Goals of the research

To understand the conceptions of Jewish Peoplehood and Identity in Latin America. To this end we will investigate the belief systems, the expressions of belonging and the pattern of behaviors (3 B’s) of representative Jewish groups in Latin America.

Understand the perspective of the key Jewish leaders of Latin America vis-à-vis these key issues.

Learn how Jewish institutions can improve their work strengthening the connections between individual Jews, the Jewish people and its heritage.
Methodology

• Blended (quantitative-qualitative).
• Voices from the field.
• Different populations (aleatory conglomerate by age, geography, identities).
• Different methodologies.
• Implications and suggestions to strengthen Jewish life and advice for policy making.
Some preliminary findings

- Information based on 12 focus groups that are being processed.
- 112 participants from 12 Latin American countries and Israelis living in LAmérica. (49% from Argentina, 38% from Mexico)
- Young people, Jewish educators, Communal leaders, Intellectuals, Orthodox, Conservative, Liberal rabbis
Country of residence

- México: 38%
- Argentina: 49%
- Otros: 13%

Generación
- Antes: 2%
- Baby Boomers: 29%
- Generación X: 41%
- Milenials: 24%
- Centenials: 4%
Personal Identification as a Jew

- **Totalmente**: 92%
- **En gran medida**: 7%
- **Un poco**: 1%

- **Otros países**: 92% Totalmente, 8% En gran medida, 0% Un poco
- **Argentina**: 92% Totalmente, 6% En gran medida, 2% Un poco
- **México**: 82% Totalmente, 16% En gran medida, 2% Un poco

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generación</th>
<th>Totalmente</th>
<th>En gran medida</th>
<th>Un poco</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centenials</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Millenials</strong></td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Generación X</strong></td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Baby Boomers</strong></td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td><strong>Antes</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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Identification with the country of residence

- Argentina: 100%
- México: 21%
- Otros: 31%

- Antes Baby boomers: 43%
- Baby boomers: 20%
- Generación X: 53%
- Millenials: 20%
- Centenials: 25%
Multidimensional Identities

• Most of the participants have a multidimensional sense of their personal Jewish identity, that includes affective, cognitive, behavioral and axiological components.

• Family, community, educational experiences, religious life, Israel, the memory of the Shoah, play a role in the shaping of the participants’ personal identities.
Diversity and different forms of expression

• There exists a significant difference among the participants, in terms of their Jewish discourse and vocabulary.
• Some expressed their perceptions in very simple words, full of clichés, while others articulated their vision in a more sophisticated and self-reflective critical terminology, including literary and academic references.
Orthodox and the others

• The main distinction among the participants, is that between those who identify themselves as Orthodox and the others.

• It’s a difference between a fixed and well established value system and life style, based on the traditional observance of the Torah and the Halacha, and the others varieties of Jewishness.

• This difference helps to explain- as a key variable- most of the other differences in the perceptions of Jewish identity.
Level of religious observance (by self-definition)
Local and global Identities

• Most of the participants feel at ease with their Jewish and local-national identities.
• They don’t see a conflict between being Jewish and Mexican or Argentine.
• But we can distinguish national differences in these perceptions, based on the history and current situation of their respective countries and communities.
The place of Israel in Jewish Identity

• For most participants, Israel plays a key role in their personal identity as Jews. They feel a strong sense of attachment and responsibility towards Israel. The younger generations are less identified with Israel.

• The participants are proud of the accomplishments of the State and are worried about the inner divisions of the Israeli society and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
Solidarity with Israel

**Totalmente** | **En gran medida** | **Un poco** | **Para nada**
--- | --- | --- | ---
OTROS | 15% | 61% | 23%
MÉXICO | 74% | 8% | 18%
ARGENTINA | 59% | 27% | 12%

**Totalmente** | **En gran medida**
--- | ---
CENTENIALS | 16% | 48% | 32% | 4%
MILLENNIALS | 16% | 48% | 32% | 4%
GENERACIÓN X | 71% | 14% | 3%
BABY BOOMERS | 83% | 14% | 3%
ANTES | 50% | 50%
The place of Israel in Jewish Identity

