

A REVIEW OF THE NAHUM GOLDMANN

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

A Report

to the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture

prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

The Program

- The Nahum Goldmann Fellowship Program had its first session in 1987. Five programs have been run every other year since its inception.¹
- *The purpose of the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship is to stimulate and train a new generation of young leadership for Jewish communities in Europe, East and West, and in Latin America.*
- *The Foundation seeks to identify emergent young Jewish leaders who have the potential to make a significant impact on local and regional Jewish life.*
- *The NGF provides an intensive experience in **Jewish learning, living and leadership** for a select number of Jewish men and women, potential leaders for Jewish communities in Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Latin America.*

The program:

- Includes lectures and text study on a variety of subjects led by outstanding Jewish academic leaders from around the world.
- Includes small-group discussions and presentations by Fellows about their communities and their own local projects.
- Includes cultural events and fully integrated working group meetings about common problems and issues involving FSU and non-FSU.
- Takes place over 10-day period in August in a retreat setting.
- Includes men and women and targets those ages 25 - 45.

¹ A sixth program was run in Brazil for Latin American participants during 1996. This most recent Fellowship program was not included in this review.

The Review

In December of 1995, at the request of the Foundation, Ukeles Associates Inc. (UAI) surveyed the alumni of the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship Program. The first phase of the project, covering alumni outside the former Soviet Union (FSU), was completed in July of 1996. The second phase, involving alumni from the former Soviet Union (FSU), was completed by the end of the year.

The purpose of this review was "to collect information that will help the Memorial Foundation assess and improve its Nahum Goldmann Fellowship program." The focus was on "documenting the voices of past Goldmann fellows and on examining the impact that the Goldmann Fellowship program has had on participating Fellows."

The work plan included gathering program documentation and material, reviewing available data on alumni, letters from alumni, memos in the files on the program, and meetings with the staff of the Foundation to learn about the program.

- Based on this background analysis, we designed a questionnaire was designed. After many drafts, we sent out an 8 page survey instrument to 129 program alumni outside of the FSU and 96 alumni in the FSU. Half of those surveyed responded; 85 participants from outside the FSU (65%), and 28 participants from the FSU (29%). Alumni from the FSU have been far more geographically mobile than the other participants, and were thus more difficult to track and reach.²
- The work was carried out by a three-person team -- Dr. Jacob B. Ukeles, Ms. Sally Baker, and Professor Steven M. Cohen -- in cooperation with, and with the full support of, the staff of the Memorial Foundation including Dr. Jerry Hochbaum, Dr. Moshe Sokol, and Rabbi Zev Segal.

² The relatively low response rate and small number of respondents suggest that the information about "FSU" needs to be treated with some caution, although there is no reason to suspect systematic bias.

The Report

This report covers findings, interpretation of results, and implications for the future directions of the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship Program. The report is based on the analysis of survey results.

For convenience, participants from outside the former Soviet Union [FSU] -- including Western, Central & Eastern Europe and Latin America -- are referred to as "Other". Participants from the FSU include a number of different countries -- Russia, Ukraine as well as the occupied Baltic States.

The remainder of this report is in 2 parts:

- an Executive Summary
- a detailed analysis

An Appendix reproduces the question - by question results from the survey.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Profile of Participants

The typical respondent to the survey who participated in the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship program:

- was in his or her early thirties
- self-defines as a cultural Jew (FSU were more likely to self-define as a "secular" Jew)
- (if other countries) had belonged to a Jewish youth movement or attended a Jewish camp or both
- attends synagogue at least once a month
- had been to Israel
- had a post-graduate degree
- if married, is married to a Jewish spouse

Of the 113 alumni who completed the survey:

- about ½ were men and ½ women
- about ½ had attended a part-time or full-time Jewish school (or both)
- about ½ were married
- about one third worked professionally in the Jewish community at the time of the program (for FSU respondents, it was 80%)

Findings

- Word-of mouth was an important factor in encouraging Fellows to apply.
- The primary motivations for applying were: opportunities for Jewish learning, meeting people and the Jewish cultural experience.
- The goal of building Jewish identity is more clearly transmitted to program participants than the goal of leadership development.
- The Fellowship Program increases interest in Jewish culture, and provides an opportunity to reevaluate what being Jewish means (for the other countries) and greater interest in Jewish observance (for the FSU).
- The Fellowship Program appears to be successful at enhancing Jewish identity, practice, involvement and interests, and does seem to serve as a motivator for Jewish communal involvement.
- Particularly for those who serve as professionals in the Jewish community, the Fellowship experience seems to strengthen their motivation and commitment.
- Connections made during the program have led to inter-community cooperative arrangements, joint programming and other linkages.
- Many of the participants in the program maintained contact with other Fellows, but a number asked for more follow-up.
- Participants' comments about their experience were specific and positive.

Issues

The interaction between the participants from the FSU and the rest of the countries involved significant complexity -- Western and Central country participants seem to welcome it, but found communication difficult.

The focus is on Jewish culture, identity and learning rather than on the practical leadership needs of Jewish communities -- problem-solving experiences, planning and management, conflict resolution.

The lack of follow-up is the only consistent criticism from participants (both FSU and other countries) and there are many suggestions. This creates a substantial dilemma for the Foundation -- it is probably beyond the resources of the Foundation to manage a follow-up program; but alumni appear to be a group that could benefit from additional opportunities for growth.

