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# THE HERTOG STUDY OF CHABAD ON CAMPUS

SUMMARY:  
Key Highlights, Takeaways & Quotes

# BACKGROUND

“The Hertog Study of Chabad on Campus” (September 2016) was commissioned and funded by the Hertog Foundation, and researched and written by widely-published Jewish social scientists Mark Rosen and Steven M. Cohen, along with Arielle Levites and Ezra Kopelowitz. The study was designed to learn who comes to Chabad on college campuses, what impact Chabad involvement has on the post-college lives of young Jewish adults, and what is it that Chabad actually does with undergraduate students.

The researchers conducted qualitative research at 22 campus Chabad-Lubavitch centers, analyzed survey data from over 2,400 alumni under the age of 30 to measure Chabad’s impact on 18 different measures of Jewish engagement, and conducted interviews with parents, faculty, university officials, and Hillel leaders.

Some brief highlights follow below.

## WHO

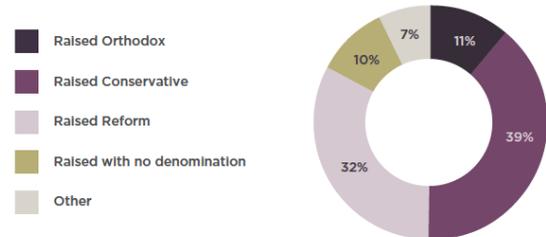
### WHO PARTICIPATES AT CHABAD ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES?

#### Wide range of Jewish backgrounds

Chabad clearly overcomes typical denominational divides, attracting students from a wide range of Jewish backgrounds, the vast majority of whom (88%) are not Orthodox. (Figure 2.1. See also footnote 28.)

And, in case you were wondering, four out of five students who attended Chabad on campus reported that they had no prior involvement with Chabad. (Table 2.2)

FIGURE 2.1: DENOMINATIONS IN WHICH SURVEY RESPONDENTS WERE RAISED

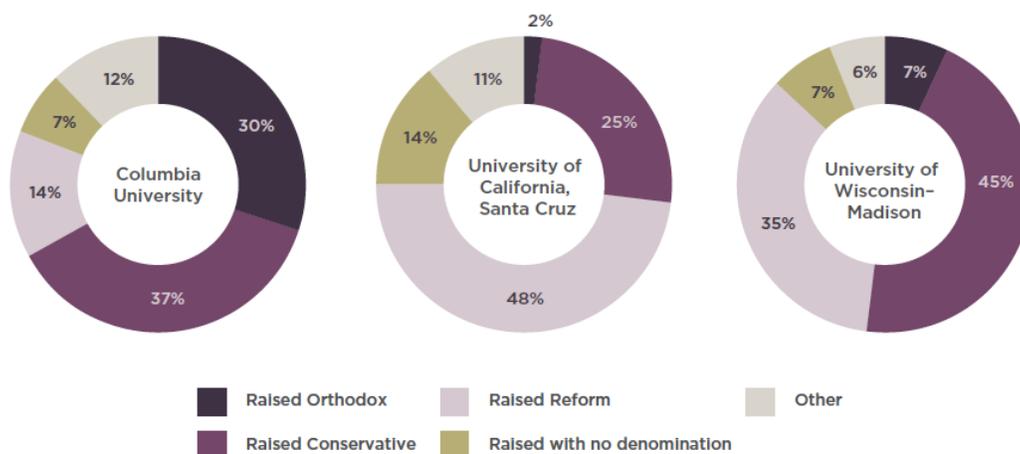


Note: Other includes Reconstructionist, Chabad, post-denominational, other Jewish, not sure, and not raised Jewish (but Jewish now).

### WHO BENEFITS FROM CHABAD ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES?

The study yields that all students who are frequent participants show higher levels of overall Jewish engagement after college than those who are less frequent participants. However, **the students who gain most from Chabad are those raised Reform or with no denominational affiliation.**

FIGURE 2.2: DENOMINATIONAL BACKGROUND BY SCHOOL: THREE ILLUSTRATIONS



Those raised Reform who were active with Chabad had a **113% higher** – i.e., **2.13 times higher** – level of overall engagement than their counterparts who weren’t active at Chabad during college. For those raised with no denomination it was **107% higher**, and for those raised Conservative, **63% higher**. (Figure 4.20)

(Re: those raised Orthodox, see note on page 11.)

