. This represents almost a tripling of the size of the Jewish community since 1976.

It is estimated that approximately 25 to 35% of Tucson Jews are affiliated with a Jewish institution or organization. These include Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox synagogues; a day school; a supplementary Jewish high school; a federation and constituent agencies; and nearly 40 Jewish community organizations in Tucson.

The sample of 382 Jewish young people was made up of 183 students attending weekday afternoon Hebrew or Sunday morning religious school classes, 57 Jewish day school enrollees, 44 high school stu-

dents attending evening classes for Jewish studies and evening meetings of the B'nai B'rith Youth Organizations, and 14 unaffiliated Jewish young people. The population included 180 boys (47.1%) and 198 girls (51.8%) in elementary (47%), junior high (22%), and high school (30.9%).

#### Instrument

Survey questions were designed through consultation with members of the Jewish Education Committee, a division of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona, education directors of Jewish institutions, and counseling professionals. A review of related literature on Jewish youth aided in the survey design. Instrument questions were evaluated for relevance to the topics being investigated, clarity, and levels of appropriateness and reading comprehension for the wide age and grade range of youth being surveyed (ages 9–18, fourth through twelfth grades).

The questionnaire had three parts. Part One obtained demographic data, i.e., age, grade, and gender. Part Two listed 47 potential concerns of young people and asked students to circle all the concerns they had at this time in their lives. Space was allotted for them to list any additional concerns. Current and anticipated use of secular and religious personnel were investigated in Part Three. Thirteen types (teacher, parent, etc.) of secular and Jewish resources were listed. Students were asked to identify those they had turned to when they had a concern in the past and those they would probably turn to in the future. Finally, Jewish youth were asked to identify programs that would interest them.

#### Procedures

Permission to survey students on-site during class or meeting time was obtained from directors of education and youth group advisors. Parental permission forms were distributed by participating institutions

and organizations. The survey was administered by the researchers.

During the assigned classroom or meeting time, the survey forms and pencils were distributed to the students, and a brief introduction to the study was given. The students were told that the survey was anonymous and that there were no right or wrong answers; only their personal feelings and opinions were to be entered. They were informed that their parents had given permission for them to participate in the survey; however, it was up to the students to decide for themselves whether they in fact wished to participate.

#### PERSONAL CONCERNS OF YOUTH

Concerns indicated by the Jewish youth were calculated for the total sample, for each educational level, and by gender. Percentages were computed to determine the relationship between concerns and each variable of interest. Concerns were then rank ordered, beginning with those of greatest concern. Tables 1–3 present a rank-order listing of the concerns for all the young people and the top ten concerns according to educational level and gender.

In examining the top ten concerns for the entire Jewish youth population (Table 1), one notes that “looks and appearance” held first place (41%), followed closely by “getting along with siblings” (40.8%) and “hard to know whom to trust” (37.7%). Three global issues of “homeless and hungry” (36.9%), “Soviet Jewry” (31.9%), and “nuclear destruction” (30.4%) also were among the top ten concerns. “College and career” (35.1%) occupied the mid-position of the top ten followed closely by “hard to talk to others about feelings” (34.6%), “boredom” (32.2%), and “getting along with friends” (31.1%). Ranking among the bottom ten concerns were “physical and sexual abuse” (7.9%), “parent and personal alcohol and other drug use” (3.4%), and “homosexuality” (1%).

Many concerns were age-related (Table 2).