Next Steps

- The Foundation should explore the possibility of developing "tracks" during the program which respond to the interests and needs for skill development of different participants (e.g., a leadership skills development and/or community planning track) or other special interests -- e.g, the specific needs of small communities.
- The Foundation should explore the possibility of developing a partnership with other Jewish institutions to build a follow-up component for the program (e.g., an alumni network -- via the Internet -- and/or additional programs for alumni).
- In this respect it might be interesting to see how other leadership development programs have dealt with the follow-up issue. For example, the Wexner Fellowship program makes a major investment in keeping their alumni connected -- how is that done and is that working? There are similar programs in the United States in the secular community which have invested effort in networking graduates of their leadership programs.

Conclusions

For a ten-day experience, the program seems to have a remarkable effect on the Jewish self-awareness of participants, and a significant impact on participants communal involvement. As such it appears to be a very good use of Foundation resources.

The Foundation is the advocate for Jewish culture. Jewish culture is a great unifying theme in a world Jewish community that does not lack for conflict and schism. On the broadest level, the Fellowship represents the Foundation at its finest. It enables young people -- from different countries and different types of communities, with diverse ways of being Jewish and defining Judaism -- to share a sense of identity, a thirst for knowledge of Jewish history and Jewish text, a bonding with Israel and with each other, and a commitment to helping to build a Jewish future.

The chapter which follows includes a detailed analysis of findings, including a comparison between the participants from the FSU and the other countries.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

This chapter includes a closer look at the statistical data that was collected, as well as some interpretation of the results of the survey. This chapter also includes a systematic comparison of the responses of the participants from the FSU and the other countries. Participants from the FSU differed in key respects from the "others" (those outside the FSU), although the lower response rate from the FSU means that the data need to be treated with some caution.

Who are the Alumni? Jewish and Socio-demographic Background

Overall, the participants were almost evenly divided between men and women; while almost two thirds of the FSU respondents were men (65%).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Overall	Other	FSU
Male	55%	52%	65%
Female	45%	48%	35%
Age at time of program (median)	33.5	32 years old	35 years old
Married now	60%	62%	52%
Married at time of program	48%	49%	44%
Live in same country now as when participated in program	88%	96%	85%
B.A. Degree	92%	86%	96%
Graduate Degree	68%	60%	75%
Doctoral Degree	17%	13%	29%

Participants ranged in age from 20 to 52, with 80% falling between the ages of 24 and 40 at the time of participation. The median age of the other countries was 32. The FSU were slightly older with a median age of 35, and were somewhat less likely to be married at the time they participated in the program (44% versus 49%).

Consistent with the high rates of educational achievement of Ashkenazi Diaspora Jews, the vast majority (86%) of other countries participants had received a BA, and as many as 60% had obtained a graduate degree. In all, 13% possessed a doctorate, a phenomenon all the more impressive in light of the youthfulness of the population, meaning that not all had completed their formal education.

As impressive as are the educational credentials of the other countries, the FSU's educational achievements are even more notable. Almost all (96%) had a BA; three quarters had earned a graduate degree; and over a quarter (29%) had doctorates. Again, these patterns reflect a broader demographic reality: Jews from the FSU are the most highly educated of any major Jewish population in the world. Years of discrimination have propelled FSU Jews into academic study so as to obtain and assure their status in a highly disadvantageous labor market.

Of the other countries, almost all of the respondents (96%) were living in the same country at the time of the survey as they were at the time of the Program. For FSU, the comparable figure is lower (85%)³.

Who are these participants in Jewish terms? About a third defined themselves strongly as "a cultural Jew," about a quarter as a Zionist, and fewer as religious (11% of the FSU and 18% of the other countries). In these Jewish self-descriptions, roughly comparable proportions of participants from FSU and those from other countries provided affirmative answers. However, with respect to whether they identified as "a secular Jew," the two groups parted ways dramatically. Only 24% of the other countries called themselves "secular" as compared to 71% of the FSU.

Table 2
Jewish Self-Definition

	To A Great Extent ⁴		
	Overall	Other	FSU
21. To what extent would you say you identify as a religious Jew?	16%	18%	11%
22. To what extent would you say you identify as a secular Jew?	36%	24%	71%
23. To what extent would you say you identify as a cultural Jew?	36%	37%	33%
24. To what extent would you say you identify as a Zionist?	25%	26%	21%

³ The substantially lower response rate of FSU (29%) compared with other countries (65%) suggests that the actual proportion of FSU still living in FSU is substantially lower than the 85% reported by respondents who could be reached.

⁴ The other choices were: to some extent, a little, not at all.

Coupled with the finding that somewhat fewer FSU define themselves as religious than the other countries, these findings point to the distinct character of FSU Jewish identity. Its secular, non-religious tendency reflects the historical influence of the Soviet state, which officially sanctioned persecution of religion in general and Judaism in particular. The results at the end of the twentieth century are that NGF FSU Jews -- presumably not unlike their counterparts in the rank-and-file -- overwhelmingly embrace a secular, non-religious self-definition in numbers that may well exceed comparable groups from anywhere in the Jewish world today.

