

ABSTRACT

The Role of Parents, Teachers, and Peers in the Spirituality and Religious Observance of Jewish Modern Orthodox Adolescents

This research analyzed data from the JewBALE 2.0 (Goldberg, 2016), an anonymous scale consisting of 167 questions intended to provide a better understanding of what students believe (BELIEFS) and do (ACTIONS) in relation to their Judaism, with a sample of 1341 Jewish modern orthodox high school students from 18 participating schools. It also analyzed data from the DUKE Health Profile and a Socio-Religious Scale of Personal Beliefs. The scales were analyzed with the intention of uncovering correlations between Jewish modern orthodox adolescent students' spirituality and religious observance, and their perceived relationships with their teachers, parents, and peers. The data indicated that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers, parents, and peers all predicted higher levels of spirituality, while relationships with General studies teachers had the reverse effect, predicting a lower score in spirituality when positive relationships were formed. Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers played the biggest role when it came to spirituality, followed by mothers and then fathers. Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers also played the biggest role when it came to religious observance, followed by fathers. Positive relationships with mothers, peers, and general studies teachers did not prove to be significant in their effect on religious observance. However, the p values for both peers and mothers were closely trending towards significance. Positive relationships with both mothers and

fathers correlated with positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers, general studies teachers, and peers. Students with more religiously observant parents were more likely to have positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers than those with less religiously observant parents. This study is important for better understanding how different relationships affect spirituality and religious observance.

The Role of Parents, Teachers, and Peers in the
Spirituality and Religious Observance of
Jewish Modern Orthodox Adolescents

by

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DEDICATION

To my children.

I love being your teacher מורה and your mom אמה.

Thank Hashem for you.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this paper, the terms below refer to the following:

Spirituality- An inner sense of living relationship to a higher power/ a personal relationship with the transcendent (Miller, 2015)

Religiosity/Religiousness- A term used to encompass the different aspects of religious behavior, such as knowing, feeling, and doing (Cornwall, Albrecht, Cunningham, & Pitcher, 1986).

Intrinsic Religiosity- Religiosity lived at a personal and intimate level, as a core value of the self (Pace, 2014)/ Religious beliefs (“I have faith in a power greater than me”) and private religious practices (e.g. prayer) (Kliewer et al., 2020)

Extrinsic Religiosity- Religiosity as a source of social connection and personal benefit (Pace, 2014)/ Observable religious behavior* (Kliewer et al., 2020)

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, Judaism relied on parents to be the primary educators of their children, and thus presumably their main source of influence for spirituality and religious observance. From the famous verse in the biblical obligatory prayer of “Shema”, which commands parents to “*teach their children whether they are sitting at home or traveling, going to sleep or waking up*” (Deuteronomy 6:7), to testimonies in the Talmud that speak about fathers taking on the responsibility of teaching Torah- to the extent that orphans did not have any opportunity to learn it (Baba Bathra 21a, Baba Bathra 32c)- it is clear that the original intent in Jewish culture was to rely heavily on the parents to impact the education of the next generation, leaving Jewish children with a very specific sphere of influence for role models in spirituality and religious observance.

It wasn't until the first century BCE when the Talmud attributed a decree that Jewish children should go to school, an environment with peers and teachers, to Shimon Ben Sheta, (Yerushalmi Ketubot 32c), and it was not until 69 CE when the Talmud recorded the enactment that teachers should be established in Jerusalem (Baba Bathra 21a). Fast forward to post World War II, when Bernard Drachman, a leading orthodox Rabbi, called for a system where students would be prepared for their duties as the Jewish people, as well as for the difficult tasks and challenges that come with living in the real world. This led to the founding of what we know today as “Yeshivot”, many of which (at least among the modern orthodox) fulfill the needs of a Jew living in the real and secular world. After WWII, the period of “the great expansion”, people felt like they needed to come back with a vengeance and help the Jewish people thrive. In response, they started a nationally organized effort for the

establishment and maintenance of orthodox day schools. The schools were organized and established through organizations like “Torah U’Mesorah”, and began to be built at an amazing rate, with hundreds of schools established around the country. From the early days of Yeshiva University, Ramaz, and the Yeshiva of Flatbush, to the newer days of Jewish graduate schools and studies even within secular colleges, the push to keep the Jewish nation educated, growing, innovating, and becoming compatible with new times, allowed Jewish schools to open and thrive post WWII (Sokolow, 2012; Schiff, 1966). Fast forward to the 21st century where there are now over 750 Jewish day schools in the United States alone, serving approximately 205,000 students (Schick, M., 2009; Wertheimer, 2007), thus expanding students’ sphere of influence for spirituality and religious observance to both the home and the school, to parents, teachers, and peers, leaving us questioning: to what extent do different relationships impact the development of adolescent spirituality and religious observance, and under what conditions?

Knowing how different relationships impact spirituality and religious observance is important for a plethora of reasons. Spirituality and religious observance are fundamental goals prioritized within Jewish Education and among Orthodox Jewish Families. Additionally, there is an abundance of research demonstrating that spirituality and religious observance can positively impact many factors, including physical and mental health, academic achievement, and even overall life satisfaction (Cotton et al. 2005; Hodge, 2007; Nelson et al., 2009; McIntosh et al., 2011; Taghavi et al., 2020). Which relationships play a stronger role in influencing spirituality and religious observance in adolescents, and why? As the research suggests, learning which relationships play a role in long term spirituality and religious observance, and to what extent these relationships impact spiritual and religious

development, can potentially lead us to a better understanding of how to improve the lives of our children, as well as how to uphold sacred Jewish values of connection and practice.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory suggests that child development is complex and multi-faceted. He explains that it can never be attributed to one cause alone, and must be associated with multiple spheres of environmental influence, from the more immediate surroundings of parents, teachers, and peers, to the more macro surroundings of economy, culture, and mass media (Guy-Evans, 2020). Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggested that the environment of the child consists of several interrelated structures including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem, with the influence of one system being dependent on its relationship with the others. According to this theory, in order to properly study the role that relationships play in adolescent spirituality and religious observance, one must consider not only the child's immediate environment, but control for the impact of the broader environment as well.

Research within the general population suggests that parents have the ability to be the most influential role models for their children (Shaffer, 2009; Briggs, 2014) to the extent that secure parent attachments are often a prerequisite to positive and strong connections with other role models, including teachers and peers (Stright et al., 2008; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Studies have also shown that consistent religious messages transmitted from both parents is a strong predictor for children who will internalize those messages (Myers, 1996), and that higher personal spirituality consistently predicts more positive adjustment in terms of well-being and parental relationships (Good, 2014). In one study, a large percentage of adolescents identified parents as role models and very few viewed teachers as role models at all (Bricheno & Thorton, 2007). However, with research on Orthodox Jewish students

specifically, a higher percentage of Jewish students viewed their teachers as good role models and believed that their positive interactions with their teachers positively impacted their religious growth (Tannenbaum, 2007). In Tannenbaum's (2007) study, 66% of Jewish students viewed their teachers as good role models in comparison to 2.4% of the general high school population, and 59% of them believed that their positive interactions with their teachers positively impacted their religious growth. Others have indicated that Orthodox Jewish students may be more likely to choose to model their religious observance after their conservative teachers than after the more liberal at home observance demonstrated by their parents (Heilman, 2005; Soloveitchik, 1994 as cited in Weinstein, 2020). Some have even hypothesized that teachers in the Orthodox community have become the main factor in determining the religiosity of their students, almost replacing the role of the parents in that area (Charyten, 1997).

The little research that exists on orthodox Jewish students is intriguing. It's possible that although within research among the general population, it seems abundantly clear that parents and even peers are the dominant influencers in the life of adolescents, that this may not be the case for Jewish Orthodox adolescents. It seems possible that in comparison to other relationships that Jewish orthodox adolescent students have, teachers may play a more significant role in influencing spirituality and religious observance than we might have thought.

In order to explore this, this paper analyzes data from the JewBALE 2.0 (Goldberg, 2016), an anonymous scale consisting of 167 questions intended to provide a better understanding of what students believe (BELIEFS) and do (ACTIONS) in relation to their Judaism, with a sample of 1341 modern orthodox high school students from 18 participating

schools. Among many other data points, the scale includes questions concerning religious beliefs, Jewish struggle, religious practices, and relationships with role models, and is analyzed with the intention of uncovering correlations between Jewish modern orthodox adolescent students' spirituality and religious observance, and their perceived relationships with their teachers, parents, and peers. In addition to the JewBALE 2.0, this paper also analyzes data from the DUKE Health Profile and a Socio-Religious Scale of Personal Beliefs.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Impact of relationships in general

Research has found that relationships are one of the most important and fundamental influences in people's lives, for better or worse. Whether it be a friend, a mentor, a teacher, a work colleague, or parent, the literature is full of data that demonstrates the extent of influence each one has on our lives, choices, decisions, and ultimately, our success (Bricheno & Thorton, 2007; Cannister, 1999; Cook, 2000; Shaffer, 2009; Srimarut & Mekhum, 2020).

As mentioned, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory suggests that the influence of relationships on a person's development is more complex and multi-faceted than one single relationship on its own. He explains that development can never be attributed to one cause alone, and must be associated with multiple spheres of environmental influence, from the more immediate surroundings of parents, teachers, and peers, to the more macro surroundings of economy, culture, and mass media (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Guy-Evans, 2020). According to this theory, in order to properly study the role that relationships play in adolescents' spirituality and religious observance, one must consider not only the child's immediate environment, but the impact of the broader environment as well. Therefore, in order to study and obtain data on the role of any one relationship on its own, one must control for those factors.

Parent Role in Child Development

The relationship between parents and their children has the ability to be the most influential model in childrens' lives (Shaffer, 2009), to the extent that secure parent attachments are often a prerequisite to positive and strong connections with other role models

(Stright et al., 2008; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Research has demonstrated that the extent of parent influence ranges from academic impact (Paulson, 1994; Kurtz-Costes et al., 1995; Seyfried & Chung, 2002; Hopson & Weldon, 2013; Bryce et al., 2019;) to self esteem (Parsons, Adler & Kaczala, 1982), beliefs (Suizzo et al., 2017), decision making (Rumberger et al., 1990), mental health (Zhang, Wang & Lu, 2019), physical health (Coto et al., 2019), as well as career choices and orientation (Wiese & Freund, 2011; Suryadi et al., 2020).

Parent Role in Spirituality and Religious Observance

It isn't surprising then that research has found that the relationship between parents and children is also highly influential on children's spirituality and religious observance. In his book "Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers", Christian Smith wrote that "research in the sociology of religion suggests that *the most important* social influence in shaping young people's religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents" (Smith, 2005, p. 56). The general research across many different religions seems to have remained consistent with that sentiment over time. In Johnson's (1973) study investigating the relationship between students' perceived parental religiosity and their own religious commitment, self-report questionnaires from 453 students at a university in California suggested that students felt they were overall similar to their parents in religious commitment. In Spilman et al.'s (2012) study on generational religious influence, a 20 year longitudinal study of families which included 451 participants found that parents' religious observance during their child's adolescent years predicted continued religiosity of the child from adolescence and into adulthood. In Goodman & Dyer's (2020) study on family factors that influence faith transmission, the role of parents in their children's faith was longitudinally examined through Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, with 327 parents

and adolescents from 13-19 years of age. Although there were some cases where the faith of the parents had a negative correlation with the faith of their children or even no correlation at all, the majority of cases revealed a positive relationship between parent religiosity and the development of faith in their children. The transmission of faith was highest in families that observed more family religious practices, and adolescents with less authoritative mothers were less likely to be influenced by their family faith.

