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Exploring How Pilgrimage Experiences Affect Identity

PLACE, RELIGION, CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND INDIVIDUALITY

PREPARED EXCLUSIVELY FOR VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY – PEABODY COLLEGE, LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS.

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2 ABSTRACT

This study uses a pilgrimage experience in Israel as one example to inform the process through which identification with Judaism and Israel is formed. Participants expressed their identification in response to events and experiences that were part of their pilgrimage to Israel. I was able to capture these expressions of sensemaking through a process of oral journaling. Participants responded to a daily prompt (i.e., What one thing happened today that you'll remember most?) as a means of reflecting on meaningful experiences that shaped their understanding of their relationship to faith and place (Henry, 1994).

I relied on both quantitative (i.e., pre and post-survey) and qualitative (a narrative analysis of the participants' daily journals) methods to investigate changes in identification.

This pilgrimage, in particular, was designed to influence young adults; to strengthen their identification with Judaism and Israel. This pilgrimage relies on rhetorical narrative (Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010) to create opportunities for participants to engage in sensemaking and reflection (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). The participants' lived experience within the group, and throughout their pilgrimage journey is at the heart of this narrative research.

Keywords: Jewish, Identity, Experience, Pilgrimage

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity development and formation is a complex, ongoing engagement. There are numerous influences at play in exploring individual identity. For example, which influencers – social, cultural, political – are assigned to how one views and understands themselves? Do these internal and external influencers shape one's identity in the short-term, the long-term, and what evidence do we have to assign such determinations? The focus on identity, identity and human development, social development, moral development, personality, the sociology of identity, and the individual and society are all considerations for opportunities of identification that result from pilgrimage experiences.

3.1 PLACE IDENTITY AND FORMATION

Writing about experience and identity as long-term relational phenomena, Jeffrey Brooks and Daniel Williams argue that essential to social identity is a recognition that the place people visit has both personal and social meaning. Through these relationships, people can assign meaning between ongoing participation with place and identity (Brooks & Williams, 2012). However, identity is fluid, and through experiences, how we see and understand ourselves changes. "Even those social identities that are maintained throughout adulthood will require a certain amount of management in order to sustain validation for them from others. For instance, the person will have to ensure that proper images are created and recreated in interaction with significant others" (Cote & Levine, 2014). This ongoing experience that occurs in everyday places demonstrates how place attachments are constructed in people's memories. How we consider place – in terms of social identity – "is part of a wider human developmental process" (Hay, 1998).

Robert Hay, in his research, *Sense of Place in a Developmental Context*, argued that place affects our sense of identity in the same way marriage can – through intimacy, attachment, and commitment. "A sense of place, if allowed to fully develop, can provide feelings of security, belonging, and stability, similar to the feelings that arise from a fully developed pair bond." He continued to argue that for tourists, however, connection to place is "superficial" and unlike an ancestral connection for residents with roots (Hay, 1998). Others argue that understanding identity from tourism experiences can be far more impactful, depending on the context and whether or not it has been systematically mobilized. For example, Shaul Kelner, in his book, *Tours That Bind*, writes:

> "By engaging diasporans in an activity that first consists first and foremost of gazing on place and assigning it meaning within a defined interpretive frame, tourism's treatment of the homeland establishes the paradigmatic behavior that diasporans can then turn inward and apply to themselves…Yet like so many of tourism's other knowledge practices, it has been systematically mobilized to more fully realize its identity-shaping potential" (Kelner, 2012).

Identity formation - in the context of visited space (as in a pilgrimage to Israel) is not easily predictable. Kalevi Korpela explores the emotional attachment to a place that is at the core of identity. Korpela considered place identity as, "consisting of cognitions of those physical settings and parts of the physical environment, in or with which an individual – consciously or

unconsciously – regulates his experience of maintaining…sense of self" (Korpela, 1989). Examining how attachment occurs can also be considered in relational terms. Clare Twigger-Ross and David Uzzell find how relationships to place "create, symbolize and establish new selves" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). This research examines how place can actively construct identity:

> …identity processes have a dynamic relationship with the residential environment. The development and maintenance of these processes occur in transactions with the environment. In acknowledging this, the environment becomes a salient part of identity as opposed to merely setting a context in which identity can be established and developed. (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996)

According to Jeanne Moore, place plays a central role in the formation of identity (Moore, 2000). Similarly, place attachment develops and supports place identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Twigger-Ross and Uzzell view place identity in which we seek place as a tool to maintain and develop one's identity process.

Relationships and attachment or association with place occur when individuals assign meaning. Meaning is an intimate, individualistic (even if the experience is shared) construct and can be assigned for numerous reasons. Lynn Manzo interviewed residents of New York City to understand the meaning of place at the individual level. Sites deemed significant to individuals represented their evolving identities. According to Manzo, these places allowed residents to "be themselves and explore who they are" using aspects of experience in a self-reflective process. In some examples, residents described a place of meaning and identity when connected to specific milestones in their lives. These places are memorable for their collected experiences – sometimes shared with others, sometimes not.

> "…one participant focused her discussions on a local park about which she told some of her most detailed stories. She met her husband there, and years later, they decided to separate there. This was also the same park where she played as a child, and where she took her children to play. This park was a significant place whose meaning developed from both positive and negative experiences" (Manzo, 2003).

3.2 JEWISH IDENTITY AND FORMATION

3.2.1 Jewish peoplehood (ethnic identity, community)

Jews are "a religious community, a nation, an ethnic group, [and] a race" (Petersen, 2017). In short, Jews are multifarious. As these authors state, Jewish identity consists of several factors and defies simple social categories.

> Ethnic identity is a useful, but imprecise, way to examine Jewish identity; there are many ethnic groups within the Jewish community, such as Sephardim, Mizrachim, and Ashkenazim. However, Jews are characterized as an ethnic group in the United States. Much of the literature on Jewish identity discusses Jews as one ethnic group. Ethnicity is helpful to describe Jewishness, though, in that Jews do feel connected to one another and have a sense of peoplehood. (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006)

Jewish Ethno-religious identity, however, is not constant. Religious conversions provide an excellent example of how individuals cut ties with their ethnoreligious origin (Schmelz & Pergola, 1992). In other cases, for example, how an individual feels connected to his or her ethnoreligious identity changes as a result of experiences, understanding, and connections of and with other Jewish individuals, groups, or places (i.e., synagogue, Jewish summer camp, Jewish day school). According to Uzi Rebhun, author of *Jewish Identity in America: Structural Analysis of Attitudes and Behaviors*,

> "Within the component part of the core Jewish population (CJ), group identity varies to reflect different types of engagement and cohesion. The core Jews are composed of: Jews by Religion (JR), namely all who reported Judaism as their present religion; Ethnic Jews (EJ) who define themselves as Jews but have no religious preferences; and Jews by Choice (JBC) who either formally converted to Judaism or are Jewish only by personal self-definition.
>
> Among those identifying themselves as Jews by religion (JR), most have an ideological preference for one of the three major denominations within American Judaism: Orthodox (OR), Conservative (CN) or Reform (RF) (Lazerwitz el al. 1998). This ideological orientation reflects how people define themselves in terms of religious identity, which is mainly self-descriptive and not necessarily a formal ideological affiliation" (Rebhun, 2004).

It has been argued that Jewish identity depends on an 'active membership' with Jewish values, communities, and organizations. Some researchers have chosen to examine Jewish identity based on levels of religious engagement alone. Steven Cohen, for example, writes about Jewish identity as a matter of ritual observance: attending Jewish holidays, keeping Jewish dietary laws outlined in Bible, involvement in Jewish communal service, and community engagement (Cohen S. M., American modernity and Jewish identity., 1983). While these engagements with Jewish identity are intentional (meaning individuals are taking action to create or participate in Jewish identity practices), in many instances, Jewish identity can be in response to unintentional engagement as well. For example, "The continuing attacks on Jews have intensified the sense of being a beleaguered people, strengthening Jewish solidarity and identification" (Herman S. N., 1977). A hallmark of antisemitism is the ability to combine Jewish identity as singular and 'other' at the same time.

In *Understanding Anti-Semitism and its Impact: A New Framework for Conceptualizing Jewish Identity*, Christopher MacDonald-Dennis shares a student's reflection on their experience as a victim of anti-Semitism, and how the experience strengthened his Jewish identity and relationship with other Jewish students.

> "I remember the incident like it was yesterday. I was walking out of the gym. I felt something being thrown at my back. I looked down and saw that they were pennies. I was so humiliated. I didn't look back. I didn't want them to think they got to me. But at that moment, I knew that I was stereotyped for being a Jew, that I was different. Before, the jokes about my being cheap were funny to me. But that situation humiliated me. I became so angry during high school and early college. I was the angry Jew. I wanted to be with Jews because I felt like they got me" (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006).

It is not only in times of crisis that bring Jewish students together. Being considered "same" by a dominant authority can, over time, strengthen membership identity. Beverly Tatum's book, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria?* explores identity from the perspective of the minority. Tatum argues that the effects of minority oppression often lead to a more significant active presence in one's community (Tatum, 2017). Similarly, Jews often embrace social, cultural, and religious engagements to facilitate positive identity development. Jewish youth groups and summer camps guided by Jewish values, customs, rituals, and beliefs are used as socializing agents – with abundant opportunities for Jewish identity development.

> "There is growing acceptance of the idea that Jewish socialization is not simply an intellectual process but also involves behaviors and feelings. Formal education may succeed at imparting knowledge and teaching skills, but it may fail at instilling love, commitment, and clear identity. Feeling Jewish and doing Jewish things, Heilman (1992) argued, may be the prerequisite to becoming a stronger Jew. Herein lies the unique contribution of Jewish summer camps and other programs of informal Jewish education. With their focus on experiential activities, group techniques, and concern with individual growth, they support the creation of Jewish friendships and Jewish self-identification" (Saxe, 2004).

Jewish identity is not limited to social engagements – although many social engagements are designed around many of the following indicators of Jewish identification:

- Segregation (i.e., Jewish neighborhoods)
- Education (i.e., Jewish day schools)
- Intermittent practices (i.e., Jewish holiday observance)
- Community (i.e., Jewish organizations)
- Rituals (i.e., Sabbath observance)
- Israel (pilgrimages)[1]

A relationship with or an experience in Israel for Jewish youth is an integral component of understanding Jewish identity. American Jewish youth and young adults are offered numerous opportunities for pilgrimages to Israel. Similarly, programs through Jewish federations, synagogues and Temples, youth movements, and summer camps understand the Israel experience as central to Jewish identity.

