



Cultural Experience of Jewish Americans


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Project background

The Jim Joseph Foundation (JJF) wants to create experiences, institutions, and systems that bring Judaism to all American Jews.

JJF has previously invested in research about how American Jews experience their Jewish identities, faith, and institutions. This report is (mostly) not about Jewish culture but, instead, about how Jewish people engage with American culture at-large in order to help JJF imagine new Jewish experiences in the cultural spaces where Jews are already spending time.

To do this, we identified ~2,000 research panelists who engaged with Jewish life on the internet over the course of a year and divided those into mapped and unmapped segments. Then, we went exploring for the cultural experiences and media preferences that make the American Jewish community unique in order to surface key cultural opportunities for JJF to explore.

Methods & data

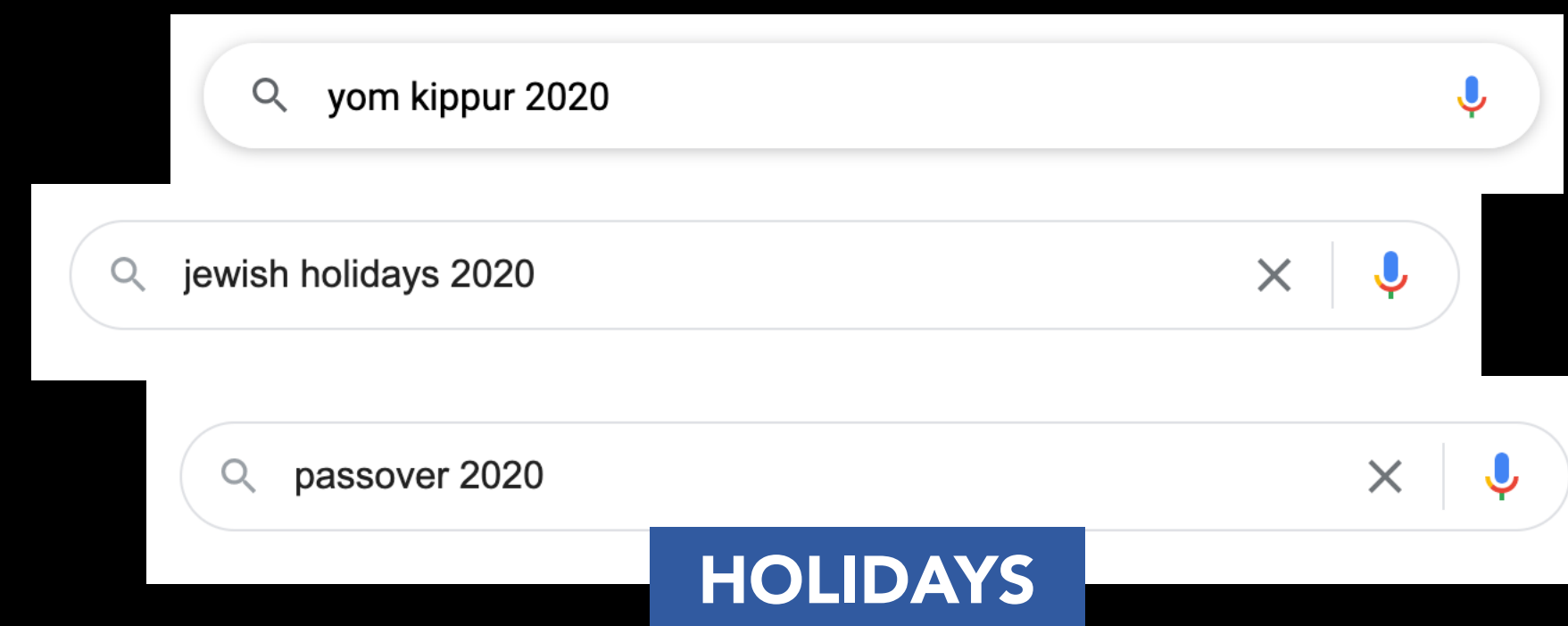
For this report, Harmony Labs used opt-in internet panel data, touching 200,000+ Americans and offering a minute-by-minute view into the content audiences care about, wherever they consume or create it.

We analyzed internet viewership and Jewish cultural content between June 2020 and June 2021 by matching online media to a set of keywords related to Jewish terms and frequently visited Jewish websites, and manual curation to eliminate users who were obviously not Jewish. From this, we identified 2,000 Jewish panel participants who engaged with Jewish content on at least 1% of the days we observed them in the panel.

For comparison purposes, and to identify what is most distinctive about the Jewish audience we identified, we created a control audience by matching each of the Jewish panel participants with up to 5 other panel participants based on age, race, gender, education, state of residence, and total minutes of internet usage.