Positive and Negative Parent-Child Relationships

Studies have also found that specifically positive parent-child relationships are the strongest predictors for children who model religious practice after their parents, while highly negative parent-child relationships with high levels of conflict tend to predict the opposite (McKinney & Renk, 2008). In Clark & Worthington's (1990) review of studies on family variables affecting the transmission of religious values from parents to adolescents, adolescents were consistently found to be strongly influenced by their perceptions of their parents' values, with an "atmosphere of intimacy" in the home more likely to lead to the learning of said values and vice versa. Other research demonstrated that when children perceived their relationship with their parents to be one filled with nurturance, companionship, reassurance, and intimate disclosure, they were more likely to follow in their parents' path of religiosity (Barry, Padilla-Walker, & Nelson, 2012). Stearns & McKinney's study (2017) found that when children perceived their parents as warm, it had a positive impact on the likelihood of them modeling the religiosity of their parents (both paternal and maternal warmth had this effect on females while only paternal warmth had this effect on males), and additional research has demonstrated that spiritual support from mothers and

affection from fathers were significantly and positively associated with adolescent “relational spirituality”, or “the experience of an ongoing dynamic personal relationship with G-d” (Desrosiers et al., 2011). In Dudley & Wisbey’s (2000) study focusing on a part of a 10 year longitudinal study, a survey that was given to 653 Seventh-day Adventist young adults from the United States and Canada analyzed their perceptions of how they were treated by their parents while growing up, and compared it to their current church commitment. The survey found that parents who demonstrated warm and caring behaviors predicted strong religious commitment when the children grew up. In Hoge et al.’s (1982) study on the transmission of religious values from parents to teenagers as well, good parent-child relationships were predictors for enhanced transmission of religious values.

Close Parent-Child Relationships

Kim- Spoon et al.’s (2012) study found that higher parent- adolescent attachment directly contributed to adolescents’ religiousness and adjustment, even more so than parents’ own religious levels. Boys who had higher parent- adolescent attachment were more involved in formal religious institutions, and both boys and girls with higher parent- adolescent attachment placed a high level of importance on faith in their lives. Additionally, in their longitudinal study on multigenerational families that included a wide spectrum of religions, including Mormon, Catholicism, and Judaism, Bengtson et al. (2013) found that close parent-child relationships were strong predictors of childrens’ religious participation and of the likelihood of children to maintain the same religious traditions as their parents. Interestingly, Good & Willoughby (2014) found that not only could parents be significant influences on spirituality/religiosity of adolescents, but the opposite could be true as well,

where higher personal spirituality/religiosity could be predictive of positive adjustment in relationships between parents and adolescents.

Drawing from survey data from 481 alumni of Christian colleges, Leonard et al.'s (2013) study found that faith support was one of the predicting factors for emerging adults who reported high religiosity that was similar to that of their parents. It is important to keep in mind however that the participants were in fact christian college graduates which may have factored into their religiosity as well. In Kliewer et al.'s (2020) study on low income urban African American adolescents, those who reported feeling more accepted by their mothers had higher levels of intrinsic religiosity, while those who reported feeling less accepted showed a decline in their intrinsic religiosity over time. In Sârbu et al's (2021) very recent study using a questionnaire on 2604 Romanian students from 108 randomly selected classes in 84 different high schools in Bucharest, data demonstrated that adolescents with better parental relationships were more religious in both belief and action than those with worse parental relationships. Interestingly, girls showed a higher level of individual religiosity than boys, but boys attended religious services more often.

Authoritative Parenting

Studies have also found that authoritative parenting in particular is a good predictor for successful transmission and influence of religiosity and spirituality from parent to child. In Hardy et al.'s (2011) study on parents' influence on religiousness and spirituality, an online survey was used to obtain cross-sectional data of 122 participants ages 17-31. The study found that family religiousness positively predicted childrens' spirituality and religiousness, even more so in families with authoritative parenting styles. Dudley &

Wisbey's (2000) study on the relationship between parenting styles and adolescents' commitment to the church also found that "affectionate constraint," a combination of care and control similar to authoritative parenting, predicted the largest number of ardent members and the smallest percentage of church dropouts. In Lane's (2016) study, 261 males and females who were raised religiously within the Orthodox Jewish community completed an online survey with measures that included the Parental Bonding Instrument and questions concerning religious conflict with parents. One of the findings from the survey included specifically mothers' authoritarian parenting style significantly predicting religious change. More recent research has found that moderate levels of parent-child conflict can have a positive impact on childrens' connection to the religiosity of their parents, which is also in line with an authoritative parenting style (Stearns & McKinney, 2018). In Goodman & Dyer's (2020) recent study on family factors that influence faith transmission, the role of parents in their childrens' faith was longitudinally examined through Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, with 327 parents and adolescents from 13-19 years of age. Goodman & Dyer found that adolescents with less authoritative mothers were less likely to be influenced by their family faith, implying that mothers who had a more authoritative parenting style would be more likely to positively influence the religiosity of their children.

Parent Role Modeling

Additional research has demonstrated that parental influence on childrens' religiosity and spirituality is also very much dependent on parent action and role modeling. For example, Cornwall's (1988) study, which looked at parental influence on religious socialization amongst Mormons, found that high parental church attendance was associated

with more frequent church attendance by adolescents. Dudley's (1999) study also found that children were more likely to remain members of a church if their parents attended church and if they worshiped with their parents more frequently (however, it is important to note that the significance of the findings were weakened due to attrition). In Schwartz's (2006) study using data from over 4,000 Christian adolescents, parent modeling of religious faith behaviors was a significant predictor of the religious faith of adolescents. Other studies have also found that parents role modeling and co-participating in religious activities help transmit the importance of religiosity to their children (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Dollahite & Marks, 2005). Luce et al.'s (2013) study revealed that parents' epistemological stances were influential on their children as well. In Francis's (2020) more recent study focusing on 645 students ages 13-15 who identified themselves as Anglicans from a survey of 7,059 students from England and Wales, survey data that used a likert scale revealed that children attended church primarily because their parents did, and that parent support mattered even more than peer support when it came to church attendance. Kliewer et al's (2020) study, referenced earlier, on low income urban African American adolescents also found that those whose mothers reported attending religious services more often had higher levels of intrinsic religiosity while those whose mothers attended religious services less often declined in their intrinsic religiosity over time.

Parent-Child Communication

Research has also discovered that in addition to role modeling through action, conversations and communication between parents and children are key impacts on childrens' religious and spiritual development. In Harris's book titled "Trusting what you're told: How children learn from others" (2012), studies reviewed revealed that conversations

with parents were influential on the conceptual development of their children. Flor & Knapp (2001) found this to be true with regard to religious transmission as well with research that demonstrated that children were more likely to report that religion was important when parents communicated with them about religious issues. (Important to note that that study was done on a specific population in Georgia) Studies have also shown that consistent religious messages transmitted from both parents is a strong predictor for children who will internalize those messages and attach importance to religion in general (Myers, 1996; Flor & Knapp, 2001). In Schwartz's (2006) study on over 4,000 Christian adolescents mentioned earlier, parent dialogue, including prayer as well as reading and talking about the bible, was positively associated with religious faith. Other studies have even demonstrated that the parent-child relationship is bidirectional when it comes to religiosity, finding that while parents influence their children through communicating about religiosity, children can make a religious impact on their parents within that same communication (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008). Francis's (2020) more recent study on Anglican adolescents from England and Wales also found that children were more likely to continue attending church if their parents not only attended church, but spoke to and communicated with them about their faith as well.

Parent Relationship Status

Other studies have found that parental influence on childrens' spirituality and religious observance is often dependent on whether the parents remain together as a couple. One study found that children born into a "traditional nuclear family structure" in which there are two parents raising the children, attended church more often than children with a

less traditional family structure (Chaves, 1991). Drawing on 30 years of data from members of multigenerational families in the Longitudinal Study of Generations, Bengtson et al.

(2009)

also found that religious orientations with regard to both beliefs and practices that were developed in nuclear and extended families continued into adulthood. Boyatzis and Janicki (2003) also found that mothers were more likely to discuss religious topics with their children, which research has demonstrated can positively impact religiosity (Flor & Knapp, 2001; Francis, 2020), when fathers were present in the household. Additionally, Petts' (2015) found that parental influence on religious participation and the importance placed on religion was stronger for children with married parents, whether biological or adoptive, than children of divorced or single parents who were never married. Zhai et al.'s (2007) study using data from 1,500 young adults ages 18-35 from the National Survey on the Moral and Spiritual Lives of Young Adults from Divorced and Intact Families (NSMS), emphasized that while divorce is associated with less religious involvement among young adults, it does not affect other aspects of religiosity including prayer or feelings of closeness to G-d. Denton's (2012) study found further nuance when it came to the effects of parents' relationship status on child religiosity. The study revealed that when parents split up or divorce, it may either lead to religious decline or increased religious engagement, depending on the characteristics of the child and how he or she relates to religion prior to the breakup.

Parent Health

Studies have also found that when there were external factors that negatively impacted parents' mental and physical health, their ability to parent was hindered ,which in

turn negatively affected their religious and spiritual impact on their children. For example, using structural equation modeling (SEM), one study found that parental antisocial issues were associated with weaker relationships between mother and daughter religiosity (Stearns & McKinney, 2018b). Another study found that depression and anxiety in mothers decreased the level of importance that children gave to religiosity, and had a negative impact on mothers' transmission of religiosity to their children (Stearns & McKinney, 2018c). These findings were specifically associated with maternal impact and the same results did not apply to fathers, possibly due to the likelihood that mothers are present more as role models in their children's lives. In a more recent study mentioned earlier, Sârbu et al. (2021) found that adolescents in lower socioeconomic families actually had greater religious belief, but were less involved when it came to religious participation when compared to families with a higher socioeconomic status. As prior studies demonstrated, it is possible that the stress caused from financial burden hindered parents' ability to model and instill religious practice.

Parents' unclear religious status

Parents who have an unclear religious stance and send mixed messages to their children about their beliefs and practices can also negatively impact their children's relationship with religion and spirituality. Using two measures for parent's religion, church attendance and importance placed on religion, Bader & Desmond (2006) found that parents who relayed a higher level of religious belief than actual religious observance and behavior, sent mixed messages to their children, which led them to display lower levels of religiosity than children of more consistently religious parents. Parents can have different levels of

religious homogeneity when their beliefs and practices don't align, which can impact an adolescents' relationship with religion, especially at a stage in life where they can be more easily upset by hypocrisy (Frankel, 2014).

Some older research has shown that parents may influence their childrens' spirituality and religious observance differently based on the gender of each child. For example, in a study conducted in Sweden, data collected from a revivalist church youth organization using 399 questionnaires revealed that women were more likely to remain consistently committed to their religion, while men were more likely to leave and come back years later. The researchers found that parent involvement in religion was the motivation behind the women remaining affiliated (Zetterberg, 1952 as cited in Weinstein, 2020). In another study where intrinsic religiousness, orthodoxy, and religious practice were examined using data from catholic boys and girls attending parochial schools, parents who modeled religious commitment had a greater influence on females than males, although both genders were significantly influenced by their parents acting as religious role models (Suziedelis & Potvin, 1981). It is important to note however that this research is much older, and therefore may represent a society where gender roles were affected differently.

Jewish Modern Orthodox Parents

Up until recently, there had not been many studies that focused on the effect of parents on the spirituality and religious observance of Jewish modern orthodox adolescents. Most focused on other religions. More current research seems to align with the aforementioned studies, shedding light on data indicating that parents do indeed play an important role in the religious and spiritual lives of Jewish modern orthodox adolescents

specifically. In Goldmintz's (2011) study, the influence of family on beliefs and actions of 227 modern orthodox high school seniors was measured using the Jewish Beliefs, Actions and Living Evaluation (JewBALE) (Goldberg, 2006). Multiple regression analyses revealed that a "moral-religious emphasis" in the home was a significant predictor of religious actions and beliefs for both males and females. In Weinstein's (2020) study focusing on the predictors of internalizing Jewish beliefs for modern orthodox adolescents, religious homogeneity between adolescents and their parents predicted higher levels of spirituality. In addition, the positive correlation between parent-child religious homogeneity and spirituality was stronger for students who spoke about God with their parents. However, Goldstein (2012) focused specifically on the causes of religious and spiritual changes in Orthodox Jewish youth after their post high school year of study in Israel, and found that parents did not play a significant role in religious and spiritual change. The study did find however that although parents were not influencing their children after their return from Israel, religious changes experienced by students negatively affected their parents' religious commitments. It is important to note that a much smaller number of parents than students responded to the surveys used in this study, which may have affected its results and generalizability.

Teacher role in student development

Although the relationship between parents and their children seems to have a large stake in influence, research has found that the relationships between teachers and their students has significant influential power as well. Not only do teachers have the potential to significantly influence their students' academic success (Jalapang & Raman, 2020) and motivation to read (Troyer, 2017), but they may also have the ability to impact their attitudes,

behaviors (Blazar & Kraft, 2017), and growth mindset (Scharf, 2020), as well as their mental (Wang, Hu, and Wang, 2018) and physical activity (Cheung, 2020).

