



## Jewish Identity and Volunteerism at Temple Emanuel

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December 2020

Vanderbilt University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organizations  
Peabody College of Education and Human Development, Vanderbilt University

## Acknowledgments

**Cohort 2:** I am eternally grateful for the “we’ve got one another’s back” and “we’re all in this together” mantras. Over the past three years, you have become my friends, my family, a sounding board, and a place to vent, laugh, and grow. We have shared major life milestones, cheered for one another, and grieved together. Thank you for all that you are! I look forward to our continued connection and friendship for years to come.

**Dr. Chris Quinn-Trank:** Thank you, thank you, thank you!! It was your insight, no-nonsense approach, passion, and humor that motivated me when I needed it most. Your excitement for my project fed my own enthusiasm!

**Professors and Professional Colleagues:** I would like to thank all of you for your guidance, insight, never-ending time, and individual expertise. It was your collective wisdom that had the greatest impact.

**My Family:** Thank you for your continued love and support—even when I said I was going back to school...*AGAIN!*

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this Capstone was to examine Jewish identity and its impact on volunteerism at Temple Emanuel (Winston-Salem, NC). This study assessed the Jewish identity of members of the Temple and their motivation to volunteer within this congregation. Following from the research on identity and volunteerism, the primary focus was the extent to which the congregants embrace a Jewish identity, and the level to which they perceive that volunteering at the synagogue is an expression of that identity.

Founded in 1932 as a reform congregation, Temple Emanuel is located in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. It is composed of 280 member units (approximately 600 individuals—singles and families) in a city with a population of 242,000 residents. Members range in age from a newborn infant to a 94-year-old engaged and outspoken Holocaust survivor. The Rabbi has been active in his current position for over fifteen years, and the temple president is in her first year of a two-year term.

As a former board member and volunteer at Temple Emanuel, I was cognizant of the ongoing struggle to secure volunteers. This first-hand knowledge prompted me to contact the past-president and the Rabbi to engage in a conversation about the Vanderbilt EdD program and its Capstone element as an opportunity to explore volunteerism. The types of challenges experienced by the Temple led me to examine faith organizations and the literature related to volunteerism and identity.

Once the context, problem of practice, literature review, and framework were established, two guiding research questions came to light:

1. To what extent do congregants identify with their faith?
2. To what extent are current volunteer opportunities seen as potential expressions of their faith?

To explore these questions, a mixed-methods design was crafted with the initial data collection obtained through a quantitative survey: the American Jewish Identity Scales (AJIS). The survey was distributed to 399 Temple members via email, inviting them to participate in this Capstone

project. In the end, 386 surveys were returned. However, only 147 respondents fully completed the survey, which represents a 38.08% response rate. Qualitative data were then collected through one audio-recorded, semi-structured focus group consisting of 7 volunteers. The audio-recording of the focus group was transcribed verbatim and was uploaded into NVivo 12 software for thematic analysis. The focus group was conducted via Zoom, which allowed for a safe environment in light of COVID-19 and social distancing restrictions. While the quantitative results showed that identity did not appear to be the driving factor for volunteering, the qualitative summary uncovered other identity-based motivations to volunteer. These motivations stemmed from one's own family as well as the perception of the Temple as an extension of family.

Thus, while the literature suggests that religious identity is associated with volunteerism (Levy, 2012), and the survey results reveal that participants have a level of Jewish identity, it did not appear to be a direct driving factor in their decision to volunteer. The relationship proved to be more nuanced based on the results of the focus group. There, participants revealed that their interest in volunteering was an expression of their family identities, which were then linked to the Temple. The Temple, in other words, proved to be an extension of the family identity. The explanation for this complex result can be found in the Identity-Based Motivation (IBM) theory. This theory of motivation suggests that behaviors, such as volunteering, can be the result of cues in the situation that "call up" aspects of identity.

Although characteristics of a "call for volunteers" may not *directly* link to Jewish identity, the extent to which Temple involvement is an extension of family identity does appear to be salient. As Oyserman (2015, p. 3) argues, "IBM theory predicts that contexts cue both a particular identity and what that identity implies in this situation." The importance of the situation is key to understanding the effects of identity on volunteering. There are many reasons that people may choose to volunteer, but when volunteering cues their identity, motivation is strong. It is congruent with their sense of self (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Although Jewish identity did not appear to have a direct effect on volunteering, it suggests that family identity, and its connection to the Temple, did have such an effect. This indicates that there are important strategies that might be leveraged to increase volunteerism.

### Finding 1

- **Jewish faith was seen as a means of expressing the drive to volunteer, but in complex ways, rather than directly**

### Finding 2

- **Volunteerism was not based on Jewish identity alone**
- AJIS analysis. Identity mean 74.7 with highest possible score of 132
- *"I think [volunteering is] important, no matter what religion or what you're working for. I'm involved in other areas that are not related to the Temple, so I think giving your service and helping others is important no matter what."*

### Finding 3

- **The drive to volunteer is intrinsic to the individual or intrinsically motivated by the fulfillment enjoyed by volunteers**
- *A comment from one participant was telling: "One volunteers to feel better about themselves, so you help the refugees, or those in need of food, or raise funds for some organization. You feel good. You come away from a volunteer experience feeling good."*

### Finding 4

- **Identification of faith is most strongly identified through the value of family and on the congregation as an extension of family**
- *"I grew up where everybody was Jewish, whether you affiliated with one of the 10 synagogues in our town or not, and coming here . . . we were drawn to the Temple before we decided whether to move here . . . In order to find our like, we joined the Temple immediately, and that was our family. Temple life was our family. We didn't have brothers, sisters, or anything. We just had our children, and that was our family."*

### Recommendation Set 1 Strategies That Increase (Jewish) Identity

- Stories Aren't Just for Children
- Hope: Chronicle of a Holocaust Survivor
- Converts, Interfaith, Christmas, and Judaism

### Recommendation Set 2 Strategies That Imbue Volunteer Opportunities with Jewish Identity Cues

- Recounting Judaism and Temple Emanuel
- Committee Leadership and Governance

As with all research, the project at hand has limitations, including a limited number of overall participants, and the possibility that the respondents may not be representative of the congregation as a whole. In addition, it is entirely possible that individuals who have volunteered are also those willing to take the survey. With that said, Temple Emanuel should begin thinking about how it frames volunteer opportunities in an effort to cue identities. This can be accomplished in two ways: First, the Temple should begin developing a stronger Jewish identity among congregants, and link volunteer opportunities to that identity. Second, it can place more emphasis on the Temple as an extension of family by crafting its messaging in the design of volunteer opportunities.

*Key Words: Jewish Identity, Volunteerism, Identity-Based Motivation, Narrative, Motivation*

## Introduction

*“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”*

—Winston Churchill

Founded in 1932 as a reform congregation, Temple Emanuel (the Temple) is located in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. It is composed of 280 member units (approximately 600 individuals—singles and families) in a city with a population of 242,000 residents. The initial place of worship was located in a remodeled storeroom in downtown Winston-Salem, and in 1952 it moved to its current location on Oakwood Drive. Temple Emanuel is affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism and maintains an inclusive agenda that embraces all beliefs, faiths, and community needs. Members range in age from a newborn infant to a 94-year-old engaged and outspoken Holocaust survivor. The Rabbi has been active in his current position for over fifteen years, and the Temple president is in her first year of a two-year term.

The religious composition of Winston-Salem includes more than 149 churches, one mosque, and one temple (synagogue). Temple Emanuel represents the heart of Winston-Salem’s Jewish community and activities, welcoming members from all Jewish backgrounds, as well as guests of other faiths and beliefs. As the sole house of worship for Jews in Winston-Salem, it is important to note that the membership includes a variety of ages, gender identities, professions, personal interests, races, and Jewish familial traditions and backgrounds. As a religious, social, and educational center, Temple Emanuel is committed to promoting and providing opportunities for Jewish-based spiritual and religious enrichment.





The Temple offers its members opportunities to form meaningful connections with traditions and people by providing religious and cultural education and activities. These events are intended to encourage members to deepen their connections to the Temple and to support Winston-Salem's Jewish population in addition to the broader community. Temple Emanuel strives to embrace, engage in, and promote community activities to include groups such as: Maven's (members over the age of 55 who gather for activities and educational day trips), Sisterhood, Brotherhood, Social Action Committee, Moore Food Pantry (members who work to organize food and monetary donations for a partnering food pantry), and Mitzvah Day (one day a year in which hundreds of members volunteer to perform acts of charity in the community at organizations such as Ronald McDonald House, SECU, Humane Society, and Sunnyside Ministry, to name a few). In addition, Temple Emanuel promotes activities with Hillel (partnering with the Wake Forest University Hillel to engage and support students), B'nei Mitzvah Classes (supporting children as they approach their Bar/Bat Mitzvah), and Lifelong Learning programming (educational programming offered year-round at little to no cost to the Temple community).