> "The crown jewel of informal Jewish education has been the Israel experience, which was heralded in the 1990s as the antidote to teenagers' Jewish malaise. A number of Israel education initiatives (led, notably, by Israel Experience Inc. and, later, by Birthright Israel) were designed to bring more young American Jews to Israel. Youth movements and private trip purveyors offered a panoply of travel experiences ranging from arts programs to sports adventures in Israel. Extensive evaluation research was undertaken to document the impact of the trips on participants (e.g., Chazan 1997; E. H. Cohen 1994, 1995; Goldberg, Heilman, and Kirshenblatt- Gimblett 2002; Mittelberg 1999, Saxe et al. 2002). The community poured its resources and its hopes into the Israel experience" (Saxe, 2004).

[1] Adapted from Uzi Rebhun (Rebhun, 2004).

4 INTRODUCTION

4.1 BACKGROUND NOTE ON BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL

Birthright Israel, or simply Birthright, carefully plans and directs pilgrimages to Israel. The participants engage in a collection of activities that occur in the context of an organized experience. This bold idea began in 1999, sending 18 – 26-year-old Jewish adults to Israel for pilgrimages between six and ten days to learn about and connect with their Jewish roots, heritage, religion, and language. The goal of the pilgrimage is to deepen a sense of Jewish identity and understanding through an immersive educational experience. According to Birthright Israel's website, the vision of the program is "To ensure the vibrant future of the Jewish people by strengthening Jewish identity, Jewish communities, and connection with Israel" (Birthright Israel, n.d.). Through several vital benefactors and financial support from the State of Israel, this program sends each participant (including airfare, lodging, food, tour guide, and associated costs) for free.

Since 1999, 650,000 individuals from 67 countries have participated in the program. Participants travel through Israel on a tour bus, with planned and unplanned stops along the way. Scheduled stops may include, for example, the Western Wall, Independence Hall, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Mount Herzl, and the Dead Sea. The program is designed to situate how young adults view their Jewish identity. "Its scope and reach suggest the program has the potential to shift the Jewish identities and involvement of a generation of Jewish young adults touched by the program" (Saxe, Shain, Wright, Hecht, & Sasson, 2017). Furthermore, the program's conscious agenda relies on rhetorical narrative (Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010) to create opportunities for participants to engage in sensemaking and reflection (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). In short, at the program's core is to create long-lasting experiences for participants, that impact their identity, through bringing them to Israel.

With numerous considerations at play, all of which may have an effect on, or diminish, opportunities for identity exploration and development, Birthright has an institutional responsibility to manage these expectations and outcomes. Indeed, while Birthright Israel cannot control many of the considerations listed above (e.g., political climate), they can and should be managing expectations accordingly. With this in mind, Birthright Israel requires all tour providers to include mandatory stops/experiences in their itineraries. The reason for doing so is to develop a cohesive narrative – for 650,000 participants and counting – of the Israel pilgrimage experience for young Jewish adults. All trips focus on three core areas:

1. Narratives of the Jewish People – Participants visit a Jewish heritage site, a Zionist heritage site, a contemporary national heritage site, a "natural" heritage site, and a *Shoah* (Holocaust) heritage and learning site.
2. Contemporary Israel – Through visits to different organizations, institutions, and businesses, participants explore Israeli geopolitics, society, and statehood; arts and culture; and innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology.

3. Ideas and Values of the Jewish People – Group members celebrate Shabbat together, form a *Kehilah* (community) with mutual responsibility, and engage with *Talmud-Torah* and *Beit Midrash* and Hebrew as a living language. (Areas, 2019)

Additionally, each itinerary of each of the nine tour providers must include visits to the following:

- The Western Wall
- At least one Holocaust-related site
- At least one Jewish historical site
- At least one site related to the Zionist history
- At least one State national site

Birthright Israel aims to take a responsible role in messaging the Jewish narrative – the centerpiece to Jewish identity, in requiring educational components and mandatory itinerary stops. The three educational goals identified by Birthright Israel provides opportunities for participants to connect with each other, their staff/tour guides, the Israeli counterparts, and to the national homeland of the Jewish people. Imagine if participants had not visited, for example, Israeli's national Holocaust museum and memorial. Instead, Birthright Israel is acknowledging an institutional responsibility as facilitators to a seminal, pilgrimage experience to more than 650, 000 young Jewish adults. This responsibility must be managed carefully.

As this research demonstrates, notions of identity, while attending to each of the five constituted areas above, becomes evident through participant reflections. Participant reflections show the connections between place and identity as paramount in their explorations.

While Israel may seem an obvious choice for connecting Jewish young adults with their roots, an argument can be made that ensuring that Israel is at the center of this pilgrimage experience is incumbent to facilitating Jewish identity. Theoretically, pilgrimages can occur in any place. Numerous Jewish heritage sites outside of Israel have the capability to showcase Jewish history, language, social, religious, and cultural connections for young Jewish adults.

The March of the Living, for example, engages in a two-week pilgrimage for Jewish high school students to Poland with the stated purpose of engaging in Holocaust education to teach about moral evil (Noddings, 1989). Birthright Israel, however, in centralizing Israel as the preeminent record of the Jewish people is making a pivotal case that Jewish identity is more than shared history, but instead belonging to a shared culture, in a shared place.

According to Birthright Israel, "Through the *Mifgash*[2] portion of Birthright Israel trips, over 80,000 young Israelis have connected with their Jewish peers from around the world and

[2] *Mifgash* is Hebrew for "encounter" or "cultural exchange." A critical component of Birthright Israel trips is a *mifgash* with Israeli peers. On most trips, Israeli soldiers and college students, ages 18-26 (depending on the age of the participants on that bus), spend five days together. They travel together, form relationships, and experience a cross-cultural exchange.

introduced them to an even more personal side of Israel. This has proven to be the most effective and transformative element in the Birthright Israel experience." (Mifgash, 2019)

Birthright Israel is not merely a tour organizer but an agent responsible for affording meaningful opportunities and space for considerations regarding participants' identity. In which ways, then, is Birthright Israel responding to its direct responsibility for fostering identity development? What learning and planning framework is Birthright Israel relying on to facilitate continued identity development, and not merely identity exploration?

4.2 Background note on Chabad of Vanderbilt University

Each of the Birthright Israel providers attracts, for the most part, different audiences. For example, most secular college students opt to join a *Taglit* Birthright Israel tour. At the same time, those who affiliate with the orthodox movement tend to prefer joining the *Mayonot* Birthright Israel tour. Although Birthright requires visits to certain sites that it deems are of historical, national, cultural, and religious importance, each tour operator is given a great deal of flexibility in choosing how to negotiate the remainder of the trip. While the Chabad movement works exclusively with *Mayonot*, it is not necessarily accurate to describe the students who participate under the auspices of Chabad as mostly observant. Many likely grew up in homes where Jewish rituals and holidays were observed. Still, these students are attracted to Chabad for its ability to offer spirituality, warmth, community, and enlightenment. The rabbi of each Chabad outfit is the primary figure responsible for inviting and securing meaningful relationships with members of the community.

Rabbi Shlomo Rothstein leads the Chabad House of Nashville's Vanderbilt campus. Rabbi Rothstein was the primary leader on this Birthright pilgrimage and is often referenced in the participant reflections.

4.3 Problem Description

Identity formation is more complicated than merely becoming a participant (Brooks & Williams, 2012). Identity as a joint accomplishment (Hand & Gresalfi, 2015) between participants in the program and their association with others (i.e., fellow participants, tour-guide, Birthright staff, Israeli soldiers, Israeli residents) requires in-depth investigation. The notion of 'self' – in how we understand and make sense of our experiences is an ongoing process; identity is socially constructed by customs and practices in which human beings experience their daily actions, and in this sense, independent.

Understanding "who am I" goes beyond the realm of philosophical narrative. Social science places great value in using the context of social engagements and experiences to address the same question but from a different lens. For example, John Dewey writes about individual habits as social functions integrally connected to one's identity. From this perspective, examining religious practices sheds light on how individuals define themselves. Deborah Tatum examines the identity of Black people using the same global considerations that can apply to other ethnic, religious, and racial groups as well. Tatum explores identity in terms of:

- Biological heritage
- Sociohistorical context of society
- Early socialization experiences
- Culture
- Ethnic identity
- Heritage
- Spirituality
- Individual awareness of self about race and racism
- Physical appearance
- Other personal and social identities including sexual orientation (Tatum, 2017)

Charles Taylor's essay, "The Politics of Recognition" explains identity accordingly,

> "…our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being." (Taylor, 1997)

To Taylor, identity, "designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being" (Taylor, 1997). It is precisely this interpretation of identity that I will rely upon in examining, to what end, Birthright Israel programs are achieving their desired outcomes in fostering identification with Judaism and Israel.

As this paper focuses on a pilgrimage experience designed for young Jewish adults, the desired outcome is for participants to engage in long-lasting experiences, in which their identification with faith and Israel is primary. However, is the pilgrimage working? Meaning, are participants identifying with Judaism and Israel in meaningful ways to contribute to their overall Jewish identity?

Questions for further inquiry include, among others:

a) What is it that turns experience into identification with place, culture, and community?
b) How do participants consider their experiences in the pilgrimage as opportunities for sensemaking?
    i. What understandings or changes to one's identity or identification are evident as a result of the pilgrimage experience?
        i. Will participants feel a greater connection to Judaism or Israel?
            1. If so, which experiences during their pilgrimage tour are responsible for this shift in value and identification?
        ii. Will the participants modify their cultural or religious engagement as a result of their pilgrimage experience? Will participants increase their identification with Judaism and Israel in particular?
            1. Similarly, which experiences during their pilgrimage tour are responsible for this shift in value and identity?

c) How will emotional states, beliefs, motivation, values, goals, and identity influence how and what participants internalize as integral to their identity?