Teacher role in student Spirituality

Just like parents, teachers have the ability to play a significant role in the spirituality and religious observance of students. However, the research on teacher influence is more limited (Aoki et al., 2000), possibly because the topic of spirituality and religion is not often emphasized in all schools (Merlino, 2005). The research that is available however, does point to a correlation between teacher influence, spirituality, and religiosity in students.

Many practitioners and theorists in the field of education suggest that nurturing the spirituality of school staff can help students find purpose and meaning (Allen & Kellom, 2001; Holmes-Ponder, Ponder, & Bell, 1999; Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999; Palmer, 1990 as cited in Keyes et al. 1999; Sernak, 1998), terms associated with spirituality and religiosity in the literature (Higher Education Research Institute, 2005; Eberhardt & Dalton, 2007; Tirri & Quinn, 2010; Quinn, 2017) . In a mixed-methods qualitative study on 168 high school seniors, although students generally felt that overall, the school they attended was not doing enough to significantly affect their spirituality, students did mention that connecting to others and attending specific classes did help their overall spiritual development and that negative school atmosphere and culture had the ability to hinder their spiritual growth, implying that a more positive school atmosphere might have the ability to enhance it (Merlino, 2005).

Studies have also found that because teachers are active role models, they have the ability to influence students through observation. Similar to “observational research”, which demonstrates that we often learn from the behavior of those we are in constant contact with (Bandura, 1986), “observational spiritual learning” can apply in modeling religious actions and spiritual beliefs (Oman & Thoresen, 2003). Particularly with adolescents, teachers who serve as role models have the opportunity to effectively impact the spirituality and religious practice of their students. Adolescents, especially those with strained relationships with their parents, are often at a stage in life where they feel the need to turn to people besides their parents for guidance and advice, thus potentially creating an opportunity for effective mentorship from teachers (Olds et al., 1997; Rhodes, 2002). These teacher-student relationships may have the potential to foster better, more communicative, and more trusting parent-child relationships (Rhodes et al., 2000) which in turn can lead to greater religious and spiritual growth (Dudley & Wisbey, 2000; Good & Willoughby, 2014 ; Harris, 2012; Bengtson et al, 2013).

Research on mentor figures in general can also help us better understand the potential teachers have to impact student spirituality and religious practice. In a 1970-1998 meta-analysis of 55 studies, DuBois et al. (2002) found that, in addition to other factors, strong mentor-mentee relationships improved the effect that mentors had on their mentees. The same meta-analysis was conducted again by Smith (2003), this time looking at 43 articles from 1975-2001, with similar results. In Cannister’s (1999) study, mentorship led to an increase in spiritual growth for 200 Christian college students. In Gill’s (2011) study using Sharon Parks’ mentoring community theory to understand environmental elements in religious student organizations, two surveys were given to 107 students in various religious

student organizations. Using correlation analysis, the results revealed that a “mentoring community” was found to be significant for Christian student religious organizations, but not as helpful for those affiliated with other religions. Gill emphasized the importance of recognizing the significance for Christian student religious organizations as being possibly due to the specificity of the “mentoring community”, and that students who affiliated differently may have just needed a different type of mentoring community in order for it to have been effective.

Teacher role in Jewish Schools

Other research has demonstrated that mentors and teachers affiliated with other religions aside from Christianity, particularly Judaism, do in fact have positive and significant effects on student spirituality and religious practice. For example, in a study on 424 Jewish adolescents studying in a gap year program in Israel, positive relationships with high school teachers and rabbis led to stronger religious beliefs (Eisenberg, 2010). In another study, Jewish Day schools seemed to have had lasting effects on the formation of students’ Jewish identity and correlated with Jewish behavior (Schiff & Schneider, 1994). Cohen’s (1995) study on the impact of Jewish Education on Jewish identity found that almost all forms of Jewish education were associated with greater Jewish Identity in both adolescents and their parents. In Tannenbaum’s (2007) study, 66% of Jewish students viewed their teachers as good role models in comparison to 2.4% of the general high school population, and 59% of them believed that their positive interactions with their teachers positively impacted their religious growth. Charytan (1996 as cited in Weinstein, 2020) theorized that Jewish day schools had the ability to be impactful, even more so than parents, but added that

potentially even greater impact could come when teachers are involved in the lives of their students even outside of the classroom, forming close relationships and establishing themselves as role models.

Peer role in general

Just like parents and teachers, peers have the ability to influence adolescents for better or for worse. Research has consistently found that the behaviors and attitudes of adolescents are often very similar to their peers' (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011), likely because they are at a vulnerable stage of life where they are developing their identities and spending more time with friends outside of their own homes, while simultaneously seeking their approval (or avoiding their disapproval) (Blanton & Christie, 2003; Prinstein & Giletta, 2016). In Laible et al.'s (2000) study, adolescents with secure peer relationships, but less secure parent relationships, reported better adjustment with regard to aggression, depression, and sympathy than those who reported secure parent relationships, but less secure peer relationships. It is important to note however that the participants were all from one public middle school and one public high school, limiting the generalizability of the study.

In a study that recruited 805 students from secondary schools, researchers found that having drinking or smoking friends as well as having friends' offer invitations to smoke or drink were strong contributors to adolescent smoking and drinking (Loke & Mak, 2013). Other research has indicated that peer status can correlate with higher disease risk in adulthood as well (Almquist, 2009). In Modin, Östberg, & Almquist's (2011) study that looked at how peer status in 6th grade could predict depression and anxiety later in life, women who described themselves as having had a low peer status in 6th grade were more likely to have

anxiety and depression in later years (men were not affected this way). In the age of social media, peer influence can be even more greatly exacerbated, with decisions often being made in relation to “likes” and comments of friends on the platform (Nesi et al., 2018). As children develop more, peers can start having an even greater amount of influence and impact (Brown & Braun, 2013) while parents may start playing a smaller role than they did before.

Peer role in Religiosity and Spirituality

Just as peers play an important role in child development via physical health, mental health, and social media, they also play a significant role in spirituality and religious observance.

Multiple studies have found that peers play a significant role in influencing religious practice (Regnerus et al., 2004; Black, 2006; Hoge et al., 1982), religious faith (Schwartz, 2006), attitudes towards religion (Hoge et al., 1982) and the importance that adolescents place on religion (Regnerus et al., 2004; King et al., 2002). Both friend modeling and friend dialogue have been found to be significantly and positively correlated with adolescents’ religious faith, potentially even more so than parental modeling and dialogue (Schwartz, 2006). Peer pressure and friend social interactions can also have a strong influence on religious practice and attitudes (Hoge et al., 1982; King & Furrow, 2004). It is important to recognize that religious adolescents tend to affiliate with peers with similar beliefs, which in turn can help strengthen those beliefs (Simons et al. 2004; Landor 2011). It is also important to recognize that the relationship between peers and religiosity can go both ways, and that religion can actually be a protective factor against certain relationships. For example, Massarwi et al.

(2019) found that Arab adolescents with higher levels of religiosity were less likely to be influenced negatively by delinquent peers.

In Ozorak's (1989) study using a questionnaire on 390 early, middle, and late adolescents, peer influence was found to be a predictor of changes in faith for early adolescents. In Black's (2006) study using a quantitative survey on 150 young adults between the ages of 18 and 30, young adults' answers when asked how often their closest friends attended church, bible study, worship, or a prayer group, were very close to their answers concerning their own involvement, the highest correlation compared to all of the other answers in the survey. Another study involving 4,600 Christian adolescents responding to the Religious Belief and Commitment Scale found that friends modeling faith and having dialogue about faith were significantly and positively correlated with the adolescent's own religious faith, even more so than parents modeling and having dialogue (It is important to note that this study was administered at the end of a peer-oriented conference which could have influenced the participants perceptions of their friends compared to their parents at the time, and that this study focused on "friends" as opposed to "peers" implying people the participants were more close to.) (Schwartz, 2006). In Hoge et al.'s (1982) study on 451 tenth graders, peer pressure was found to have a strong influence on participation in and attitudes towards church youth programs. In King & Furrow's (2004) study using data collected from 190 students in one public high school in Los Angeles, students who reported higher friend social interactions were also more active in their own religious practice. Another study where data was collected from a self-report questionnaire given to 413 high schoolers found that peer influence played a significant role in the importance an adolescent placed on religion and in their experience of G-d (King et al., 2002). It is important to note

that this study used a convenience sample and there is also a possibility that the high schoolers who were “influenced” were actually already placing a high level of importance on religion and therefore may have just been drawn to others like them.

Which relationship plays the greater role?

Research within the secular world suggests that parents have the ability to be the most influential role model for their children (Shaffer, 2009) to the extent that secure parent attachments are often a prerequisite to positive and strong connections with other role models, including teachers and peers (Stright et al., 2008; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). In one study, a large percentage of adolescents identified parents as role models and very few viewed teachers as role models at all (Bricheno & Thorton, 2007). When it comes to peers, some research has suggested that although parents play a crucial role in influence throughout their childrens’ life, peers specifically can become even more influential than parents at the stage of adolescence (Laible et al., 2000).

However, with research on Orthodox Jewish students specifically, parents can play a bigger role than peers when it comes to adolescents’ world-outlook (Halpern, 2013), but a higher percentage of Jewish students are likely to view their teachers as good role models and believe that their positive interactions with their teachers positively impacts their religious growth when compared to the general high school population (Tannenbaum, 2007). In some scenarios, such as receiving mentorship from teachers while studying for the year in Israel, this may be regardless of the type of relationship they had with their parents prior (Eisenberg, 2010). Others have indicated that Orthodox Jewish students may be more likely to choose to model their religious observance after their conservative teachers than after the more liberal at home observance demonstrated by their parents (Heilman, 2005;

Soloveitchik, 1994 as cited in Weinstein, 2020). Some have even hypothesized that teachers in the Orthodox community have become the main factor in determining the religiosity of their students, almost replacing the role of the parents in that area (Charyten, 1997).

This review attempted to survey the literature concerning parent, peer, and teacher impact on spirituality and religious observance in general. Little research exists comparing the roles that parents, teachers, and peers play with regard to spirituality and religious observance among Jewish modern orthodox adolescents, and whether or not other factors such as gender and grade level make a difference. The following chapters will discuss the research questions and methods involved in analyzing the roles that parents, teachers, and peers play in spirituality and religious observance on a sample of 1341 Jewish modern orthodox adolescents.

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

1. Controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location, to what extent do parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predict spirituality/ internalization of religious beliefs?
 - a. How do each of these relationships contribute to the collective model of predicting the beliefs?
 - b. How do each of these uniquely contribute to the model of predicting the beliefs?
 - c. Does gender mediate the relationship?
 - d. Does type of school (co-ed, single gender boys, single gender girls) mediate the relationship?
 - e. Does grade (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th) mediate the relationship?

2. Controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location, to what extent do parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predict religious observance?
 - a. How do each of these relationships contribute to the collective model of predicting observance?
 - b. How do each of these uniquely contribute to the model of predicting religious observance?
 - c. Does gender mediate the relationship?
 - d. Does type of school (co-ed, single gender boys, single gender girls) mediate the relationship?
 - e. Does grade (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th) mediate the relationship?

Hypothesis #1a: Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of spirituality when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(1): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of spirituality for girls than for boys when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(2): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of spirituality for

single gender school students than for coeducational students when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(3): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of spirituality for higher grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Hypothesis #1b: Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict the highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(1): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for both boys and girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(2): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for both single gender and coeducational schools when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(3): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for all grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Hypothesis #2a: Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of religious observance when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(1): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of religious observance for boys than for girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(2): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of religious observance for single gender school students than for coeducational students when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(3): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of religious

observance for higher grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Hypothesis #2b: Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict the highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(1): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict the highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships for both boys and girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(2): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships for both single gender and coeducational schools when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(3): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships for all grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

CHAPTER IV. METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

This study will be a secondary analysis of previously collected data from a survey of students at 18 Modern Orthodox High Schools in the United States. In December 2016 and January 2017, researchers sent emails to the principals of the schools to request the participation of at least 50 students per school to complete the survey. Participating schools were incentivized by offering a summary of their individual school data. Parents were given the option to opt-out on behalf of their child and no penalty was given to students who did not participate. Students completed the measure anonymously using the online survey platform, Survey Monkey. The students were either given designated class time to complete the measure or received a direct link to the survey from their school. Each school decided which students were allowed to participate. Some schools limited the opportunity to certain students, while others offered every student the opportunity to participate.