Each of the groups require volunteers, and volunteerism is a core belief of Temple Emanuel and the Union for Reform Judaism, which notes: “We believe that all human beings are created in the image of God, and that we are God’s partners in improving the world. *Tikkun olam*—repairing the world—is a hallmark of Reform Judaism as we strive to bring peace, freedom, and justice to all people” (urj.org).

Prior to defining the structure for this project or constructing the questions that needed to be answered, I spent time speaking with the Rabbi, as well as the current and immediate-past president, to gain insight into the recruitment strategy for volunteers, how volunteers learn about opportunities, if they (the Temple leadership) have an understanding of why or why not individuals volunteer, and whether the development of a volunteer network was being addressed as a strategic initiative. They unanimously agreed that “we are a ‘plugged-in’ society, always on the go, trying to juggle raising children, caring for elderly parents, working, and attending to a plethora of family issues.” Additionally, they believe that when parents reach a certain point in their children’s lives (Bar/Bat Mitzvah), they retreat from being more active in the Temple because there is an impression that they have paid their (volunteer) dues. There was also a general consensus that people will volunteer for a particular event; however, it is often the same individuals who volunteer time and again. The current president theorized that one of the barriers to volunteering might be the time commitment expected by Temple Emanuel when an individual assumes a leadership role because the time commitment can range from just four hours per month to twenty or thirty hours per month.

The past-president offered insight by describing a timeline of the evolution of volunteerism at Temple Emanuel. She expressed that for the older generation of members

(born in 1945 and earlier), the Temple was their “*country club*” of sorts because they had not been permitted to join the Forsyth County Country Club simply because they were Jewish. The Temple was the place where they were accepted for being Jewish. It wasn’t until a prominent community member was invited to join the (actual) country club that the door opened for other members of the Jewish community to join as well. The next generation (born approximately between 1946–1964) also viewed the Temple as their social hub. These individuals volunteered because their parents had volunteered, and they felt it was important to carry on that tradition. The following generation (1965–1977) found that by this time being Jewish in the community at large was more accepted. Because there were numerous leadership opportunities as well as extracurricular activities available for their children (sports, music, dance), many parents began to volunteer their time in a manner that benefitted their families. While being part of the Jewish community is nice to have, this generation now also has other communities in which to divide their time and efforts.

In my conversations with two past-presidents, I learned that approximately 50% of the congregation at Temple Emanuel is composed of interfaith couples. While some of the significant others/spouses have converted to Judaism, others have not. (As a side note: Rabbi Mark shared that the overall number of conversions he has facilitated makes up 16.5% of the membership base). An initiative to welcome the non-Jewish spouse into the community has recently been revitalized, opening the door for enhanced community and engagement. All interfaith couples are invited, and gatherings take place at a (Jewish) member’s home with the hope of creating a casual atmosphere that allows for rich conversations to take place. This initiative was instituted approximately 25 years ago but the number of gatherings has

dwindled. When Temple Emanuel initially launched this initiative, it created a strong bond to the Jewish community as well as lifelong friendships, according to the leaders. This information suggests that this specific population of the Temple community may be overlooked and could be a valuable resource for securing volunteers for serving on committees or for any appropriate board positions. It is common in Reform Judaism for non-Jews to participate at the board level, most often in a role as an at-large member or as a committee member/chair (urj.org).

One issue that results from the lack of new volunteers is the missed opportunity to develop and nurture relationships and create a pipeline for board and executive committee positions. With an insufficient number of volunteers for these leadership positions, the Temple is at risk for becoming stagnant because the incoming president finds it necessary to recruit previous board members (having served 5, 10, or even 15 years ago) in order to fill current positions. The disadvantages of this system include an outdated replication of past practices and a potential lack of relevance to today's congregants. In addition, there exists a gap in the needs of the community, and in the educational programming offered by Temple Emanuel.

Notably, there is no formal plan for extending the recruitment efforts for volunteers beyond a board member's personal network or through announcements made during a regular Friday night Shabbat Service. Although the service attracts an average of 50 congregants each week, it is often many of the same individuals, which means that the outreach and communication to the congregation of Temple Emanuel in its entirety is incomplete. In addition to the lack of a pipeline of individuals to fill the board and executive positions (Board President, Executive VP, VP of Finance, Assistant VP of Finance, VP Fundraising, VP Membership, and VP Education/Rituals), there are 15 committees that each require a chair and members. The

underwhelming volunteer response has forced some committees to limit outward-facing activities.

The inadequate volunteer pipeline amplifies the Temple's subsequent inability to respond to the changing needs of the congregation. It also limits the flexibility in program implementation, and does not allow for progressive Jewish Education.

Thus, despite the core beliefs of Tikkun Olam, Temple Emanuel struggles to recruit a sufficient number of volunteers to staff its many community and leadership efforts. The goal of the Temple's leadership (and this project) is to find ways to increase the overall number of volunteers. Success is expected to result in a volunteer pipeline for Board of Director and Executive Committee positions, and staffing critical committees to support the congregation and serve the community.



The problem of practice is, the leaders of Temple Emanuel need to increase volunteerism.



### **Literature Review**

Volunteerism is defined as an act of helping that is not based on monetary compensation but is instead a planned, willful action in which the foundation is to help others with a task or to improve their overall well-being (Penner, 2002; Finkelstein, 2009; Wilson, 2000). The motivation to volunteer, according to Wemlinger and Berlan (2016), is rooted in a common social need to engage in communal relationships. By definition, volunteers do not receive compensation for their efforts, so something other than extrinsic rewards must drive the decision to volunteer, most likely a need to satisfy a social or intrinsic need (Gage & Thapa, 2012). Farmer and Fedor (2001) add that the leadership must be considerate of time expectations and constraints and offer volunteers an opportunity to rotate through a number of volunteer assignments. This will ensure sustained interest and engagement on the part of the volunteers.

### **Not-for-Profit Volunteerism**

While overall volunteerism has experienced a decline, when an individual's religious affiliation (church, temple, mosque, etc.) is strong, they are more apt to volunteer in a range of contexts (Wemlinger & Berlan, 2016; Johnston, 2013; Lowe, Willis, Gibson, 2017; Mencken & Fitz, 2013). In light of this decline, researchers of religious volunteerism posit that when an individual's religious affiliation (church, temple, mosque, etc.) is rooted in interfaith initiatives, they are more apt to volunteer (Wemlinger & Berlan, 2016; Johnston, 2013; Lowe, Willis, Gibson, 2017; Mencken & Fitz, 2013). In support of this, Forbes and Zampelli (2004) revealed a correlation in their research between church participation and volunteer activities. To that end, Kang (2016)

extend that, more often than not, a volunteer will align themselves with organizations that support and promote their values, be they religious or social, which indicates a relationship between church participation and volunteer activities.

Additional research indicates that religious attendance has a positive influence on an individual's desire to volunteer and affects the type of volunteerism in which they engage (Merino, 2013; van Tienen, Scheepers, Reitsma, Schilderman, 2011). In research conducted on Christian-affiliated institutions, Johnston (2013) demonstrated a correlation between religious service attendance and volunteerism over the adult lifespan. Additionally, he demonstrated a relationship between the importance of religion to individuals and their level of volunteerism with their religious institutions.

Researchers suggest that in general volunteers will align themselves with organizations that support and promote their values (Kang, 2016; Levy, 2012; Cohen & Kelman, 2006). Moreover, many religions emphasize the importance of helping others in need. In some communities, volunteering is greatly valued, and in some instances, it is valued more than monetary contributions (Taniguchi & Thomas, 2011). Many religious organizations promote volunteerism as a social norm in an effort to invoke acts of moral goodness (Johnson, Alladin, Cohen, Okum, 2015).

These findings hold within the Jewish religion as well. Jews are more likely to volunteer within their own community when their identification with the institution is strong (Levy, 2012). Further, Jews are more likely to volunteer within the Jewish community if they practice historical traditions and rituals both inside and outside of the home (Hodgkinson, 1990; Beyerlin & Hipp, 2006).



Still, there is widespread difficulty convincing individuals to volunteer. The rate of volunteerism in the United States has been on a steady decline. In 2015, volunteerism dropped to its lowest rate since formal tracking of this data began (BLS, 2016). In the face of this decline, organizations are forced to compete for available volunteers within the community. As a result, staff of not-for-profit organizations (NFPs) are assuming responsibilities previously performed by volunteers, thereby placing an extra burden on administrative staff struggling to meet their mandates (Gage & Thapa, 2012; Manetti, Bellucci, Como, and Bagnoli, 2015). Volunteers make up quite a significant portion of the workforce for NFP organizations and Boyd (2003) cites 80% of NFP organizations in the United States rely on volunteers to sustain their basic operations. Volunteerism in the NFP arena is mainly dedicated to educational/youth services at 25.1%, religious organizations at 33.3%, and hospitals/healthcare at 7.4% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). With that said, individuals also give freely of their time to special interests and social welfare organizations. These include organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Humane Societies, suicide hotlines, food shelters, hospice, and a host of other NFP organizations that rely on volunteers to help them fulfill their mission and vision.