Jewish content

The Jewish content that audiences consume helps provide context for the broader cultural experiences that Jews prefer. While some of the Jewish cultural encounters were with specific websites like www.jdate.com and www.timesofisrael.com, Jews in both segments spent time searching for recipes and holiday dates as well as enjoying Jewish music, especially a cappella.

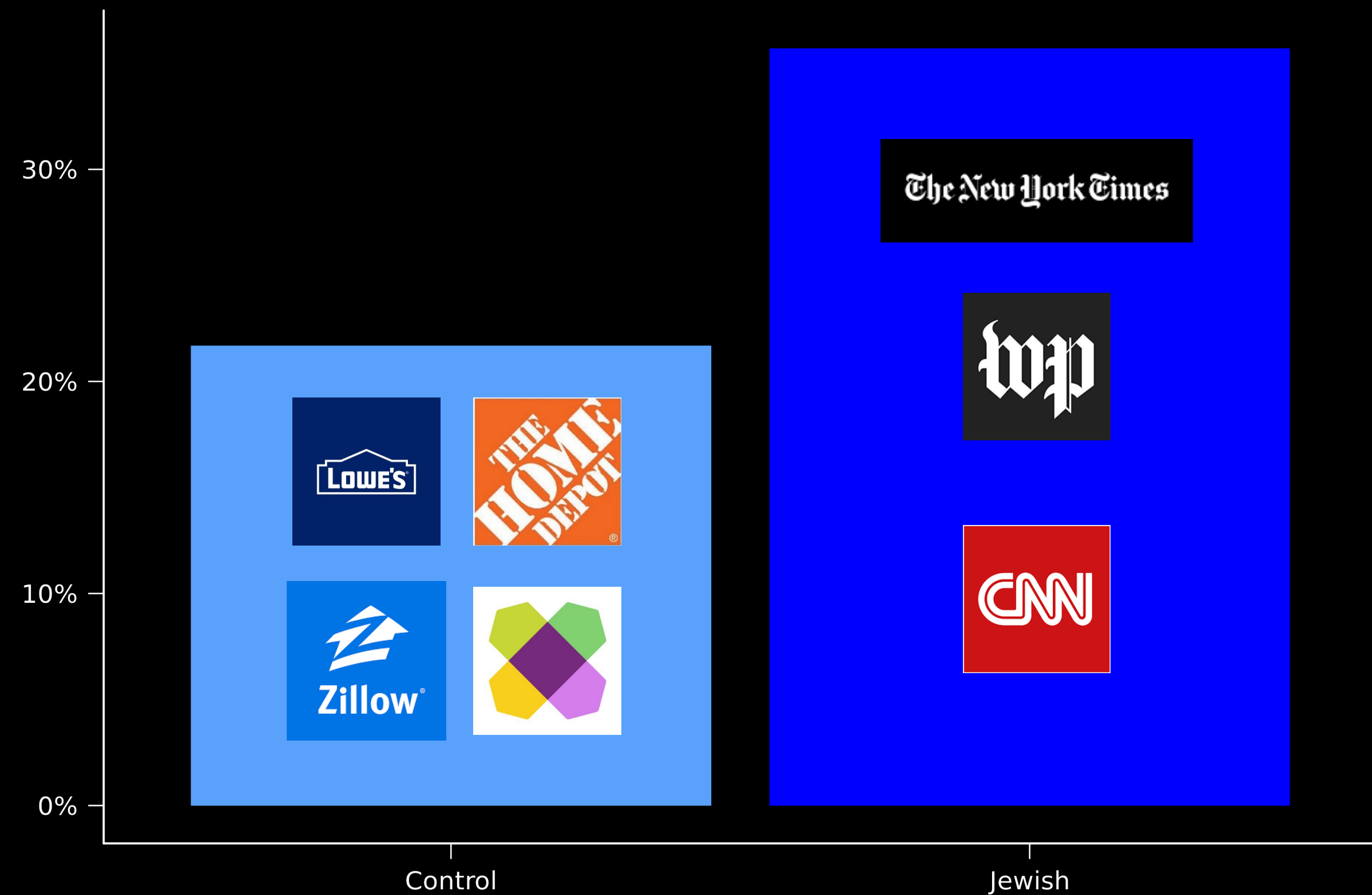


Uniquely info-seeking

Jews are unique in their online cultural consumption: they are avid information-seekers, constantly consuming news to make sense of the world. They are nearly 2x as likely as the non-Jewish "control" to read the news each day.

The news they engage with is diverse and political. It tends to lean slightly left, but Fox and other more conservative sources also make appearances.

This is distinct from the control audience who, instead of news, tend to be consuming "cozier" content, like home improvement and online shopping.