# WHAT

## WHAT KIND OF MEASURABLE IMPACT DOES CHABAD ON CAMPUS HAVE ON POST-COLLEGE JEWISH ENGAGEMENT?

**Involvement with Chabad on campus affects a broad range of Jewish attitudes and behaviors:** Chabad participation during college was revealed to have a statistically significant effect upon the study's 18 measures of post-college Jewish engagement for those raised Reform or Conservative, and 16 out of 18 for those with no denominational affiliation. (The study further clarifies that Chabad's impact on Reform and unaffiliated Jews on campus is likely already significantly larger nationwide than what the study reveals - see pgs. 29, 104.)

In the authors' words:

**"Post-college impact of involvement with Chabad during college is pervasive, affecting a broad range of Jewish attitudes and behaviors. These include religious beliefs and practices, Jewish friendships, Jewish community involvement, Jewish learning, dating and marriage, emotional attachment to Israel, and the importance of being Jewish."**  
(See pgs. 79-80 for the full list of measurables.)

### RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS...

Furthermore, it emerges from the report that Chabad's impact on college students can be **felt across the Jewish denominational spectrum**, in matters such as increased attendance at religious services, and even membership dues (hardly something young people are known for!).

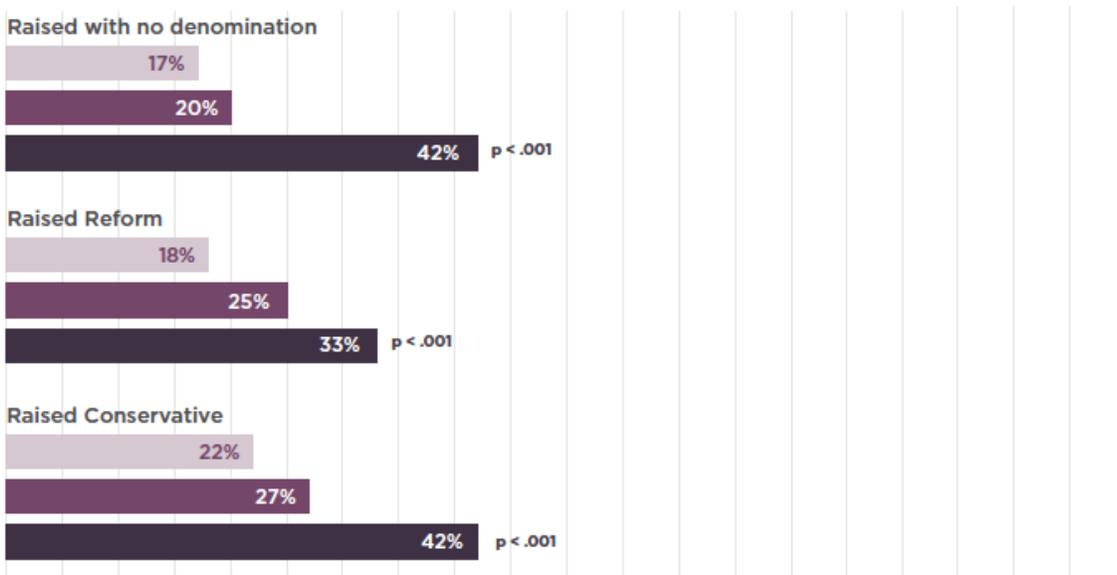
This statistically significant rise across all denominations applies **even to those students who had only moderate Chabad participation in college**. Students who participated in Chabad also had a **significantly greater sense of belonging within the Jewish community in general**, as well as higher rates of community volunteering. (Figures 4.6, 4.7, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11.)

Overall, the authors conclude, the data indicates that **"participation at Chabad during college fosters a greater involvement with mainstream Jewish life [after college]."**

FIGURE 4.11: TAKING ON A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN A JEWISH ORGANIZATION