Religious organizations are a prime example of the decline in volunteerism due to their reliance on volunteers to maintain daily operations. Volunteer participation rates observed in religious organizations declined approximately 2.5% from the high of 36.5% in 2007 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005, 2007–2016). Volunteers not only serve the religious community and organization; they also assume critical operational roles in order for temple leadership to focus on the longer-term agenda. Lay leaders are adult volunteers who assume a leadership role in a religious community, regardless of their faith (Bean & Martinez,

2015; Hameiri, 2019). It is common practice for the Jewish religion to rely on lay leadership for important work in the daily operations and sustainability of the synagogue, fulfilling both board and committee positions.

While research indicates that volunteers leave their role after one year, the research of Senses-Ozyurt and Villicana-Reyna (2016) presents a positive relationship between leadership inclusiveness and volunteer retention. In other words, when leaders included volunteers (training, development, and acknowledgment), they increased their ability to attract and retain them. An organization's ability to recruit and retain volunteers is crucial to its long-term success; therefore, understanding the reasons why individuals volunteer is critical. (e.g., Lewis, 2004; Brayley, et al., 2013; de Espanés, Villar, Urrutia, Serrat, 2015; Willems & Walk, 2013).

### **Motivation to Volunteer**

Volunteering means doing something without extrinsic reward. Therefore, volunteering is a result of intrinsic motivation, which can be driven by many factors. There may be any number of reasons that individuals will engage in the same task and yet will be motivated in completely different ways (Kwok, Chui, Wong, 2013). For some, the motivation to volunteer may be social relationships or interpersonal phenomena (Snyder & Omoto, 1992). Many individuals are motivated to volunteer as a result of their children's extracurricular activities such as little league coach, soccer mom, PTA, and field trips. Additionally, those with a strong passion for the arts may volunteer their time to a museum, while others who are motivated to volunteer to improve their community may assist in a Habitat for Humanity build, local Humane Society, or a food pantry. Volunteers who are provided an opportunity that aligns with their personal

motivational needs, will be more likely to engage in volunteerism (Kwok, Chui, Wong, 2013). Personal motivational needs may be represented as values, beliefs, feelings, inspirational, religious, identity, and any other identifier specific to each individual (Alexander, Sung-Bum, Dae-Young, 2014).

In their research to further examine the motivators behind volunteerism, van Tienen, Scheepers, Reitsma, and Schilderman, (2011) differentiate between formal volunteerism (public in nature and in concert with an organization) and informal volunteerism (more spontaneous and carried out in a more private setting or through ones' network). They assert religion and intrinsic motivation are functions of informal volunteering and uncover a connection between religious attendance and formal volunteering.

The research shows that volunteerism is often driven by faith and identification with the values of a faith. This is consistent with the research that indicates that individuals are driven toward volunteerism by intrinsic motivation. Researchers contend that when individuals feel a connection in the form of identity, their willingness to volunteer increases. Further, when values are supported as a component of identity, individuals give freely of their time (Levy, 2012; Chase, 2018; Punzi & Frischer, 2016).

## Identity

The word “identity” has countless definitions, therefore, for the purpose of this project, the term is defined as a *sense of sameness that is unwavering, an awareness of common characteristics, and a sense of belonging to one’s group* (Chase, 2018). This definition aligns with the research of Friedlander et al. (2010), Cohen and Hill (2007), and Krieger (2010) that Jewish identity is comprised of two core factors: religious identity and cultural identity.

Schlosser (2006) describes the cultural aspect as “All at once, Judaism is a culture, a religion, an ethnicity, and a set of traditions that is embedded in Jewish people’s expectations, belief systems, and family dynamics.” This stems from historical knowledge that the Jewish people have been identified as a cultural group for over 3,000 years and were once identified as the minority, the other, nonwhite, and of *other* ethnicity (Altman, 2010; Chase, 2018; Friedlander et al., 2010; Rosen, 2006; Sarfirstein, 2002). Core values in the Jewish identity are *chesed* (good deeds) and *tikkun olam* (repair the world) and when carried out, these actions provide structure and richness to the community as a whole. These core tenets, along with 613 commandments, can be found in the Torah and the Talmud. In a 2015 study by the Pew Research Center, Jews were asked about behaviors and attributes that are “essential” or “important” to their Jewish identity. In addition to remembering the Holocaust, Jews in the United States cite leading an ethical and moral life, working for justice and equality, observing Jewish law, and caring about Israel as essential to being Jewish. Therefore, an argument can be made that if a Jew is living a Jewish life (following the commandments, performing good deeds, and repairing the world), then their Jewish identity can also be considered a foundational feature of their identity as an individual.

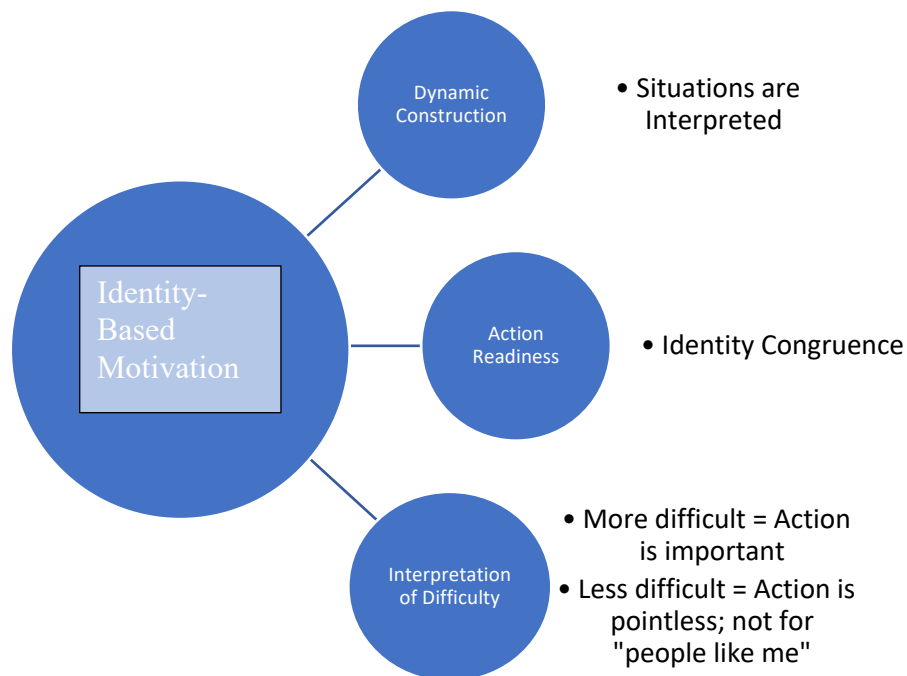
Through an exploration of congregational communities and the dependence on people for programming, structure, and strategies, Nauta (2007) purports that social processes are an intricate component of identity development, and further contends that there is a balance that exists between religious identity and the decline of a congregation's vitality. Research has discovered that in recent years a congregation's participation and involvement in religious institutions has been on the decline because the need to commit as a congregant is less important than in preceding decades (Nauta, 2007; Twenge et al., 2015). When religious identity declines, volunteerism declines as well.

Jewish identity is both multifaceted and multicultural, and the dimensions of Jewish identity examined in the AJIS (American Jewish Identity Scales) have been identified as religious identification and cultural identification, which are both key to this study.

## Theoretical Framework

Identity-Based Motivation (IBM) is the theoretical framework that is employed throughout this study. This framework rests on the assumption that one's identity matters because it imparts a foundation for meaning-making (Oyserman, 2015). When individuals consider their own identity, they generally know who they are, and that understanding is an important factor in what they do.

According to Oyserman (2015), identity-based motivated behavior is predicted by three elements: dynamic construction of identity cues, action-readiness, and interpretation of difficulty.



Individuals make sense of situations as they are occurring and assess them for action and identity cues. Individuals focus on who they are in a congruent manner, all while understanding that their identity can be fluid and may be impacted by personal circumstances and environmental cues (Oyserman, 2015). If an action feels identity-congruent, then the

resulting behavior or action will not only feel right, the difficulty will also be interpreted as being more meaningful. Conversely, when behaviors or actions are identity-incongruent, then the difficulty will be interpreted as pointless or not for “people like me.” Individuals place information in context in order to make sense of it. A situation is assessed in the context of taking action, and the information that is present in the environment will affect the decision to do so. Although there are many sources of motivation, identity may also be a motivational force.

Beyond the membership beliefs and identity, researchers argue that IBM is about more than simple membership; specifically, it encompasses action-readiness and procedural-readiness. Action-readiness refers to how individuals behave in ways that people within their identity group seem to act; ways that *feel* right. Procedural-readiness involves making sense of situations through the lens of an I/we (in-group) identity-congruent mindset (Oyserman, 2009; Lewis & Oyserman, 2016). Lewis and Oyserman (2016) further state that the three elements of identity-based motivation (dynamic construction, action-readiness, and interpretation of difficulty) act in tandem: one component activates the other.