Beyond the news

When not consuming news, top distinctively Jewish content still features information and learning: WebMD, Yelp, wikiHow, and TedX are all spaces where Jews show up. Even their entertainment can feel a little newsy. Politically-charged late night shows dominate. The more "fun" content that is distinctively Jewish includes movies in particular; top YouTube channels include YouTube Movies and Movie Clips.



Mappedness

MAPPED

UNMAPPED

CONTROL

Mapped = info seekers

MAPPED

UNMAPPED

CONTROL



Control = anything but news

MAPPED

UNMAPPED

CONTROL



Unmapped = in between

MAPPED

UNMAPPED

CONTROL



Finding the opportunities:

1. Distinctively unmapped
2. Capacity to support the sacred
3. Clear, existing bridge to the mapped cultural experience

3 opportunity zones

MAPPED

UNMAPPED

CONTROL



THE TIMES OF ISRAEL



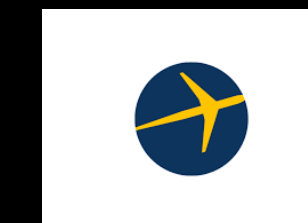
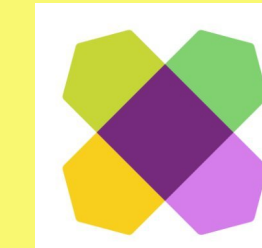
Learning



Imagination



Welcome



A thirst for knowledge

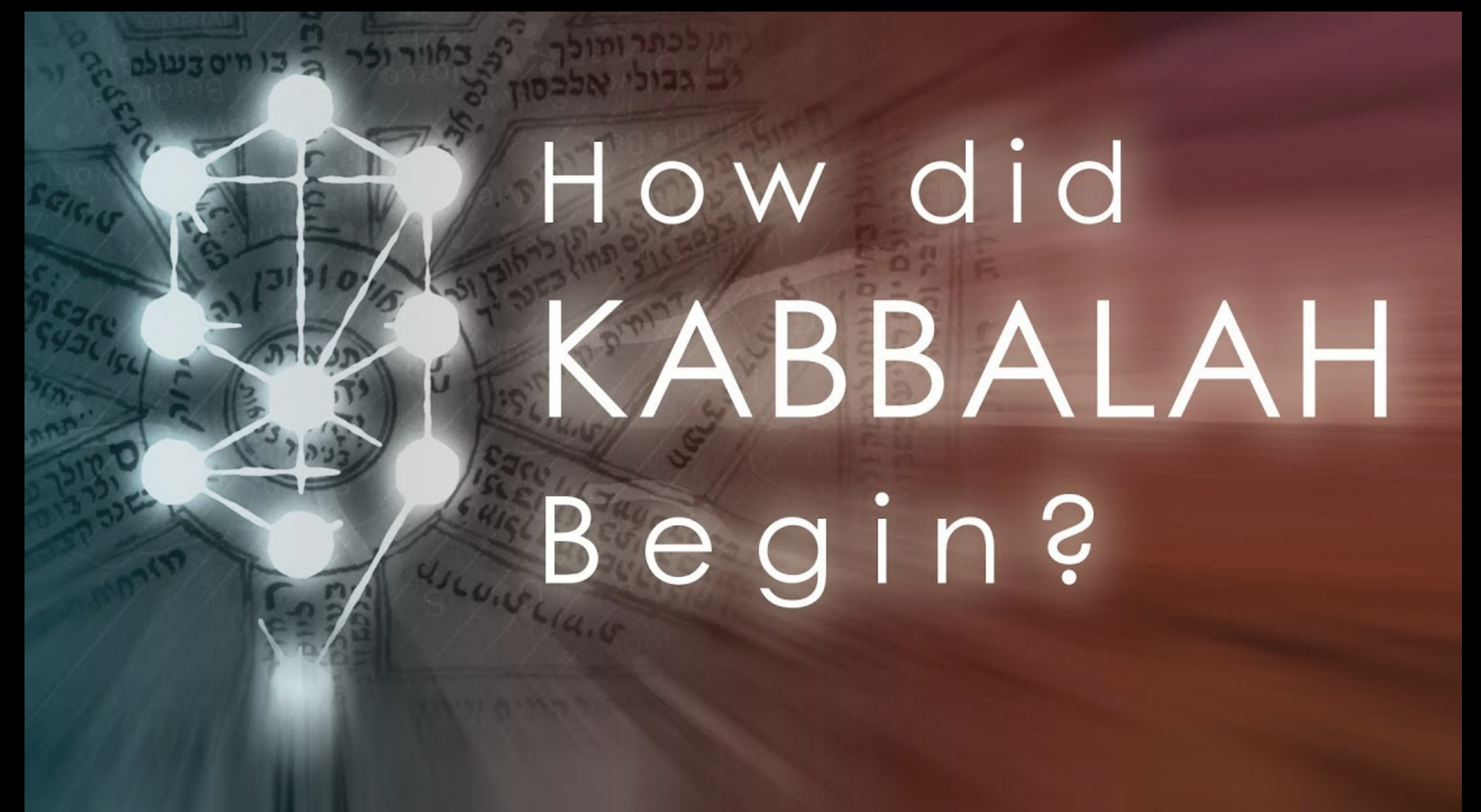
Learning is an opportunity that arises from all Jews' shared thirst for knowledge. Again and again in this analysis we have seen that Jews are information-seekers.