CHABAD PARTICIPATION DURING COLLEGE:  None/Low  Moderate  High

#### Took on a Leadership Role in a Jewish Organization in the Past 12 Months



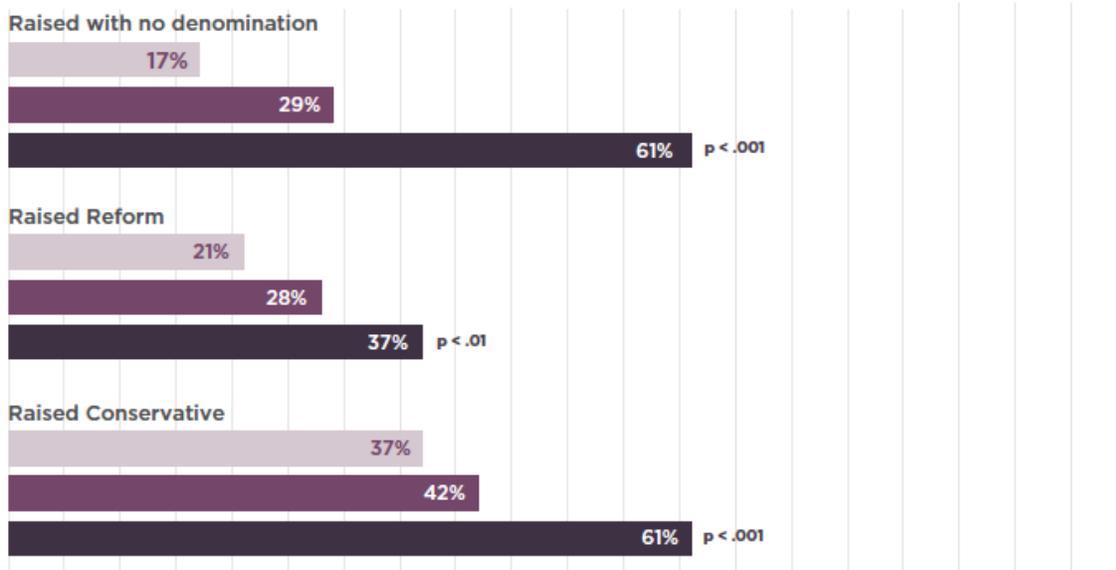
## SOME EXAMPLES OF INCREASED PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL JEWISH INVOLVEMENT:

- **Belief in G-d:** Replicating a question asked by the Pew Research Center in its 2013 study of American Jewry: “Do you believe in God or a universal spirit, or not?,” the study found **statistically significant differences between active and less active participants** across all denominations, including a **doubling for Jews raised with no affiliation**. (Figure 4.2)
- **Dating and Marriage:** Participants with more frequent Chabad participation are more likely to feel it is important to date Jews, are actively dating Jews, and **consider it important to marry Jewish**. (Figures 4.14, 4.15, 4.16) Married respondents (comprising 16 percent of all respondents) were more likely to have married someone Jewish if they had been more frequent participants at Chabad during college. (Figure 4.17)

**FIGURE 4.14: IMPORTANCE OF DATING JEWS**

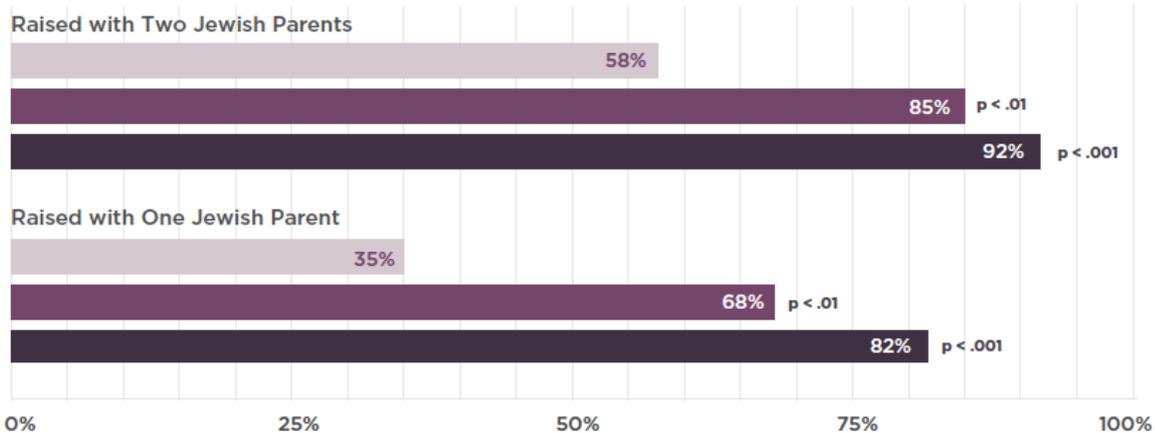
CHABAD PARTICIPATION DURING COLLEGE:  None/Low  Moderate  High