Table 1  
RANK ORDER OF CONCERNS OF ENTIRE  
JEWISH YOUTH POPULATION

| Rank | Concern                                     | Percentage |
|------|---------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1    | Looks/appearance                            | 41.1       |
| 2    | Getting along with siblings                 | 40.8       |
| 3    | Hard to know whom to trust                  | 37.7       |
| 4    | Homeless and hungry                         | 36.9       |
| 5    | College and career                          | 35.1       |
| 6    | Hard talking to others about feelings       | 34.6       |
| 7    | Boredom                                     | 32.2       |
| 8    | Soviet Jewry                                | 31.9       |
| 9    | Getting along with friends                  | 31.1       |
| 10   | Nuclear destruction                         | 30.4       |
| 11   | Getting along with parents                  | 28.8       |
| 12   | Negative feelings about myself              | 27.5       |
| 13   | AIDS                                        | 27.2       |
| 14   | Parents expect too much                     | 26.4       |
| 15   | Competition/pressure at school              | 26.1       |
| 16   | Loneliness                                  | 25.9       |
| 17   | Environmental pollution                     | 24.4       |
| 18   | Academic problems                           | 22.5       |
| 19   | Being Jewish in a mostly non-Jewish society | 22.0       |
| 20   | Will I be as successful as my parents       | 20.7       |
| 21   | Parents don't understand my problems        | 20.7       |
| 22   | Depression                                  | 20.6       |
| 23   | Too many activities                         | 19.4       |
| 24   | Anti-Semitism                               | 19.4       |
| 25   | Not enough to do                            | 19.0       |
| 26   | Parents too critical                        | 17.3       |
| 27   | Family financial problems                   | 17.3       |
| 28   | Parents too strict                          | 14.7       |
| 29   | Need more encouragement                     | 14.4       |
| 30   | Parents' arguments                          | 14.1       |
| 31   | Thoughts of suicide                         | 11.8       |
| 32   | Competition/pressure at home                | 11.8       |
| 33   | Parents don't spend enough time with me     | 10.5       |
| 34   | Interfaith dating                           | 10.5       |
| 35   | Eating disorders                            | 10.0       |
| 36   | Parent's separation/divorce                 | 9.4        |
| 37   | Pressure to be sexually active              | 6.8        |
| 38   | Living in a stepfamily                      | 6.0        |
| 39   | Pressure to buy/use drugs                   | 5.8        |
| 40   | Parents don't seem to care                  | 5.5        |
| 41   | My use of other drugs                       | 4.5        |
| 42   | My alcohol use                              | 4.2        |
| 43   | Physical abuse                              | 4.2        |
| 44   | Sexual abuse                                | 3.7        |
| 45   | Parent's alcohol use                        | 2.1        |
| 46   | Parent's use of other drugs                 | 1.3        |
| 47   | Homosexuality                               | 1.0        |

Communication, peer, and family relations were among the top concerns of both junior high and elementary youth. "Getting along with siblings," "talking to others about feelings," and "knowing whom to trust" all ranked within the top five concerns for those grade levels. "Getting along with parents" ranked in the top ten for both junior high and elementary youth, whereas "getting along with friends" was in the top 5 for elementary (32.3%) and dropped to 14 for junior high (27.4%) and 18 for high school (32.2%). Although "looks and appearance" ranked highest among junior high students (56%), it was third for high school (50%) and sixth for elementary youth (28.3%). "Boredom" was another consistently high concern, being fifth for elementary (28.9%), tenth for junior high (32.1%), and eleventh for high school (37.3%). While being bored, high school students also indicated they have "too many activities" (33.9%); in contrast, elementary students who also gave high ranking to boredom indicated as their thirteenth concern "not having enough to do" (20.7%). "Loneliness" ranked high for both elementary and junior high, being ninth for junior high (32.2%) and eleventh for elementary (22.2%). Both high school youth (39%) and junior high youth (28.6%) indicated that "parents expect too much."

Concern with social action and the global issues of the "homeless," "Soviet Jewry," "nuclear destruction," "AIDS," and "anti-Semitism" all ranked among the top ten concerns on at least one of the three educational levels' lists, with "homeless and hungry" in the top ten on all three lists, ranking second for high school (51.7%), fourth for junior high (35.7%), and seventh for elementary (27.9%). "Soviet Jewry" also ranked among the top ten concerns on all levels, taking sixth place for high school (39.8%), eighth for elementary (27.2%), and ninth for junior high (31.0%).

It is evident that many concerns were also gender-related (Table 3), with girls

*Table 2*  
RANK ORDER OF TOP TEN CONCERNS OF JEWISH YOUTH BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