That shows up as news consumption, but there is little room in news for the sacred. But it also shows up as a curiosity to better understand the world from a multitude of angles. From wikiHow searches and questions answered on Quora, to National Geographic and Ted talks, Jews curiosity to hold a deep understanding of an international worldview is potent.



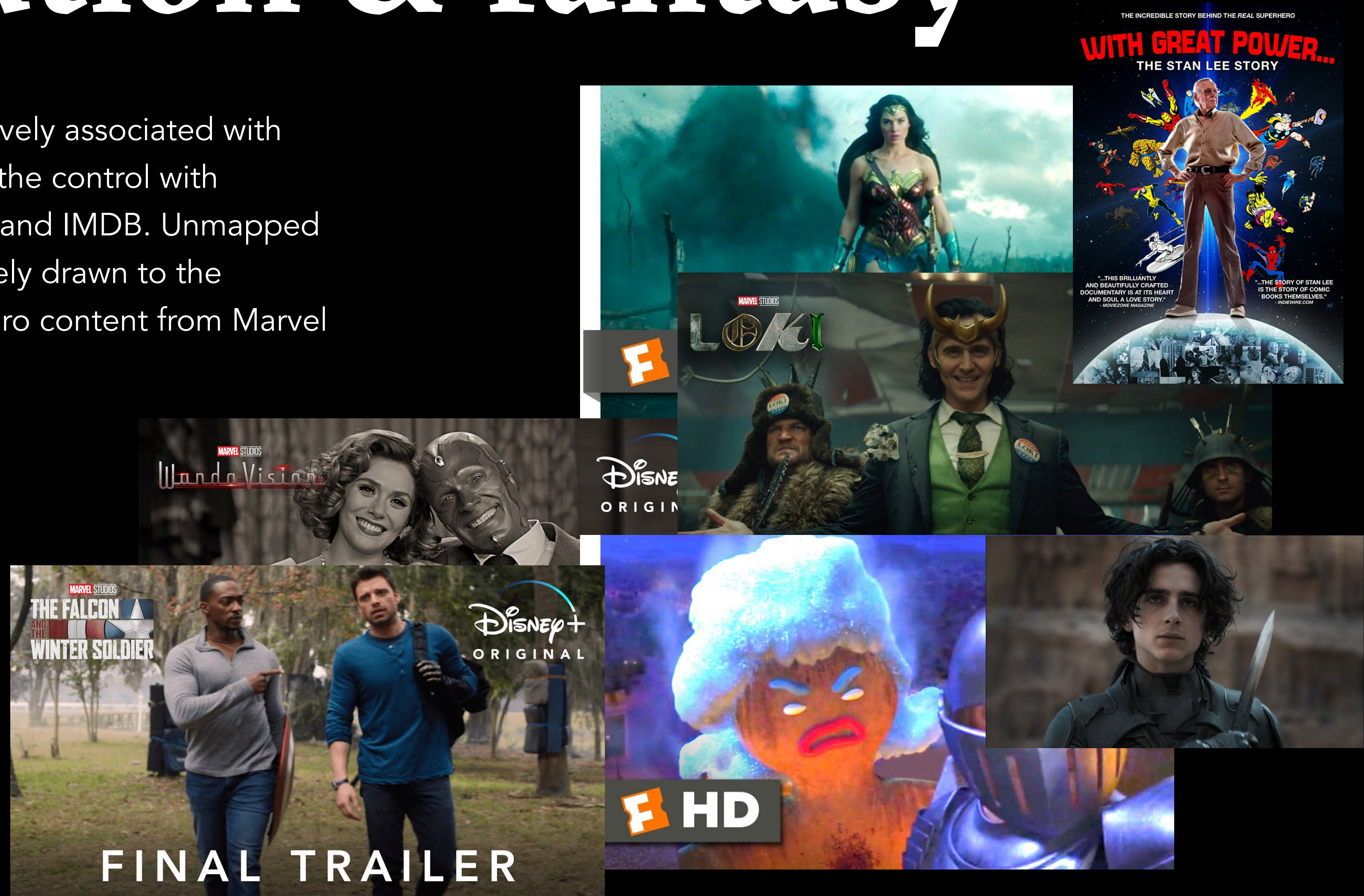
Learning /opportunity

Creating a space for Jews to nurture their curiosity and understanding of how the world works is also an opportunity to invite Jews in who may not have access readily to a knowledge source (rabbi, etc).