### Dating Jews is “Very Important”



**FIGURE 4.17: CHOICE OF A SPOUSE**

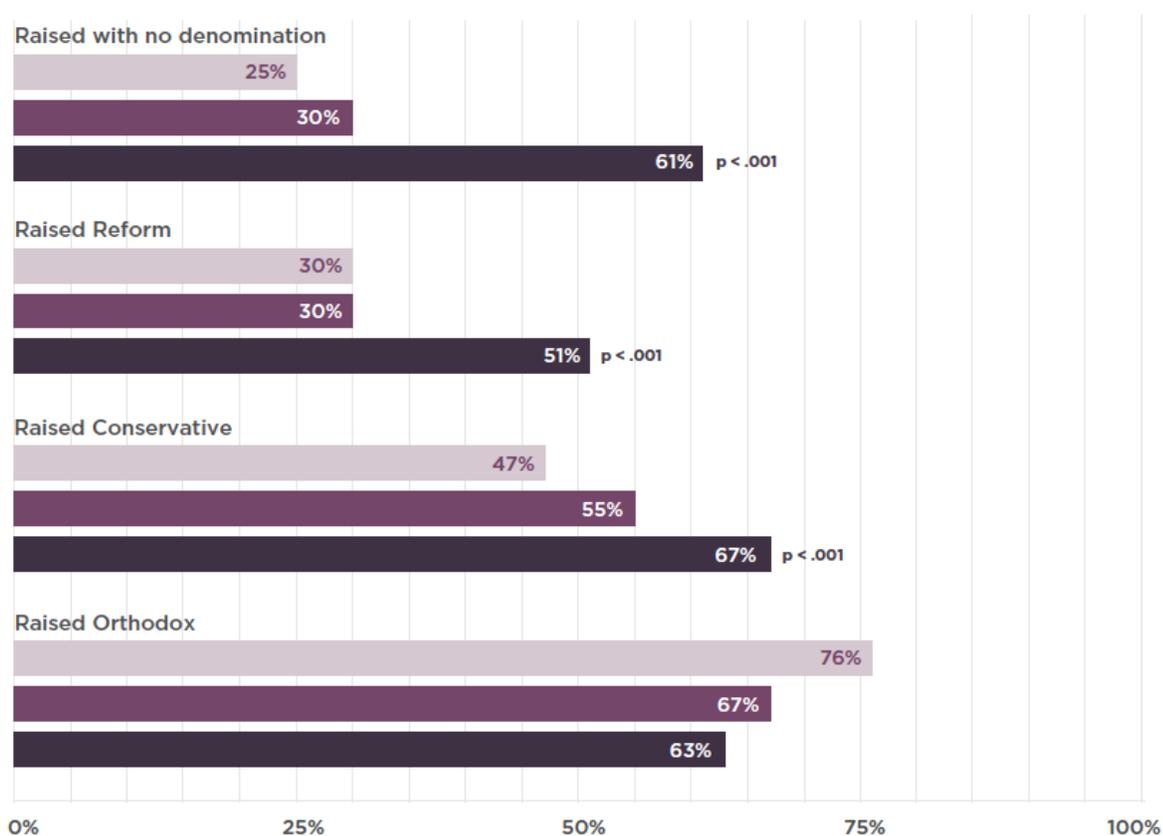
### Married a Jew



- **Traditional practice:** The authors measured and discovered **increased observance** of Shabbat candle lighting among those involved with Chabad. Applied to other tangible Jewish practices, this would appear to support the likelihood of significant growth in many other ‘tangible’ practices of Judaism among those who come to Chabad. (Figure 4.3)
- **Jewish Learning:** The percentage of students who participate in all kinds of Jewish learning after college is higher for those who participate moderately at Chabad while on campus, and **nearly doubles** for students raised Reform or Conservative with high Chabad participation. (Figure 4.13)
- **Emotional Attachment to Israel:** Chabad fosters “love and support for the Jewish homeland.” Between classes about Israel and bringing students to Israel (via Birthright, to which it sends over 100 buses of students every year, and its own lengthier and more in-depth IsraelLinks trips), Chabad has a pronounced effect on students. The study shows that alumni with high Chabad participation, in contrast with those who did not attend Chabad, have a **stronger emotional attachment to Israel**. (Figure 4.18)

**FIGURE 4.18: EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL**

“Very Attached” to Israel



- **Donating to Jewish causes:** Chabad participation **strongly influences post-college donations to the full range of Jewish organizations**. The study found that probability of giving went up with age, suggesting an enduring impact from Chabad participation during college years after graduation. (Figure 4.12)

**BOTTOM LINE: MORE CHABAD DURING COLLEGE, MORE JUDAISM AFTER! THE DEGREE OF IMPACT DESCRIBED ABOVE IS DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION:**

**“The greater an individual’s involvement with Chabad during college, the greater the degree of Jewish engagement after college.”** (Table 4.5, Figure 4.20)

Now, as compelling as some of these stats may be, what might be even more intriguing is the authors’ revelation of the HOW: How do the rabbis and rebbetzins of Chabad achieve such significant impact?! Let’s take a look...