| Concern                               | Elementary |            | Jr. High |            | High School |            |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|----------|------------|-------------|------------|
|                                       | Rank       | Percentage | Rank     | Percentage | Rank        | Percentage |
| Looks/appearance                      | 6          | 28.3       | 1        | 56.0       | 3           | 50.0       |
| Getting along with siblings           | 1          | 50.0       | 2        | 42.9       |             |            |
| Hard to know whom to trust            | 3          | 35.0       | 4        | 35.7       | 4           | 43.2       |
| Homeless/hungry                       | 7          | 27.8       | 4        | 35.7       | 2           | 51.7       |
| College and career                    |            |            |          |            | 1           | 67.2       |
| Hard talking to others about feelings | 2          | 35.6       | 4        | 35.7       |             |            |
| Boredom                               | 5          | 28.9       | 8        | 32.1       | 9           | 37.3       |
| Soviet Jewry                          | 8          | 27.2       | 9        | 31.0       | 6           | 39.8       |
| Getting along with friends            | 4          | 32.2       |          |            |             |            |
| Nuclear destruction                   |            |            | 3        | 39.2       | 8           | 39.0       |
| Getting along with parents            | 9          | 25.6       | 5        | 34.5       |             |            |
| Negative feelings about myself        |            |            |          |            | 4           | 43.2       |
| AIDS                                  | 9          | 25.6       |          |            |             |            |
| Parents expect too much               |            |            | 10       | 28.6       | 7           | 39.0       |
| Competition/pressure at school        |            |            | 6        | 33.3       | 9           | 37.3       |
| Loneliness                            | 10         | 22.2       | 7        | 32.2       |             |            |
| Environmental pollution               |            |            | 9        | 31.0       |             |            |
| Academic problems                     |            |            |          |            | 3           | 50.0       |
| Anti-Semitism                         |            |            |          |            | 5           | 40.7       |
| Parents too critical                  |            |            |          |            | 10          | 36.4       |

*Table 3*  
RANK ORDER OF TOP TEN CONCERNS OF JEWISH YOUTH BY GENDER

| Concern                                | Male |            | Female |            |
|----------------------------------------|------|------------|--------|------------|
|                                        | Rank | Percentage | Rank   | Percentage |
| Looks/appearance                       | 5    | 27.2       | 1      | 53.0       |
| Getting along with siblings            | 1    | 37.8       | 3      | 43.9       |
| Hard to know whom to trust             | 5    | 27.2       | 2      | 47.5       |
| Homeless/hungry                        | 2    | 30.0       | 3      | 43.9       |
| College/career                         | 4    | 27.8       | 4      | 40.4       |
| Hard talking about feelings            | 2    | 30.0       | 5      | 39.4       |
| Boredom                                | 3    | 28.9       | 9      | 35.9       |
| Soviet Jewry                           | 5    | 27.2       | 8      | 36.4       |
| Getting along with friends             | 9    | 22.4       | 6      | 37.9       |
| Nuclear destruction                    | 2    | 30.0       |        |            |
| Getting along with parents             | 8    | 22.8       | 10     | 34.3       |
| Negative feelings about myself         |      |            | 7      | 37.4       |
| AIDS                                   | 6    | 25.0       |        |            |
| Parents expect too much                | 8    | 22.8       |        |            |
| Competition/pressure at school         | 10   | 22.2       |        |            |
| Loneliness                             |      |            |        |            |
| Environmental pollution                |      |            |        |            |
| Academic problems                      |      |            |        |            |
| Will I be as successful as my parents? | 7    | 24.4       |        |            |

showing greater concern with "looks and appearance" (53% vs. 27.2%), "negative feelings about myself" (37.4% vs. 16.7%), and "getting along with friends" (37.9% vs. 22.4%). In general, greater numbers of girls indicated nearly all issues to be of

concern. The only five concerns noted by a greater percentage of males were as follows: "Will I be as successful as my parents?" (24.4% vs. 17.7%), "parents' arguments" (15% vs. 13.1%), "living in a stepfamily" (6.7% vs. 5.0%), "pressure to

Table 4  
PREVIOUS USE OF RESOURCES REPORTED BY JEWISH YOUTH OF DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