Imagination & fantasy

All Jewish users were distinctively associated with movies, engaging more than the control with Movieclips, YouTube Movies, and IMDB. Unmapped Jews in particular were uniquely drawn to the fantastical, especially superhero content from Marvel and DC.



Imagination /opportunity

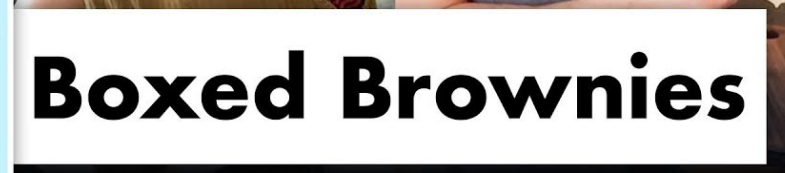
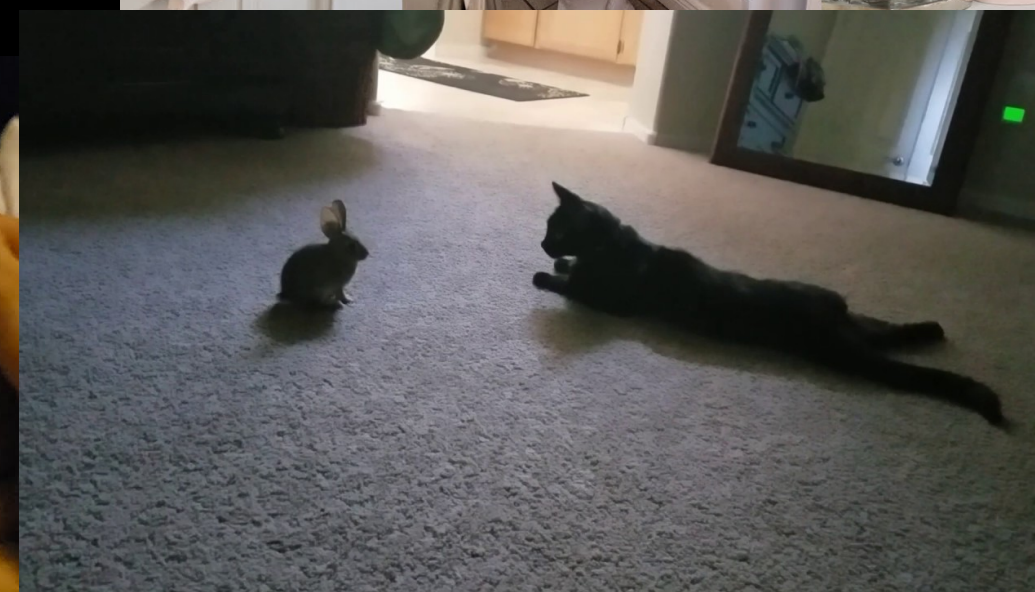
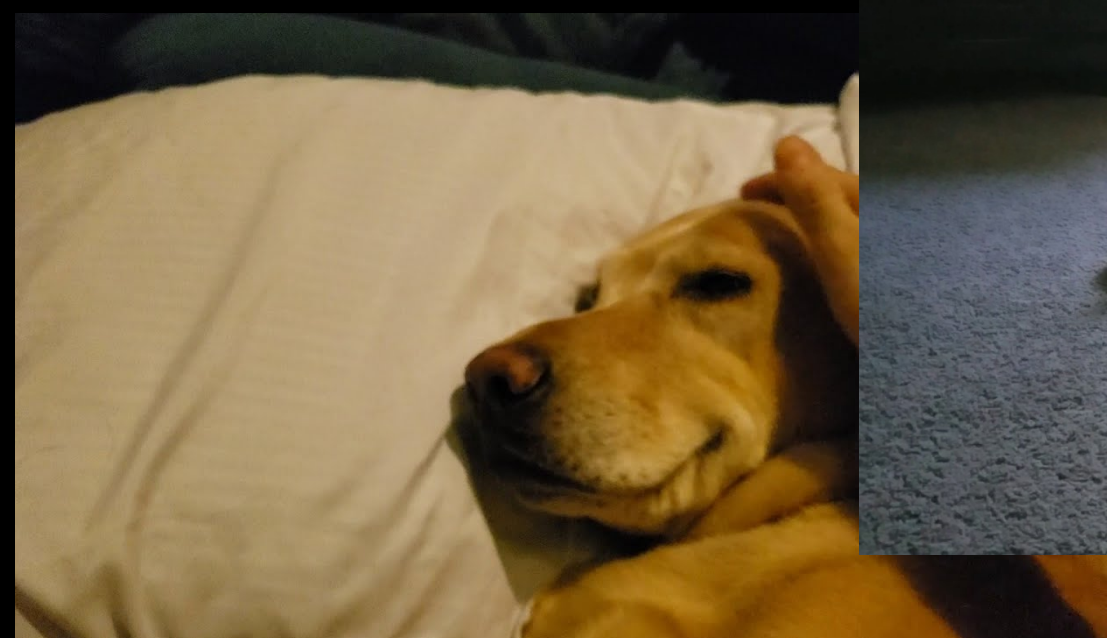
The fantastical isn't new in Judaism. In fact, one of the most popular Jewish videos in our sample was a retelling of the popular "Golem" story, in which a rabbi creates a gentle, but flawed, giant to protect the Jewish people in 1500's Prague.