Sample

A sample of 1341 modern orthodox high school students was obtained from the 18 participating schools. Of those who responded, 39% were male, 58% were female and 3% classified themselves as “other.” The participants were high school students in Modern Orthodox high schools; 26% were in 9th grade, 15% in 10th grade, 24% in 11th grade and 33% in 12th grade.

Measures

The students had to electronically agree to participate in the scale. If they did, then they advanced to the survey, which consisted of four sections.

The JewBALE 2.0 (Goldberg, 2016), an anonymous scale consisting of 167 questions intended to provide a better understanding of what students believe (BELIEFS) and do (ACTIONS) in relation to their Judaism, was used together with the DUKE Health Profile and a Socio-Religious Scale of Personal Beliefs. The SPSS Version 25 was used to analyze data from the JewBALE 2.0 scale, reliability tests were used to assess consistency of the subscales, and descriptive analyses were used to check for outliers and abnormalities in the dataset so that it could be adjusted accordingly. In order to understand the factors that underlie the overall questionnaire, Principal components analysis with oblimin rotation was used.

Data Analyses

In order to evaluate research question one, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted. In the first step of the equation, physical health, mental health, and geographic location were entered. In the second step, the relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers were entered. The dependent variable is spiritual beliefs. Mediation analysis using the Barron-Kenny model was used to determine whether gender, type of school or grade mediated the relationship.

In order to evaluate research question two, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted. In the first step of the equation physical health, mental health, and geographic location were entered. In the second step, the relationship with parents, Judaic studies

teachers, General studies teachers, and peers were entered. The dependent variable is religious observance. Mediation analysis using the Barron-Kenny model was used to determine whether gender, type of school or grade mediates the relationship.

CHAPTER V. RESULTS

The research questions focus on the variables of geographic location, physical health, mental health, relationship with parents, relationship with Judaic Studies teachers, relationship with General studies teachers, relationship with peers, and spirituality.

Physical health, mental health, and social health were measured by the DUKE health fatherscale. Each of those factors was measured on a scale from 0-100, where 100 implies that the participant had great health. The majority of participants had above average health scores, where the median for physical and mental health was a score of 70 and for social health was a score of 80. Less than 15% scored a physical health score of 40 or less, less than 21% scored a mental health score of 40 or less and less than 6% scored a social health score of 40 or less.

Geographic location was divided into 6 areas, New York/NJ, MidAtlantic region, Southeastern, Central, South Central, and West.

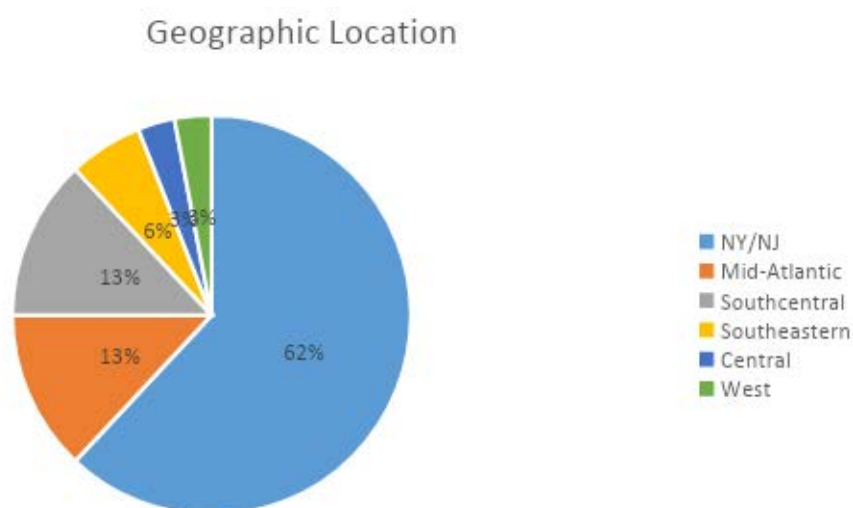
The majority of the students, 62% came from NY/NJ. Thirteen percent came from the Mid-Atlantic region which includes Maryland and Philadelphia. An additional 13% came from Southcentral and the remaining 12% came from southeastern, central, and west.

Relationship with parents was measured by the questions “I have a good relationship with my mother” and “I have a good relationship with my father.” Each item was scored from “completely disagree” to “completely agree”. Ninety percent of the population “agrees” that they have a good relationship with their mother, while 56% “completely agrees”. Only 6% “disagrees” and 4% were ambivalent. 86% of participants agree that they have a good relationship with their father, 51% completely agree, 8% disagree and 5% were

ambivalent. Overall, participants had similar feelings about the strength of the relationship with their mother or father.

Figure 1

Geographic breakdown of participant



1. Controlling for physical and mental health, to what extent do relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predict spirituality/ internalization of religious beliefs?

- a. How do each of these relationships contribute to the collective model of predicting the beliefs?

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted in order to determine whether the relationship with the mother, relationship with the father, relationship with Judaic studies

teachers, relationship with General studies teachers, and peer relationships predict religious beliefs while controlling for physical and mental health. Internalization of religious beliefs was the dependent variable as measured by the JewBALE. Physical and mental health as measured by the DUKE health profile were entered as the first step. The combination of relationships with mother, father, Judaic studies teachers, general studies teachers, and peers was entered in the second step.

Physical and mental health contributed significantly to the regression model, $F(3,840)=33.80$, $p<.001$ and accounted for 10.8% of the variance in religious beliefs. The combination of the relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, general studies teachers, and peers explained an additional 15% of the variation in religious beliefs. $\Delta R^2=.15$, $F(5,835)=33.45$, $p<.001$.

b. How do each of these uniquely contribute to the model of predicting the beliefs?

In the overall model, each of the independent variables, relationship to mother, relationship to father, relationship to Judaic studies teachers, relationship to general studies teachers and relationships with peers are significant predictors of religious beliefs. The strongest predictor is the relationship with Judaic studies teachers ($t=7.66$, $p<.001$), followed by a relationship with mother ($t=3.37$, $p<.001$), relationship with father ($t=3.33$, $p<.001$), and relationship with peers ($t=3.30$, $p<.01$). Relationship with general studies teachers is a negative predictor ($t=-11$, $p<.05$) such that a stronger relationship with general studies teachers predicts a lower score in religious beliefs.

Table 1

Effect of Relationships with Parents, Teachers, and Peers on the Internalization of Religious Beliefs

Independent Variables	Standardized Beta	std. error	T-test	p value
Relationship with Mother	.12	.03	3.37	
				<.001
Relationship with Father	.12	.03	3.33	
				<.001
Relationship with Judaic Studies Teacher	.29	.03	7.67	
				<.001
Relationship with General Studies Teacher	-.11	.03	-3.00	.03
Peer Relationships	.12	.02	3.30	
				.003

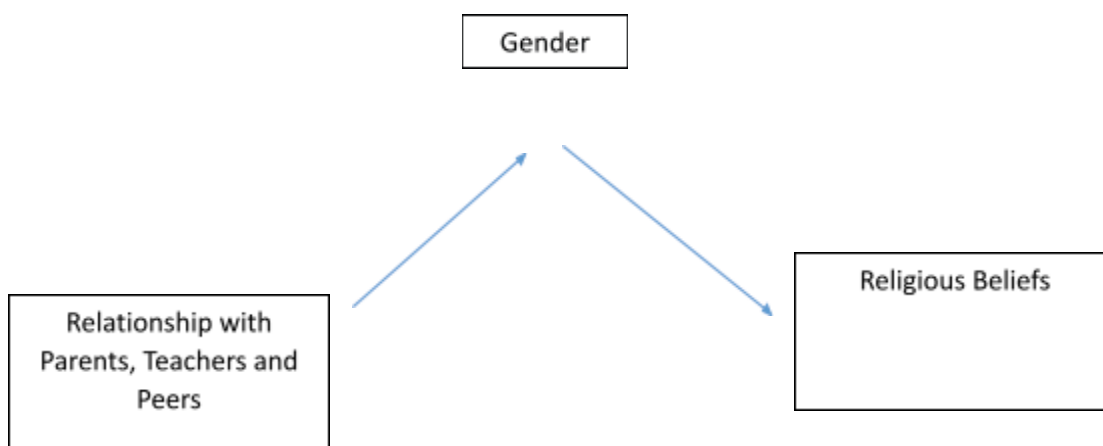
c. Does gender mediate the relationship?

In order to determine whether gender mediates the relationship between the relationship with parents, teachers and peers and religious beliefs, the Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step approach was used.

Step one was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationships predicting religious beliefs. This was done above. While controlling for physical health, mental health, and geographic location, the relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predict religious beliefs explaining 15% of the variance of religious beliefs, $\Delta R^2=.15$, $F(5,835)=33.45$ $p<.001$.

Figure 2

Demonstration of Gender Mediating the Relationship Between the Relationships with Parents, Teachers and Peers and Religious Beliefs.



Step two was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationship with parents, teachers and peers predicting gender. The combination of relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predicts gender while controlling for physical, mental health, and

geographic location $\Delta R^2=.02$, $F(5,834)=3.32$, $p<.01$, which explains 2% of the variance of gender.

Step three was to conduct a regression analysis looking at whether gender predicts total beliefs while controlling for physical health, mental health, geographic location, and relationships with parents, teachers and peers. Gender does significantly predict overall beliefs while controlling for physical health, mental health, and geographic location, $\Delta R^2=.005$, $F(1,833)=5.53$, $p<.05$.

Step four was to evaluate what happens to the original model while controlling for gender. Step one in the regression model was geographic location, physical and mental health. Step two in the regression model was gender, and step three in the model was relationship with parents, teachers, and peers, and the dependent variable was total beliefs, $\Delta R^2=.15$, $F(5,833)=34.54$, $p<.001$. Since the model is still significant and even slightly stronger, gender was not found to be a partial mediator between the relationship with parents, teachers, and peers and overall religious beliefs.

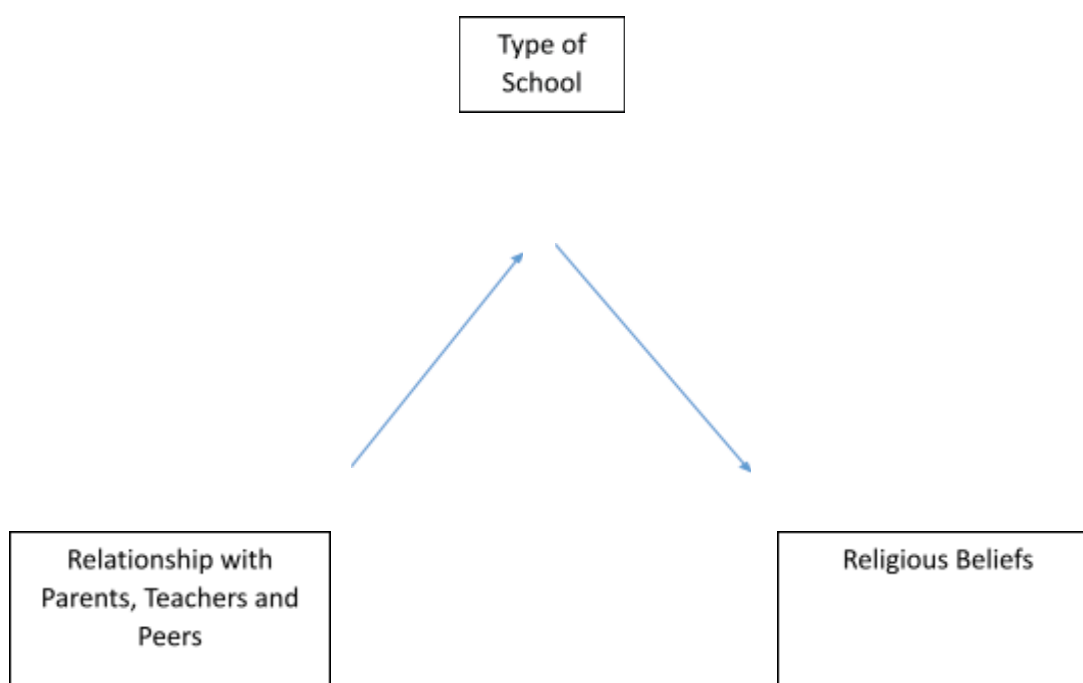
d. Does type of school (co-ed, single gender boys, single gender girls) mediate the relationship?