|                              | Elementary |            | Junior High |            | High School |            |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|                              | N          | Percentage | N           | Percentage | N           | Percentage |
| Teacher                      | 105        | 58.3       | 34          | 40.5       | 48          | 40.7       |
| Principal                    | 31         | 17.2       | 14          | 16.6       | 14          | 11.9       |
| School counselor             | 15         | 8.3        | 23          | 27.4       | 52          | 44.1       |
| Peer counselor               | 6          | 3.3        | 7           | 8.3        | 20          | 16.9       |
| Social worker/counselor      | 9          | 5.0        | 9           | 10.7       | 15          | 12.7       |
| Psychiatrist/psychologist    | 14         | 7.8        | 10          | 11.9       | 20          | 16.9       |
| Rabbi                        | 9          | 5.0        | 6           | 5.1        | 9           | 7.6        |
| Religious school teacher     | 35         | 19.4       | 10          | 11.9       | 13          | 11.0       |
| Religious school principal   | 15         | 8.3        | 8           | 9.5        | 7           | 5.9        |
| Youth group advisor          | 4          | 2.2        | 4           | 4.8        | 18          | 15.3       |
| JFS                          | 8          | 4.4        | 3           | 3.6        | 4           | 3.4        |
| Drug treatment               |            |            | 1           | 1.2        | 4           | 3.4        |
| Other (as added by students) |            |            |             |            |             |            |
| Parents                      | 34         | 18.9       | 16          | 19.0       | 7           | 5.9        |
| Brothers/sisters             | 3          | 1.7        |             |            |             |            |
| Other relatives              |            |            |             |            |             |            |
| Friends                      | 12         | 6.7        | 13          | 15.5       | 21          | 17.8       |
| Coach                        |            |            |             |            | 3           | 2.5        |
| Camp counselor               | 3          | 1.7        |             |            |             |            |
| Religious school aide        | 2          | 1.1        |             |            |             |            |

buy/use drugs" (6.1% vs. 5.6%), and "parent's alcohol use" (2.8% vs. 1.5%). For both boys and girls, global issues of "homeless and hungry" and "Soviet Jewry" ranked in the top ten concerns, whereas for the boys, two additional global concerns of "nuclear destruction" and "AIDS" also ranked among their top ten.

#### USE OF RESOURCES BY YOUTH

##### Previous Use

From a list of secular and Jewish community resources, youth were asked to indicate to whom they *have* turned in the past for help with a problem (Table 4). Approximately 58% of elementary students indicated they have sought the help of secular school teachers, whereas 19.4% indicated they have turned to religious school teachers. Almost 19% added parents and 6.7% added friends. Among junior high school students, 40.5% chose secular school teachers followed by 11.9% turning to Hebrew and religious school teachers. Nearly equal numbers added parents (19%) and friends (16%) to their list. Among

high school students, fewer students turned either to secular teachers (40.7%), religious teachers (11%), or parents (5.9%), but rather school counselors (44.1%), peer counselors (16.9%), friends (17.8%) and youth group advisors (15.3%) were the resources of choice. Few students in each level turned to rabbis for help with problems (5%), whereas community mental health professionals, including social workers, counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists, were seen by approximately 13% of elementary, 23% of junior high, and 30% of high school youth. Only 4% of the youth in each education level sought the services of Jewish Family Services.

##### Anticipated Use

From the listing of secular and Jewish resources, with the addition of "family," "other relatives," and "friends," youth were asked to choose those resources to whom they *would* turn for help if they had a problem (Table 5). Of the elementary youth, 85.6% indicated they would turn to parents, followed by 63.9% who would choose friends. Among junior high stu-

Table 5  
ANTICIPATED USE OF RESOURCES REPORTED BY JEWISH YOUTH  
OF DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

|                            | Elementary |            | Junior High |            | High School |            |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|                            | N          | Percentage | N           | Percentage | N           | Percentage |
| Parents                    | 154        | 85.6       | 63          | 75.0       | 73          | 61.9       |
| Brothers and sisters       | 64         | 35.6       | 32          | 38.1       | 51          | 43.2       |
| Other relatives            | 69         | 38.3       | 18          | 21.4       | 26          | 22.0       |
| Friend                     | 115        | 63.9       | 63          | 75.0       | 103         | 87.3       |
| Teacher                    | 84         | 46.7       | 19          | 22.6       | 28          | 23.7       |
| Principal                  | 33         | 18.3       | 11          | 13.1       | 6           | 5.1        |
| School counselor           | 22         | 12.2       | 27          | 32.4       | 32          | 27.1       |
| Peer counselor             | 8          | 4.4        | 8           | 9.5        | 16          | 13.6       |
| Psychiatrist/psychologist  | 13         | 7.2        | 9           | 10.7       | 21          | 17.8       |
| Social worker/counselor    | 13         | 7.2        | 5           | 6.0        | 13          | 11.0       |
| Rabbi                      | 14         | 7.8        | 6           | 7.1        | 7           | 5.9        |
| Religious school principal | 17         | 9.4        | 2           | 2.4        | 6           | 5.1        |
| Religious school teacher   | 23         | 12.8       | 6           | 7.1        | 5           | 4.2        |
| Youth group advisor        | 5          | 2.8        | 2           | 2.4        | 15          | 12.7       |
| JFS                        | 5          | 2.8        | 2           | 2.4        | 2           | 1.7        |
| Help on call               | 10         | 5.6        | 6           | 7.1        | 16          | 13.6       |
| Other                      | 18         | 1.0        | 10          | 11.9       | 8           | 6.8        |