Table 3
Other Jewish Characteristics

<i>[Percentages are for "Yes" responses only]</i>	Overall	Other	FSU
25. Do you attend synagogue services at least once a month?	51%	54%	43%
27. (IF MARRIED) Is your spouse Jewish?	86%	87%	80%
28. Are you now employed by the Jewish community or any Jewish organization?	47%	38%	75%
29. Were you employed by the Jewish community or any Jewish organization when you participated in NGF?	46%	35%	82%

Interestingly the contrasts in self-definition (as secular or religious) are far more sharply drawn than are the rates of synagogue service attendance. About half of each group (54% of the other countries, 43% of the FSU) attend services monthly. Apparently, synagogue service attendance does not contradict the self-declared secular identity of many FSU Jewish respondents. The vast majority (87% of the other countries and 80% of the FSU) who were married were married to a Jewish spouse. Clearly, these figures are far higher than those that would be found among comparably aged rank and file Jews in their respective communities.

A little over a third of the other countries and about four fifths of the FSU were employed by their respective Jewish communities both at the time of the survey and at the time of their participation in the NGF. A much higher proportion of the FSU respondents were employed by the Jewish community than were FSU participants; Jewish professionals were less mobile and easier to locate than other FSU participants.

The other countries report what must be regarded as strikingly high rates of participation in childhood Jewish educational programs. As many as 69% had visited Israel; 61% participated in a youth group; more than half attended a Jewish summer camp; 44% went to a part-time Jewish school and as many as 29% attended a full-time Jewish school (some of whom attended a part-time school as well). All of these figures exceed those for the general Jewish population in the home countries of these participants. In contrast, hardly any of the FSU Jews experienced any form of organized Jewish education in their youth. Such programs simply did not exist thirty or forty years ago when the participants were young.

Table 4
Jewish Educational Background of Other Countries

19. Before the age of 18, did you ever...	YES
a) Attend a part-time Jewish school?	44%
b) Attend a full-time Jewish day school?	29%
c) Participate in a Jewish or Zionist youth group or club?	61%
d) Participate in a Jewish summer camp?	53%
e) Visit Israel	69%
f) Other informal Jewish group activities	74%

Recruitment: Sources of Encouragement and Motivation

Who or what encouraged participants to apply to the NGF? The FSU and the other countries report different patterns. For the other countries, about a third cited as “very important” program alumni (35%); written material and the program’s reputation were important far less often (21% and 20%). As might be expected, the FSU relied far less often on alumni (15%). Reflecting the later start of the program in the FSU, fewer alumni have been available to recruit there. Presumably, over time, NGF alumni in the FSU will assume a greater responsibility for recruitment. Accordingly, most FSU NGF alumni responded that they were most influenced by “the program’s reputation.” Since only the MFJC itself could have shaped that reputation, the emphasis on reputation among the FSU probably reflects well upon the degree of trust accumulated by the MFJC during its many years of work in the FSU.

Table 5
Who/What Encouraged You to Apply?

2. How important were each of the following in encouraging you to apply to the NGF program?	Very Important		
	Overall	Other	FSU
a) An alumnus of the program	30%	35%	15%
b) A local rabbi or Jewish community official	33%	33%	33%
c) Written material	19%	21%	24%
d) The program's reputation	29%	20%	51%

The other countries reported a variety of reasons for applying to the program. The most frequently cited were “to engage in Jewish learning” (49% called this reason “very important”), “to participate in Jewish cultural experiences” (39%), and “to meet interesting people” (35%). The FSU differed from the other countries in their mix of reasons in a few respects. For them, the most widely cited reason was “to meet interesting people” (68%), followed by “to engage in Jewish learning” (52%). While hardly any of the other countries (10%) cited “to acquire relationships that would help me in my profession,” as many as 30% of the FSU said this was a very important reason. One theme that emerges from the comparison of the two groups is that the FSU were more readily seeking ways to overcome their relative isolation, and saw the NGF program as a way of establishing contacts with significant outsiders.

Table 6
Reasons for Applying

3. How important were each of the following reasons for applying to the program?	Very Important		
	Overall	Other	FSU
a) To strengthen my Jewish identity	25%	29%	14%
b) To engage in Jewish learning	50%	49%	52%
c) To participate in Jewish cultural experiences	36%	39%	30%
d) To acquire links with other Jewish leaders	35%	35%	33%
e) To acquire Jewish leadership skills	12%	15%	4%
f) To acquire relationships that would help me in my profession	14%	10%	30%
g) To explore my religious interests	12%	14%	7%
h) To meet interesting people	44%	37%	68%

Three Dimensions: Religious, Cultural, and Leadership

A detailed analysis of the survey results (using a statistical technique known as factor analysis) uncovered a meaningful structure. The NGF program seems to have operated along three dimensions:

- 1) **Religious Identity:** personal identity as a Jew, Jewish observance, and holiday observance.
- 2) **Cultural participation:** learning, knowledge of Jewish culture, participating in cultural activities (e.g., drama, music, film).
- 3) **Jewish Leadership:** skills, knowing Jewish leaders, Jewish community activities.

This tri-partite division characterized participants' reasons for participating, their descriptions of themselves as Jews (before and after the program), the way they thought of the sponsor's view of the program, and the way they understood how the program may have affected them. In other words, the findings pointed to an underlying conceptual reality, one which may be suggestive to Foundation leadership.