In order to determine whether the type of school mediates the relationship between the relationship with parents, teachers, and peers with religious beliefs, the Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step approach was used.

Step one was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationships predicting religious beliefs. This was done above. While controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health, the relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predict religious beliefs explaining 15% of the variance of religious beliefs, $\Delta R^2=.15$, $F(5,835)=33.45, p<.001$.

Figure 3

Demonstration of Type of School Mediating the Relationship Between the Relationships with Parents, Teachers and Peers and Religious Beliefs.



Step two was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationship with parents, teachers and peers predicting the type of school. The combination of relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predicts type of school while controlling for

geographic location, physical and mental health, $\Delta R^2=.012$, $F(5,824)=2.26$, $p<.05$, which explains 1.2% of the variance of type of school.

Step three was to conduct a regression analysis looking at whether type of school predicts total beliefs while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health and relationship with parents, teachers and peers. Type of school does not significantly predict overall beliefs while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health and relationship with parents, teachers and peers, $\Delta R^2=.003$, $F(1,823)=3.31$, *ns*.

Since step three was not significant, type of school is not a mediator between relationship with parents, teachers, and peers and overall religious beliefs while controlling for geographic location, mental and physical health.

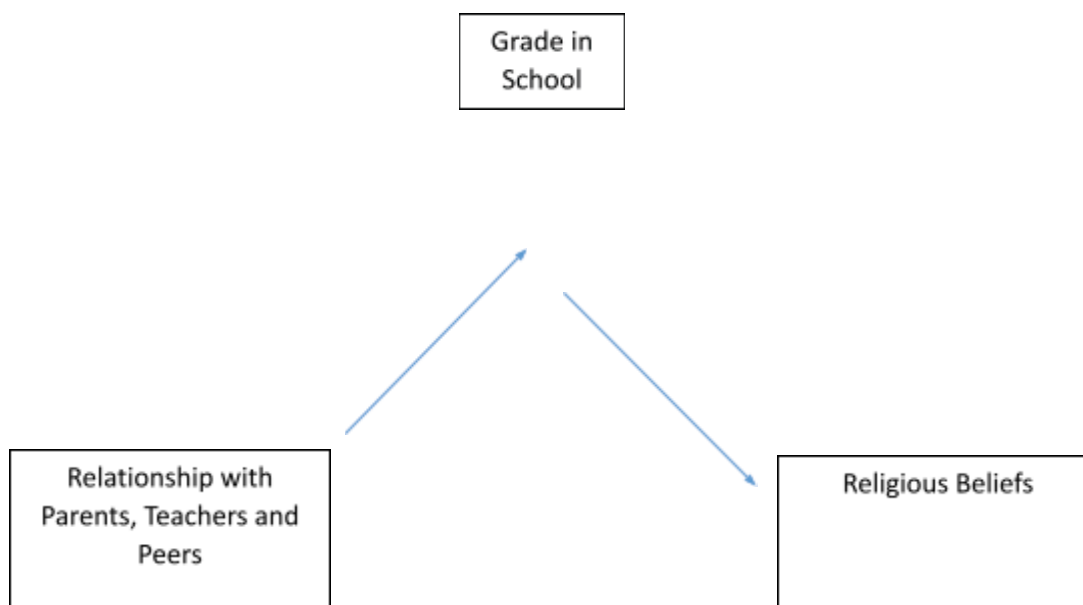
e. Does grade (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th) mediate the relationship?

In order to determine whether the grade the student was in (9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th) mediates the relationship between relationship with parents, teachers, and peers and religious actions, the Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step approach was used.

Step one was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationships predicting religious beliefs. This was done above. While controlling for physical and mental health, the relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predict religious beliefs explaining 16% of the variance of religious beliefs, $\Delta R^2=.15$, $F(5,835)=33.45$, $p<.001$.

Figure 4

Demonstration of grade in school mediating the relationship between the relationships with parents, teachers and peers and religious beliefs.



Step two was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationship with parents, teachers and peers predicting the grade of the student. The combination of relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predicts the grade of the student while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health, $\Delta R^2=.02$, $F(5,830)=2.52$, $p<.05$, which explains 2% of the variance of the grade.

Step three was to conduct a regression analysis looking at whether the grade predicts total beliefs while controlling for physical and mental health and relationship with parents, teachers and peers. The grade of the teen significantly predicts overall beliefs while controlling for physical and mental health and relationship with teachers, parents and peers, $\Delta R^2=.014$, $F(1,829)=16.38$, $p<.001$.

Step four consists of conducting a multiple regression analysis analyzing whether relationship with parents, teachers, and peers still predict religious beliefs while controlling for physical and mental health and grade in school. A three-step hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with geographic location, physical and mental health in step one, grade in step two, and relationship with parents, teachers, and peers in step three. When controlling for geographic location physical and mental health, relationship with parents, teachers and peers and the grade of the student still predicts religious beliefs, $\Delta R^2=.15$, $F(5,829)=33.66$, $p<.001$.

The regression model was still significant once controlling for the grade the student was in school, but slightly higher than the simple regression model in step one. Therefore, the grade the student is in cannot be assumed to be a partial mediator.

1. Controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location, to what extent do parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predict religious observance?

a. How do each of these relationships contribute to the collective model of predicting observance?

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted in order to determine whether the relationship with the mother, relationship with the father, relationship with Judaic studies teachers, relationship with General studies teachers, and relationship with peers predict religious beliefs while controlling for physical and mental health. Internalization of religious

beliefs was the dependent variable. Physical and mental health were entered as the first step. The combination of relationships with mother, father, Judaic studies teachers, general studies teachers, and peers was entered in the second step. Geographic location, physical and mental health contributed significantly to the regression model, $F(3,840)=45.63, p<.001$ and accounted for 14% of the variance in religious actions. The combination of the relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, general studies teachers, and peers explained an additional 18% of the variation in religious actions. $\Delta R^2=.18, F(5,835)=44.90, p<.001$.

b. How do each of these uniquely contribute to the model of predicting observance?

In the overall model, the independent variables relationship to father and the relationship to Judaic studies teachers are significant predictors of religious actions. The strongest predictor is the relationship with Judaic studies teachers ($t=9.21, p<.001$), followed by a relationship with the father ($t=5.61, p<.001$). Relationships with mother, peers and relationships with general studies teachers are not significant predictors of religious actions in this model.

Table 2

Effect of Relationships with Parents, Teachers, and Peers on the Internalization of Religious Actions

Independent Variables	Standardized Beta	std. error	T-test	p value
Relationship with Mother	.07	.02	1.95	

.052

Relationship with Father	.19	.02	5.61
<.001			
Relationship with Judaic Studies Teacher	.33	.02	9.21
<.001			
Relationship with General Studies Teacher	-.06	.02	-1.66
.098			
Peer Relationships	.07	.001	1.95
.051			

a. Does gender mediate the relationship?

In order to determine whether gender mediates the relationship between the relationship with parents, teachers and peers and religious actions, the Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step approach was used.

Step one was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationships predicting religious beliefs. This was done above. While controlling for physical and mental health, the relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predict religious beliefs explaining 18% of the variance of religious actions, $\Delta R^2=.18$, $F(5,835)=44.90$, $p<.001$.

Step two was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationship with parents, teachers and peers predicting gender. The combination of relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predicts gender while controlling for geographic location, physical

and mental health, $\Delta R^2=.02$, $F(5,834)=3.32$, $p<.01$, which explains 2% of the variance of gender.

Step three was to conduct a regression analysis looking at whether gender predicts total actions while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health and relationship with parents, teachers and peers. Gender does not significantly predict overall actions while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health and relationships with parents, teachers and peers, $\Delta R^2=.000$, $F(1,833)=.312$, *ns*.

Since gender does not predict overall actions, it cannot be a mediator in the relationship between relationships with parents, teachers and peers and total actions.

b. Does type of school (co-ed, single gender boys, single gender girls) mediate the relationship?

In order to determine whether the type of school mediates the relationship between the relationship with parents, teachers, and peers with religious actions, the Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step approach was used.

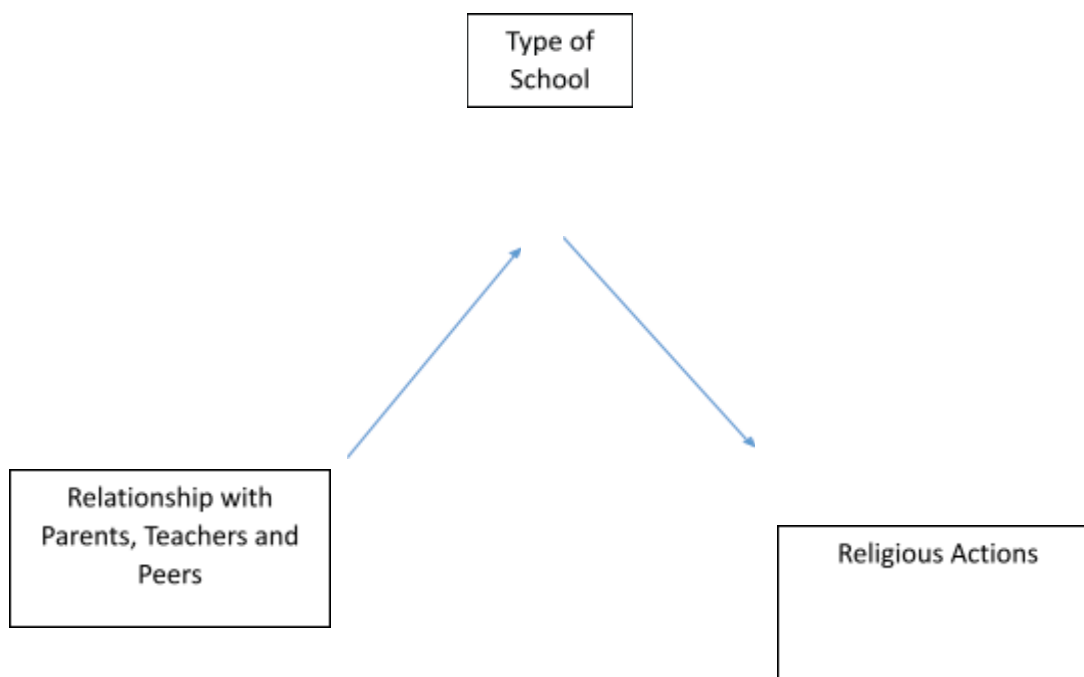
Step one was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationships predicting religious actions. This was done above. While controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health, the relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predicts religious actions explaining 18% of the variance of religious actions, $\Delta R^2=.18$, $F(5,835)=44.90$, $p<.001$.

Step two was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationship with parents, teachers and peers predicting type of school. The combination of relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predicts type of school while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health, $\Delta R^2=.012$, $F(5,824)=2.26$, $p<.05$, which explains 1.2% of the variance of type of school.

Step three was to conduct a regression analysis looking at whether type of school predicts total actions while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health and relationship with parents, teachers, and peers. Type of school does significantly predict overall beliefs while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health and relationship with parents, teachers, and peers, $\Delta R^2=.021$, $F(1,823)=26.08$, $p<.001$.

Figure 5

Demonstration of type of school mediating the relationship between the relationships with parents, teachers and peers and religious actions



Step four consists of conducting a multiple regression analysis with relationship with parents, teachers, and peers predicting overall actions while controlling for type of school. A three-step hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with geographic location, physical and mental health in step one, type of school in step two and relationship with parents, teachers, and peers in step three. The outcome variable was overall actions. When controlling for type of school, relationship with parents, teachers, and peers still predicts religious actions, $\Delta R^2=.18$, $F(5,823)=44.78$, $p<.001$.

Since the regression model was still significant once controlling for type of school, but slightly lower than the simple regression model in step one, type of school can be assumed to be a very slight partial mediator.

c. Does grade (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th) mediate the relationship?

In order to determine whether the grade of student (9th, 10th, 11th or 12th) mediates the relationship between the relationship with parents, teachers, and peers with religious actions, the Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step approach was used.