The lens of this paper is narrow. Pilgrimage experiences, while sharing similar religious, cultural, and social outcomes, are vastly different from one another. For example, Birthright Israel programs utilize nine different trip organizers with itineraries ranging from five to ten days. An individual's experience on one Birthright Israel trip is not necessarily similar to someone else's. The most popular tour provider is run through college campuses and seeks to offer a non-denominational experience in Israel. According to their literature,

> "Hillel trips connect Jewish students and young professionals to their Jewish journey and identities, to Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, and, upon return, to their communities. All Hillel trips will provide a variety of meaningful experiences for young adults from all Jewish backgrounds to explore their traditions.
>
> All the while, you will be traveling with Israeli soldiers and getting a firsthand account of the real Israel. On Shabbat, you will have the chance to choose the way you celebrate, whether through Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox services, or in a guided meditation, yoga, or alternative conversation." (Hillel, 2019)

Other tour providers explore Israel through a connection to the people of Israel. *Shorashim* (Hebrew for the word, "Roots"), for example, states,

> "On Shorashim, Americans & Israelis always explore Israel, side-by-side, for the entire experience. Our authentic journeys offer new perspectives, focusing on experiencing the culture, sites, scenes, vibes, a variety of stories, & people of Israel, in the way that connects to you. Your adventure is made, not only by what you see & experience but by the people that you encounter & the close group formed. Shorashim maintains that the human landscape - authentic encounters with Israelis - is the core component of the experience. Seeing Israel through the eyes of the locals & creating personal connections is what drives meaningful experiences." (Shorashim, 2019)

The tour provider that led the Birthright Israel pilgrimage from which my research was collected has an entirely different vision in which to experience Israel. In affiliation with the orthodox Chabad movement, the tour provider, *Mayonot* (Hebrew for "wellsprings"), believes in cultivating the following Israel experience:

> "Through learning Jewish and Israeli history and engaging in dialogue with Israelis, questions are raised about Jewish identity that challenges the participants throughout their lives. Mayanot strives to find the delicate balance in presenting the ancient and modern history of Israel, contemporary Israeli culture and Jewish tradition, and the vexing political divisions and ideologies all in an open and pluralistic environment." (Mayonot, 2019)

There are important considerations and value in examining how the three tour providers above, or any of the nine tour providers in total, can influence and direct a participant's pilgrimage experience. However, comparing experiences of participants – in terms of opportunities for identity development, and subsequent development based on tour providers – is not the focus of this research paper. I am elaborating on the tour providers, and their itineraries only to highlight

that one's experience has numerous factors at play. Beyond the vision of each tour provider, lies the social make-up of the cohorts, the tour guides, and the staff. Not-to-mention, the prescribed encounters with their Israeli peers, the political climate of Israel, threats, or acts of disruption due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict – none of which operate without impact to the participant experience, and ultimately to their identity.

4.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: NARRATIVES AND CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

This study examines four areas of literature especially helpful in understanding the identity construction process, broadly defined: (a) the value of place, (b) religion and spirituality, (c) culture and community, and (d) individuality.

Sense-making, as a multi-dimensional construct, is at the center of understanding the participants' experience of their pilgrimage. Karl Weick's publication, Sensemaking in Organizations, describes seven attributes of sense-making to include: (1) grounded in identity construction, (2) retrospective, (3) enactive of sensible environments, (4) social, (5) ongoing, (6) focused on and by extracted cues, and (7) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick, 1995). However, the focus of this study is primarily concerned with Weick's first attribute, "grounded in identity construction," to respond to the question, "who am I" – concerning this place, my faith, and those in my community?

This study uses the pilgrimage experience in Israel as one example to inform the process through which identification with Judaism and Israel may be formed. Rather than organizing participant reflections only by day (considering the set schedule of places to visit and planned engagements), I categorized the reflections by theme: place, faith, community, and individuality. In reading and analyzing the daily reflections of participants, it became clear to me that experiences during the day were not compartmentalized. Instead, participants reflected on their day one experience, for example, several more times as they made connections between sites visited and experienced throughout their trip. The idea of 'place,' however, acted as a springboard for which participants were able to locate a time and place in which newly formed identifications or challenges to existing identifications were considered. For example, the Western Wall, a holy and spiritual center or 'place' in Jewish identity, was used by the participants to reflect on their understanding of community, spirituality, and faith in the context of "who am I?" Specifically, what about Judaism and Israel, in particular, is shaping this narrative?

5 METHODS

A mixed-methods approach was used in this research. The components of the study included both qualitative and quantitative data collection and subsequent analysis. Using mixed-methods allowed me to increase validity in the findings. Furthermore, mixed-methods adds confidence in the conclusion drawn upon by readers (O'Cathain, Murphy, & Nicholl, 2010). Another value of mixed-methods is an added layer of interpreting findings with greater confidence. According to Morse and Chung, "Qualitative methods are never completely holistic, containing assumptions and perspectives that partition reality and provide subtle biases, often silently excluding as they focus and as inquiry becomes directed as it proceeds" (Morse & Chung, 2003).

5.1 QUANTITATIVE

Forty-one participants attending this Birthright Israel trip completed either a pre-trip survey or a post-trip survey, twenty-one participants completed both. The survey questions used in this study were adopted from a research article titled *Integrative Tests of a Multidimensional Model of Organizational Identification* (Boros, Curseu, & Miclea, 2011). The survey was used to track changes over time in participants' attitudes, opinions, and behaviors to questions specific to both Judaism and Israel. To measure change, participants were asked the same questions before beginning their journey and again at the culmination of their journey, using elements of longitudinal design in surveying. Asking the same questions at different points in time provides me with an opportunity to report on the changes in participants' views (Center P. R., 20220).

In addition to basic demographic questions (on level of schooling, age, race/ethnicity), the pre and post-survey contained the following twelve questions:

1. *When someone criticizes Judaism, it feels like a personal insult.*
2. *When someone criticizes Israel, it feels like a personal insult.*
3. *I am very interested in what others think about Judaism.*
4. *I am very interested in what others think about Israel.*
5. *When I talk about Judaism, I usually say "we" rather than "they."*
6. *When I talk about Israel, I usually say "we" rather than "they."*
7. *Judaism's successes are my successes.*
8. *Israel's successes are my successes.*
9. *When someone praises Judaism, it feels like a personal compliment.*
10. *When someone praises Israel, it feels like a personal compliment.*
11. *If a story in the media criticized Judaism, I would feel embarrassed.*
12. *If a story in the media criticized Israel, I would feel embarrassed.*

Each familiar pair of questions (i.e., questions 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, etc.) is broken-down below and includes a brief statistical analysis. Appendix C contains bar graphs that provide a visual of pre and post-survey responses.

To provide additional context, a quantitative survey was used to measure changes in participant attitudes. The results from the survey are used in the research to demonstrate that changes in mentality did occur.

5.2 QUALITATIVE

The qualitative measures – oral reflections and a series of focus group meetings – help further support changes in identification and provide valuable insight as to why these changes occurred, and not merely that they did occur, if left to quantitative analysis alone.

Participants were asked to use a free application on their phone (Otter.ai) to record oral responses to a daily prompt as part of the oral journaling exercise. Engaging in oral journaling, and reflection is a technique that has the potential of connecting history and place to people's identity. Participants had six opportunities to record their responses (once per day for six consecutive days). To this end, the research engaged in oral journaling as a means of providing opportunities for reflection and self-discovery. The daily prompt remained the same during each of the six days and is as follows:

> *Please describe a scene, episode, or specific moment in your day that stands out as something that you'll remember the most from this day. Please describe this scene in detail. What happened, when, and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a bit about why you think this particular moment stands out to you now and what the scene may say about who you are as a person.*

The daily prompt is based on the *Life Story Interview* tool (McAdams, 2008) and used in prior research studying narrative identity (Adler, et al., 2017). A version of the daily prompt is also featured in *The Progress Principle* (Amabile & Kramer, 2011), building on the methods of daily journaling.

The method of using a life story interview through oral journaling provided ongoing information about participant experiences, their sensemaking, and any effects on identity. Reflectively, the journals respond to self-awareness, and understanding by examining defining moments. The daily prompt is designed to solicit thoughtful reflections and is purposefully open-ended. Using an open-ended prompt encourages participants to respond using their own words, rather than pre-determined answer choices. Responses to open-ended questions provided more diversity in participant reflections than would have been possible of a measure that relied on closed questions. At the heart of the daily prompt is an opportunity for participants to reflect and consider, "Where am I at this moment?" What is happening, that makes this moment so significant?" (McGraw, 2001).

The focus group aimed to capture participant reflections of their pilgrimage experience one-year later. A series of focus group meetings provided added insight into the latency effect of participant conclusions about identity and identification with faith and Israel.

5.3 RECRUITMENT

Seventy-eight participants, ages 18 – 23, who registered for the May 2019 pilgrimage to Israel through the Chabad Student Center at Vanderbilt University were solicited to participate in this study.

Thirteen participants responded to an anonymous pre-trip survey before they embarked on the seven-day pilgrimage, and seven completed the post-trip survey on the final day of the program. However, 21 participants completed both the pre and post-trip survey. It is important to note that participants were not required to complete the survey but encouraged to do so. The post-trip survey contains the same questions as the pre-trip survey; however, the demographic items were removed as they were redundant. I conducted two focus groups, totaling five students. Due to COVID-19 considerations, the focus group was held via Zoom. Participants for the focus groups were selected for inclusion based upon their schedule availability, and their participation in submitting journal entries. See Appendix A for the solicitation letter and Appendix B for the study protocols.

5.4 NOTE ON NARRATIVE ANALYSIS AND SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

I relied on the narrative analysis to determine how participant identities are constructed and negotiated through various social, cultural, historical, and religious experiences throughout the seven-day pilgrimage in Israel. According to Connelly and Clandinin, "narrative refers to the making of meaning through personal experience by way of a process of reflection in which storytelling is a key element and in which metaphors and folk knowledge take their place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986). Since narrative is about meaning-making, narratives can be considered as internal articulation in nature. In this way, the telling of the story is where sense-making occurs (Riessman, 1993). According to Riessman, "[i]nformants' stories do not mirror a world 'out there.' They are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions, and interpretive" (Riessman, 1993). Using narrative analysis and coding, I uncovered how participants were interpreting the events and experiences they encountered along their journey. Relying on a narrative methodology allowed me to examine participant identities as they emerged and were enacted. Specifically, "the story of the self that weaves together the reconstructed past, the perceived present, and the imagined future" (Adler, et al., 2017). Capturing individual narratives provides me with an opportunity to better understand their lived experiences in the context of the pilgrimage (Fivush, 2010).