We suggest that these dimensions are useful not only for structuring our analysis, but also for understanding how the program operates and how it may be improved.

Perceived Goals of the Program

We asked the respondents to reflect on what they thought were the goals of the sponsors (MFJC) for the NGF program. The other countries most widely indicated the goal of motivating “potential Jewish leaders to become active” (64% thought it was very important). Almost as many indicated “to build Jewish activity” and “to deepen interest in and knowledge of Jewish culture.” Despite their having understood that the MFJC wanted to motivate potential Jewish leaders, relatively few felt the Foundation thought it very important to transmit “Jewish leadership skills” (just 32% of the FSU and of the other countries). In fact, the number seeing this as a very important MFJC goal was among the smallest of any goals listed. This finding suggests that the respondents were not particularly impressed with the extent to which the Program intended to teach leadership skills.

Table 7
Perceived Goals of the Program

		Very Important		
		Overall	Other	FSU
6.	In your view, how important were each of the following goals to the sponsors of the NGF program?			
a)	To build Jewish identity	56%	58%	50%
b)	To introduce Jewish learning	50%	45%	64%
c)	To spark interest in Jewish observance (e.g., Shabbat)	20%	13%	41%
d)	To motivate potential Jewish leaders to become active	58%	64%	39%
e)	To develop links with Jewish leaders	48%	47%	50%
f)	To impart Jewish leadership skills	32%	32%	32%
g)	To deepen interest in and knowledge of Jewish culture	62%	58%	75%

The most striking difference on this set of questions between the FSU and the other countries centered on the goal of sparking “interest in Jewish observance.” Only 13% of the other countries thought this goal very important to the MFJC as opposed to 41% of the FSU. How can we explain this discrepant evaluation of essentially the same experience? Our answer might be found in the relative prior exposure of the two populations to observance generally, or perhaps instruction in observance in particular.

For the FSU, exposure over the course of the NGF seminar to a relatively intensive Shabbat experience (and the occasional appearance of ritual activities during the week) may have created a more powerful impression than among the other countries who are more accustomed to ritual aspects of Judaism.

Perceived Impact of the Program

In addition to asking respondents about the sponsor's goals for the program we asked what they believed the program's impact was on them. The respondents, whether the FSU or the other countries, rather frequently reported greater interest in "Jewish culture" as a result of their NGF experience. In contrast, few reported greater interest in Jewish observance or having acquired Jewish leadership skills. Thus, at least in terms of the perception of the participants, the program succeeded dramatically in one area (Jewish culture), while it may have exerted little influence with respect to Jewish religious identity, and failed to develop Jewish leadership skills.

In four areas of possible impact, about a third of the other countries respondents gave the Program the highest available rating. These consisted of: "I reevaluated what being Jewish means to me; I became even more interested in Jewish culture; I learned about Jewish culture; it strengthened my Jewish identity." In contrast, hardly any of them reported a comparable impact with respect to increased interest in Jewish observance, or with respect to acquiring Jewish leadership skills.

The patterns among the FSU vary somewhat. For them, the biggest perceived impact (41%) occurred with respect to becoming more "interested in Jewish culture." About a quarter reported the highest impact with respect to the interest in and comfort with Jewish learning, interest in Jewish observance, and learning about Jewish culture.

For both groups, then, the impact on engagement with Jewish culture and learning was most highly rated. The other countries report greater impact than the FSU in terms of their private Jewish identity, but the FSU report a greater effect upon their interest in observance.

Table 8
Perceived Impact of the Program

		Very Much		
		Overall	Other	FSU
7.	As far as you can tell, to what extent did the NGF Program have the following sorts of impact upon you?			
a)	It strengthened my Jewish identity	27%	31%	18%
b)	I became more interested in and comfortable with Jewish learning	20%	18%	25%
c)	I became more interested in Jewish observance (e.g., Shabbat)	8%	2%	25%
d)	I became more motivated to serve as an active Jewish leader	21%	26%	7%
e)	I developed links with Jewish leaders	18%	21%	11%
f)	I acquired Jewish leadership skills	6%	7%	4%
g)	I became even more interested in Jewish culture	34%	32%	41%
h)	I learned about Jewish culture	30%	32%	22%
i)	I reevaluated what being Jewish means to me	29%	35%	10%

Jewish Involvement

Whatever the extent of the impact on the personal Jewish identity of the NGF alumni, there is no question that large numbers of them have been active in Jewish communal life since participating in the program. Around three quarters have “tried to become more involved in Jewish life or organizations” in their respective communities, and about the same number have actually been engaged in some Jewish community projects. Of these, around two thirds were new initiatives, about half entailed some collaboration between communities, just under half were largely individual initiatives rather than undertaken in collaboration with others, and around a third were undertaken in collaboration with other NGF alumni. In other words, the projects they have initiated or joined certainly vary in character.

The FSU differed markedly from the other countries over whether their local Jewish communal leaders encouraged them to become active in Jewish life. As many as 62% of the other countries so reported, compared with only 25% of the FSU. For better or worse, this factor was unrelated to the likelihood of NGF alumni actually participating in Jewish communal activities.