Moreover, researchers claim that IBM links both cultural and societal identities and shapes the context that triggers goals, which motivates behavior (Klein, Lowrey, Otnes, 2015). Notably, Oyserman (2007) classifies identities as personal (those traits or characteristics not originating from a social group) or social (stemming from social connections or broader categories). In their research to test dynamic construction, Elmore and Oyserman (2012) randomly assigned middle-school students to interpret either graphs depicting census information related to earnings or high school graduation rates in their state. To further dissect

the graphs, some were delineated by gender. As the researchers predicted, in situations where boys examined graphs containing males, that information cued their interpretation baseline. Students displayed action-readiness after they read about the cost of a college education. The students began planning to study more and seek out opportunities for extra credit with the hope of increasing their grades, leading to financial rewards. Finally, in order to examine interpretation of difficulty, students were split into two groups. Group “A” was provided an interpretation of difficulty as a means to understand that schoolwork was important, and in turn Group “A” tended to work harder on their homework and developed a higher quality of writing skills (Oyserman 2013, 2015).

Thus, given the research on volunteerism and identity, and particularly on volunteerism in faith-based communities, including the Jewish faith, the goal is to understand how identity is, or is not, triggered in the context of volunteering at the Temple. It is now possible to elaborate on the original research questions concerning volunteerism at Temple Emanuel:

Research Question 1: To what extent do congregants identify with the Jewish faith?

Research Question 2: To what extent do congregants see volunteer opportunities as expressions of their faith?



## Methods and Design

This Capstone utilized a mixed-methods approach to explore the extent to which Jewish identity may affect volunteerism at Temple Emanuel. The survey was distributed via email to 399 Temple members inviting them to participate in this Capstone project. Ultimately, 386 surveys were successfully returned. The 147 respondents who fully completed the survey represents a 38.08% response rate. As a means to invite individuals to participate in the focus group, one of the survey questions asked if they would be willing to participate in such a group, to which 64 individuals responded affirmatively. To ensure random selection, every 9th volunteer was invited to the focus group Zoom session, which resulted in 7 participants.

In an effort to gain a demographic and baseline understanding of those who participated in this project, participants were asked to identify their age cohort, gender, service attendance, and qualifying questions related to each individual's impediments or influencers to volunteering (Appendix B). Jewish identity was assessed by using the American Jewish Identity Scales (AJIS) for the quantitative component of this project. The AJIS consists of 33 questions that are answered on a 4-point Likert Scale where 1 = Not at all true of me, 2 = a little true of me, 3 = fairly true of me, and 4 = very true of me.

### **Instrument: American Jewish Identity Scales (AJIS)**

The AJIS is a psychological measure of Jewish identity that is used with "self-identified" American Jews regardless of one's individual affiliation or historical religious practices. Friedlander, Miller, Friedman, Ellis, Friedlander, and Mikhaylov (2010) developed the AJIS to assess cultural and religious identification of North American Jews. Because the scope was North American Jews, the researchers refer to "culture" as opposed to "ethnic" because culture

is often associated with learned behaviors/beliefs and ethnic often refers to nationality and where an individual is from. The researchers conducted three studies to develop and investigate the properties of the American Jewish Identity Scales:

- Study 1 assessed the validity of the content
- Study 2 measured ethnic identity, collective self-esteem, and religiosity
- Study 3 assessed the AJIS's short-term stability and its relation to social desirability

According to the researchers, the most significant findings across the three studies were the development and cross-validation of a viable measure of American Jewish identity and that their results were in alignment with a broadly acknowledged theory that American Jews view their religious and cultural identities as being interwoven (Friedlander, et al; 2010).

In order to assess Jewish identity in addition to the AJIS, a focus group was conducted by randomly selecting every ninth (9th) participant who answered *yes* to demographic question #4 ("Have you volunteered for Temple Emanuel in the past?") and who also indicated that they were willing to participate in said focus group. To further understand the Jewish identity as it relates to volunteerism, questions asked during the focus group were:

1. What motivates you to volunteer at Temple Emanuel?
  - a. Does your identity as a Jew impact your volunteerism?
2. Tell me about a time in your life when you felt your Jewish identity most deeply.
3. Are you aware of volunteer opportunities at Temple Emanuel?
4. Do you carry out volunteer work other than at Temple Emanuel?

## Findings and Analysis

*“Not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything that can be counted, counts.”*

—Albert Einstein

The objective of this Capstone project was to examine the impact of Jewish identity and volunteerism at Temple Emanuel. This section provides the findings based on both the quantitative and the qualitative results. First, the quantitative results are presented and interpreted. The quantitative results section begins with a reiteration of the research questions and then presents the interpretations of the results based on the sample. Second, the qualitative results are presented, by theme and within each theme, by subtheme. Finally, the conclusion is presented with a summary of the quantitative and qualitative results combined.

### Quantitative Results

The results were calculated and estimated using SPSS. The data were collected using an online survey of members of the Temple Emanuel community. In this first section, the results are interpreted as standalone analyses, however, in the summary of this segment, the quantitative results are discussed in tandem with the qualitative results that are presented in the second section.

Based on the review of the literature, there were two key questions guiding this Capstone project:

1. To what extent do congregants identify with the Jewish faith?
2. To what extent do congregants see volunteer opportunities as expressions of their faith?

Insofar that religious identity is partially dependent on individual life circumstances, it is plausible that the level of Jewish identification may be affected by age, employment status, and gender.

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, including the means and standard deviations (for AJIS, continuous variable), were calculated for the study variables. Table 1 provides the distributions of the independent variables. A total of 147 respondents completed the survey. Among them, 97 (66%) were female and 49 (44%) were male. By birth cohort, respondents were distributed as follows: respondents born in 1945 or before represented 20% of the sample ( $n = 30$ ), those born between 1946 and 1964 composed 55% of the sample ( $n = 81$ ), those born between 1965 and 1977 accounted for 14% of the sample ( $n = 1$ ), and those born between 1978 and 1998 represented the remaining 10% of the sample ( $n = 15$ ).

The employment status of the Temple Emanuel congregants is presented in Table 1 as well. Of the sample, 45% of the congregants were retired ( $n = 66$ ), 41% were employed full-time ( $n = 60$ ), 10% were working part-time ( $n = 14$ ), and 5% of the congregants were unemployed ( $n = 7$ ).

Table 1

*Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Characteristics (N = 147)*

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Birth Cohort</b>	Born 1945 or <	30	20.4	20.4
	Born between 1946–1964	81	55.1	75.5
	Born between 1965–1977	21	14.3	89.8
	Born between 1978–1998	15	10.2	100.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>100</i>	
<b>Gender</b>	Female	97	66.4	66.4
	Male	49	33.6	100.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>100</i>	
<b>Employment Status</b>	Full-time	60	40.8	40.8
	Part-time	14	9.5	50.3
	Retired	66	44.9	95.2
	Unemployed	7	4.8	100.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>100</i>	
<b>Have you volunteered for Temple Emanuel before?</b>	No	24	16.3	16.3
	Yes	123	83.7	100.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>100</i>	

The survey also asked respondents if they have ever volunteered for Temple Emanuel. The vast majority, 123 (84%) answered in the affirmative, and only 16.3% ( $n = 24$ ) said they have not. The final descriptive/baseline questions asked of respondents pertained to the factors that impeded or influenced their decision to volunteer. Of the 123 participants who

volunteered in the past, the majority of participants gave personal satisfaction (100, 81.3%) and Mitzvah (90, 73.2%) as their reasons for volunteering. Of the 24 participants who did not volunteer in the past, the majority (11, 45.8%) claimed that the reason they could not volunteer was due to either work or personal scheduling conflicts (Table 2).

Table 2

*Reasons for Volunteering or Not Volunteering*

		Frequency	Percent
<b>Reasons for Volunteering</b>			
(n = 123)	Friends volunteer	39	31.7
	Social networking	42	34.1
	Mitzvah	90	73.2
	Personal satisfaction	100	81.3
	Volunteerism recognized	14	11.4
	Support is provided	23	18.7
	None of the above	14	11.4
<b>Reasons for Not Volunteering</b>			
(n = 24)	Lack skills/training	3	12.5
	Lack understanding/expectations	1	4.2
	Financial difficulties	0	0
	No transportation	1	4.2
	Lack of time	6	25.0
	Lack child/elder care	0	0
	Work/personal conflict	11	45.8
	None of the above	9	37.5

Note: The total percentage of responses exceeds 100% because participants were asked to choose all of the reasons that applied.

The participants' responses to the 33-survey item questions in the American Jewish Identity Scales (AJIS) are used to construct a summative scale. The highest possible score for the AJIS is 132. Each respondent was asked to rate the 33 items of AJIS from 1 (Not at all true of me) to 4 (Very true of me) to represent how strongly they identify with each statement. A summative score was computed for each respondent to indicate their Jewish identification, which makes the independent variable a continuous variable. The higher the score, the more strongly the respondent identifies with the cultural and religious beliefs of Jewish people. Across the 147 respondents, the scores ranged from 41 to 111 ( $M = 74.7$ ,  $SD = 12.4$ ).