The narrative creates an opportunity to gain insight and ultimately "see" participants' sensemaking. It is only from this "seeing" of an otherwise invisible process that allows interpreting a relationship between their experience (i.e., what happened that day) and identity.

6 MAIN: FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

In using oral journaling to share their insights, participants reflected on the impacts on their identity as they visited historical, cultural, and religious sites within Israel. Similarly, participants also used their daily reflections to consider the value of the Jewish community in their lives – past, present, and future. Their insights were often rich with discussions about the role of religion and spirituality in their lives, challenging their understandings of what Judaism means to them. "Who am I?" in the context of Jewish values was a continuous theme noted in the transcripts of their daily recordings.

The sections below organize participant reflections by themes: place (i.e., the Western Wall, Mount Herzl, visiting a border town with Gaza, etc.), religion (i.e., Jewish ritual observance and prayer, the role of God, etc.), culture and community (i.e., American Jews versus Israeli Jews, the role of community membership in Jewish identification, etc., and finally, individuality (i.e., what does being Jewish mean to me? How has this pilgrimage changed how I understand my identification with faith, community, and Israel? etc.).

The daily reflections are rich, honest, and deeply personal testaments of the experiences understood by the participants in the study. Although the reflections share intimate moments in time, they are better understood in the context of changes in opinion to matters related to Jewish and Israel identification.

The pre and post-Birthright surveys provide an additional data point in which, when combined with participant reflections, and a post-Birthright focus group, helps to complete a more informed narrative as to the changes that these participants experienced and ultimately articulated.

Using a paired t-test, I was able to determine that the results in changes of opinion before the pilgrimage to after the pilgrimage, in eleven of the twelve questions surveyed, was significant. Table 1 identifies that six out of the twelve questions had a p-value of less than .01, indicating that the results were highly significant. Five out of the remaining six questions had a p-value of less than .05, demonstrating significance. Question three, which states, "I am very interested in what others think about Judaism," demonstrated no significance. Figures 1 – 6 in Appendix C include bar graphs examining each pair of questions as each pair substitutes the words "Judaism" and "Israel."

Table 1: Pre and Post Measures

Survey Question	Pre-Survey M (SD)	Post-Survey M (SD)	t	p
(1) When someone criticizes Judaism, it feels like a personal insult.	3.95 (0.95)	4.24 (0.79)	-2.34	.03*

Survey Question	Pre-Survey M (SD)	Post-Survey M (SD)	t	p
(2) When someone criticizes Israel, it feels like a personal insult.	3.14 (1.13)	3.90 (1.19)	-4.54	.00**
(3) I am very interested in what others think about Judaism.	3.90 (0.49)	4.19 (0.46)	-1.67	.11
(4) I am very interested in what others think about Israel.	3.95 (0.44)	4.38 (0.35)	-3.28	.00**
(5) When I talk about Judaism, I usually say "we" rather than "they."	3.90 (1.49)	4.43 (0.76)	-2.33	.03*
(6) When I talk about Israel, I usually say "we" rather than "they."	2.28 (1.37)	3.39 (1.21)	-3.07	.01*
(7) Judaism's successes are my successes.	3.57 (1.36)	4.29 (0.51)	-3.42	.00**
(8) Israel's successes are my successes.	3.29 (1.11)	4.0 (0.90)	-3.87	.00**
(9) When someone praises Judaism, it feels like a personal compliment.	3.71 (0.71)	4.19 (0.76)	-2.90	.01*
(10) When someone praises Israel, it feels like	2.76 (0.79)	3.71 (0.91)	-3.91	.00**

Survey Question	Pre-Survey M (SD)	Post-Survey M (SD)	t	p
a personal compliment.				
(11) If a story in the media criticized Judaism, I would feel embarrassed.	3.29 (1.81)	4.05 (1.45)	-2.69	.01*
(12) If a story in the media criticized Israel, I would feel embarrassed.	2.90 (1.39)	3.76 (1.49)	-3.70	.00**

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, t = t-statistic, p = p-value
*p<.05
**p<.01

The twelve survey questions, comparing pre and post pilgrimage attitudes, offer a crucial data point in validating that participant changes in identification with Judaism and Israel did, in fact, occur during their Birthright Israel experience. While this data point is essential as a tool to examine what happened in terms of participant identification, it does not, on its own, support why the change in attitudes occurred.

The daily, oral journal entries provide a critical piece to understanding this puzzle. In reading and coding these personal entries, I was able to assign themes of common threads.

However, I will admit that selecting which entry was aligned to which theme or set of themes was not methodological or, in any way, scientific. After reading an entry, for example, I highlighted vital sentences that, in my opinion, aligned with a theme. There were instances in which I waivered. For example, one of the participants described the feeling of community at the Western Wall. Initially, I categorized this under the theme of "community." In the last line of her entry, however, she concluded by saying that she now realizes that prayer can be done anywhere. Her entry overlaps at three themes: community, religion, and place. Ultimately, I made a choice to include her entry in the section about religion because I understood her reflection to be more about communicating with God than with the Western Wall, or the people surrounding her. Other entries were much easier to categorize.

My experience in assigning entries a category and coding accordingly is a common challenge in qualitative research. In considering narrative analysis, in particular, the goal is to explore the lived experiences of participants. The nature of journal entries is such that individuals use the space to share a myriad of feelings (e.g., what emotions am I experiencing at this time?), and

experiences (e.g., what is happening that makes this moment so significant?) as they consider how to respond to the daily prompt. In assigning categories, I noted the following:

Firstly, participants recorded themselves speaking at length about Israel as a place. For the most part, they did not consider Israel as a destination. Instead, they expressed, implicitly or explicitly, that Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people and not just the home of her Jewish Israeli citizens.

Secondly, participants evaluated and reflected on the role of religion and spirituality in their daily lives. Questions arose about the role of God, prayer, and ritual. How participants identified with the Jewish faith, and how that change occurred are all recorded in their daily reflections.

Thirdly, participants began to examine and explore the power of the community in assessing their relationship with Judaism. One participant noted that the power of the Jewish community was so meaningful to him that his prayer at the Western Wall was not addressed to God, but rather to the Jewish community. His identification with Judaism was not on an observant level, but rather a communal one.

Finally, participants used their journals as an opportunity to reflect, challenge, and ultimately explore their stance and place concerning Judaism and Israel. They commented on their lives compared to the lives of their Israeli peers who joined them on the journey, and they reflected on how they find meaning in Judaism, citing family, community, faith, and Israel as key components.

The sections below, organized by the themes just discussed, offer the most convincing conclusions for this study – **identification with Judaism and Israel, through a pilgrimage experience – does affect one's identity**.

6.1 Place & Identity

"Here is home, here is heart
And you, I will not leave
Our ancestors, our roots
We are the flowers, the melodies
A tribe of brothers and sisters."

-Lyrics from the song: *Shevet Achim Va'achayot* (Band of Brothers & Sisters) by Doron Medalie

How we consider our surroundings has a direct impact on how we see, understand, and identify ourselves. While this may be more common in permanent or semi-permanent locations (i.e., location of the home, or place of school), there are many documented instances of identity development that happens in temporary areas as well. As this paper focuses on identity development and change through pilgrimage experiences, it is necessary to examine how students on this particular Birthright Israel engagement made sense of Israel during their pilgrimage – and for many of whom, this was their first time in the Jewish state. Clare Twigger-Ross and David Uzzell have contributed research on place and identity process, and have categorized relationships with place as "attached" and "non-attached" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Ross and Uzzell consider two ways in which people think of place: (a) place identifications, and (b) place identity. In the former, place is a social category. For example, someone from Canada would call themselves "Canadian." In the latter, place identity involves a more profound construct of identity "that describes the person's socialization with the physical world" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). In thinking about place identity further, there is an understanding that identity is fluid, organic, continually being evaluated and re-evaluated through accommodation and assimilation with peoples' environments (i.e., their social world) (Breakwell, 2015). Glynis Breakwell developed a place identity framework that considers these four principles: (a) Distinctiveness, (b) Continuity, (c) Self-esteem, and (d) Self-efficacy. I will leverage Breakwell's framework in describing the identity engagements of these Birthright participants.

DISTINCTIVENESS

Distinctiveness is about one's uniqueness. When considering the context of place, however, distinctiveness "summarizes a lifestyle and establishes that person as having a specific type of relationship with his/her home environment, which is clearly distinct from any other environment" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Bonds developed with a place also add to an individual's distinctiveness. Shaul Kelner writes about people's relationship to place as both uncomfortable and inviting. "The interplay of familiarity and strangeness, of feeling simultaneously "at home" and alien, is integral to the experience of diasporic homeland tourism" (Kelner, 2012).

On the second day of the Birthright pilgrimage, the group spent the day touring Tel-Aviv. The morning consisted of optional activities that included a bicycle tour, an architectural tour, a tour

of graffiti installations around the city, and a Krav Maga[3] training session. Initially, I was curious to understand Mayonot's decision to include a Krav Maga session. The image of Israel always under attack seems counter-productive to the image of Israel being peaceful and safe, which I imagine is a centerpiece of Israel's design for attracting tourists. Israel's Ministry of Tourism sponsored a marketing video that currently runs on its website (Tourism, 2020). The video features two young women enjoying the beach, the nightlife, and the history of Israel. It seems rather purposeful that the video leaves out images of soldiers, weapons, or any promotion of Israel's military capabilities. Yet, safety in Israel is paramount as part of the country's overall identity. Both men and women serve in a conscripted army and continue to serve in the reserves throughout the majority of their adult life. Just two months before this trip, Israel and Gaza had entered into yet another conflict that included volleys of missiles and incendiary balloons. Air raid sirens were active in places as far as Tel-Aviv (Halbfinger, 2019). It is my understanding that some participants decided to forgo their seats on this Birthright trip as a result of the conflict. After reading participant reflections from the *krav maga* exercise, however, I understood that having a pilgrimage for young Jews to identify with their historical, cultural, and religious roots must include some level of honesty. Israel's defensive and non-defensive postures cannot be simply glossed over and set aside for the duration of the trip. According to Kelner,

> "One of the ironies of diaspora Jewish tours to Israel is that they represent the Jewish homeland as a site of danger where the threat of physical attack is possibly greater than that which tourists face as Jews in the places where they live. The tours accomplish this not only through their discourse about Israel and their display of its war – and terrorism-related sites but, even more important, through a program structure that is pervaded by attention-grabbing security measures that tour operators highlight rather than mask" (Kelner, 2012).