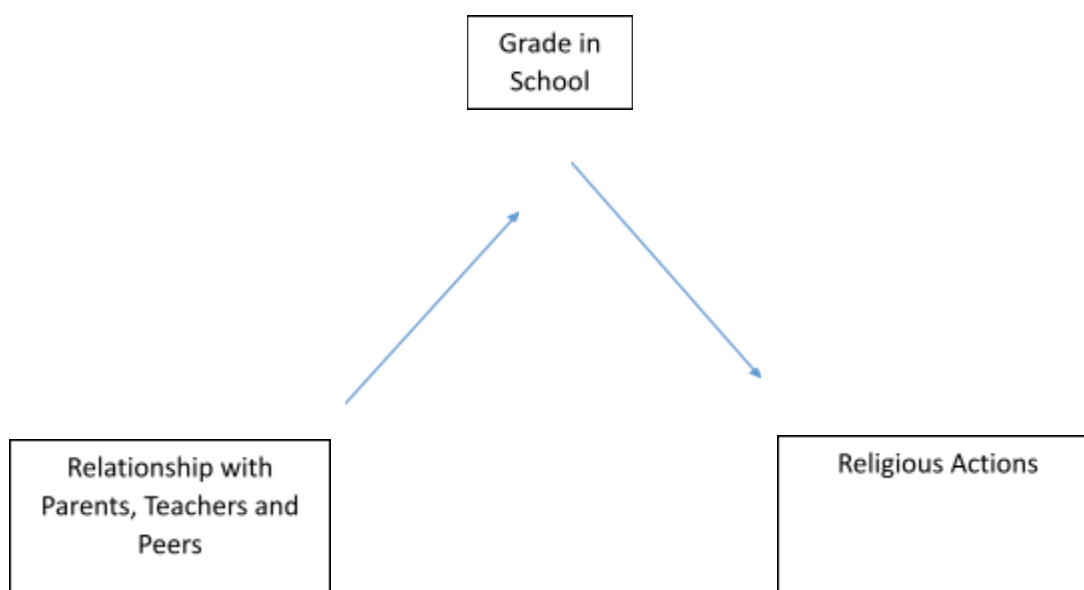
Step one was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationships predicting religious actions. This was done above. While controlling for physical and mental health, the relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predict religious actions explaining 18% of the variance of religious actions, $\Delta R^2=.18$, $F(5,835)=44.90$, $p<.001$.

Step two was to conduct a simple regression analysis with the relationship with parents, teachers and peers predicting the grade in school. The combination of relationship with parents, teachers and peers significantly predicts the grade in school while controlling geographic location physical and mental health, $\Delta R^2=.02$, $F(5,830)=2.52$, $p<.05$, which explains 2% of the variance of the grade.

Step three was to conduct a regression analysis looking at whether the grade of the student predicts total actions while controlling for geographic location, physical and mental health and relationship with parents, teachers, and peers. The grade of the students does significantly predict overall actions while controlling for physical and mental health and relationship with parents, teachers, and peers, $\Delta R^2=.022$, $F(1,829)=27.95$, $p<.001$.

Figure 6

Demonstration of grade in school mediating the relationship between the relationships with parents, teachers and peers and religious actions



Step four consists of conducting a multiple regression analysis with relationship with parents, teachers, and peers predicting overall actions while controlling for the grade of the student.

A three-step hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with physical and mental health in step one, grade of the student in step two and relationship with parents, teachers, and peers in step three. The outcome variable was overall actions. When controlling for grade of the student, relationship with parents, teachers, and peers still predicts religious actions, $\Delta R^2=.18$, $F(5,850)=45.78$, $p<.001$.

Since the regression model was slightly stronger, once controlling for grade in school, grade is not considered a mediator of relationship with parents, teachers, and peers and religious actions.

Supplementary Research Questions:

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(1): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of spirituality for girls than for boys when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to look at whether a positive relationship with parents, Judaic Studies teachers, General Studies teachers, and peers predicts higher levels of spirituality for girls than boys while controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Physical and mental health and geographic location were entered as the first step.

Relationship with parents, Judaic Studies teachers, General Studies teachers and peers was entered as the second step. The dependent variable was Spirituality. The model was looked at separately for females and males.

For males, $R^2\Delta=.18$, $F(5, 326)=15.85$, $p<.001$. For females, $R^2\Delta=.13$, $F(5, 486)=17.41$, $p<.001$. Since the combinations of variables explain 18% of spirituality for males and 13% for females, we can say that positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, and peers predict higher levels of spirituality for males.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(2): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of spirituality for single-gender school students than for coeducational students when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to look at whether a positive relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predicts higher levels of spirituality for students in a single-gender school than those in a coeducational school while controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location. Physical and mental health and geographic location were entered as the first step. Relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers was entered as the second step. The dependent variable was Spirituality. The model was looked at separately for single-gender and co-ed schools. For single-gender schools, $R^2\Delta=.19$, $F(5,217)=10.86$, $p<.001$. For co-ed schools, $R^2\Delta=.15$, $F(5, 599)=23.24$, $p<.001$.

Since the combination of variables explains 19% of the variance of spirituality for single-gender schools and 15% of the variance for co-ed schools, positive relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predicts higher levels of spirituality for students at single-gender schools.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(3): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of spirituality for higher grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to look at whether a positive relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predicts higher levels of spirituality for different grade levels while controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Physical and mental health and geographic location were entered as the first step.

Relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers and peers was entered as the second step. The dependent variable was Spirituality. The model was looked at separately by grade level:

For 9th grade, $R^2\Delta=.22$, $F(5,205)=13.74$, $p<.001$; For 10th grade, $R^2\Delta=.16$, $F(5,113)=4.94$, $p<.001$; For 11th grade, $R^2\Delta=.09$, $F(5,196)=4.37$, $p<.001$; For 12th grade, $R^2\Delta=.19$, $F(5,278)=15.04$, $p<.001$.

Since the combination of variables explains 22% of the variance of spirituality for 9th grade, 16% for 10th grade, 9% for 11th grade and 19% for 12th grade, positive relationships with parents, teachers, and peers predict higher levels of spirituality in 9th and 12th grade.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(1): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of religious observance for boys than for girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to look at whether positive relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predicts higher levels of religious observance for girls than boys while controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Physical and mental health and geographic location were entered as the first step.

Relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers and peers was entered as the second step. The dependent variable was religious observance. The model was looked at separately for females and males. For males, $R^2\Delta=.17$, $F(5,326)=17.23$, $p<.001$.

For females, $R^2\Delta=.16$, $F(5, 486)=21.35$, $p<.001$.

Since the combination of variables explains 17% of the variance of religious observance for males and 16% of the variance for females, there was no difference in the amount that the relationship with parents, teachers and peers predicted religious observance for males and females.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(2): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of religious observance for single gender school students than for coeducational students when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to look at whether positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predict higher levels of spirituality for girls than boys while controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Physical and mental health and geographic location were entered as the first step.

Relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers and peers was entered as the second step. The dependent variable was religious observance. The model was looked at separately for single-gender and co-ed schools. For single-gender schools, $R^2\Delta=.25$, $F(5,217)=16,66$, $p<.001$. For co-ed schools, $R^2\Delta=.17$, $F(5, 599)=28.704$, $p<.001$. Since the combination of variables (relationship with parents, teachers and peers) explain 25% of the variance for single-gender school students' religious observance and 17% of the variance for co-ed school students' religious observance, positive relationships with parents, teachers and peers predict higher levels of religious observance in single-gender schools.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(3): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of religious observance for higher grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to look at whether a positive relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers predicts higher levels of religious observance for different grade levels while controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

Physical and mental health and geographic location were entered as the first step.

Relationship with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers was entered as the second step. The dependent variable was religious observance. The model was looked at separately by grade level:

For 9th grade, $R^2\Delta=.24$, $F(5,205)=20.26$, $p<.001$, For 10th grade, $R^2\Delta=.21$, $F(5,113)=7.41$, $p<.001$, For 11th grade, $R^2\Delta=.12$, $F(5,196)=6.08$, $p<.001$, For 12th grade, $R^2\Delta=.25$, $F(5,278)=20.76$, $p<.001$. Since the combination of variables (relationship with parents, teachers, and peers) explain 24% of the variance with 9th grade, 21% of the variance with 10th grade, 12% of the variance for 11th grade, 25% for 12th grade; positive relationships with parents, teachers, and peers predict higher levels of religious observance in 9th and 12th grade.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(1): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for both boys and girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

When evaluating the strength of each of the individual predictors, for both boys and girls, the strongest predictor of spirituality in the model was their relationship with their Judaic studies

teachers. For boys, the strongest predictor was the relationship with their Judaic studies teacher ($t=4.81$, $p<.001$), followed by their relationship with their mother ($t=2.84$, $p<.01$), father ($t=2.77$, $p<.01$), and peers ($t=2.17$, $p<.05$). For girls, the strongest predictor was the relationship with their Judaic studies teacher ($t=5.94$, $p<.001$), followed by the relationship with their peers ($t=2.78$, $p<.01$) followed by the relationship with their father ($t=2.24$, $p<.05$). For girls, the relationship with their mother was not a significant predictor. For both girls and boys, relationship with the general studies teacher is a negative predictor.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(2): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for both single gender and coeducational schools when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

When evaluating the strength of each of the individual predictors, for single-gender and co-ed schools, the strongest predictor in the model was their relationship with their Judaic studies teachers. For co-ed schools, the strongest predictor was the relationship with their Judaic studies teacher ($t=5.86$, $p<.001$), followed by their relationship with their mother ($t=3.24$, $p<.001$), peers ($t=3.033$, $p<.01$) and father ($t=2.74$, $p<.01$). The relationship with general studies teachers was a negative predictor ($t=-2.59$, $p<.05$). For single-gender schools, the only significant predictor was the relationship with their Judaic studies teacher ($t=5.35$, $p<.001$).

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(3): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for all grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

When evaluating the strength of each of the individual predictors in predicting spirituality, broken up by grade level, the strongest predictor in the model was their relationship with their Judaic studies teachers. For 9th grade, the strongest predictor was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers, $t=4.39$, $p<.001$ followed by the relationship with peers ($t=2.93$, $p<.01$) followed by the relationship with their mother ($t=2.77$, $p<.01$). The relationship with the general studies teachers and father were not significant predictors. For 10th grade, the relationship with the Judaic studies teacher was the strongest predictor ($t=2.82$, $p<.01$). The relationship with parents and peers were not significant predictors in the model. The relationship with general studies teachers was a significant negative predictor, $t=-2.46$, $p<.05$. For 11th grade, the relationship with the Judaic studies teachers was the strongest predictor, $t=2.54$, $p<.05$, followed by the relationship with the father, $t=2.15$, $p<.05$. The other variables were not significant predictors of spirituality in the model. For 12th grade, the strongest predictor was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers, $t=5.57$, $p<.001$ followed by the relationship with the father, $t=2.46$, $p<.05$, followed by the relationship with peers $t=2.08$, $p<.05$.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(1): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict the highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other

relationships for both boys and girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

When evaluating the strength of each individual predictor on religious observance, the strongest predictor for both boys and girls was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers. For girls the strongest predictor of religious observance was their relationship with Judaic studies teachers, $t=5.62, p<.001$, followed by the relationship with their father, $t=4.81, p<.001$ followed by the relationship with peers, $t=1.97, p<.05$. The other variables do not significantly predict religious observance. For boys, the strongest predictor was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers, $t=6.33, p<.001$, followed by the relationship with their father, $t=2.79, p<.01$ followed by the relationship with their mother, $t=2.17, p<.05$. The other variables of peer relationship with relationship with general studies teachers, do not predict religious observance.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(2): Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers will predict higher levels of religious observance for single gender school students than for coeducational students when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

When evaluating all of the variables on the level of religious observance for single gender and co-ed schools, the strongest predictor was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers. For single-gender schools, the strongest predictor of the level of religious observance was the relationship with their Judaic studies teachers ($t=6.10, p<.001$) followed by their relationship

with the father, $t=2.89, p<.01$). The other variables of peer relationships, relationship with the mother and relationship with the general studies teachers were not significant. For co-ed schools, the strongest predictor is the relationship with the Judaic studies teachers, $t=6.55, p<.001$, followed by the relationship with the father $t=4.64, p<.001$. The other variables of peer relationships, relationship with the mother and relationship with the general studies teachers were not significant.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(3): Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers will predict highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships for all grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location.