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics of the American Jewish Identity Scales (N = 147)*

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
American Jewish Identity Scales (AJIS) measure	147	41	111	74.7	12.4

To test the associations among the demographic variables, volunteer history, and Jewish identity (using AJIS), the following test approaches were employed. First, in order to examine the relationship between Jewish identity and the demographic variables, a series of ANOVAs were run (Tables 4–6). ANOVA was used because the factors—demographic variables—were categorical in nature, and the AJIS variable was continuous. To examine the relationship between volunteer history and the demographic variables, a series of Chi-square analyses were conducted. This was appropriate because both the demographic and the volunteer history variables were categorical (Tables 7a/b–9a/b). Finally, a comparison between AJIS and the volunteer history was performed using an ANOVA model (Table 10).

Table 4

## ANOVA Results for Jewish Identity and Generation

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	633.732	3	211.244	1.800	.150
Within Groups	16778.268	143	117.331		
Total	17412.000	146			

Table 5

## ANOVA Results for Jewish Identity and Gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	117.673	1	117.673	.987	.322
Within Groups	17294.327	145	119.271		
Total	17412.000	146			

Table 6

## ANOVA Results for Jewish Identity and Employment Status

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	422.074	3	140.691	1.184	.318
Within Groups	16989.926	143	118.811		
Total	17412.000	146			

Of the comparisons among AJIS and the demographic variables, there were no significant differences shown in terms of age, gender, or employment status. This indicates that an individual's Jewish identity does not relate to the demographic variables used in this sample.



Table 7a

## Crosstabulation of Generation and Volunteer

		VOLUNTEERED		Total
		0	1	
Generation	Born 1945 or <	6	24	30
	Born between 1946–1964	10	71	81
	Born between 1965–1977	1	20	21
	Born between 1978–1998	7	8	15
Total		24	123	147

Table 7b

## Chi-Square Tests for Generation and Volunteer

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.399 <sup>a</sup>	3	.004
Likelihood Ratio	11.502	3	.009
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.090	1	.148
N of Valid Cases	147		

a. 3 cells (37.5%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.45.

Table 8a

## Crosstabulation for Gender and Volunteer

		VOLUNTEERED		Total
		0	1	
MALE	0	15	83	98
	1	9	40	49
Total		24	123	147

Table 8b

## Chi-Square Tests for Gender and Volunteer

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.224 <sup>a</sup>	1	.636		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.056	1	.813		
Likelihood Ratio	.221	1	.639		
Fisher's Exact Test				.642	.400
Linear-by-Linear Association	.223	1	.637		
<i>N</i> of Valid Cases	147				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 9a

## Crosstabulation for Employment Status and Volunteer

		VOLUNTEERED		Total
		0	1	
Employment Status	1	11	49	60
	2	1	13	14
	3	10	56	66
	4	2	5	7
Total		24	123	147

Table 9b

## Chi-Square Tests for Employment Status and Volunteer

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.876 <sup>a</sup>	3	.598
Likelihood Ratio	1.950	3	.583
Linear-by-Linear Association	.003	1	.954
<i>N</i> of Valid Cases	147		

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.14.

Of the Chi-square associations among the demographic and volunteer variables, the only significant association occurred between generation and volunteer (Chi-square = 13.40,  $p = .004$ ). This indicates that different generations had different volunteer practices. Participants born between 1946 and 1964 had the highest numbers of volunteering experience.

Table 10

ANOVA Results for Jewish Identity and Volunteer

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	87.841	1	87.841	.735	.393
Within Groups	17324.159	145	119.477		
Total	17412.000	146			

Table 10 depicts the ANOVA results for Jewish identity and volunteer. The results in this sample were not significant, which indicates that whether an individual volunteered did not differ based on their Jewish identity.

### Quantitative Summary

This section presents summary analysis of the quantitative component of the study of volunteers and Temple Emanuel. The descriptive statistics provided essential characteristics of the population and systematically examined the level of volunteerism among the congregants. Overall, the rate of volunteerism was very high: 84%.

The ANOVAs did not show any significant effects determining either AJIS or likelihood to volunteer. The limitations of the data may be responsible for that result (hence, the qualitative component). For example, the group of non-volunteers is extremely small ( $n = 24$ ). Further, the question related to volunteering is a binary variable. As such, it may not account for different levels—or intensity—of volunteering, which may well still be affected by the degree of Jewish identification, as discussed in the qualitative data analysis.

### Qualitative Results

An organization's ability to recruit and retain volunteers is crucial to its long-term success, therefore, understanding the reasons why individuals volunteer is critical. The purpose of this project was to understand why members of the Temple Emanuel congregation either volunteer or choose not to do so. Two research questions were used to guide this study, including:

RQ1: To what extent do congregants identify with their faith?

RQ2: To what extent are current volunteer opportunities seen as potential expressions of their faith?

Qualitative data were collected through one audio-recorded, semi-structured focus group of volunteers. Table 11 indicates the demographic characteristics of the individual focus group participants.

Table 11

#### *Focus Group Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Age Range
P1	Male	80–89
P2	Male	50–59
P3	Female	50–59
P4	Female	90–99
P5	Female	70–79
P6	Female	60–69
P7	Female	50–59

The audio-recording of the focus group was transcribed verbatim and was uploaded into NVivo 12 software for thematic analysis. First, a cycle of open coding was conducted in which statements from the transcript were grouped when they expressed similar ideas or experiences. In NVivo, this process involved assigning transcript excerpts with meanings relevant to answering a research question to a node. When transcript excerpts indicated similar

meanings relevant to answering a research question, they were assigned to the same node. Each node represented a code.

In the next step of the analysis, the data were themed. Theming the data involved grouping the codes with similar meanings or meanings that were related as different aspects of a single, overarching theme. In NVivo, this process involved grouping the nodes representing similar or related codes under a common parent node, which represented a theme.

Two major themes emerged. The first major theme, which was used to answer RQ1, was: Identification with the Jewish faith is strongest in relation to the value placed on family. The second major theme, used to answer RQ2, was: Volunteering is identified as an expression of personal inclination rather than of faith. The following presentation of the findings is organized by research question. The discussion related to each research question includes descriptions of the codes that were grouped to form the themes. Direct quotations from the data are presented as evidence for all findings.

### **Theme 1: Identification with the Jewish Faith Is Strongest in Relation to the Value Placed on Family**

Theme 1 was used to answer RQ1, which was: To what extent do congregants identify with their faith? Focus group participants expressed that they strongly identified with their faith, and that they experienced this identification most strongly through the value it placed on the family and on the congregation as an extension of the family. Nine excerpts from the focus group transcript were grouped into the four codes from which this theme emerged. Table 12 indicates the codes grouped to form this theme.

Table 12

*Theme 1 Codes*

Theme Codes	<i>n</i> of References in Transcript
<b>Identification with the Jewish faith is strongest in relation to the value placed on family</b>	<b>9</b>
Faith and family	5
Immersion in the homeland	1
When surrounded by non-Jews	2
Precept of helping others	1

Participants strongly identified with the family values they associated with the Jewish faith. A participant stated:

*“The basic element of Judaism is family. Remember: we started as a family of Abraham and Sarah. And so, when you take it in that light, you're just working with your family. The same as I do with my children, I do with everybody else that's of my faith. I'm caring for my family.”*

A participant experienced Jewish identity as an imperative to help others in part because of the high value placed on setting a good example for one's children: *“I think it's important to give back to the Temple and also work with people. It's setting a good role model for my child, knowing the importance of Judaism, and working to help others.”* Strongly identifying with the importance placed on family in the Jewish faith further enhanced participants' Jewish identity when they broadened their perception of family to include the congregation:

*“I grew up where everybody was Jewish, whether you affiliated with one of the 10 synagogues in our town or not, and coming here . . . we were drawn to the Temple before we decided whether to move here . . . In order to find our like, we joined the*

*Temple immediately, and that was our family. Temple life was our family. We didn't have brothers, sisters, or anything. We just had our children, and that was our family."*

The high value placed on family and on the congregation as an extension of the family in the Jewish faith contributed to a sense of strong identification with other members of the Jewish community. Some participants experienced this sense of communion with other members of their faith most strongly when they were in the company of people of other faiths: *"We're invited to a lot of interfaith gatherings, and I guess I feel Jewish most often when we wind up at Christian events, and [being Jewish] just doesn't fit anymore."*

### **Theme 2: Volunteering Is Identified as an Expression of Principle**

Theme 2 was used to answer RQ2, which was: To what extent are current volunteer opportunities seen as potential expressions of their faith? Theme 2 included two subthemes: (1) volunteering as a principle, and (2) reconciling the drive to volunteer with opportunity and capacity. A total of 32 excerpts from the transcript were grouped into 10 codes to form this theme. Table 13 indicates the subthemes and codes associated with Theme 2.