# HOW

## HOW DOES CHABAD SERVE THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT?

BUT FIRST:

A few things from the study that demonstrate how improbable the success of Chabad on Campus actually is:

For starters, the personnel seem to be all wrong for today's campus. The authors write:

**"Many elements of the lifestyle and outlook of Chabad emissaries would not seem to appeal to the values and interests of contemporary college students."**

**Amid "Orthodox beliefs and practices" emissaries "strictly adhere to Jewish Law."**

**"At the most obvious level, features of Chabad dress ('modest' attire, full beards and fedoras for men, wigs for married women) may be seen as alien and ultimately off-putting."**

**They have large families and it is "not uncommon for six or more children to be present at Chabad events."**

**"A college degree is not required" of them to become campus emissaries and instead they "spend years in yeshiva or seminary studying the mystical philosophy of Chabad along with Talmud, practical rabbinics, and more."**

**They "model traditional Jewish rituals that are unfamiliar to some participants," "present mystical teachings to explain how the rituals connect the student to God," and their prayer services are "based on Orthodox liturgy with separate seating for men and women."**

**They do "not create separate Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox groups," nor do they "teach students about differences among the various streams of Judaism that do not follow their interpretations of Jewish law."**

Additionally:

**"When they first arrive, they are not always welcomed by existing Jewish organizations on campus."**

**"They must convince a sometimes skeptical campus administration that they have something unique to offer students that is not being offered by other Jewish organizations."**

**"They need to attract students who are not looking for them."**

And:

**They have to raise their own funds "There is no central pool of money, and Chabad on Campus International does not fund campus centers."**

**"While Jewish federations support Hillel on campus both locally and at the national level, federations either do not fund Chabad centers at all or only provide small grants."**

**Thus, apart from "generous [partial] funding for their first three years at a campus [provided by] a philanthropist," "emissaries need to spend a significant portion of their time contacting donors," including "[spending] a good part of their summer on the road fundraising."**

**So the financial struggles are constant and "shortfalls happen periodically."**

Which leads us back to the question, only significantly compounded:

## HOW DOES CHABAD ACHIEVE WHAT IT DOES WITH THE UNDERGRADUATE POPULATION?!

*The study makes it clear that to understand Chabad's unique appeal and success, one need appreciate some basic philosophical principles of Chabad-Lubavitch, especially as taught and modeled by the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory.*

*[While it is arguably impossible for any report to sum up every theological point 100% accurately – there are thousands of books of deep Chabad philosophy – the authors definitely do a good job getting the discussion going.]*

*The study recounts a few of these philosophical principles (pg. 45 and on), including: Unconditional love of their fellow that is “at the heart of every interaction with a college student,” driving the Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries to be selflessly committed and devoted to others (and considering their campus responsibility to be a full-time and lifetime responsibility, not a job), completely non-judgmental (and considering their less practicing brethren to be fully as Jewish as they are), and to open up their own homes and families to the student population. They also point to Chabad teachings about how every good deed brings the individual closer to G-d, brings more G-dliness into the world, and is an everlasting spiritual achievement.*

*From the totality of the authors' data conclusions and field reports a picture emerges wherein things like Authenticity, Love, Joy, Passion, Hands-on Experiences, Familial Join-Ups Approach, Intellectual Rigor, Energetic Belief, Personal Example, Non-Judgmentalism, Personal Meaning, Personalized Non-Cookie-Cutter Approach, Talmudic Analysis, Hasidic Insight, and much more all converge to form a deeply impactful and personal experience for the individual student, one that has deep and long-lasting impact on their lives.*

### WELCOMING AND “HEIMISH” ENVIRONMENT.

**“Chabad centers strive to welcome all Jewish students regardless of their Jewish upbringing or sensibilities. The couples work to create welcoming, attractive, and fun Jewish social environments... They seek to create a ‘home away from home’ and to ‘ensure that students graduate as stronger and more empowered Jews than when they entered.’”**

**“Emissaries aspire to instill their campus centers with warmth and caring.”**

**“Chabad’s traditional Friday night Shabbat dinner is an example of the “heimish” homey atmosphere students seem to gravitate to, affording participants a welcome alternative to the campus party scene.”**

**“While study participants described the social scene at Chabad with terms like cool, fun, hip, lively, vibrant, and exciting, the warm atmosphere of family and food remained the key.”**

**“When comments about Chabad provided by over 1,200 alumni were analyzed, the single most frequently mentioned word was ‘Welcoming.’”**

### PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS: TRUE CARE!

**“Love, passion, warmth, and caring were terms we heard repeatedly, not just from the emissaries, but also from alumni. From all indications, emissaries were genuinely interested in their students.”**