When looking at the predictors on religious observance based on grade level, for grades 9, 11 and 12, the strongest predictor was the relationship with the Judaic studies teachers, for 10th grade, the strongest predictor was the relationship with the father.

For 9th grade, the strongest predictor of religious observance was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers $t=5.38, p<.001$ followed by peer relationship $t=3.94, p<.001$. The other variables are not significant.

For 10th grade, the strongest predictor of religious observance was the relationship with the father, $t=4.30, p<.001$ followed by the relationship with Judaic studies teachers, $t=2.61, p<.01$. The relationship with the General studies teachers was a significant negative predictor, $t=-2.34, p<.05$.

For 11th grade, the strongest predictor of religious observance was the relationship with their Judaic studies teacher, $t=4.04$, $p<.001$ followed by the relationship with their father, $t=2.38$, $p<.05$. The other variables were not significant predictors.

For 12th grade, the strongest predictor of religious observance was the relationship with the Judaic studies teachers, $t=6.14$, $p<.001$ followed by the relationship with the father $t=3.15$, $p<.01$ followed by the peer relationship $t=2.11$, $p<.05$. The other variables were not significant.

Additional Analysis:

After analyzing the results and discovering that Judaic studies teachers were the most impactful on the students in this data set with regards to spirituality and religious observance, I thought it would be appropriate to ask a few more questions and dive deeper. The secular research made it seem that positive relationships with parents were a prerequisite to success and impact in other relationships. I wanted to know if this was the case here- if there was any correlation between parent relationships and the other relationships in this study. I therefore added the following questions, hypotheses, and analyses:

Question: Do students with positive relationships with parents have a higher likelihood of having positive relationships with teachers and/or peers than students who have less positive relationships with their parents?

Hypothesis: Students with positive relationships with parents have a higher likelihood of having positive relationships with teachers and/or peers than students who have less positive relationships with their parents.

Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted to look at whether there was a relationship between positive parent relationships and positive teacher relationships as well as positive parent relationships and positive peer relationships.

There were significant positive relationships between having a good relationship with the mother and the Judaic studies teachers ($r=.22$, $p<.001$), general studies teachers ($r=.19$, $p<.001$) and peers ($r=.42$, $p<.001$). There was also a significant positive relationship between having a positive relationship with the father and Judaic studies teachers ($r=.26$, $p<.001$), general studies teachers ($r=.19$, $p<.001$), and peers ($r=.40$, $p<.001$). The connection between the relationship with parents and peers was stronger than with parents and teachers.

Question: Do students from families with married parents have higher levels of religious observance and spirituality than those with divorced or separated parents?

Hypothesis: Students from families with married parents have higher levels of religious observance and spirituality than those with divorced or separated parents.

In order to evaluate whether there were differences in the religious observance or spirituality of students whose parents were divorced, separated, married, or deceased, a One-Way ANOVA was conducted.

There were significant differences based on beliefs, $F(3,947)=4.17$, $p<.01$ and based on actions, $F(3,947)=7.89$, $p<.001$. LSD Post hoc tests were conducted to determine where the significance lied. For spirituality, there were differences between those who came from families where the parents were married ($M=5.39$, $SD=1.05$) versus those who were divorced ($M=5.03$, $SD=1.10$). For religious observance, there were differences between those whose parents were married to each other ($M=4.94$, $SD=.80$) and those who were separated

($M=4.40$, $SD=.77$) or divorced ($M=4.55$, $SD=.81$). In each of these cases, the students who came from families where the parents were married had higher levels of spirituality and religious observance than those who came from divorced parents. Students who came from families with married parents also had higher levels of religious observance than students who came from separated families.

Question: Are students with more religiously observant parents more likely to have positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers than those with less religiously observant parents?

Hypothesis: Students with more religiously observant parents are more likely to have positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers than those with less religiously observant parents.

In order to evaluate whether adolescents with more religiously observant parents (defined as parents who observed the laws of both Shabbat and Kosher) were more likely to have positive relationships with Judaic Studies teachers, a One-Way ANOVA was conducted. The two groups of parents religiosity in the JewBALE data set are parents who are observant of both Shabbat and Kosher or parents who observe one and not the other. No parent in the sample is neither.

Adolescents whose parents were observant of kosher and shabbat had a stronger positive relationship with their Judaic studies teachers, $F(1,863) = 8.77$, $p < .05$, ($M = 5.52$, $SD = 1.40$) compared to the adolescents who had parents that were only either shomer kashrut or shomer shabbat ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.52$).

CHAPTER VI. DISCUSSION

Hypothesis #1a: Relationships and Spirituality/ Internalization of Beliefs

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers would predict higher levels of spirituality when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be mostly supported. Positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers, parents, and peers all predicted higher levels of spirituality. However, relationships with General studies teachers actually had the reverse effect, predicting a lower score in spirituality when positive relationships were formed. As mentioned, the literature is limited when it comes to teacher impact on spirituality, especially in the realm of secular education. However, some prior studies have pointed out that teachers have the opportunity to influence student spirituality through observational learning (Oman & Thoresen, 2003) as well as the potential to be effective mentors (DuBois et al., 2002; Smith, 2003). It is possible that in this study, secular studies teachers were not outwardly spiritual and some may have even displayed distaste or disagreement towards spirituality. They may have also shared various perspectives on spirituality in their classes, leaving students who felt more connected to them to begin to share in and become influenced by their perspectives or teachings. Since we know that positive relationships with teachers and mentors can lead to students modeling their beliefs and behaviors (Bandura, 1986; Oman & Thoresen, 2003; Olds et al., 1997; Rhodes, 2002), it seems fair to say that in this case, it is possible that general studies teachers were effective role models, they were just effective in the opposite way based on their own beliefs and/or teachings. It is also possible that students who were less spiritual to begin with gravitated more towards their secular studies teachers.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(1): Boys VS Girls Spirituality

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers would predict higher levels of spirituality for girls than for boys when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was not supported. In fact, the opposite was found. Positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, and peers predicted higher levels of spirituality for boys than for girls. Prior research seems to indicate that girls are more strongly influenced spiritually (Suziedelis & Potvin, 1981; Sârbu et al's, 2021), but that was not the case in this study. We know from prior research that both boys and girls with higher parent- adolescent attachment place a high level of importance on faith in their lives (Kim-Spoon et al, 2012), and that close parent-child relationships are strong predictors of childrens' religious participation and of the likelihood of children to maintain the same religious traditions as their parents (Bengtson et al., 2013). We also know that positive teacher interactions have the ability to impact religious growth (Tannenbaum's, 2007) and that friend modeling and friend dialogue have been found to be significantly and positively correlated with adolescents' religious faith (Schwartz, 2006). Peer pressure and friend social interactions can also have a strong influence on religious practice and attitudes (Hoge et al., 1982; King & Furrow, 2004). Friends modeling faith and having dialogue about faith can also impact adolescent's own religious faith (Schwartz, 2006). It is possible that the boys in this study developed higher levels of attachment and closeness to parents, a larger amount of positive teacher interactions, and were exposed to more positive peer pressure and social interactions with regard to spirituality than the girls, which led to higher levels of spirituality.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(2): Single Gender VS Coeducational Spirituality

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers would predict higher levels of spirituality for single gender school students than for coeducational students when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be supported. Although I have yet to see studies on coeducational vs single gender schools as it specifically relates to spirituality, there is a plethora of research where academic achievement is substantially higher in single sex schools than in coeducational schools. However, that research proposed that although there was a tendency for children attending single-sex schools to have greater success on exams and higher reading scores than children attending coeducational schools, a considerable amount of those differences could be explained by pre-entry differences in childrens' academic, behavioral, and social functioning and status (Woodward, Fergusson, and Horwood, 1999; Park, Behrman, and Choi, 2012). Although these studies were looking at academic performance rather than spiritual level, it offers the possibility that in this study, maybe single gender schools led to higher levels of spirituality not because they are single gender, but because more spiritual families tend to send their children to single gender schools. It is also possible that the teachers in the single gender Jewish day schools were more likely to offer more positive interactions, which could lead to higher levels of spirituality (Tannenbaum's, 2007), and that parents sending their children to single gender Jewish day schools offered higher parent- adolescent attachment and closeness, leading their children to place a high level of importance on faith in their lives and maintain the same religious traditions as their parents (Kim-Spoon et al, 2012; Bengtson et al., 2013). It is also important to note that 110 of

the participants in this study came from four single-gender girls' schools, and 134 came from three single-gender boys' schools. The representative sample of single-gender school attendees was well below that of the co-educational representative sample, potentially limiting relative generalizability.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1a(3): Higher vs Lower grade level spirituality

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers would predict higher levels of spirituality for higher grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be partially supported. Positive relationships with parents, teachers, and peers predicted higher levels of spirituality in 9th and 12th grade. Those relationships predicted the highest level of spirituality for 9th graders, then 12th, followed by 11th and 10th. It is possible that this is the case because 9th and 12th graders may receive more attention due to being newcomers and almost graduates respectively. It is possible that the teachers of those grades were more likely to offer more positive interactions, which could lead to higher levels of spirituality (Tannenbaum's, 2007), and that parents offered higher parent- adolescent attachment and closeness to children in those grades, leading their children to place a high level of importance on faith in their lives and maintain the same religious traditions as their parents (Kim-Spoon et al, 2012; Bengtson et al., 2013).

Hypothesis #1b: Positive relationships with Judaic Studies teachers

The hypothesis that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers would predict the highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was supported. Judaic studies teachers were the most influential when it came to spirituality, followed by mothers and then fathers. This was consistent with the existing literature on Judaic studies teachers (Charyten, 1997; Tannenbaum, 2007; Eisenberg, 2010). Positive relationships with mothers having a significant and slightly better ability at influencing spirituality than fathers is also consistent with the existing literature, (Desrosiers et al., 2011; Kliewer et al., 2020). The difference however between the impact of mothers and fathers in this study is very small, which should speak to the idea that it is likely that both parents in modern orthodox Jewish homes are very important and necessary in the spiritual growth of their children (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 21:18; Goldmintz, 2011; Weinstein, 2020).

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(1):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers would predict highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for both boys and girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be supported. As mentioned, prior research seemed to lead us in that direction (Charyten, 1997; Tannenbaum, 2007; Eisenberg, 2010).

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(2):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers would predict the highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for both single gender

and coeducational schools when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be supported. It is interesting that for co-ed schools, the strongest predictor was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers, followed by the relationship with the mother, peers, and father, while for single-gender schools, the only significant predictor was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers. Contrary to the theory mentioned previously that single gender school students are more academically successful because they tend to come from families that have resources and influence (Woodward, Fergusson, and Horwood, 1999 ;Park, Behrman, and Choi, 2012), this seems to indicate that the coeducational modern orthodox yeshivot are where the students with more influential parents send their children.

Supplementary Hypothesis #1b(3):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers would predict highest levels of spirituality in comparison to the other relationships for all grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be supported. While it is possible and understandable that parents would play the strongest role for much younger children (Smith, 2009 as cited in Goldmintz, 2011), it makes sense that once students are in high school, and have been exposed to school for many years, many hours a day, usually more than with their own parents, that their Judaic studies teachers would start to play a bigger role with regard to spirituality (Bandura, 1986; Oman & Thoresen, 2003; Olds et al., 1997; Rhodes, 2002).

Hypothesis #2a: Relationships and Religious observance

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents, Judaic Studies teachers, General Studies teachers, and peers would predict higher levels of religious observance when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was interestingly only partially supported for this study. Only positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers and fathers had significant impacts on religious observance, while positive relationships with mothers, peers, and general studies teachers did not prove to be significant. While it is not surprising that general studies teachers did not play a significant role, it is definitely perplexing that mothers and peers fell under that same category, since prior literature seems to predict that both of those relationships would indeed influence religious observance (Hoge et al.; 1982; King & Furrow, 2004; Black, 2006; Lane, 2016) . However the p value of .051 for peers and .052 for mothers is so closely trending towards significance that it is possible that if this study were replicated or broadened, they would indeed prove to be significant.