Table 13

*Theme 2 Codes*

Theme	<i>n</i> of
Subtheme	References
<i>Code</i>	in Transcript
<b>Volunteering is identified as an expression of principle</b>	<b>32</b>
Volunteering as a principle	23
<i>Faith calling toward volunteerism</i>	3
<i>Participating as community member</i>	6
<i>Values in volunteering</i>	7
<i>Volunteering outside Jewish community</i>	6
<i>Volunteerism drawing to faith</i>	1
Volunteering according to opportunity and capacity	9
<i>Broad awareness</i>	1
<i>Challenges in recruiting volunteers</i>	1
<i>Could increase awareness</i>	2
<i>Factors impacting capacity</i>	3
<i>Level of awareness connected to attending temple</i>	2

***Subtheme 1: Volunteering as a Principle***

Participants expressed that they did not identify the value of volunteering or the sense of obligation to do so with any specific religious faith. A participant stated:

*"I think [volunteering is] important, no matter what religion or what you're working for. I'm involved in other areas that are not related to the Temple, so I think giving your service and helping others is important no matter what."*



Further, one participant echoed:

*"I have to agree with that. I think it has nothing to do with your faith, but your personality, just giving of yourself, if you so want to, whether you do it at the Temple or you do it in the greater community."*

Meanwhile, another participant highlighted that being part of the community means being one in helping and serving, no matter what one's religion is. The participant noted: *"I agree, I think the community needs you as much as the Temple, but you still want to be a part of the community."*

A participant described the drive that motivated volunteering as individual rather than faith-dependent: *"If you have the need to volunteer, if you have the drive to volunteer, or the want to volunteer, no matter what your life experiences . . . you're going to find opportunities to volunteer."* Another participant used similar language to describe the motivation to volunteer as an individual inclination: *"If you're inclined to volunteer, you're out there. There's plenty of need for you."* In addition, participants described the personal benefits volunteers derived from their service as being universal. For example, a participant described volunteering as a check against idleness and a way to meet people:

*"Rather than sitting at home and vegetating, I think it is very important that you participate, not necessarily in only the Jewish community, but in the community at large. And I think that's what keeps you going, too . . . It keeps my mind active. And getting to know other people in different circles, both here and in other cities."*

A different participant described the motivation to volunteer as intrinsic: *"One volunteers to feel better about themselves, so you help the refugees, or those in need of food, or raise funds for some organization. You feel good. You come away from a volunteer experience feeling good."* One participant described the motivation to volunteer as a need to be active within and close to the Jewish community, but for universal reasons of survival rather than faith-specific reasons, stating that volunteering served *"A need to be a part of [the Jewish] community. Being that I came here as a stranger and had to make a life for myself, I need the Jewish community in order to survive."* When volunteerism was identified with the Jewish faith,

the Jewish faith was perceived as a means to express a pre-existing drive to volunteer rather than volunteerism being perceived as a means of expressing the Jewish faith. One participant suggested: *"I've always been involved in volunteering in one way or another. My decision to convert to Judaism was based in large part on the amount of work reform Jews do out in the world."* Volunteering was also identified with the Jewish faith when it was perceived as a means of meeting a learned, faith-based obligation, rather than as a positive expression of faith. Another participant suggested: *"Many people were brought up Jewish and brought up with the ethical laws. And so, they might be geared toward volunteerism because of that."*

### ***Subtheme 2: Volunteering According to Opportunity and Capacity***

In addition to perceiving volunteerism as an expression of an individual drive or inclination, participants perceived volunteerism as an expression of individual circumstances, including the opportunities and constraints encountered by each individual with the drive to volunteer. A participant described the reaction elicited when the individual drive was met by chance with opportunities for expression: *"I found that there were committees that I didn't even know existed . . . and some of them intrigued me. I thought, 'Oh, there's something beyond [name of committee redacted] that I could [be] involved in.'" The desire to pursue opportunities for volunteerism was constrained by individual circumstances, however, as a participant indicated: "It's a matter of how much do you give? How much do you involve yourself?"*

A participant referred to specific, circumstantial constraints related to time and opportunity that impeded volunteering: *"I'm working and travelling, and I don't have the time, and I'm not in town to be able to do it, so I don't look into it as much as I would if I was retired."* Similarly, another participant noted that being retired, not retired or working, can affect what you know, and, in turn, may also impact the time you have to allocate to reading all of the newsletters, emails, and bulletins. To that end, a participant highlighted: *"I thought I was pretty plugged in, and then the other night, we all signed in (Zoom lobby) for our various committees, and I found that there were committees that I didn't even know existed."*

Another participant described the Temple's ability to recruit volunteers as curtailed by its decreasing pool of young members who could be compelled by their parents to volunteer:

*“Our school-age population has shrunk. We have lesser the folks that are the indentured servants of parents. There's fewer people to draft for things because they're just not around.”*

The constraints associated with having fewer young members resulted in a transfer of volunteer tasks to older members, who might have their own constraints on taking up the additional burden: *“There's a greater burden being put on members who don't have sons and daughters affiliated with the Temple.”*

### **Summary of Findings**

Two research questions were used to guide this study. The first research question was: To what extent do congregants identify with their faith? The theme that emerged during data analysis to answer this question was: Identification with the Jewish faith is strongest in relation to the value placed on family. In relation to this theme, participants indicated that they strongly identified with the Jewish faith, and that they felt their identification most strongly when they were acting on the high value their faith placed on family and on the congregation as an extension of the family.

The second research question was: To what extent are current volunteer opportunities seen as potential expressions of their faith? The theme that emerged to answer this research question was: Volunteerism is identified as an expression of personal inclination rather than of faith. Participants perceived the drive to volunteer as being either intrinsic to the individual or as intrinsically motivated by the fulfillment enjoyed by volunteers. When volunteering was associated with the Jewish faith, the Jewish faith was seen as a means of expressing the drive to volunteer rather than vice versa. Alternatively, volunteering was perceived as a means of participating more fully in the congregation in order to obtain assistance in meeting practical needs.

The theme that emerged here, similar to the statistical findings, is that faith is not an exclusive or even a predominant reason that study participants volunteer. Rather, participants perceived the drive to volunteer as being either intrinsic to the individual or as intrinsically motivated by the fulfillment enjoyed by volunteers. When volunteering was associated with the Jewish faith, the Jewish faith was seen as a means of expressing the drive to volunteer rather

than vice versa, or volunteering was perceived as a means of participating more fully in the congregation in order to obtain assistance with meeting practical needs.

The implications of these quantitative and qualitative results, for future research, theory, and practice, are presented and discussed in the Conclusion. Additionally, the strengths and weaknesses of the results presented here are discussed in terms of internal validity, external validity, theoretical validity, and measurement validity and reliability.

## Recommendations

Temple Emanuel (like many other NFP organizations) has experienced a decline in its number of volunteers and finds it difficult to attract congregants who are willing to assume these volunteer roles. While Temple Emanuel garners support at events, there is a continuous struggle to establish a network of volunteers for committee projects, which creates a chronic shortage of individuals who are in the pipeline to fill board positions. The Temple president and the immediate past-president are focused on making the congregants aware that the benefits of serving the community can't necessarily be quantified and that volunteering is critical for the long-term sustainability of Temple Emanuel.

Judaism is relational, and the network of volunteers is no different. Just as Temple Emanuel is committed to promoting and providing opportunities for Jewish-based spiritual and religious enrichment and is a religious, social, and educational center, it also has an obligation to develop and nurture the very foundation of its sustainability: volunteers.

As is the case with most research, this Capstone project began with two broad-based guiding questions that led to a few specific outcomes. The data collection process included a 33-question electronic survey that was emailed to congregants in an effort to understand the Jewish identity of the participants. The process also included a focus group that was designed to further explore Jewish identity and its relation to volunteerism.

The proposal of recommendations must stem from a foundational problem of practice, which, in this case, it is: The leaders of the synagogue need to increase volunteerism. While the research links volunteerism to identity, additional variables were realized, such as personal satisfaction (intrinsic motivation) and family. Therefore, the recommendations that follow

outline strategies to increase volunteerism by focusing on identity and motivation through the implementation of changes to the current procedures the Temple employs to recruit volunteers.

The literature indicates that religious identity is associated with volunteerism, and the findings of this Capstone project reveal that participants exhibit a mid-level relationship to their Jewish identity; however, Jewish identity does not present as a driving factor in their decision to volunteer. The IBM model is motivational in the sense that when individuals act in accordance with their personal identity, their behaviors are congruent with the model even when their behaviors of IBM feel difficult (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). “IBM theory predicts that contexts cue both a particular identity and what that identity implies in this situation” (Oyserman, 2015, p3). Moreover, Oyserman (2007) classifies identities as personal (those traits or characteristics not originating from a social group) or social (stemming from social connections or broader categories). The personal identity that Oyserman speaks of can easily be translated to the high response rate of participants who volunteered in the past who asserted personal satisfaction (100, 81.3%) and Mitzvah (90, 73.2%) as their reasons for volunteering.