dents, 75% chose parents, and an equal number also chose friends. Only 61.9% of high school students would turn to parents, whereas 87.3% would turn to friends. For both junior high (32.4%) and high school students (27.1%), school counselors would be a resource of choice, as would other secular mental health professionals (approximately 30% for both junior high and high school youth). From available Jewish resources, rabbis were a chosen resource of elementary (8%), junior high (7%), and high school (6%) youth. Approximately 13% of elementary youth would turn to religious school teachers, whereas 13% of high school youth would choose youth group advisors. Jewish Family Services (JFS) was a resource chosen by a total of 7% of all students.

#### PROGRAM INTERESTS

Jewish youth were asked to identify programs they would be interested in from a list of 13 programs. The two most frequently chosen by all grade levels (Table 6) were "sports and recreation" (65.7%) and "parties and dances" (62.6%). For elementary (30% and 27.8%) and junior high youth

(21% and 36.9%), "getting along with family" and "how to have more friends" were the next topics of greatest interest, whereas for high school students "maintaining Jewish identity and involvement" was the third-ranking program of interest (39.8%). "How to feel good about yourself" was of relatively equal interest to all groups (25% for both elementary and junior high and 33% for high school). Elementary (27.2%) and high school (28.8%) students showed greater interest in "helping others/performing mitzvahs" than junior high youth (19%). "How to say no to peer pressure" interested 24% of elementary youth, and "sexual concerns" were of interest to 24.4% of junior high students and 26.3% of high school students. Junior high students (7.1%) were less interested in alcohol and other drug information programs than elementary (12.2%) and high school students (16.1%).

#### DISCUSSION

The top ten personal concerns chosen by the survey population of Jewish youth were as follows in rank order: looks and appearance, getting along with siblings, knowing

*Table 6*  
PROGRAM INTEREST IDENTIFIED BY JEWISH YOUTH OF DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

| Program Interest               | Elementary |     |            | Junior High |    |            | High School |    |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|------------|-------------|----|------------|-------------|----|------------|
|                                | (Rank)     | N   | Percentage | (Rank)      | N  | Percentage | (Rank)      | N  | Percentage |
| Feel good about self           | (6)        | 45  | 2.5        | (4-5)       | 21 | 25.0       | (4)         | 39 | 33.1       |
| Sports and recreation          | (1)        | 122 | 67.7       | (1-2)       | 59 | 64.3       | (2)         | 70 | 59.3       |
| Jewish ident. and involvement  | (8)        | 33  | 18.3       | (9)         | 15 | 17.9       | (3)         | 47 | 39.8       |
| Coping with separation/divorce | (13)       | 9   | 8.3        | (10-11)     | 8  | 9.5        | (13)        | 5  | 4.2        |
| Saying no to peer pressure     | (7)        | 44  | 24.4       | (6-7-8)     | 16 | 19.9       | (11)        | 14 | 11.9       |
| Getting along with family      | (3)        | 54  | 30.0       | (4-5)       | 21 | 21.0       | (6)         | 32 | 27.1       |
| Parties/dances                 | (2)        | 97  | 53.9       | (1-2)       | 59 | 70.2       | (1)         | 83 | 70.3       |
| Disappointment and failure     | (10)       | 18  | 10.0       | (6-7-8)     | 16 | 19.0       | (8-9)       | 30 | 25.4       |
| Parent's alcohol use           | (14)       | 4   | 2.2        | (14)        | 1  | 1.2        | (14)        | 2  | 1.7        |
| Have more friends              | (4)        | 50  | 27.8       | (3)         | 31 | 36.9       | (8-9)       | 30 | 25.4       |
| Alcohol and drug information   | (9)        | 22  | 12.2       | (12)        | 6  | 7.1        | (10)        | 19 | 16.1       |
| Mitzvahs/Helping others        | (5)        | 49  | 27.2       | (6-7-8)     | 16 | 19.0       | (5)         | 34 | 28.8       |
| Sexual concerns                | (11)       | 15  | 8.3        | (10-11)     | 8  | 9.5        | (7)         | 31 | 26.3       |
| Other                          | (12)       | 14  | 7.8        | (13)        | 5  | 6.0        | (12)        | 7  | 5.9        |