Participant responses to their brief engagement with Israeli *krav maga* experts included, "you always have a right to be here." The participant, Justin, was mindful that the "right" has a cost, which preoccupies Israelis with defending themselves. Another participant, Michael, suggested that we were

> "learning to defend ourselves from a person attacking you with a knife, and all of these young Israeli children walked by, and it was, you know, nothing unusual to them to see a bunch of people training in a park learning how to defend themselves. And I think that speaks to how this country sort of understands the importance of defense and protecting our Jewish identity."

Aubrey, a participant who opted to participate in the *krav maga* exercise, noted,

> "It's not about anything other than staying alive and being able to stay safe. And I think that's an interesting metaphor for what Israel is about, and about keeping the Jewish people safe and alive."

In the afternoon, the group reunited to visit the old port of Tel-Aviv, known as Jaffa. Here, one of the participants reflected on what she was witnessing. The application software used to transcribe participants' journal entries includes timestamps and accounts for pauses when

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[3] Israeli military self-defense and fighting system developed for the Israel Defense Forces

transcribing recordings. The result was an entry that perhaps unbeknownst to Annie had been reproduced much like a poem.

Today we went to Java, the old city, and
walked up to the cobblestones steps
across a bridge that was lined with
medallions that had pictures of horoscope signs. It was called the wishing bridge.
I was a little bit skeptical as to what would be at the top and what we were going to see.
But as we hiked up the tall, grassy hill, we reached
a view of the New City and the old city, the juxtaposition of these
cities
makes you feel
almost trapped in time.
It was a really special moment at the top of the hill, with everyone just looking down at Tel
Aviv. While the wind was blowing, there was a man there
playing fetch with his dog.
Probably just an Israeli man
enjoying his day in the sunshine with his pup.
Whereas we
are all young college kids traveling around Israel, some of us for the first time. This just
proves how this place
can be
so ordinary for some people. But so special
and unique for others. But
we all share a common value of this land because of its history and because of its value
to us as Jewish people.

Annie is explicit; she understands Israel as both unique to her and her fellow Birthright participants and commonplace to residents of Tel-Aviv ("…so ordinary for some people. But so special and unique for others"). Annie's relationship with place, on only the second day of the trip, is beginning to take shape. She recognizes that there is an intrinsic value to being in Israel and that seeing the "man there playing fetch with his dog" is not an image or appreciation she could have made sense of had she not had seen it, experienced it, for herself. Annie's perceptive and articulate reflection reminds me of Yehuda Amichai's poem, *Tourists* (Amichai, 2013).

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall
And they laugh behind heavy curtains
In their hotels.
They have their pictures taken
Together with our famous dead
At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb
And on Ammunition Hill.
They weep over our sweet boys
And lust after our tough girls
And hang up their underwear

To dry quickly
In cool, blue bathrooms.

Once I sat on the steps by a gate at David's Tower,
I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists
was standing around their guide, and I became their target marker. "You see
that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch
from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!"
I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them,
"You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next to it,
left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family.

In Tours That Bind, Kelner notes that "not recognized as anything symbolic, the man with the baskets is ignored by onlookers," he represents the mundane (Kelner, 2012). Yet Annie, a tourist, having never visited Israel before, was able to hone in on the everyday as anything but ordinary. For Annie, the distinctiveness of this place "to us as a Jewish people" is an essential recognition that the daily ongoing and sacrifices of Israelis, regardless of how banal they seem, contributes to her identity with them, connected by place.

CONTINUITY

There is a sense of considering oneself in the past (i.e., who I was), the present (i.e., who I am), and the future (i.e., who I will become). Despite the changes that we experience, continuity between the old-self, the present-self, and the future-self is relevant in maintaining a sense of continuity, of self-concept. Simon & Garfunkel, in the song, The Boxer, use the fourth verse to describe the desire to preserve continuity:

Now the years are rolling by me
They are rockin' evenly
I am older than I once was
And younger than I'll be; that's not unusual
Nor is it strange
After changes upon changes
We are more or less the same
After changes, we are more or less the same.

Kalevi Korpela describes the notion that we are more or less the same.

> The continuity of self-experience is also maintained by fixing aids for memory in the environment. The place itself or the objects in the place can remind one of one's past and offers a concrete background against which one is able to compare oneself at different times...This creates coherence and continuity in one's self-conceptions (Korpela, 1989).

The continuity of one's identity is at risk when active identity construction is absent. We often find meaning in place, and not surprisingly, pilgrimages are central symbols of meaning. Brian, a participant in his late teens, posted a rather earnest reflection of his Jewish identity concerning Israel. Having just spent his first hour in Israel, riding from Ben Gurion airport to the hostel in

Tel-Aviv, and seated next to one of the Israeli soldiers, Brian says, "And I think something that I've been puzzling within my own head is my connection to Israel from a Judaism perspective, and much can I confidently say, I am connected to Israel by just being Jewish." Brian makes a critical observation, which essentially is, why should Israel matter to me? To him, Israel has had little to no impact on his Jewish identity. Instead, Israel is a place, a destination, but not a home or a homeland. To Brian, however, and others like him, these pilgrimages can have a life-changing understanding of the relationship between being Jewish and Israel, and they do so in ways that participants do not often anticipate. By chance, Brian's seatmate is one of four Israeli female soldiers to join the group. Her name is Mira. His conversation with Mira was illuminating; they shared common interests. "And it was really cool because we talked about everything from New York, where I am from, to Tel-Aviv, to English and Hebrew, all of our hobbies, just seeing the differences between our lives, where our interests diverged, and you know, where they converge." Brian was beginning to discover that 'place' – somewhere he lacked a connection to, was suddenly inhabited with familiarity. The Game of Thrones became the focus of their conversation, and Brian reflected that Mira – someone that belonged to a country that he had no prior connection with – "shared almost the exact same opinions that I have about a show." This identification that place is more than historical architecture, unfamiliar customs, and a foreign language became a transitioning point for Brian. Place and people are connected, and now his relationship to Israel was beginning to take seed through his ties to Mira.

On day five, the participants visited Mt. Herzl – Israel's national military cemetery. Visits to settings of historical value, or places of the national narrative, "stand for, or represent, the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation" (Hall & Du Gay, 2006). Birthright has identified five settings that it deems are essential to the national rhetorical narrative of its history., and visits to a national cemetery are one of them. Opportunities to visit designated sites allow Birthright to construct an ideological frame that American Jews have as much to lose if Israel fails as do Israeli Jews. "History is a social and rhetorical construction that can be shaped and manipulated to motivate, persuade, and frame action, both within and outside an organization" (Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010). And Birthright is utilizing this opportunity, as it does with required visits to the Western Wall and Holocaust memorial sites such as *Yad Vashem* (the national Holocaust museum) to both manage and introduce a conversation that was not present before these students arrived.

Consider how Brian begins to make further connections between Israel and his home in New York. He talked about the significance of "seeing the ages on all of these tombstones. I mean, kids were younger than me, and they were giving the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate expression of love for their country, for their countrymen, for the people, for the Jewish people." It's Brian's subtle but essential conclusion that these young soldiers died not only for Israel's survival but for the survival and continuity of the Jewish people. I would argue that it was this seminal experience that created a significant 'ah-ha' moment for Brian; he now understood that Israel is not separate for the Jewish consciousness but at the center of it. Arguably, a strategic decision in this tour, and which I believe is common in other Jewish pilgrimages to Israel as well, is to identify Americans who volunteered to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), who died while

in service, and who are buried at Mt. Herzl alongside Israeli natives; this is part of the rhetorical narrative. One such example is the story of Michael Levin, who was born in Philadelphia and moved to Israel shortly after his 18th birthday to join the IDF as a paratrooper. The group stopped by his tombstone to hear his story, as many Birthright trips and other groups do. Tour guides often include the detail that Michael's grandparents were Holocaust survivors, which had a meaningful impact on his Jewish identity. At the young age of 22, Michael died while fighting Hezbollah in the southern part of Lebanon. The sacrifices of non-Israelis in the IDF is in and of itself a consideration of great national pride for Israelis. Thousands of Israelis attended Michael's funeral, and soon after, a memorial for Michael was erected at Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem, the site of a significant battle during the Six-Day War of 1967. With such vivid images of nationalism, Brian reflects further, "…and hearing the stories of these Americans that went on Birthright or visited Israel and fell in love with Israel, and the Israeli people in the Jewish state, and dedicating their lives to the Jewish state, and dying after joining the IDF was perhaps maybe the most, some of the most moving stories I've ever heard. It literally brought me to tears."

Another participant, Stephen, shares Brian's esteem for Americans who chose to serve in the IDF. Stephen says,

> "The other thing is that Americans come, they go on Birthright trips, and then they themselves decide that they want to come here and serve and live here, after. And I think that is an amazing thing. This country has an amazing ability to draw people in and make you fall in love with it…But I think it's like, you know, that's evidence for sure of how powerful this place makes people do things that they didn't even know, they didn't even think they could ever do. I don't know, I mean, with each day, my love for this country grows stronger and stronger."

Stephen is linking patriotism with sacrifice. Dying for this country speaks to a modern Zionist notion that to have a Jewish homeland means that it must be cared for and secure. Those Americans who came, fought, and some of whom died while serving in the Israeli Defense Forces are Zionists. In some way, Stephen is beginning to conclude that dual loyalties are possible and acceptable. He can be a proud American, and still, feel pride and commitment towards Israel. They are not mutually exclusive.

It is also true that American identity is in many ways about strength, devotion, and sacrifice. It is possible, then, that these American students are transferring their understanding of patriotic identity to the sacrifices that Israelis and Americans make while serving their country in the military. Both Brian and Stephen have designated American young adults like them as brave for their decision to serve in the IDF. Furthermore, they both attribute feelings of love for the country as motivators for the decisions of these of other American young adults that they know little about. The participant, Annie, adds, "As Americans, we should especially be appreciative of them, and respect them for all they have done."

SELF-ESTEEM

Birthright pilgrimages are unique in that they are conducted in groups. Spiritual journeys can occur to any place with meaning, and often people choose to engage in them independent of others. Birthright, however, has decided to group participants so that the social connection to Jewish identity is seen with Israel and not independent of it. Self-esteem, when considered from the perspective of social value, changes when people move from one group to another and when they move from one place to another. The association to place and self-esteem can often be described by pride by association (Uzzell, 1995).