Based on both the literature and on the findings from the data collection process, I have divided my recommendations into two primary categories:

- Strategies That Increase (Jewish) Identity
- Strategies That Imbue Volunteer Opportunities with Jewish Identity Cues

## **Recommendation Set #1**

### **Strategies that Increase (Jewish) Identity**

#### **Charismatizing the Routine**

Part of the Jewish faith relies on the passing down of stories through the generations as well as on sharing experiences as a community. The concept of “charismatizing the routine” is characterized by storytelling and through the creation of a narrative. Because storytelling is inherently interactive (storytellers and listeners), individuals are more easily able to appreciate the sense of meaning-making that may otherwise be overlooked. Storytelling and narratives surrounding the history of the Temple as well as Judaism, family history, rituals, and traditions can serve to ignite a sense of Jewish identity as well as foster motivation.

My recommendation is to create opportunities for Lifelong Learning that enhance an individual’s Jewish identity while simultaneously adding to the narrative. The life experiences are vastly different for a Holocaust Survivor, for an individual who has “opted-in” (converted) to Judaism, and for the individual who is in an interfaith relationship. Although the journey of each individual may be different, it is in another respect, the same. The experience of Lifelong Learning scaffolds engagement, enhances identity, and strengthens the overall community.

When learning is community-based, we learn as a social system (Wenger, 1998). How does this connect to the core values of Jews? The Holocaust occurred not all that long ago, yet some believe it was a folklore story and some primary schools do not recognize the necessity of teaching the depths of evil to our children. Jews count on familial stories, artifacts, and the exchange and interpretation of information in order to retain knowledge of past events.

A well-known American Rabbi (Harold Kushner) explains further,

“Understand that religion is about community and about people coming together, then you realize you don't come to the synagogue to find God. There are 20 places you could find God more conveniently than at the synagogue. You come to the synagogue to find a congregation to make something special happen, something that happens only when people come together questing for the same thing. And somehow, magically, miraculously, something that nobody brought with him, everybody finds” (Kushner, 1993).



- i. **Stories Aren't Just for Children:** Given that Jews as a people rely on familial stories, Temple Emanuel could consider holding a special event where congregants gather to share stories of warm childhood memories, important family traditions, and the traditions they have continued. Through these rekindled memories, families may choose to incorporate long-lost familial traditions into their celebrations. Through the act of sharing, traditions and stories are kept alive and individuals may elect to incorporate "borrowed" traditions into their own familial celebrations.
  - a. **Impact 1:** The data gathered from the focus group found that a motivation to volunteer and a connection to identity stemmed from immediate family or from congregants as extended family: The Temple.
  - b. **Impact 2:** Through the act of storytelling and by strengthening the narrative, family (immediate and extended) bonds are reinforced, which increases the motivation to volunteer as a means to help one's family.
  
- ii. **Hope: Chronicle of a Holocaust Survivor:** Through research into IBM and by examining memoirs from Holocaust survivors (Klein, Lowrey, & Otnes, 2015), one man revealed that when prisoners arrived at Auschwitz, they were forced to relinquish all personal possessions, have their heads and bodies shaved, were given dingy uniforms, and more times than not, had numbers tattooed on their forearms for easy identification. As Cecile Klein (1988, 80) states, "...we were not only stripped of our clothes, but of our own identities, to the depths of our souls."

Temple Emanuel is fortunate to have a member who is a Holocaust Survivor and was a part of the Kinder Transport (the mission that saved thousands of children from Hitler's reign of terror throughout Europe by the Nazis). She willingly shares her powerful story when asked. I recommend Temple Emanuel seize the opportunity to capture and formally document her journey as a young girl, through her imprisonment in the concentration camps, and eventually to finding her freedom. She is currently in her mid-nineties and it is important for Temple Emanuel, as a community of Jews, to document, preserve, and pass on her story. Millions of Jews were murdered and as time marches on, the further away the younger generations get from history, the truth must be known. It is imperative that we all clearly understand history for what it is (was) and that it not be "white washed" because it's vitally important to understand anti-Semitism and what it looks like. Memory both shapes and teaches us; as do education and knowledge.

- a. **Impact 1:** Understanding that narrative and identity are intertwined in Jewish history. As a psychotherapist who survived Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust, Frankl (1959) considers suffering an undeniable part of life and as such, sees it as an opportunity. In light of this, we are then forced to seek meaning in suffering. Frankl quotes Dostoevsky: "There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings" (Hansen & Quinn-Trank, 2016).
- b. **Impact 2:** It is by remembering the suffering that occurred during the Holocaust and by passing the stories down from one generation to the next (atrocious as they may be) that the narrative stays alive. Stories of this magnitude can serve as

motivation to maintain and build family bonds as well as be a voice for those who can no longer share their story. The facts and the brutal truth about the Holocaust remain alive and a part of the Jewish narrative.

- c. **Impact 3:** The Holocaust took place in the very heart of a civilized society; in a country revered for its scientific advancements, theologians, and as a dominant power on the European continent through WWI. This type of cataclysmic event can happen anywhere. It is vital that we remember and respect the suffering of Jews that went before us.
  
- iii. **Converts, Interfaith, Christmas, and Judaism:** Rabbi Mark has facilitated 99 conversions in his tenure at Temple Emanuel. This represents roughly 16.5% of the overall congregational makeup of the Temple. I recommend initiating a conversation that would be accessible to anyone wishing to understand the path, motivating factors, and journey of fellow congregants who have converted to Judaism. Additionally, with the increasing number of interfaith marriages and partnerships (keeping in mind my conversations with two past-presidents and learning that approximately 50% of the congregation at Temple Emanuel is composed of interfaith couples), invite families to share how they integrate differing religious views, traditions, and holidays into their family life.

All individuals who have converted or are in interfaith marriages/partnerships will be invited to participate by sharing their individual journeys.

- a. **Impact 1:** Those who were born Jewish may not be aware of the journeys, predicaments, and hurdles their fellow congregants have experienced.  
  
Community can be strengthened by charismatizing the routine and infusing meaning into the experience.
- b. **Impact 2:** The potential for an increased faith and identity to Judaism is possible by learning of others' faith preferences, journeys, and traditions.

## Recommendation Set #2

### Strategies that Imbue Volunteer Opportunities with Jewish Identity Cues

- i. **Recounting Judaism and Temple Emanuel:** The foundation of IBM supports the assumption that one's identity matters because it imparts a foundation for meaning-making (Oyserman, 2015).

When individuals consider their own identity, they generally know who they are and that understanding plays an important role in what they do. There exists a bank of memories that guides an individual's identity, yet, what often remains unconsidered is that one's identity is fluid. Proceeding with IBM as a foundation, engage participants in a conversation (as a part of Lifelong Learning programming) that explores Judaism and the origination of Temple Emanuel.

Topics to consider: What exactly is Reform Judaism and what is its origin? What is the history of Temple Emanuel? What are the fundamental experiences that shape the story of the Temple's congregation? How does the congregation contribute to the larger Jewish community? It is further recommended that each individual's identity as a Jew be integrated into the conversation. Through the connection to Jewish history, emerging congregational volunteers and leaders will better understand the rich history of Temple Emanuel, its core values, physical structure, and how these elements are interconnected.

- a. **Impact 1:** Given that IBM is malleable and places emphasis on cultural and social contexts, cues will be triggered in regard to both individual and cultural (Jewish) identity, increasing the likelihood that it will motivate behavior.
  - b. **Impact 2:** When each participant explores their own identity and gains personal clarity in regard to their engagement, volunteerism will increase.
  - c. **Impact 3:** Participants will attain an understanding of the significance of Jewish history and Temple Emanuel. The (re)connection to Judaism will serve as a tool that can be used as a guidepost in the creation of programming, initiatives, and standards of behavior moving forward. Wenger and Lave (1991) tell us that “learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant...”.
- ii. **Committee Leadership and Governance:** As members of the Temple community as well as for sustainability, it is imperative that we understand our responsibilities to protect our resources (tangible and nontangible), hear and respect each other, and plan for the future of the congregation.

The survey results provided a definitive statement that personal satisfaction (81.3%) and Mitzvah (73.2%) are key motivators in the decision to volunteer and another 65.8% of individuals (combined) volunteer due to the influence of friends or for the social networking opportunities. I recommend a format in which to invite members (both Jewish and non-Jewish) to engage in a *volunteer fair* of sorts. Encourage leaders

with skills in communication, Jewish identity, rhetoric, formal education, or experience (skills) in specific committee matters to be a part of setting the narrative.

- a. **Impact 1:** By inviting members (Jewish and non-Jewish) to engage and bring forth their individual skills, they will infuse routine committee activities with enhanced purpose.
- b. **Impact 2:** By encouraging participants to explore and define their personal needs and skills, the congregants, in turn, will make the connection (cues) to their Jewish identity.





