

« Moshe Safdie » contains a record of the work of a distinguished alumnus of the McGill School of Architecture. It is an impressive exemplaire of a modern architectural archive and an important reference work for those interested in the growth of modern architecture.

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<sup>1</sup>Safdie, Moshe. *Beyond Habitat*. Editor John Kettle. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1970

<sup>2</sup>Safdie, Moshe. *For Everyone a Garden*. Edited by Judith Wolin. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974

Shahar, Charles. *The Jewish High School Experience: Its Implications for the Evolution of Jewish Identity in Young Adults* Montreal: The Jewish Education Council of Greater Montreal / Federation CJA , 1998.

As much of the 'Jewish continuity' debate in North American Jewish federations has turned to the role of 'Jewish education', the Jewish Education Council of Montreal in conjunction with Montreal Federation CJA has commissioned a study to measure the impact of the Jewish high school experience on Jewish identity of young adults. Charles Shahar, a veteran demographer of Montreal's Federation CJA and author of numerous community studies, is particularly well-suited for this task.

Intuitively we seem to know that Jewish education, in its various forms, will help to ensure Jewish continuity. Recent studies have been conducted as an attempt to provide some empirical evidence to support this claim (Fishman and Goldstein, 1993; Schiff and Schneider, 1994a, 1994b). Shahar's work is an important part of this continuing effort.

In terms of methodology, the study is unique in that it surveys Jewish young adults who have graduated from Montreal area high schools and compares this group to Jews

who have graduated from non-Jewish high schools. Four Jewish and five non-Jewish schools are targeted. In order to try to ascertain long-term effects of a Jewish education, graduates from the years 1981, 1984 and 1987 are used in the sample. Graduates in these cohorts were randomly selected to participate in the study. Of the 337 people sampled, 213 (63%) were graduates from Jewish high schools and 124 (37%) were graduates from non-Jewish high schools.

Credit should be given to Shahar for not falling prey to the common fallacy that *association* is equivalent to *causation*. In other words, just because there is a high correlation between graduating from Jewish high school and, for example, a high level of Jewish ritual observance, it does not necessarily follow that graduating from a Jewish high school has caused this high level of ritual observance. Other variables, such as attendance at Jewish elementary schools, family upbringing, participation in Jewish youth groups, travel to Israel, among others, must also be considered before a definitive statement of direct causation can be made. Shahar indicates his awareness of this problem of spurious relationships. He correctly observes that “. . . Jewish identity is a complex issue, which has many factors which shape and influence its evolution. In any study of this nature it is very difficult to separate the effects of parental upbringing and other impactful events . . . from the Jewish high school experience.” (p. 5)

There are a number of other methodological issues which need to be considered when exploring the relationship between Jewish education and Jewish identity. Schoenfeld (1998), for example, cautions the researcher to question the homogeneity of the independent variable in question, Jewish education (are there not important differences, for example, *between* the four Jewish high schools targeted in this study?). One should also reflect carefully on the operationalization of the dependent variable, Jewish identity (are behavioral indicators the only way of measuring ‘Jewish identity’?). Keeping these and other methodological concerns in mind, researchers

should be encouraged to be modest in their assessment of what can be learned from these studies.

This being said, let us report the findings of Shahar's study: graduates of Jewish high schools demonstrate significantly higher levels of Jewish identity in terms of several key behavioral indicators than do graduates of non-Jewish high schools. Graduates of Jewish high schools are more inclined to keep kosher at home (69%) than graduates of non-Jewish high schools (20%); are more inclined to observe the Sabbath (38% vs. 2%); are more inclined to study Jewish texts on a regular basis (30% vs. 4%); are more inclined to belong to a Jewish communal organization (36% vs. 20%); are more inclined to have the majority of close friends as Jewish (52% vs. 33%); are more inclined to give to Jewish charitable causes on an annual basis (59% vs. 40%); are more inclined to travel to Israel after high school (63% vs. 46%); and, in what many consider to be the most significant variable, are more inclined to marry within the faith (93% vs. 70%). The study concludes in an upbeat fashion, reporting that the majority of Jewish high school graduates describe their high school experiences as having "a very positive impact on their life as a Jew." (p. 87)

Shahar's study also presents large amounts of interesting data rarely found in other similar works. I found it interesting to learn, for example, that among the books most often found on bookshelves of Jewish young adults are Alfred Kolatch's *The Jewish Book of Why*, Mordechai Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Leon Uris' *Exodus*.

The study does succeed in developing a "more intimate profile of the Jewish high school experience" (p. 5) with its use of open-ended questions rather than a more rigid multiple-choice survey design, however I do feel that in order to access more rich qualitative descriptions it would have been useful to include direct quotations of the respondents. This could have been particularly beneficial in Chapter 13,

which asks respondents to describe their actual memories of high school. Ethnographies like Schoem (1989) and Heilman (1992), for example, are particularly effective in providing an insider's look at what exactly transpires inside the schools. Overall, however, Shahar has produced another valuable study to add to the larger body of research on the relationship between Jewish education and Jewish identity. This is must reading for anyone concerned about Jewish continuity.

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