**“Emissaries go to great lengths to help students, not just with respect to Judaism, but whenever a student is in need.”**

**“Additionally, rabbis and rebbetzins provide students with guidance, mentorship, and informal counseling on topics both religious and personal. It is not uncommon for the rabbi or rebbetzin to be sought out in times of personal crisis, such as when a grandparent dies, or when a student undergoes a serious illness.”**

**“...an extraordinary level of commitment and devotion. For Chabad emissaries, working with students is not a job with a set number of hours per week for which they receive a salary. Chabad emissaries do not move on to the next campus or advance their career and salary by moving to another Jewish organization when a better opportunity arises. Their mission involves a long-term commitment to be the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s emissary at a particular campus.”**

**“Some of the individuals we interviewed indicated that the rabbi and rebbetzin had become like family to them. Students told us that the rabbi or rebbetzin sometimes served as a surrogate parent or as an older sibling.”**

**“The study found that developing a personal relation with the rabbi and/or rebbetzin was the foundation for Jewish growth and as students grew closer, they were more receptive to taking on new Jewish practices.”**

## **ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS:**

**“Those who participated at Chabad during college are likely to maintain a relationship with their campus rabbi or rebbetzin after college. Personal relationships do not end just because someone graduates. College students stay in touch with their college friends after college. If the campus rabbi or rebbetzin has also become a personal friend, then staying in touch is to be expected.”**

**“Campus rabbis were also regularly contacted by alumni for life cycle events. We heard from every rabbi we interviewed about weddings they had conducted for former students, sometimes flying across the country or even overseas.”**

**“Even seven years after graduation, half (50%) of respondents in the high participation category during college had contact with the rabbi or rebbetzin in the past 12 months.”**

**“It is clear from our fieldwork and survey data that some alumni continue to see their campus rabbi as their personal rabbi and the campus rebbetzin as a confidant and personal friend.”**

**“At a focus group with alumni we conducted, one woman described how her campus rabbi and rebbetzin had helped her through a divorce that took place a number of years after graduation. Another participant who had become a physician and joined a Conservative synagogue described how when his grandfather had died, his parents had asked him to contact his campus Chabad rabbi to conduct the funeral, rather than the rabbi at his synagogue. His parents did not belong to a synagogue. Two other members of the focus group, whose families were also unaffiliated, then spoke up and said that they had also reached out to their campus rabbi when their grandparent had died.”**

**“This continuing relationship has the potential to meaningfully shape the post-college lives of young adults. Once young adults graduate from college, they face a new environment and a new set of life challenges.**

**“In contrast with campus life, in the new urban landscape that college graduates enter [...things are much different for them]. So, if young adults are unlikely to join synagogues, and if the Jewish opportunities they do attend often lack religious content, having a relationship with a rabbi or rebbetzin has the potential to make a real difference in their Jewish lives. Emissaries can provide guidance during a crucial time when these young adults are establishing careers and looking for a life partner.”**

## COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE

“Despite their scrupulous and unwavering personal observance, emissaries do not consider students who do not follow these practices to be any less Jewish, and they do not impose these practices upon them.”

“All Jewish students, regardless of background and upbringing, attend the same events, and all are welcomed regardless of their beliefs or practices.”

“Campus emissaries believe that students should be attracted to Jewish life and participate of their own volition. It is the job of the Chabad emissary to inspire.”

## “AUTHENTICITY” IN A VALUE-NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENT

“In their personal lives, [the emissaries] strive to practice everything that they teach and ‘preach.’”

“[Some find that] elements of Chabad serve as critique and counterpoint for a prevailing ‘anything goes’ campus atmosphere,” and “some female students we interviewed reported finding the modest clothing and conduct of the rebbetzin to be appealing in the midst of a campus culture that some students find degrading to women.”

“[Chabad] does not attempt to be all things to all Jews” and “will never violate Jewish law for short-term gains, even at the cost of a smaller student turnout.”

Tailor to the individual “Emissaries repeatedly told us that their approach was always to find ways to get to know each student, learn where they wished to go Jewishly, and then help them to get there.” They “may encourage the student to go in various directions, depending upon the student’s interests and current level of knowledge.”

## THE OVERALL DIRECTION: “MORE!”

“Our conversations with rabbis and rebbetzins yielded many variations on a single theme – more. The idea was to help students move in an ‘upward direction’ and ‘take the next step,’ increasing their Jewish practice from wherever they were. Emissaries told us that they were there to help students ‘discover their own path’ and help their souls ‘blossom’ when they were ready, but students were also encouraged to ‘grow’ Jewishly through learning about Judaism and trying out new Jewish practices.”