One participant, Michelle, spoke about her transformation by reflecting at different stages of the trip. On Day 3, Michelle said, "and always makes me think, what if I just picked up and moved to Israel and join the army and just serve something greater than myself…I do consider Israel as one of my countries." By Day 5, Michelle begins to consider other ways to connect with a place that she finds value. She says, "I really want to study abroad here… I'm always so happy here." Her self-esteem with being in Israel evolves further, and by Day 7, the last day of the trip, Michelle reflects,

> "I will be able to learn the culture and learn the language and actually become a part of Israel…This country is mine. This country is something that I feel a part of, and I don't think that I could ever had the same feeling about Israel had I not come here…I want to have a home here. I want to know the language, I want to know the culture, I want to be able to be a part of the culture because this culture is my own and Judaism is something I am so proud of."

Michelle's identity development was not unique among the participants. Noah's reflections shared a similar pattern as he recognized Israel as having social value. He talks about the moment he was in the customs line at Ben Gurion airport at the onset of the trip. "And as I was standing there waiting, I looked past the customs desk, and I saw a giant sign that said, "Welcome to Israel"…And as I stood there in line, for the first time in my life, Israel became real…a second home to me became real." For Noah, however, the commitment to a "second home" is still rooted in idealism.

It's only on the third day when he visits a town near the Gaza Strip's border does he begin to understand that the Israel he has identified with growing up in a Jewish community is far from perfect. Moments after arriving at this farming community, a guide points to the concrete shelter behind them. He tells the group that in the event of a missile launch from Gaza, they have less than 15 seconds to enter the shelter. If the shelter is full, he continues, hide behind it like this – and he crouches behind the wall on the east side. The group has arrived at this location for a discussion on Israel's security – specifically, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Recall that a purposeful design element of the *Mayaont* experience is to integrate Israeli soldiers with the group from the first day until the last. They are not with the group to protect them. Although they are on active duty, they have been instructed to wear civilian clothes, remain unarmed while with the group, and only wear their fatigues when the group tours Israel's national military cemetery, akin to the Arlington National Cemetery in the United States. The soldiers span the same ages as

the participants. Their integration with the group is a design element of the Birthright experience. The thinking is, how can one understand a place without interacting with its people? As Kelner states, "The intent, in part, was to foster among visitors a sense that they have a personal stake in the conflict's outcome. Structuring opportunities to forge relationships with individual soldiers was one way of accomplishing this" (Kelner, 2012). Noah's entry after the guided lesson on the conflict with Gazans is a subtle check on his confidence with the Israel that seemed so inviting just days earlier when he in the customs line.

> "Along with the idea of Israel comes the themes of conflict, violence, and terrorism that are so prevalent in the news and on social media. I had always vaguely known about conflicts in Israel, but today, looking out into Gaza, the conflict became real. While our tour guide informed us on the conflict and its history, guns from an Israeli training base fired in the background. I thought about the terrorists living just a few miles away. I thought about how a mortar could be fired at us any minute, with little to no warning. I thought about how innocent civilians on both sides of the border live in fear of death each and every day. I thought about how lucky I am to live calmly and peacefully every single day."

Noah's initial and almost instantaneous identity as Israel being a second home seemingly evaporates quickly when he references how lucky he is to be living somewhere else. His status as an American, defined by calm and peace, is primary. However, on day six, Noah has now had his first experience to the Western Wall – a physical, spiritual, and symbolic representation of Judaism's religious center. The notions of conflict and the sounds of gunfire are behind him. He is struck by the awesomeness of this place – a place that Jews like him know so well from Jewish day camps, youth groups, religious day school, etc. At the epicenter of prayer and pilgrimage, the Western Wall has quickly grabbed hold of Noah's perception of self and is now taking root. Later that evening Noah reflects,

> "It's no longer a symbol; it's no longer an idea. It's really becoming a part of me…and to make the connection today; the wall is sort of the root of Judaism in Jewish belief…that makes me who I am, and that makes me feel so loved and so comfortable…And I can say, with 100% certainty, that today, I felt more proud to be a Jew than I ever had in my entire life."

SELF-EFFICACY

The belief in ourselves that we are capable of achieving goals, of being competent, is a reflection of our confidence, our worth. This expression is a measure of personal agency, and Albert Bandura has developed the corresponding framework as self-efficacy. Our capacity to execute behaviors necessary to meet goals is a measure of how well we exert ourselves over motivating principles, our practice, and the social environment. According to Bandura, "Perceived self-efficacy affects people's choice of activities and behavioral settings, how much effort they expend, and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the coping efforts" (Bandura, 1977). In thinking about self-efficacy and place, "feelings of self-efficacy are maintained if the environment facilitates or at least does not hinder a person's everyday lifestyle" (Twigger-Ross

& Uzzell, 1996). Meaning, does this environment – Israel – support their goals and purposes? A participant, Kevin, considered Israel from the perspective of both redemption and refuge.

> "But I think the most impactful part of the day was when I had the view of Tel-Aviv. And I don't know, just looking at the whole city, and knowing that I am working there is a very good feeling. It gives me a sense of pride to be Jewish and look at this place and know that represents my people, especially the fact because my grandfather is a Holocaust survivor, so just knowing that no matter what, I'll have a place to go if God forbid anything like that ever happened again. Makes me feel at peace inside."

Immediately after May 14, 1948, when Israel became a state, nearly 330,000 refugees from a battled Europe found refuge in Israel. The massive immigration influx meant that by 1949, almost a third of all Jews in Israel were Holocaust survivors (Klar, Schori-Eyal, & Klar, 2013). Kevin identifies Israel as the haven for his grandfather and as his haven if he deems it necessary in the future. While Israel does not yet have a constitution, it does have tenants – which are described as Basic Laws. The Basic Law, Israel – The Nation-State of the Jewish People clearly states, "The State shall strive to ensure the safety of members of the Jewish People and of its citizens, who are in trouble and in captivity, due to their Jewishness or due to their citizenship" (Rolef, 2020). As early as 1950, the State of Israel granted the opportunity for every Jew in the world to seek citizenship in Israel, arguably as a measure to safeguard the millions of world Jewry who may someday find themselves as victims, or potential victims to another genocide (Affairs, 2020). Kevin, however, is not the only participant to associate Israel with the necessary survival of current and future Jews. Ori, for example, has family in Israel that he has been in contact with since his youth. In thinking of the Jewish historical narrative, Ori reflects, "And that's why so many people have fought so long for us to get it, and for us to keep it." The "it" Ori is reflecting about is, of course, Israel.

6.2 Religion & Identity

"The shipmaster came to him and said to him, "What do you mean by sleeping? Get up and pray to your God so that He might take note of us so that we will not perish."…Then they said to him, "Tell us, please, why has this catastrophe come upon us? What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What people do you belong to?" And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the Lord God of heaven who created the sea and the dry land."[4] (Pearl & Pearl, 2005).

Pamela Ebstyne King's research expands on religious identity to include ideological, social, and spiritual contexts. King proposes that religion provides a distinct setting for identity exploration and commitment (King, 2003).

SPIRITUAL / THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

"The belief system inherent in any religion may be central to explaining why many individuals strongly associate themselves with their religious group" (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). One's worldview can often be a representation of the psychological and social foundations that together impress upon one's self-concept (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). From an epistemological perspective, there is a sense of what we can and do learn from religious identity and how we make sense of our surroundings through the identification of distinct beliefs.

All Birthright Israel pilgrimages are required to visit the Western Wall at least one time. Approximately 60,000 people visit the Western Wall plaza each year. Symbolically, the Western Wall is considered a Jewish link to Jerusalem and serves as the synagogue closest to the remains of both holy temples. It is arguably the most sacred place in the world for Jews to visit.

Jerold Auerbach, in his book, *Are we one? Jewish identity in the United States and Israel* recounts the story of the Israeli reunification of Jerusalem that happened in the six-day war in June of 1967. For nearly twenty-years, Jews were unable to visit the Western Wall as the Old City of Jerusalem was under Jordanian control.

> "During a single week in June 1967. It seemed that Zionism and Judaism had finally converged with stunning synergy. The world had watched indifferently as Israel confronted the terrifying prospect of a second Holocaust, then Israel struck within six days it routed Arab armies on three fronts. The Arab dream of driving Jews into the sea suddenly turned into a nightmare of defeat and humiliation for Jews, the impending tragedy of annihilation became. Instead, a miraculous moment of ecstasy.
>
> There was more, much more than overwhelming relief after a perilous escape from national disaster. It was in Martin Buber's words, "in a binding astonishment" when Israel suddenly

[4] Jonah 1:6 of the Hebrew bible. Copied from *I am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl*.

> confronted Jewish memory, and some would say its own destiny, as people of the covenant. Even the most resolutely secular Israelis found themselves deeply affected by their own anticipated encounter with Jewish history. Kol Israel broadcaster, Rafi Amir, reached the Western Wall, with the first wave of Israeli soldiers that swept through the Old City. "I'm not religious and never have been," he said breathlessly, "but this is the wall, and I am touching the stones of the Western Wall!"…In that instant, "for the first time," an army major remembered, I felt not the 'Israelness,' but the 'Jewishness' of the nation" (Auerbach, 2001).

According to the Pew Research Foundation, nearly 40% of Israelis define themselves as secular, and only 18% as religious or ultra-orthodox (Center P. R., 2016). Still, Jerusalem as the spiritual center and as an identifier of the secure connections to historical and present-day faith (through place and spirituality) is unquestionable. Israel's national anthem closes with a repeated verse that there is a Jewish yearning to be free in Zion and Jerusalem. The "Song of the Jubilee" celebrating Israel's 50th anniversary in 1998 was a song that marks a return to Jerusalem.

"We have returned to the cisterns
To the market and to the market-place
A ram's horn calls out on the Temple Mount
In the Old City." (Shemer, 2020)

The significance of Jerusalem, especially the Western Wall in the Old City, is not lost on Birthright Israel architects. Spiritual connections to the sanctity of Jerusalem can have a significant impact on Jewish identity, and an overall relationship with accepting and identifying Israel as the national home of the Jewish people, with Jerusalem at its center.