One other outcome of the NGF program entails ongoing contact with the alumni and staff. About a third of the other countries reported having kept in touch with “some” or “many” participants from their respective areas or countries and even more (38%) kept in touch with at least some participants from other countries. Only a few maintained contact with faculty and staff. Far fewer FSU kept in touch with NGF program alumni, a circumstance that may reflect their geographic mobility, their dispersal, or the weakness of their Jewish communal infrastructure.

Table 9
Jewish Communal Activities Since the Program

		Overall	Other	FSU
9.	Since participating in the NGF Program, have you tried to become more involved in Jewish life or organizations in your community?	72%	70%	79%
11.	Have you been engaged in any Jewish community projects since having attended the NGF Program?	75%	75%	75%
11a	Were any of these projects new initiatives (as opposed to having been pre-existing projects or programs)?	66%	68%	59%
11b	Were any of these projects largely individual initiatives (you do most of the work by yourself -- such as writing a book -- rather than in combination with others?)	43%	40%	50%
11c	Have you been engaged in any projects in which you've worked with any other members of your NGF Program?	31%	30%	36%
11d	Have you been engaged in any projects which involved some sort of collaboration between your community and another community?	55%	50%	68%
10	Have you found that the leadership of the organized Jewish community in your area have generally encouraged you to become involved in Jewish communal life?	53%	62%	25%

With respect to a variety of Jewish activities, we asked respondents to report on their levels of involvement prior to the program and their current (i.e., post-program) involvement. In some cases, "prior to the program" was eight or ten years ago. We have no idea whether questions based on recall would serve to exaggerate or minimize estimates of impact of the program. That is, perhaps respondents remember themselves consistently as less or more involved than they were in reality. If less, then this survey over-estimates change; if more, then it under-estimates change. It is also very difficult to isolate the impact of the NGF experience in the context of many other experiences, often over a long period of time. Thus this data has to be treated with some caution.

When we compare the proportions stating they were "very involved" in specific areas before the program with comparable levels of current (post-program) involvement in Jewish life, we find a pattern of modest increases in involvement.

With respect to current levels of involvement (i.e., at the time of the survey, several years after participating in the program), the FSU and the other countries bear several notable similarities. Of all aspects of Jewish involvement, both groups rank highest "caring and talking about Israel," followed by "reading books and periodicals on Jewish subject matter." Apparently, Israel holds a special place in their Jewish identities, perhaps one more central than what we might expect among a comparable group of Americans. FSU Jews are obviously closely tied to Israel, by virtue of recent and ongoing migration; Jewish communities in other countries with smaller Jewish populations have long relied on Israelis for professional and educational leadership. The frequency of reading Jewish subject-matter and its primacy in the participants' consciousness reflects their high levels of education.

Both participants from the FSU and from other countries also rather frequently report being "very involved" in two other, related areas: "Jewish community activities" and "knowing Jewish leaders." Both items clearly reflect the respondents' roles in Jewish communal service.

In contrast, rather few participants from FSU and those from other countries said they were "very involved" in "Sabbath observance" or "Jewish holiday observance." The rather low ranking of these two items testifies to the ethnic, cultural, and/or secular character of participants' Jewish identity.

For the other countries, almost all measures increased over time, with only one ("Jewish community activities") showing relative stability (38% compared with 34%). The most dramatic jumps were reported with respect to "reading books and periodicals on Jewish subject matter" (from 27% to 40%), and with respect to "caring and talking about Israel" (from 37% to 49%). Generally, the items related to Jewish leadership showed the smallest increases, those related to cultural life showed the largest increases, and those related to personal Jewish religious identity displayed intermediate levels of change. This finding is consistent with other findings about the importance of Jewish culture to participants.

The FSU display somewhat different patterns. Like the other countries, they too reported increases in all but one area -- “talking about Jewish matters at home”-- 29% compared with 25%; all the other items were associated with increases. In contrast with the other countries, the FSUs’ Jewish involvement scores increased more substantially.

Among the FSU, the largest increase (of 25 percentage points) was registered with respect to “knowing Jewish leaders.” Other large increases (18 points) were associated with involvement in “Jewish community activities” and “caring and talking about Israel.” In addition, those who described themselves as “very involved” in “leadership in the Jewish community” jumped 11 points (from 11% to 22%). Apparently, Jewish communal activity grew substantially among the FSU.

Table 10
Jewish Involvement Then and Now
(Percentages are for “Very Involved”)⁵

4/5. On each of the following dimensions, how involved were you just before you participated in the NGF program and how involved are you now?	Other		FSU	
	Then	Now	Then	Now
a) Jewish community activities	38%	34%	21%	39%
b) Leadership in the Jewish community	23%	25%	11%	22%
c) Knowing Jewish leaders	26%	35%	11%	36%
d) Sabbath observance	13%	18%	11%	21%
e) Jewish Holiday observance	18%	23%	11%	18%
f) Reading books and periodicals on Jewish subject matter	27%	40%	36%	43%
g) Attending classes and lectures on Jewish subjects	19%	25%	21%	26%
h) Talking about Jewish matters at home	37%	43%	29%	25%
l) Caring and talking about Israel	37%	49%	36%	54%
j) Participating in Jewish cultural activities (e.g., drama, film, music)	19%	24%	32%	32%

⁵ “Very involved” equals a “5” on a 5-point scale. Additional responses were “somewhat involved” indicated by a “3” or “4”.