The fantastical has the possibility to be a rich opportunity space to coalesce a new form of Jewish community.



Welcome home

That food is important to Jews is no great discovery. Traditional Jewish food such as brisket and latkes made many appearances in mapped and unmapped Jewish cultural consumption. However, unmapped Jewish participants weren't exclusively interested in Jewish food—they were showing up in all spaces related to "home." The information-heavy, worldly cultural experiences of the mapped Jews were more sterile and serious while unmapped Jews sought (and bought) cozier content.



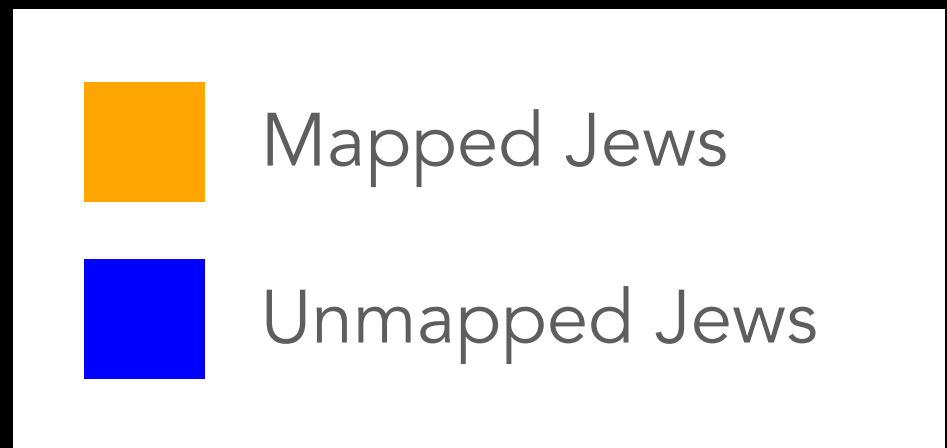
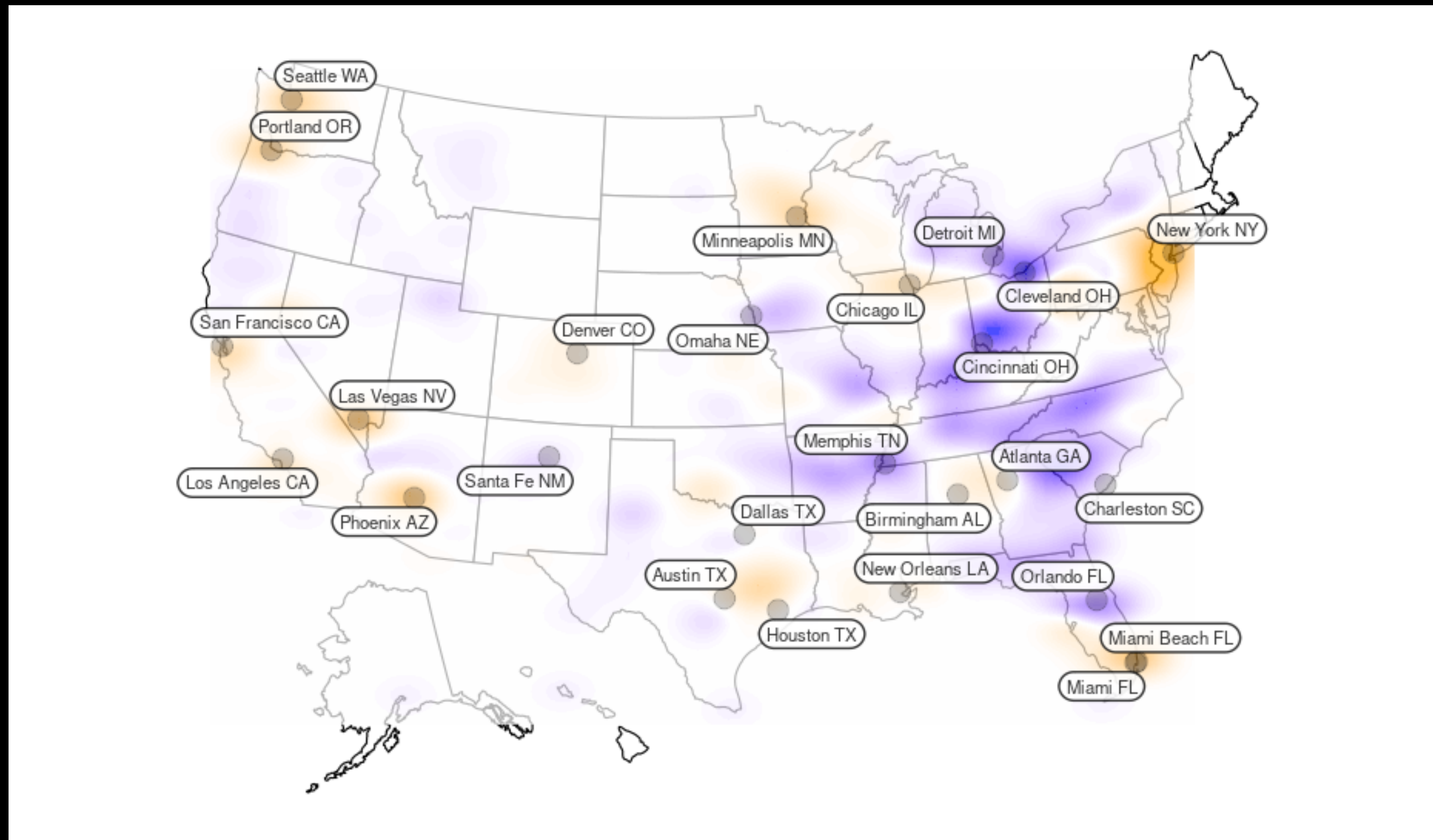
Welcome /opportunity