On the fifth day, the Birthright group made their way to the Old City of Jerusalem, with a culminating activity at the Western Wall. One participant, Noah, reflected on his experience wearing *Tefillin.*[5]

After the group visited the Western Wall, Noah said,

> "And a little anecdote of when I was approaching the wall today, I was wrapped in *Tefillin,* and it was the first time that I've been wrapped in *Tefillin* that I wasn't, I don't know if uncomfortable is the right word, but aware of the fact that someone might look at me and think that's weird, "what are you doing?" I [wear] *Tefillin* at school sometimes, and you know, it's meaningful, it's a very special thing. But there is always a thought in the back of your mind, a little voice that, you know, people are gonna' see you and going to think that it's weird. People are going to wonder what's going on. And today, when I was wrapped in *Tefillin*, I just felt natural. It just felt normal. I knew that the people around me were there for the same reason I as I was. I knew that the people around me respected me. And I knew that through our common roots of Judaism, that the people around me love me. And that is special, and that is something that I can only get in Israel, and that is why today was such a special day at the Western Wall."

[5] *Tefillin* are a pair of black leather boxes containing Hebrew parchment scrolls…The Torah commands Jewish men to bind tefillin onto their head and upper arm every weekday, in fulfillment of the verse from Deuteronomy 6:8, "You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes." (Chabad, What are Tefillin?, 2020))

Jean Phinney proposed a model of ethnic identity development in which she argues that ethnic groups are continually working to resolve two fundamental conflicts. The first challenge is for ethnic groups to address negative stereotypes that are considered threatening to their self-concept. The second conflict is managing the divergence between their culture and the culture of the majority in society. Managing the division causes many ethnic groups to maintain two identities at the same time; theirs and the majorities (Phinney, 1990). To Noah, the religious ritual of wearing Tefillin in the United States brought about negative stereotypes, "it's weird." His comment of feeling "natural" and "normal" dawning Tefillin in the religious center of the Jewish world is as much about place identity as it is about religious identity. A leading figure in the Jewish enlightenment period was a Russian-born, Hebrew poet named Yehudah Leib Gordon. His poem, "*Hakitsah 'ami*" (Awake My People!), called on Russian Jews to assimilate into Russian and European culture and partake of the great enlightenment around them while remaining committed Jews around the 1860s (Levy, 2009). Gordon's poem is a reflection of both Phinney's two fundamental conflicts. To Gordon, the Russian Jew must adopt two personas: the ritual Jew and the assimilated Jew.

Similarly, Noah is experiencing his religious identity "at home" (i.e., in Israel) and his assimilated identity "in the streets" of America. The conflict, of course, is that Noah resides in America, and is only visiting Israel! Necessarily, for Noah to feel "natural" and "normal" with his religious identity, he must be in Israel; "that is something I can only get in Israel."

Noah's experience at the Western Wall was not unique; other participants experienced the same internal religious affirmations. After visiting the Western Wall, Stephen, for example, contemplated,

> "I don't; I wouldn't say that I believe in God. But if there I a God, I felt pretty connected to him today. And at the Wall, it was the first time I've ever actually prayed to a higher power, or spoken with one, or tried to. And that was an interesting feeling, for sure. But I think it's like, you know, that's evidence for sure of how powerful this place makes people do things that they didn't even know, they didn't think they could ever do."

Spiritual and religious centers are meaningful for their ability to encourage visitors to transcend their understanding of self. These centers are a collection of place, community, and religion that spark individuals to reexamine, foster, and strengthen their understanding of religious identity and meaning in their lives. Recall Annie, who, on the second day of the trip, was able to identify the profane experience of "the man playing with his pup," was now commenting on the sacredness of the Western Wall.

> "It was interesting once I was at the Wall, and having my own private prayer, listening to people on either side of me having their own prayers. Well, one woman next to me was crying. Another woman was speaking a different language that I didn't recognize. It just proves that people come from all places, with all different stories, to this one special place to speak to God."

The next day, the group returned to the Western Wall to experience and celebrate the start of the Sabbath there. Although the place is the same, the mood and energy are entirely different at the Western Wall on Friday evenings. It is common for groups of tourists, Israeli soldiers, Jerusalemites, and others to gather at the Wall to dance and sing. The energetic experience is quite the opposite of the calm, reflective mood that occupies the rest of the week at the Western Wall or its plaza. Annie's journal entry – the day after her first visit to the Wall reflects her changing understanding of prayer. To provide context, earlier in the day, the group toured *Yad Vashem*, Israel's national Holocaust museum.

> "It honestly makes me appreciate Judaism more, that we're able to come back from that, after the genocide, and come together as one people.
>
> I felt like a community of Jews at the Wall tonight. The Wall yesterday was an original experience because it was my first time there, and I had my own silent prayer.
>
> But tonight, being separated[6] wasn't a big deal because I really felt the community of women. I felt the community of just being Jewish. Shabbat at the Wall was honestly one of my favorite experiences of the trip so far. We were dancing, we were singing, we were lifting people up in chairs…and when I went over for my silent prayer, I had a reflection that I hadn't had yesterday. And I thought about how I always have more things to say to God, and maybe I don't have to be next to the Wall to pray anymore."

This experience, for Annie, seems to have significant value on her interpretation of her religious identity through prayer, the spirituality of place, her relationship with God, and her satisfaction with community. First, Annie accepts that place is not sacred in Judaism; it is symbolic. As Rabbi Harold Kushner explains,

> "Understand that religion is about community 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 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).

Annie now accepts that praying to, and speaking with God is not about a place. She is not limited to when or how she chooses to communicate with God. Second, she recognizes that her religious identity is more about the community, then it is the theology. It is reasonable to conclude that

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[6] Men and women are separated by a six-foot divider do that they cannot easily see or interact with one another while at the wall. There are a variety of reasons in Judaism that are used to justify gender separation to varying degrees.

In Pirkei Avot 1:5, Yosi ben Yochanan says that a man who spends too much time talking to women, even his wife, neglects the study of Torah (Unknown, Pirkei Avot- Ethics of the Fathers, 2020).

Chapter 152 of *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* details a series of laws forbidding interaction between persons of the opposite sex who are not married or closely related (Newman Y. , 2012) Some of the prohibitions include *negiah* (physical contact), yichud (isolation with members of the opposite sex), staring at women or any of their body parts or attire, or conversation for pleasure.

Annie has replaced her interpretation that the Western Wall is dividing (i.e., the physical separation of men and women) with the Western Wall is inviting; "I really felt the community of women." Annie is moving beyond the idea of self in exploring a sense of belonging that comes from finding meaning. Her search for spirituality reveals an awareness, a desire to share her experiences with both the divine and her community (King, 2003). She is learning that through exploring her Judaism, it is possible to do both simultaneously, "something that happens only when people come together" (Kushner, 1993).

Annie's mother also serves to inform her religious identity by acting as an identity agent (Schachter & Venturra, 2008). Two days before the group visited the Western Wall for the second time (Friday evening), they toured Masada[7]. Identified as a UNESCO Heritage Site, Masada's "tragic events during the last days of the Jewish refugees who occupied the fortress and palace of Masada make it a symbol both of Jewish cultural identity and, more universally, of the continuing human struggle between oppression and liberty" (UNESCO, 2020). Before leaving Masada, Rabbi Rothstein surprised the participants with a letter from their parents. Later that day, Annie reflected on what her mother had written to her.

> "I knew how much this trip meant to me and how much it impacted me as a Jew, as this is my first time in Israel, but I had no clue until I read this letter how much of an impact my trip to Israel had made on my mom. She was proud of me, not only for transferring to Vanderbilt and working so hard this year but for maintaining my Jewish identity all along, and for becoming so involved in Chabad, and my religion while at school. I'm the most religious out of all of her children. And I think this religion means a lot to her considering she's married to a Catholic man. I think it always felt like she was cheated out of her Judaism when she grew up, and she lost her grandparents, who usually were the ones that kept Judaism alive and her family. She said she's proud of me for keeping Judaism within our family and for practicing my religion, even in my crazy busy life. It all felt real in that moment. Masada is about our ancestors, and to reflect back on my ancestors and my family, and our Judaism meant a lot to me in that moment, it all felt a lot more real."

The influence of Annie's mother is a mediating factor in her religious identity. As an identity agent, Annie's mother shares an implicit goal with Annie: favoring a specific social character and course of development (Schachter & Venturra, 2008). To Annie, reading that her mother was proud of her for carrying the torch of Judaism – something that her mother "felt cheated out of" – becomes a transformative moment for her. Combining the sacred space of Masada with her mother's acceptance, Annie's Jewish path is a moment whereby she accepts the challenge of furthering her Jewish identity. "We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. Even after we outgrow some of these others – our parents, for instance – and they disappear from our lives, the conversation with them continues with us as long as we live" (Taylor, 1997).

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[7] "Masada is a rugged natural fortress, of majestic beauty, in the Judaean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea. It is a symbol of the ancient kingdom of Israel, its violent destruction and the last stand of Jewish patriots in the face of the Roman army, in 73 A.D. It was built as a palace complex, in the classic style of the early Roman Empire, by Herod the Great, King of Judaea" (UNESCO, 2020).

SOCIAL IDENTITY

Other participants shared similar experiences to Annie's at the Western Wall. Brian, for example, reflected,

> "Being at the western wall was an entirely different experience because I was surrounded by not only a crazy amount of Jewish people but fairly to very religious people. Praying there and singing there showed me the celebratory aspect of Judaism that one doesn't often witness. I was encouraged to sing and shout and put my arms around complete strangers simply because we were all Jewish, shared a common history, and wanted to relish in our excitement in the company of our own community. In that moment, my Jewish identity swelled and has certainly stayed just as excited about my religion and people even though I am no longer at the wall."