Two reasons for this discrepancy between changes in communal involvement among FSU and the other countries may be operating. First, the program may simply exert more impact on the FSU (and others) with limited prior exposure to systematic Jewish learning and leadership training. Second, over the last decade, FSU Jewry generally experienced substantial broadening of Jewish communal activity. As a result, many opportunities for communal leadership have only recently emerged. This dynamic situation provided an added impetus to the growth in leadership activities among NGF alumni from the FSU.

Who Was Most Affected?

Clearly, knowing who are the candidates most likely to “succeed” could only aid recruitment efforts. Is there, in fact, a profile of the NGF alumnus/a who is most likely to advance in terms of religious commitment, leadership involvement, and cultural participation? To answer this question we examined two sorts of outcome measures: differences between “then” (pre-program) and “now” (post-program) in scales of involvement; and respondents’ own declared perceptions of the Program’s impact upon themselves personally.

Interestingly, outcome measures of one sort or another seemed to correlate with each other. The different measures were associated with each other and the perceived impact measures were associated with each other as well. In other words, growth in one dimension tended to indicate growth in another, and perception of impact in one area usually accompanied a similar perception elsewhere.

No strong indicators emerge from the analysis. Age does little to predict outcome, as does gender, although in a few instances, women did slightly out-score men. Weak evidence also suggests that those with a weaker Jewish educational background were more affected than those with a stronger one. Similarly, those initially scoring low on measures of Jewish involvement may have advanced further, but this finding may reflect the reality that those who score low initially have more room to progress. We need to stress that all of these relationships are quite weak and, short of confirmation elsewhere, ought not influence recruitment policy.

We did find a rather striking and strong set of relationships between the reasons for participating and the reported impact of the Program. To take an example, those who said that leadership development (indicated by a variety of questions) strongly motivated them to apply for the Program also tended to say that the Program heavily contributed to their development as a Jewish leader. The same sort of statement may be made for religious involvement and cultural participation. In the case of leadership development, perceptions that the sponsor (MFJC) was keen on this goal also was associated with perceived impact in the leadership dimension.

Recommendations from the Alumni

We asked the respondents to comment on the most desirable geographic boundaries of future NGF participants. About half would set no restrictions whatsoever, and called for participants from all over the world including Israel. At least three fifths would prefer participants from anywhere in the Diaspora, including North America. Very few would restrict participation based on geographic origin. The FSU, given their greater interest in meeting people from diverse backgrounds, were somewhat less restrictive in their preferences than were the other countries.

Table 11
Recommendations Regarding Geographic Origin

16. Based on your experience, which of the following should constitute the geographic focus of the NGF program?	Overall	Other	FSU
Western and Central Europe	11%	11%	11%
Europe and the former Soviet Union	12%	14%	7%
The Diaspora, excluding North America	12%	13%	11%
The entire Diaspora	19%	19%	18%
The Diaspora and Israel	46%	43%	54%

Finally, we asked respondents their views of several possible changes in the NGF program. Among the other countries, all proposals received similar, generally positive receptions. The proportions regarding the six proposals as “very desirable” ranged between 33% and 46%. Among the FSU, the patterns were more clear-cut. Very few were interested in increasing the component dealing with leadership development. In contrast, a majority highly endorsed the idea of setting up a discussion group on the Internet, and even more (68%) wanted more attention to Jewish learning (e.g., text, Jewish thought).

Table 12
Recommendations Regarding Program Content

	Very Desirable		
	Overall	Other	FSU
17. Below are some ideas for changing the NGF Program. In your view, how desirable are each of the following possible changes?			
a) Increase the component dealing with Jewish culture and Jewish living	45%	46%	43%
b) Increase the component dealing with Jewish learning (text, Jewish thought, etc.)	46%	39%	68%
c) Increase the component dealing with Israel-Diaspora relations	36%	39%	29%
d) Increase the component dealing with leadership development	30%	37%	11%
e) Add a component dealing with community planning and management	40%	43%	32%
f) Organize a discussion group on the Internet for program alumni	38%	33%	54%

The differences between the FSU and others on this multi-part question serve to point to differences in their interests and background. Given their lack of formal training in Judaica and the relative novelty of exposure to the world Jewish community, the FSU – more than the others – look to the NGF program to enrich their Jewish intellectual background and to provide them with international contacts that they would like to maintain after the program. They are not particularly interested in leadership training or development, perhaps reasoning that they are already skilled in such matters or that conditions in FSU are so distinctive that there is little of practical use they can learn from a seminar organized by outsiders. This difference may also reflect the greater proportion of Jewish communal workers among FSU respondents.

What the Participants Found “Most Attractive” & “Least Attractive” About the NGF Program

We also asked participants two open-ended qualitative questions -- what they found most attractive about the program and what they found least attractive about it. The majority of participants seized the opportunity to praise the program, and were both specific and effusive in their comments about the program’s strengths. Overall, very few participants offered negative comments, and many of those who did made a point of mentioning that the positives far outweighed the negatives, and that they were only offering negative comments because they were being asked to and hoped it would help the program sponsors.

Most Attractive

When asked what they found most attractive about the program, participants spoke of the overall impact the program had on them, and tended to praise the program in three major areas: participants, faculty and program.