Food specifically was most likely to show up across the mappedness spectrum, but the warm feeling of welcome associated with making new recipes, searching for a new couch, or even buying a puppy (Puppy for Hanukkah anyone?) can resonate with all Jews.

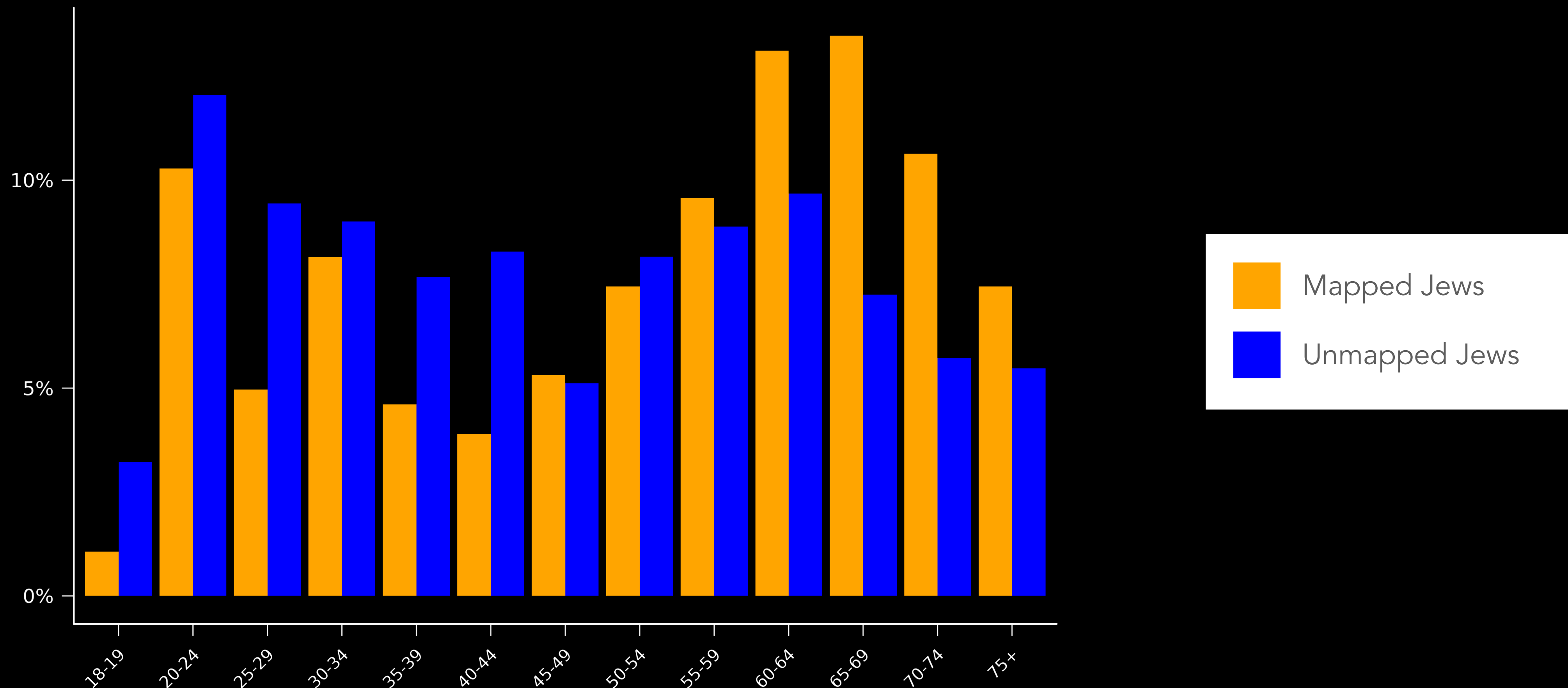
Warm, cozy, inviting homes can be a jumping pad to foster a community of Jews who might not otherwise feel comfortable in a temple.