“Of course, emissaries are gratified when a student becomes mitzvah-observant... [but] according to Chabad rabbis and rebbetzins, if a Jewish student leaves after graduation feeling a bit more Jewish pride, has more of an appreciation of Shabbat, practices a few more Jewish rituals than they did before, or is more inclined to choose a Jewish marriage partner, they feel they have accomplished something important.”

## PERSONAL EXAMPLE

“...Through the caring they show students and the lifestyle they model, [Chabad emissaries hope that students will] be drawn to explore and embrace Jewish practices and teachings. [They also] hope that the feeling of Jewish community they create on campus prepares students to participate in a local Jewish community post-college wherever they may end up living.”

“It is apparent from our findings that those who come regularly are inspired by their experiences to continue Shabbat practices after college.”

“It was important to Chabad emissaries that they show students as much as possible the benefits of these life choices, in the hope that students would also choose to marry someone Jewish and raise a Jewish family.”

**“In her personhood, the rebbetzin demonstrates approaches to Jewish life and religious expression...”**

**“One of the primary ways that Chabad creates a warm social environment is by modeling Jewish family life.”**

## **WHAT DOES CHABAD’S FOUNDATIONAL “JEWISH PROGRAMMING” CONSIST OF?**

*(PLEASE NOTE: for the sake of brevity we’ve left out the socially-oriented activities)*

**“Aside from increasing the performance of mitzvot, Chabad also seeks to create a sense of belonging to something larger and historic, engender Jewish pride, foster a deeper connection to the Jewish people, enhance Jewish identity, and teach about all aspects of Jewish history, life, and religion.”**

**“According to emissaries, group classes were perhaps the single most impactful way to foster Jewish growth. Most emissaries developed and taught their own classes on topics of their own choosing, based on student interest. Many also taught classes that were developed nationally.”**

**“[In addition to teaching the same things their husbands do,] Rebbetzins also teach classes that are only for women, covering topics such as love, relationships, and marriage. In one-on-one classes with women, the rebbetzin might tackle weightier topics that she would not teach to a larger audience.”**

**“In addition to one-on-one meetings about personal issues, emissaries also spend time meeting with students one on one to teach them about Judaism. Topics can range from ‘Judaism 101’ to mystical Hasidic teachings to traditional Talmud study, depending upon the student’s level of knowledge and interest.”**

A sampling of group classes/one-on-one discussion topics: “All aspects of Jewish history, life, and religion.” “Developing a relationship with God.” “Judaism 101.” “Talmud study.” “Love, relationships, and marriage.” “Deeper questions about life and God.” “Hasidic philosophy, and the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” “[Other topics] based on student interest.”

**“[Making prayer] services accessible and engaging to those with little Jewish knowledge.”**

**“Opportunities to participate in Jewish rituals, Shabbat and holiday celebrations.”**

**“Farbrengens: Emissaries [held more] intimate gatherings [=farbrengens to] give students an opportunity to have sincere and candid conversations about topics that matter to them while learning Hasidic Jewish teachings that provide further illumination and give students a sense that Jewish teachings have meaningful and practical application.”**

**“[In addition to more formal teaching,] Rebbetzins also teach informally about observant Jewish life. The rebbetzin may offer sessions in cooking and challah baking or simply invite students to help her in these tasks. While she demonstrates how to run a kitchen, a practical skill that many of the female students interviewed seem to appreciate, she also gives embedded lessons in Jewish law and tradition. Preparing food provides an opportunity to talk about the laws of keeping kosher... and the laws of Shabbat...”**