• All the participants in our focus groups have visited Israel at least once.
• Many participants are critical of some of the current policies of the State and a minority is feeling a growing sense of alienation with the Zionist enterprise.
Israelis living in Latin America

• Their main identification is first as Israelis second as Jews and third as locals. For those more observant, the Jewish component comes first.
• The experience of living in a Jewish community like Mexico, increased in most cases, their level of observance, community activism and traditionalism.
• They have ambivalent feelings towards Israel, the local Jews and the conditions of life in the diaspora.
The place of Antisemitism in Jewish Identity

- **Antisemitism is not** considered a key variable in the participant’s sense of Jewish identity.
- Some members of the focus groups have experience antisemitism in a direct way, but in most cases, it was not considered a real concern in their countries.
- At the same time there is a perception that antisemitism is a serious issue in Europe, and lately, in the USA.
The place of the Holocaust in Jewish Identity

- Interestingly, the topic of the Shoah **did not appear spontaneously in the conversations**, until the interviewer brought it to the table.
- When the memory of the Shoah was discussed, most of the participants considered it a very significant issue in Jewish life, particularly those who were descendents of survivors.
- Some mention the risk of “too much Shoah” in our discourse and education of the younger generations and the tension between particularist and universalist understandings of the Holocaust and its political and ethical implications.
Leadership and community

• Many participants mention a gap between the current communal leadership and their own personal perspectives and perceptions.
• The participants were critical of some Jewish institutions in terms of the governance processes, the limited openness, conservative policies, among others. But at the same time most participants are fully aware of the value and importance of the community settings.
• The lay leaders that participated in our groups realized the need to rethink the Jewish organizational life, (type of institutions, levels of participation, inclusiveness), and to renew the way Jewish institutions are conducted.
Semantic references

Past
Israel
Responsability
Sense of belonging
Examples of participants voices

What unites the Jewish People?

“(...) Well the Jewish people is united by the fact that we share the same history, although not necessarily the same beliefs, the sense of belonging, and what unites us can be for each one different, but we start from the same common basis.

“I think there are two conflicting views of what would be the accepted or agreed on who is part of the Jewish people: one is the orthodox logic of descendants of a Jewish mother, which means that there is a genetic component but my personal vision is that essentially, belonging to the Jewish people has to do with personal identification”
“(...) the problem today with the tribes within the Jewish people is that they do not have points of contact between them; that is, someone who is a liberal Jew, probably reads a newspaper different from the one who is a religious Jew and lives in a different neighborhood.”

The challenges of Globalization, diversity and education

“(…) I think there is a great challenge in this generation, in this reality that we live, that it is a very globalized world of identities that flows like water, (liquid identities Z. Bauman) they come, they go.

I personally feel that it is difficult for educators to really show that Judaism and identity is something that transcends and that is meaningful.”
A sense of familiarity and kinship

“I see it as a great family, a great inheritance and a great responsibility; a historical sense of survival, and at the same time, a rather difficult club, to which the entrance is automatic, the membership automatic, but the entrance to others that interest them is difficult… ”(3int5-MEX)
Collective memory

“… Memory is a fundamental element in, in Jewish life. Without memory we have no possibility of sustaining anything at all in time. If we do not remember, if we do not convey what this was, what happened, what is part of our history, we are in serious problem, eh memory is fundamental eh, in education, in the transmission of values and, and that is what makes us keep, let's say together,… ”(Arg, G.)
Individual practices vs cultural patterns

"the question was whether there are practices that you have to do to be Jewish... from my humble opinion, is that no. That is, there is no practice, yes of course there are certain cultural patterns, yes of course there are many things that a large number of Jews around the world see as certain practices that are or are not. But I do not believe that there is any particular practice, that it is a sine qua non or mandatory if you do not do this, you are not Jewish, or doing this is what defines you as a Jew..." (3nt3-Mex)
"(...) well, the Jewish people, is formed from the fact that we share the same story, although not necessarily the same beliefs, but it's the same story, the sense of belonging; and what unites us to the people, may be for everyone is different, but we start from the same background. ”

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