Participants

Fifty-five comments -- 39 from other countries and 16 from FSU -- mentioned the participants as the most attractive aspect of the program. Of these comments, 23 referred to the value of the diversity of the group, for example:

"Opportunity to meet active Jews from around the world."

"Opportunity to share dilemmas, questions w/ colleagues from various countries, professions and backgrounds."

Faculty

Thirty-six comments -- 26 from other countries and 10 from FSU -- addressed the excellence of the faculty and lectures:

"Being exposed to some of the finest minds in the Jewish world."

Program

Fifty-two comments -- 45 from other countries and 7 from FSU -- dealt with different dimensions of the program. A common theme seems to be the program’s ability to balance diverse topics and offerings without sacrificing depth:

"The intensity of the learning, discovery, sharing and bonding that occurred in such a short time."

"Diversified themes, well structured, very professional, stimulating discussion, well balanced."

"Opportunity to engage in intensive study, dialogue and socializing."

Least Attractive

When asked what they found least attractive about the program, participant comments focused on two major themes -- the separation between FSU and other countries during the program, and a lack of follow-up on the part of the Foundation after the program. Both FSU and other countries tended to want more interaction between the two groups -- both socially and in the formal program, though members of both groups recognized the practical, linguistic difficulty of completely integrating the two groups.

Twenty-three comments -- all from other countries -- were critical of the logistics and physical arrangements, especially food and accommodations. Perhaps the Foundation needs to do a better job of preparing other countries for what they can and cannot expect from a residential program in the Former Soviet Union.

Conclusion

Virtually all the survey evidence -- both quantitative and qualitative -- points to the success of the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship program. The participants express keen satisfaction with the program; they claim to have been affected by their participation in anticipated ways; and they report high levels of communal involvement and Jewish leadership activities.

If there is one area where the program may need some attention, it is with respect to enhancing Jewish leadership. Here the data point to implications before, during, and after the program. Before the program, the Foundation may wish to consider a more explicit and potent emphasis on the leadership aspects of the program. During the program, it may wish to consider expanding the curricular component related to leadership development. And, as noted earlier, the Foundation may want to explore ways in which it can launch follow-up activities to assist alumni in functioning as Jewish communal leaders.

APPENDIX: Survey of Alumni of the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship

<i>1. In what year did you participate in NGF?</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
<i>1987</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>1989</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>1991</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>1993</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>32%</i>
<i>1995</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>43%</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Who/What Encouraged You to Apply?

2. How important were each of the following in encouraging you to apply to the NGF Program?

	<i>Very Important</i>		
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
<i>a) An alumnus of the program</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>b) A local rabbi or Jewish community official</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>33%</i>
<i>c) Written material</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>24%</i>
<i>d) The program's reputation</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>51%</i>

Why Did You Apply?

3. How important were each of the following reasons for applying to the program?

	<i>Very Important</i>		
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
<i>a) To strengthen my Jewish identity</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>b) To engage in Jewish learning</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>49%</i>	<i>52%</i>
<i>c) To participate in Jewish cultural experiences</i>	<i>36%</i>	<i>39%</i>	<i>30%</i>
<i>d) To acquire links with other Jewish leaders</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>33%</i>
<i>e) To acquire Jewish leadership skills</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>f) To acquire relationships that would help me in my profession</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>30%</i>
<i>g) To explore my religious interests</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>7%</i>
<i>h) To meet interesting people</i>	<i>44%</i>	<i>37%</i>	<i>68%</i>

Your Jewish Involvement -- Then and Now

4. Think back to the year just before you participated in the NGF Program. On a scale from 1 to 5, rate the extent of your involvement in each of the following dimensions.

<i>How involved were you?</i>	<i>Very Involved</i>		
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
a) <i>Jewish community activities</i>	34%	38%	21%
b) <i>Leadership in the Jewish community</i>	20%	23%	11%
c) <i>Knowing Jewish leaders</i>	22%	26%	11%
d) <i>Sabbath observance</i>	12%	13%	11%
e) <i>Jewish Holiday observance</i>	16%	18%	11%
f) <i>Reading books and periodicals on Jewish subject matter</i>	30%	27%	36%
g) <i>Attending classes and lectures on Jewish subjects</i>	20%	19%	21%
h) <i>Talking about Jewish matters at home</i>	35%	37%	29%
i) <i>Caring and talking about Israel</i>	37%	37%	36%
j) <i>Participating in Jewish cultural activities (e.g., drama, film, music)</i>	22%	19%	32%

5. With respect to your current involvement in Jewish life, in each case, on a scale from 1 to 5, rate the extent to which you are now involved in each of the following dimensions:

<i>How involved are you?</i>	<i>Very Involved</i>		
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
a) <i>Jewish community activities</i>	35%	34%	39%
b) <i>Leadership in the Jewish community</i>	24%	25%	22%
c) <i>Knowing Jewish leaders</i>	35%	35%	36%
d) <i>Sabbath observance</i>	19%	18%	21%
e) <i>Jewish Holiday observance</i>	22%	23%	18%
f) <i>Reading books and periodicals on Jewish subject matter</i>	40%	40%	43%
g) <i>Attending classes and lectures on Jewish subjects</i>	26%	25%	26%
h) <i>Talking about Jewish matters at home</i>	38%	43%	25%
i) <i>Caring and talking about Israel</i>	50%	49%	54%
j) <i>Participating in Jewish cultural activities (e.g., drama, film, music)</i>	26%	24%	32%

What Were the Goals of the Program?