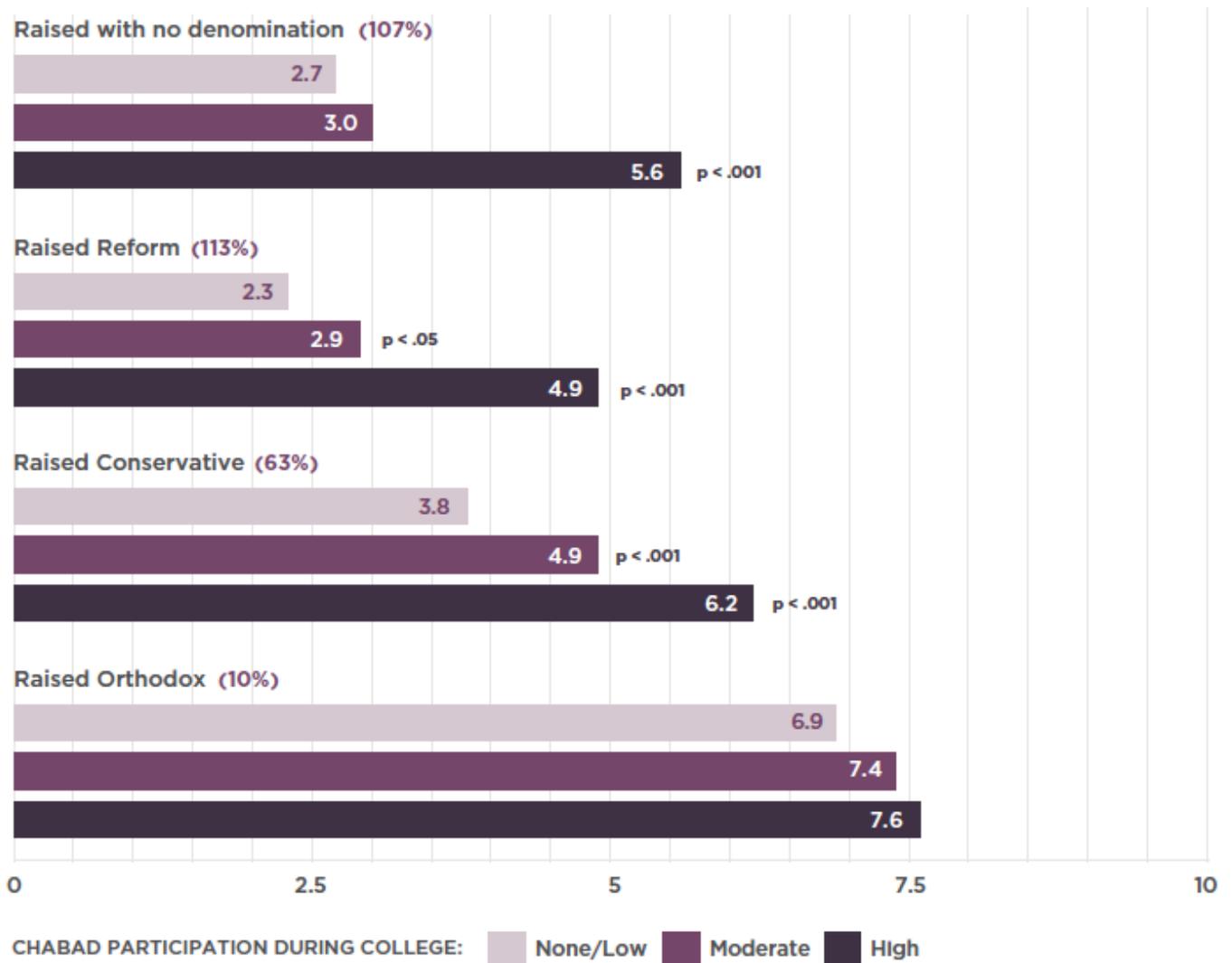
**“In addition, the Lubavitcher Rebbe believed that it was important for Jewish young men and women to simply dine together over kosher food in order to strengthen Jewish identity and to meet each other. Accordingly, [some] emissaries can drop not-so-subtle hints at meals such as ‘mingle if you are single.’”**

## Chabad Participation During College



**FIGURE 4.20: IMPACT OF CHABAD PARTICIPATION ON AN OVERALL ENGAGEMENT SCORE**

Predicted Overall Engagement Score on a Scale of 0-12



A note regarding students raised Orthodox: The study did not specifically focus on Chabad's impact on students raised Orthodox, and many of the measures it employed are pretty standard for this cohort prior to arrival at Chabad. Thus, various data points in the study register little or no impact on Orthodox students. A brilliant dive, however, in chapter 5 (pgs. 101-3) sheds some fascinating light on the probable actual impact, along with some data from the study's current measurables that appear to uphold that probability (though further study must surely be done).

## AND MUCH MORE...

There are all kinds of other great nuggets to be found throughout the study, e.g.:

- Based on the nature of the study and the cohort of schools it focused on, Chabad's impact on Reform and unaffiliated Jews on campus is likely already likely significantly greater nationwide than what is revealed in this study. (See pgs. 29, 104)
- School administrators appreciate Chabad.
- Chabad emissaries recognize that not everyone will come to Chabad and feel it is important to have a strong Hillel at their schools. (Pg. 44)
- Investigating some of the rumors and stereotypes, like pressure tactics, gender discrimination, and more.
- The role little children play on a campus for students multiple times their age.
- The dizzying array of additional responsibilities the emissaries juggle atop all the ones mentioned above.
- And much more...



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