whom to trust, homeless and hungry, college and career, hard to talk to others about feelings, boredom, Soviet Jewry, getting along with friends, and nuclear destruction. Concerns varied according to age and gender. Percentages of youth indicating particular concerns increased with age, and girls indicated concerns with greater frequency than boys. Sexual and physical abuse, both youths' and parents' alcohol and other drug use, and homosexuality were consistently low-level concerns with all youth.

Previous and anticipated uses of community resources showed teachers and school counselors to be the resources of choice, with parents being replaced by friends with increased age. Sports and recreation and parties and dances were the most often indicated program choices for all youth, with the next choices being "getting along with family" and "how to have more friends" for elementary and junior high youth and "maintaining Jewish identity and involvement" for high school youth.

When examined for the entire population, sibling and peer relationships are both in the top ten concerns of Jewish youth and suggest a need for skills in communication and family living. It is evident that girls have greater numbers of concerns in general, particularly in areas of personal well-being and social adjustment, such as "difficulty in talking about feelings," "negative feelings about self," and "loneliness." It is also evident that the percentages of youth identifying various concerns increased with advancing age among both sexes. As might be expected, "college and career," although being in the midpoint of the list of top ten concerns for the entire population, is an overriding concern for high school youth.

Despite the inner directedness evident in youths' top concern with "looks and appearance" (which was also evident in a national study of fifth to ninth graders; Search 1984), it is heartening to discover that three of the top ten concerns of this

sample of Jewish youth were global issues of concern for the "homeless and hungry," "Soviet Jewry," and "nuclear destruction."

Although it was disturbing to find that youth are "bored," it is apparent that this group of Jewish youth who are highly concerned about social issues could be offered an increased opportunity to participate in programs where they can put into concrete action their concern about social issues. Within the Jewish and general community there are numerous opportunities for meaningful community service that could give youth new meaning, purpose, and a sense of belonging in their lives. It was psychologist Sol Gordon (1985) who stated that those who are bored are bound to be boring to others. Gordon recognized the value of community service and the mitzvah of helping others as not only a key to preventing boredom but also giving youth a sense of worth and importance that helps combat loneliness, sadness, and depression.

Two other top ten youth concerns that are disturbing are youth's "difficulty in knowing whom to trust" and "difficulty in talking to others about feelings." Since trust is a basic ingredient in establishing satisfying and meaningful relationships, there is a compelling need to provide experiences and practice that increase youths' sense of trust in others. Also needed are communication skill-building programs for families and all age groups of youth to develop individual and family competencies in communication that foster open expression of thoughts and feelings. Programs are needed to encourage youth to continue turning to their parents as resources. This study showed that with advancing age, youth were less likely to consult their parents for help with problems. This is an expected and positive sign of healthy adolescent development; however, by enhancing communication skills of both children and their parents, there is a greater chance that their communication link can be maintained during junior high or high school.

It is evident from the study's examina-



tion of the students' use of both secular and Jewish community resources for help with personal concerns that youth are seeking help from teachers, teacher's aides, and youth group advisors. It is therefore important for workshops and special training opportunities to be offered to those resources to whom youth are turning for help. These resources need to be aware of their own strengths and also limitations and recognize when referral is essential. Their service as a referral source cannot be underestimated.

It is also important that religious institutions continue to engage and expand the availability of on-site services of professional counselors through the outreach of Jewish Family Services. These services are essential not only for crisis counseling for youth and their families but also for presenting family life education programs that provide a foundation and enrichment of skills. It is this building of skills that provides the preventive protection needed to insulate against the societal forces threatening the strength of the Jewish family.

This study confirms that many of the same changes that are taking place in American families in general and Jewish families in particular are affecting the concerns of these Jewish youth. Since there are no previous studies of personal concerns

of this particular sample of Jewish youth, there is no baseline for making comparisons. It can only be stated that this study confirms that Jewish youth have special concerns, which must be recognized and addressed within the Jewish community. To ignore them and not address the special concerns of these youth is to risk losing them. To embrace and nurture them is to stimulate growth of the Jewish family and perpetuation of the Jewish heritage.

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