In his book, *Relational Judaism*, Wolfson (2004) states “Call it what you want—a religion, a civilization, a way of life—Judaism is built on relationships.” Further, Wolfson contends the purpose is “...relationships...find meaning, community, shared understanding, ... belonging, lifecycle traditions...”.



## Conclusion

### Limitations

1. A potential limitation lies in the population that was sampled. It is possible that the respondents were not representative of the whole population of the Temple.
2. COVID-19 may have influenced an individual's desire to spend more time online given that society has essentially been Internet and homebound, which may have impacted the overall *N*.
3. It is possible that those individuals who volunteered are also those who were willing to take the survey (84% of respondents have volunteered and 16% have not).
4. In an attempt to secure a focus group that was manageable in size, the selection of every 9th individual who volunteered to participate yielded a small sample size (7).
5. Participants in the focus group were not forthcoming with information. It is possible that a larger group may have generated a richer conversation.
6. Internal and external environments of the Temple cannot be controlled.

### Recommendations for Future Research and Exploration for Temple Emanuel

1. Explore the phenomenon realized in the data that religion itself does not motivate individuals to volunteer, instead, volunteerism was a means to express their Judaism (religion).
2. As a means to further explore the origins of motivation, identify a short-form motivation instrument that could be deployed at Temple Emanuel.

### In Summary

This Capstone project, in a mixed-methods manner, examined Jewish identity and its relation to volunteerism at Temple Emanuel, a small synagogue located in Winston-Salem, NC. The quantitative data proved to be confirmatory rather than informative, whereas, the qualitative data revealed major themes, which were coded as: family, faith, Jewish culture, living in a non-Jewish community, and helping others. Within the themes, the importance of identity became evident along with the understanding that volunteerism is a means by which to express ones' Judaism.

The decline in the number of volunteers is universal and is not limited to North Carolina or to Temple Emanuel, which is supported by the literature. Both the literature and the research reveal that identity is a component of the motivating factors that influence an individual's decision to volunteer, and as it relates to Temple Emanuel, the connection between volunteerism and intrinsic motivation (satisfaction and Mitzvah) is clearly present. When volunteers feel the motivational pull toward identity-congruent actions, it further builds on their identity (in this case, their Jewish identity).

Despite the limitations, this project is valuable because it provides Temple Emanuel with insight into what motivates individuals to volunteer in conjunction with the depth of their Jewish identity. Given the universal decline in volunteerism, now is the time to address the issue, formulate an action plan, and energize and motivate both the existing and future cohort of volunteers at Temple Emanuel.

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## Appendix A

### American Jewish Identity Scales—Short Form

Participants will respond to each of the following 33 questions on a 4-point Likert Scale

1=Not at all true of me, 2=a little true of me, 3=fairly true of me, 4=very true of me

1. I observe the Sabbath.
2. I enjoy Jewish literature.
3. I deliberately seek out Jewish professionals (health care providers, realtors, etc.).
4. I read Jewish newspapers.
5. I am embarrassed, ashamed, or angry when a Jew does something criminal.
6. I study Jewish religious texts (e.g., Torah, Talmud, Gemora).
7. I try to follow all Jewish commandments in my daily life.
8. I am proud to be Jewish.
9. I believe in the coming of the Messiah.
10. Being ethnically Jewish is more important to me than my nationality.
11. I show my Jewish identity to others by the way I dress.
12. It is important for me to date or marry a Jew.
13. I make contributions to Jewish causes.
14. I regularly keep my head covered for religious reasons.
15. A member of my household lights candles on the Sabbath.
16. I have a mezuzah in my home.
17. I know today's date on the Hebrew calendar.

18. I listen to Jewish secular music.
19. I feel connected to Judaism through my personal ancestors.
20. I celebrate all Jewish holidays.
21. My sense of being Jewish is constant no matter where I am.
22. "Tikkun olam" ("healing the world") is a Jewish value that is important to me.
23. I follow the dietary rules of Passover.
24. I read Hebrew.
25. I keep Kosher.
26. I dress in accordance with Jewish religious commandments.
27. I feel a strong connection to Israel.
28. I am active in a Jewish community center or organization.
29. I regularly go to a Mikvah.
30. I fast on Yom Kippur.
31. I attend Jewish religious services at a temple, synagogue, or stiebel.
32. When in mourning, I observe all Jewish religious rituals.
33. I ritually wash my hands before eating bread.

## Appendix B

### Introduction to the Project and Demographic Survey

Good day! I am working with Temple Emanuel in support of my research Capstone project at Vanderbilt University. The Capstone project in Vanderbilt's Leadership and Learning in Organizations provides a unique opportunity for students to work with an organization and design potential solutions or programming to be implemented.

You have been selected to participate in a study concerning identity, moreover, Jewish identity and its impact on volunteerism. The survey is completely anonymous and does not collect any personal identifying information. There are two parts to the survey: demographic questions and the American Jewish Identity Survey. It should take approximately 3–4 minutes to complete both. You can participate in the study by visiting the SurveyMonkey link provided and complete the survey online.

Thank you for your help in obtaining the data needed to complete my Capstone project and furthering the research on Jewish identity. By clicking the link to the survey, you are volunteering to participate. Please understand that you have the option to stop the survey at any time or may opt to skip any question without providing a reason. This survey is intended to be anonymous as the purpose for collecting data is to assess Jewish identity and volunteerism as a result.

**Demographic and Baseline Questions:**

1. What generational cohort are you a member of?
  - a. Born <1945
  - b. Born between 1946–1964
  - c. Born between 1965–1977
  - d. Born between 1978–1998
  - e. Born after 1999
2. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Identify as other
3. What is your current employment status?
  - a. Retired
  - b. Full-time
  - c. Part-time
  - d. Student
  - e. Unemployed
4. Have you volunteered at Temple Emanuel in the past?
  - a. Yes
    - i. Would you be willing to participate in a small focus group to discuss your experience?
      1. Yes

2. No

b. No

5. If you have not volunteered, to what extent do the following reasons prevent you from volunteering? (Select all that apply)

- a. Work/Personal schedule conflict
- b. Lack of child/elder care
- c. Lack of time
- d. No transportation
- e. Financial difficulties
- f. Lack of understanding of expectations
- g. Lack of training or skills necessary to fulfill the role
- h. None of the above

6. If you have volunteered, to what extent do the following reasons influence your decision to maintain your volunteer participation?

- a. Support is provided
- b. Volunteerism is recognized
- c. Personal satisfaction
- d. Mitzvah
- e. Social networking
- f. Friends volunteer
- g. None of the above

## Appendix C

### Focus Group Questions

To further understand the Jewish identity and volunteerism, questions asked during the focus group were:

1. What motivates you to volunteer at Temple Emanuel?
  - a. Does your identity as a Jew impact your volunteerism?
2. Tell me about a time in your life when you felt your Jewish identity most deeply.
3. Are you aware of volunteer opportunities at Temple Emanuel?
4. Do you carry out volunteer work other than at Temple Emanuel?



## Appendix D

### IRB Approval

**Human Research Protections Program – HRPP**  
*Supporting the work of the IRB and Providing HRPP Oversight*



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**RE: IRB #200589 "Jewish Identity on Volunteerism at Temple Emanuel"**

Dear Renee Just:

A designee of the Institutional Review Board reviewed the Request for Exemption application identified above. It was determined the study poses minimal risk to participants. This study meets 45 CFR 46.104 (d) category (2) for Exempt Review.

Any changes to this proposal that may alter its exempt status should be presented to the IRB for approval prior to implementation of the changes.

**DATE OF IRB APPROVAL: 4/6/2020**

Sincerely,

Alexander R Bologa BS  
Institutional Review Board  
Behavioral Sciences Committee

**Electronic Signature:** Alexander R Bologa/VUMC/Vanderbilt : (9ad7a90527000e8ecd015d0b7ab4a186)  
**Signed On:** 04/06/2020 9:44:36 AM CDT

## Appendix E

### About Renee

Renee spent over two decades working in a range of positions for various million- and billion-dollar enterprises. In 2004, she launched a consulting practice that focuses on helping entrepreneurs and small business owners set strategic goals and devise action plans. Renee believes it is never too late to learn and says, “Life is not based on textbook theories, rather a combination of leadership abilities and life experiences. I strive to help learners understand that one size doesn’t fit all. You must be prepared at all times to be flexible and innovative. I believe we all can learn through asking questions, being a champion for our own goals, and remaining open.”

With over a dozen years in higher education, Renee is an Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Leadership in the Puri School of Business at Rockford University, as well as the Director of the Degree Completion Programs geared toward adult learners. In addition to her studies in the EdD Leadership and Learning Organizations at Vanderbilt University; Renee holds a PhD in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Capella University, a Master of Arts in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of New Haven, and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Albertus Magnus College.

Renee lives in Rockford, Illinois with her rescue dog Harley (7 ½ years). She is an animal advocate and has served on a board of directors for a humane society and volunteers any chance she can working to help dogs get rescued! In her down time, Renee enjoys the beach, cooking, entertaining, camping, hiking, and spending time with friends and family.