6. In your view, how important were each of the following goals to the sponsors of the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship (NGF)? (Circle the number of your answer.)

	Very Important		
	Overall	Other	FSU
a) To build Jewish identity	56%	58%	50%
b) To introduce Jewish learning	50%	45%	64%
c) To spark interest in Jewish observance (e.g., Shabbat)	20%	13%	41%
d) To motivate potential Jewish leaders to become active	58%	64%	39%
e) To develop links with Jewish leaders	48%	47%	50%
f) To impart Jewish leadership skills	32%	32%	32%
g) To deepen interest in and knowledge of Jewish culture	62%	58%	75%

The Impact of the Program on You

7. As far as you can tell, to what extent did the NGF Program have the following sorts of impact upon you?

	Very Much		
	Overall	Other	FSU
a) It strengthened my Jewish identity	27%	31%	18%
b) I became more interested in and comfortable with Jewish learning	20%	18%	25%
c) I became more interested in Jewish observance (e.g., Shabbat)	8%	2%	25%
d) I became more motivated to serve as an active Jewish leader	21%	26%	7%
e) I developed links with Jewish leaders	18%	21%	11%
f) I acquired Jewish leadership skills	6%	7%	4%
g) I became even more interested in Jewish culture	34%	32%	41%
h) I learned about Jewish culture	30%	32%	22%
i) I reevaluated what being Jewish means to me	29%	35%	10%

With Whom Have You Kept in Touch?

8. *To what extent have you kept in touch with each of the following types of participants at the NGF Program?*

	<i>Some or Many</i>		
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
<i>a) Participants from your area</i>	27%	31%	12%
<i>b) Participants from your country</i>	25%	31%	7%
<i>c) Participants from other countries</i>	32%	38%	11%
<i>d) Faculty</i>	9%	8%	11%
<i>e) Staff</i>	10%	12%	4%

Your Involvement in the Jewish Community [for questions 9-11d percentages are for "Yes" responses]

	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
<i>9) Since participating in the NGF Program, have you tried to become more involved in Jewish life or organizations in your community?</i>	72%	70%	79%
<i>10) Have you found that the leadership of the organized Jewish community in your area have generally encouraged you to become involved in Jewish communal life?</i>	53%	62%	25%

Your Involvement in Jewish Community Projects

	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
<i>11) Have you been engaged in any Jewish community projects since having attended the NGF Program?</i>	75%	75%	75%

If you answered "Yes" to question 11, please answer questions 11a-11d; If you answered "NO" please skip to question 12.

	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>FSU</i>
<i>11a) Were any of these projects new initiatives (as opposed to having been pre-existing projects or programs)?</i>	66%	68%	59%
<i>11b) Were any of these projects largely individual initiatives (you do most of the work by yourself -- such as writing a book -- rather than in combination with others?)</i>	43%	40%	50%
<i>11c) Have you been engaged in any projects in which you've worked with any other members of your NGF Program?</i>	31%	30%	36%
<i>11d) Have you been engaged in any projects which involved some sort of collaboration between your community and another community?</i>	55%	50%	68%

Your Reactions to the Program

12. In your view, what did you find most attractive about the program? [See chapter on **Detailed Analysis**]

13. In your view, what did you find least attractive about the program? [See chapter on **Detailed Analysis**]

	Somewhat (4) or Very (5)		
	Overall	Other	FSU
14) How useful were the materials you received prior to the Program?	40%	44%	29%
15) How well were the program expectations and goals conveyed to you in advance?	43%	42%	46%

16. Based on your experience, which of the following should constitute the geographic focus of the NGF program?

	Overall	Other	FSU
Western and Central Europe	11%	11%	11%
Europe and the former Soviet Union	12%	14%	7%
The Diaspora, excluding North America	12%	13%	11%
The entire Diaspora	19%	19%	18%
The Diaspora and Israel	46%	43%	54%

Proposed Changes in the NGF Program

17. Below are some ideas for changing the NGF Program. In your view, how desirable are each of the following possible changes?

	Very Desirable		
	Overall	Other	FSU
a) Increase the component dealing with Jewish culture and Jewish living	45%	46%	43%
b) Increase the component dealing with Jewish learning (text, Jewish thought, etc.)	46%	39%	68%
c) Increase the component dealing with Israel-Diaspora relations	36%	39%	29%
d) Increase the component dealing with leadership development	30%	37%	11%
e) Add a component dealing with community planning and management	40%	43%	32%
f) Organize a discussion group on the Internet for program alumni	38%	33%	54%

18. What, if any, other changes to the NGF Program would you recommend? [See chapter on **Detailed Analysis**]

Your Childhood Jewish Background (Other countries only)

19. Before the age of 18, did you ever...	YES
a) Attend a part-time Jewish school?	44%
b) Attend a full-time Jewish day school?	29%
c) Participate in a Jewish or Zionist youth group or club?	61%
d) Participate in a Jewish summer camp?	53%
e) Visit Israel	69%
f) Other informal Jewish group activities	74%

Current Jewish Characteristics