When it comes to religious observance, the literature does seem to indicate that fathers are a reinforcing factor for the significant impact of mothers on religious observance, suggesting a symbiotic relationship (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003). It is interesting that general studies teachers negatively affected spirituality but not religious observance. It may be because the role of a general studies teacher often remains inside the classroom, which lends itself to concepts and ideas more than points of action. On the other hand, Judaic studies teachers made a significant impact on both spirituality and religiosity, perhaps because they are establishing positive relationships while living and modeling the ideas and lessons that they teach both inside and outside the classroom, which the research supports can lead to students modeling their beliefs and behaviors (Bandura, 1986; Oman & Thoresen, 2003; Olds et al., 1997; Rhodes, 2002). This may also be a possible reason why fathers played the next greatest

role in religious observance after Judaic studies teachers, as they also can tend to be more involved with modeling religious observance through synagogue attendance and other physically observed Judaic commandments.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(1):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers would predict higher levels of religious observance for boys than for girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was not supported. There was actually no difference in the amount that the relationship with parents, teachers and peers predicted religious observance for males as compared to females. This is interesting because prior research seems to demonstrate boys being more influenced when it comes to religious practice, especially with regard to church attendance (Kim-Spoon et al., 2012; Sârbu et al's, 2021). However, prior research also pointed to religious participation being especially higher for boys with stay at home mothers who presumably spent more time with their children and utilized direct observance, and found that parents who are supportive and attentive to emotional needs tend to have more religious children (Sârbu et al's, 2021). It is therefore reasonable to suggest that in this study, there wasn't a significant difference in the amount of support that boys and girls were receiving religiously.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(2):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers would predict higher levels of religious observance for single gender school students than for coeducational students when controlling for physical and

mental health and geographic location was found to be supported. This goes back to the possibility that more religiously observant parents tend to send their children to single gender schools.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2a(3):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents, Judaic studies teachers, General studies teachers, and peers would predict higher levels of religious observance for higher grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be partially supported. Positive relationships with parents, teachers, and peers predicted higher levels of religious observance in 9th and 12th grade. Those relationships predicted the highest level of spirituality for 12th grade, then 9th, followed by 10th and 11th. As mentioned, it is possible that this is the case because 9th and 12th graders may receive more attention due to being newcomers and almost graduates respectively. While it is possible and understandable that parents would serve a greater role than others for much younger children (Smith, 2009 as cited in Goldmintz, 2011), it makes sense that once students are in high school, and have been exposed to school for many years, many hours a day, usually more than with their own parents, that Judaic studies teachers might start to play a greater role than parents (Bandura, 1986; Oman & Thoresen, 2003; Olds et al., 1997; Rhodes, 2002).

Hypothesis #2b: Judaic Studies teachers and religious observance

The hypothesis that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers would predict the highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was supported. As mentioned previously, only positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers and fathers were found to be significant in this study. Judaic studies teachers playing a greater role than parents seems to align with the limited research as well (Charyten, 1997; Tannenbaum, 2007; Eisenberg, 2010), especially when comparing the impact of liberal parents and conservative teachers (Heilman, 2005, Soloveitchik, 1994 as cited in Weinstein, 2020).

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(1):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers would predict the highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships for both boys and girls when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be supported. For girls, the strongest predictor of religious observance was their relationship with Judaic studies teachers, followed by the relationship with their father, and then peers. The other variables did not significantly predict religious observance. For boys, the strongest predictor was the relationship with Judaic studies teachers, followed by the relationship with their father, and then mother. While it is not completely surprising that Judaic studies teachers played the most significant role for both boys and girls followed by fathers (Flor & Knapp, 2001; Francis, 2020; Baba Bathra 21a; Baba Bathra 32c), it is interesting that the other spheres of influence affected each gender differently. Why would

mothers impact boys more than girls with regard to religious observance? Why would peers impact girls more? Other research has suggested that mothers tend to have stronger positive religious influence on their sons than on their daughters (Stearns & McKinney, 2018b), but did not provide suggestions or investigation as to why. However, the literature does seem to suggest that girls may be more easily influenced by their peers than boys, potentially because girls may self-disclose more (Lansford & Parker, 1999; Rose & Rudolph, 2006; Helfert & Warschburger, 2013).

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(2):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers would predict highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships for both single gender and coeducational schools when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was found to be supported.

Supplementary Hypothesis #2b(3):

The hypothesis that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers would predict highest levels of religious observance in comparison to the other relationships for all grade levels when controlling for physical and mental health and geographic location was not supported. For 9th, 11th and 12th grades, Judaic studies teachers were indeed found to be the strongest predictors of religious observance. However for 10th graders, fathers had more of a role.

Why this is the case specifically would require more knowledge of parent involvement at different grade levels in different schools as we would assume more parent involvement would be the reason for greater religious observance. It should be noted that there were less 10th graders than any other grades in the study.

Additional Analysis:

The hypothesis that positive relationships with parents would lead to positive relationships with teachers and peers was supported. Positive relationships with both mothers and fathers correlated with positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers, general studies teachers, and peers. This aligns with research within the general population that suggests that parents have the ability to be the most influential role model for their children (Shaffer, 2009; Briggs, 2014) to the extent that secure parent attachments are often a prerequisite to positive and strong connections with other role models, including teachers and peers (Stright et al., 2008; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Even though Judaic studies teachers were found to have the potential to be the most influential on modern orthodox adolescents both religiously and spiritually, it seems likely that parents play a large role in allowing those positive relationships to happen in the first place.

The hypothesis that students from families with married parents would have higher levels of religious observance and spirituality than those with divorced or separated parents was supported. Students who came from families where the parents were married had higher levels of spirituality and religious observance than those who came from divorced parents. Students who came from families with married parents also had higher levels of religious

observance than students who came from separated families. This aligned with some of the existing research (Petts', 2015). However, as mentioned, there was also prior research that emphasized that while divorce was associated with less religious involvement among young adults, it did not necessarily affect other aspects of religiosity including prayer or feelings of closeness to G-d, and that when parents split up or divorce, it may either lead to religious decline or increased religious engagement, depending on the characteristics of the child and how he or she relates to religion prior to the breakup (Zhai et al. ,2007; Denton, 2012). That nuance did not seem to be present in the research on the modern orthodox adolescent students. We might assume that married parents are more likely to offer stable, warm, and loving environments as well as more consistently authoritative parenting styles which can foster more religious and spiritual growth (Dudley & Wisbey, 2000; Desrosiers et al., 2011; Hardy et al., 2011).

The hypothesis that students with more religiously observant parents were more likely to have positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers than those with less religiously observant parents was supported. Adolescents whose parents were observant of both kosher and shabbat had a stronger positive relationship with their Judaic studies teachers compared to the adolescents who had parents that were only either observant of kashrut *or* shabbat. This seems to be intuitive since one would assume that Judaic studies teachers are likely to be more religiously observant. It is therefor possible that students with more in common are more likely to relate to them or establish a relationship that is perceived as more positive (Gelbach et al., 2016).

CHAPTER VII. IMPLICATIONS

It is overwhelmingly clear through this research that positive relationships with Judaic studies teachers, parents, and peers all have the opportunity to positively impact the spirituality and religious observance of modern orthodox adolescents. This specific research reveals that Judaic studies teachers have the potential to have the greatest impact among these relationships with regards to spirituality and religious observance. It is therefore crucial that we invest a serious amount of time, effort, care, and thought into allowing adolescents the time and space to develop and foster positive relationships in general, but especially with their Judaic studies teachers who can serve as positive role models in the religious arena. Additionally, it is imperative that parents do their due diligence in researching the warmth and connection that school staff offers to students before making a decision on where to send their children to school. On the other hand, parents should also ensure that the teachers all hold the values that they want imparted to their children before they develop strong positive relationships and associate the values of their teachers with what is right and wrong. Administrators should dedicate themselves to developing teachers who are role models and positive religious mentors. Judaic studies teachers should spend time not only imparting knowledge and wisdom, but developing meaningful connections and relationships with their students. School administrators should also continue to track student-teacher relationships, spirituality, and religious observance throughout the entire high school tenure and beyond, and make curriculum adjustments when they see discrepancies among grade levels, as this research suggests may occur.

This research suggests that investing in the development of positive relationships with parents and peers can lead to strong positive outcomes with regard to spirituality and

religious observance. We must therefore do our due diligence in fostering these relationships, setting good examples for our children, and ensuring that they are in a good sphere of influence.

This research also suggests that parents have the opportunity to be the catalyst for other positive and influential relationships. As significant and influential as relationships with Judaics studies teachers are, there is potential to maximize that impact by fostering good relationships and religious and spiritual mentoring at home. Parents should not send their children off to school and assume that everything will be taken care of there. They should create the foundation and build the framework at home in order for the religious and spiritual impact to be optimized at school.

Let's place value as strong, if not stronger, on relationship development as we do on academia. The results will speak for themselves.

CHAPTER VIII. LIMITATIONS

"Studies are only as convincing as their research designs permit them to be, and their results can properly be generalized only to populations similar to those who participated in the studies" (Olds 1997). Convenience sampling was used for this study, which limits its generalizability.

It is also important to recognize that this research and much of the literature involves surveys and self-reports, which can lead to answers based on one's own self perception as opposed to observations, which can demonstrate what's actually taking place in reality. Observational data would therefore be valuable for further, potentially more accurate research (Desrosiers et al., 2011).

It is also important to recognize that although this research seems to indicate that positive relationships with parents, teachers, and peers can promote religious observance and spirituality, there is also the possibility that children who are more spiritual or religiously observant develop more positive relationships as some research indicates that children can impact the behaviors or reactions of their parents (Fabes et al., 1994; Zhou et al 2002).

Studies have also demonstrated that the parent-child relationship can be bidirectional when it comes to religiosity, finding that while parents influence their children through communicating about religiosity, children can make a religious impact on their parents within that same communication (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008).

question

It should also be noted that significantly more co-educational school attendees responded to the surveys in this study than single gender school attendees, which might impact the results.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

For future studies, researchers should consider surveying more students per school, incorporating observational data, and asking more detailed questions. Asking a larger amount of students at each school would make the study more generalizable. Observational data would balance the potential bias that surveys possess. More detailed questions would give a better understanding of what students consider a positive or negative relationship, whereas this study only relied on one or two questions to represent those categories. It would be interesting to see this study longitudinally, as relationships fluctuate, grow, and dissolve over time. Answering a question once makes it difficult to capture the complexity of relationships, and it is possible that answers were given based on how students felt in the moment of answering, as opposed to how they might answer over time. It would be interesting to see this study replicated with modern orthodox Jewish day schools of different cultures. The schools in this study were predominantly representative of Ashkenazi Jews who have a different cultural upbringing than Jews of other denominations with regards to several things, including family relationships. It would also be interesting to consider inquiring about other relationships, including grandparents and other family members or people that adolescents may or may not feel close to and are influenced by. Future studies should also consider the consequences presented as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, as the data from this research was from beforehand.

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APPENDIX

1. JewBALE 2.0 (2016)

A. Total Beliefs (33 items)

- Divine Providence with Relation to the World (5 items)
- Divine Providence with Relation to the Individual (4 items)
- Fear/Love/Awe of God (6 items)
- Joyful/Meaningful Life (4 items)
- Rabbinic Authority (4 items)
- Divinity/Truth of Torah (3 items)
- Relationship to Israel (4 items)
- Outlook on Secular Studies (3 items)

B. Total Actions (50 items)

- Community Service (2 items)
- Prayer (10 items)
- Blessings (2)
- Formal Prayer (6)
- Informal Prayer (2)
- Holiday Observance (7 items)
- Interpersonal Relations/Personal Character Traits (8 items)
- Kashrut (4 items)
- Study of Torah (4 items)
- Modesty (5 items)
- Sabbath Observance (8 items)
- Gender Specific Questions (3 items)
- Boys (2)
- Girls (1)

2. Demographics (40 items)

- General: name, grade, age, school, location, camp (6 items)
- Family: background, relationships (10 items)
- School: relationship with teachers, connection to learning, grades, tracking (14 items)
- Self-concept (5 items)
- Technology: use of, bullying (4 items)
- Aspiration to be a Jewish communal leader (1 item)

3. Socio-Religious Scale of Personal Beliefs (27 items)

- Future Plans (2 items)

- Women (5 items)
- Sexuality and Family Values (4 items)
- Western Values (3 items)
- Judgment (1 item)
- Social Media (2 items)
- Influences (6 items)
- Growth Mindset (4 items)

4. Duke Health Profile (17 items)

- Physical Health (5 items)
- Mental Health (5 items)
- Social Health (5 items)
- Perceived Health (1 item)
- Disability (1 item)