Consider place



Age also matters



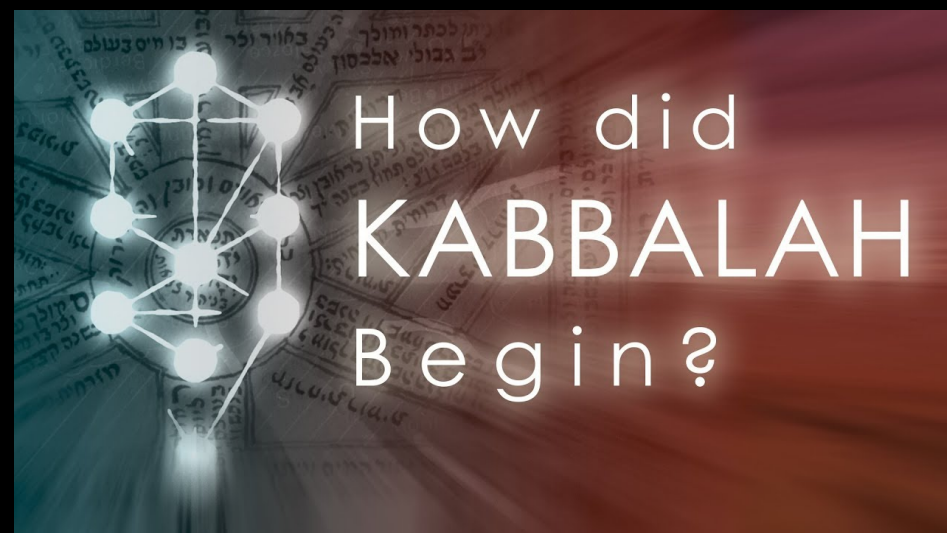
Key insights

Both mapped and unmapped Jews consume much more news than average.

Unmapped Jews are harder to decipher via cultural consumption data as they lie somewhere in between mapped Jews and the general population (i.e. control).

Age and geographic location should also be special considerations when trying to reach unmapped Jews in particular.

Opportunities exist to reach both mapped and unmapped audiences in 3 key areas of cultural interest: learning, imagination, and welcome:





Thanks for listening


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Appendix

Building the sample

Identifying a sample of ~2,000 Jewish Americans and their control counterparts included the following steps:

1. We developed a set of seed words spanning Jewish holidays, cultural terms, religious terms, and food. Examples include: Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, shalom, kismet, rabbi, oy vey, mezuzah, and rugelach.
2. Based on these seed words, we programmatically determined new keywords by finding distinct websites and search terms that the participants who searched the initial key terms went to. Examples kosher.com, chabad.org, jpost.com, timesofisrael.com, Chabad, and Adonai. The final full seed keyword list can be found [here](#).
3. We searched our databases using these keywords and retrieved all the instances where search terms from Google, Bing, and other search engines matched, and all of the YouTube videos where the words appeared in the description or tags.

Building the sample (cont.)

5. We manually disqualified any activity which contained:
 - Quiz type answers (ex: The _____ records Jewish interpretations of the _____ which is their sacred text)
 - Antisemitism
 - Porn
 - Christian truth seeking or bible study (ex: Should Christians keep the Sabbath or Sunday?)
 - Political event (ex: Jewish space lasers)
 - Other non relevant content (ex: Traveling Across ISRAEL!)
 - Examples of qualifying and non-qualifying content can be found [here](#)
6. We also excluded anyone who spent *less than* 1% of their total number of days online interacting with Jewish content. The full distribution of Jewish consumption can be found [here](#).
7. As a final step, we created a matched control sample with an exact match on race, hispanic origin, gender, and a propensity match on education, age, state, and total time spent online.