Brian's experience was significant enough to encourage a latency effect. Although his experience was fleeting, the positive feeling he gained of sharing it with others speaks to the power of community in encouraging long-term, positive associations in pilgrimage tours. Brian's reflection demonstrates a sense of ownership that goes back to Glynis Breakwell's self-esteem framework on social identity; Brian feels proud to be Jewish. In *Understanding Anti-Semitism and its Impact: A New Framework for Conceptualizing Jewish Identity*, Christopher MacDonald-Dennis describes the power of experience in ethnoreligious identity. Macdonald-Dennis gives the example of 'Amanda' who articulates a more considerable pride in her Jewish heritage as a result of growing up in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006). While we are not sure where Brian grew up, we see that he is fascinated by being around "a crazy number of Jewish people." His prior perception of Judaism as mainly sorrowful, has suddenly been upended in this captured experience. Brian now sees the promise of understanding Judaism in a celebratory manner. MacDonald-Dennis's research investigates the adverse outcomes that Jewish adolescents feel being stereotyped as ruthless and demonic (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006). Brian's experience as a Jew may have been predominately reactionary. Meaning, it is possible that Brian experienced Judaism by continually defending it or being victimized as a result of it. However, his experience in Israel, mainly in the context of place, religion, and community, is fostering a new Jewish identity as favorable. Brian is redefining his character; he "has acquired a strong sense of self and seeks to build a coalition with other groups to deconstruct oppressive and limiting ideologies" (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006).

On the final day of the trip, Brian reflects,

> "And I think everything that we've learned along his trip…has been about endurance and remaining who you are in the face of adversity. And I think throughout this trip, that's definitely my biggest takeaway, that I have to remain strong and that I have to keep my Judaism alive whether or not that means being more religious or being proud that I am Jewish and telling other people and showing my pride and sharing it with others."

I was surprised to read that so many journal entries describe the liturgical aspect of Jewish ritual as sad or melancholy. Aubrey shared a similar sentiment to Brian's after the group's second visit to the Western Wall on Friday evening.

> "And we got there. And Rabbi Shlomo brought us all together into a circle. And had the, and had the guys in the circle just dancing and singing, and saying different prayers, [and] we went along. You know, really getting everyone involved, getting everyone excited, and just having a great time, some of the people looking on, we're having, you know, we're a little upset that we were sort of acting like that, or that we're being so loud and excited and happy.
>
> And one of the Israelis today mentioned that, they felt that they thought it was so great that we were excited and happy and many people go to the Wall feel so down and tired and, you know, negative about, just about prayer experience, just about what they're praying about, and how it can be a sad experience. And prayer often is associated, I think, with sad experiences, funerals, asking for things asking for help. And even thanking God, you know, in keeping you safe, but, but just the, just the pure joy and happiness of just being somewhere and being able to, to be happy and feel like you're in somewhere that matters, and that you're with people that matter was fantastic. And it was, it was something I, I just, I think it was so important to me.
>
> And as I walked back, I saw so many people praying in such different ways. You know, I saw a man literally slam his book shot and just start nodding to himself and, and really felt like he was in his own thoughts. And it was, it was liberating to see certain people feel so in touch with themselves, liberating to see people connecting with loved ones at the wall, liberating to see people just loving each other loving Judaism loving themselves. And you know, whether happy or sad, I thought it was, it was amazing to be there. It was amazing to experience it. It was so unlike anything else I'd ever experienced even after being at the wall the day before. It made me proud to be Jewish."

In an analysis of Jewish identity in America, Uzi Rebhun comments on Jewish associations based on ethnoreligious meaning, which are strategies for Jewish continuity and commitment to the Jewish community (Rebhun, 2004). Aubrey's comment that joy comes from "being somewhere that matters, and you're with people that matter" sheds light on how he values relationships and unique experiences as significant contributors to his Jewish identity (Miller, 1962). Aubrey's experience at the Western Wall translates into his evolving understanding of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rituals associated with his sense of what it means to be Jewish. Aubrey's experience with communal ritual and prayer provides him with a significant opportunity to consider how he belongs to a larger Jewish group, central to the task of identity exploration (Benson, 1997).

At the onset of the trip, Stephen struggles to associate himself or identify with a broader Jewish community that includes observant Jews. Similar to Aubrey, Stephen lacks experience with communal ritual prayer and sees those who engage in religious observance as 'other.' Feeding on stereotypes and personal understanding, of what Jews do and do not look like, Stephen reflects,

> "Then we went and started exploring a more Jewish looking area where we saw people getting ready to celebrate before the bonfire ceremony thing that's going on tonight, and [saw] a bunch of little kids all in *kippas*[8] and all in black pants and in a white shirt. All looking very Jewish."

Stephen's comment that they are "all looking very Jewish" is a reflection of his orientation away from religious Judaism, and perhaps a subtle nod to seeing himself as an ethnic Jew: Jews with no religious preference (Rebhun, 2004). Still, Stephen's comments are alarming; to him, there is a scale of more or less Jewish that is defined by ritual observance. To Stephen, the "communal or collective aspects of being Jewish, that is, all manner of attachment to Jewish family members, neighbors, institutions, community, and people, including Israel" (Cohen S. M., The demise of the "Good Jew", 2012) is both secondary and incompatible with religious Judaism.

On the flight over to Israel, Stephen was seated next to, presumably, an orthodox woman. Stephen shared his observation, describing her in a way that anthropologists describe remote Amazon tribes – with immense curiosity and vacancy.

> "She then proceeded to pull a couple of books outside of her bag. All of them were in Hebrew. One of them said it said the word "Torah." But I'm not exactly sure what it was. And she sort of started reading one of them and rocking back and forth in her seat, reading it herself mouthing the words to herself … she seemed sort of distressed. And I was a little confused what was going on? I was trying to figure out whether she was doing some sort of prayer, maybe it was a ritual that something to do with traveling or flying or some like, comforting situation. But I was just overall, I was very interested, it made me think a lot about religion, and how religion is so important in so many people's lives. Yet in my life, it doesn't really impact me that much. I'm, you know, I'm, I would say culturally religious and not habitually religious, I don't practice religion as a habit. And I'm, you know, I'm more in it for the people aside of the religion."

A few days later, in response to seeing numerous Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem, Stephen asks, "Why? What about them makes them feel that religion is so important to be a part of it. In my mind, it's definitely due to how they were brought up. They have come from very religious families." Stephen's cultural, social, and ethnic relationship to Judaism is becoming more evident. He does not identify with religious Judaism; however, it is only on the last day of the trip that he begins to view his Jewish identity in terms of ethnicity and culture instead of, and in opposition to, theology.

> "I have never given Judaism a really real shot in my life. And I haven't really explored my Jewish side and figured out what being Jewish means to me. And so, I wanted to make it a goal of this trip to figure that out. And last night, at the wall, I figured [it] out for myself.
>
> I had a weird experience happen, weird for me.

[8] Head covering or skullcap worn mainly by Jewish men. (MJL, 2020).

> I don't believe in God. I still don't after this week. But I still found myself praying when I went to the wall, and I think I may have talked about earlier in the week. But my girlfriend is going through some very, like, very tough stuff right now.
>
> And I prayed, I prayed for her. But I wasn't praying to God; I was praying to the community, and to the Jewish, just to the Jewish community. And so I found myself asking for help, not from something involved, but something that surrounds me. And so that what that told me is that I didn't think about it before, I didn't really say like, I didn't think about who in my mind, like Who am I praying to or my praying for, I just kind of started I felt an urge that it stopped, right? Felt like put my hands and my head on the wall. And it just felt like the right thing to do at that moment.
>
> And so that told me that, to me, Judaism is about my community. And it's about strength in the people that are around you. And the Jewish community and especially like, that's where, you know, the community of Jewish people around me, and the strength that we can offer each other in good times, and more importantly, in bad times. You know, I think that, I think that us as Jews, because we've gone through so much as a, as a community and as a group of people, historically, we have a special connection to each other, we will always have each other's backs. And our empathy to help people when they need it. And whenever they need it, no matter what's going on in our own lives. And so I think that this trip has really an especially like, so I'll talk about the wall a little bit; actually, seeing the wall yesterday, and seeing that many people all doing different things together for the same goal was unbelievable. You have your very like religious Orthodox Jews, standing in front of the wall bowing and praying. Like very, very with like, an extreme amount of intent. And then you have groups like us standing in circles, singing and dancing. And the goal for everyone was to make the world a better place and to improve the lives of those around them. And it was such an amazing congregation of people. And you could feel the energy, and you could feel the connection that everyone there had with each other.
>
> And so that I think is what led to, for me to realize that the God of my Judaism is about community. And for me, the most important thing in my religion is a community that it helps you develop."

IDEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

In addition to an ethnoreligious lens, Rabbinic literature on Jewish identity constitutes both mental and physical conditions that define a Jew. A physical-body attribute in Rabbinic literature is, for example, male circumcision, which is labeled as a *mitzvah* (commandment). Thoughtful considerations include the mitzvah of Torah learning. Much of these concepts align with biblical thought on the purity of the Jew (Neusner, 1975). There are social rituals that were carried through tradition and observance that are also considered central to the concept of Jewish religious belonging, which includes *tzedakah* (philanthropy or charity). While these associations are arguably defining features of Judaism, modern Judaism has evolved through periods of emancipation, Zionism, and assimilation to include a much broader understanding. Through modernity, identifying as Jewish now includes social conceptions of community, responsibility, and self that were not entirely evident, understood, or present in ancient times.

In 1991, the Council of Jewish Federations published a study that collected data on Jews in the United States for the previous three-years. Data collected in the survey included demographic information such as educational backgrounds, religious affiliations, memberships and associations with Jewish groups, views on Israel, and inter-marriage rates. The data on intermarriage rates, in particular, citing that 52% of Jews were marrying Gentiles, sparked intense debate and concern within the Jewish community at the time. Although criticisms of how the data was collected and interpreted had ultimately revised the number to 40% (a statistical figure consistent for decades), the initial reaction from the Jewish community leaders was telling. The data painted a picture of a Jewish demographic crisis in which Jews were in decline as though becoming – through intermarriage – an endangered species (Hart, 2000).

In 1997, Alan Dershowitz published a book titled, "*The Vanishing American Jew*." Dershowitz argues that American Jewish life is in danger of disappearing "The bad news is that American Jews--as a people--have never been in greater danger of disappearing through assimilation, intermarriage, and low birthrates" (Dershowitz, 2000).

In 2000, Bethamie Horowitz published a study titled "*Connections and Journeys: Assessing Critical Opportunities for Enhancing Jewish Identity,*" which was commissioned by the United Jewish Appeal and Federation of New York. Horowitz summarizes two goals of the study. The first goal was to investigate attitudes of American Jewish identity by exploring, for example, "What does being Jewish mean to them? In what ways, if at all, do they identify as Jews? How do they relate to their Jewishness?" (Horowitz, 1994). The second goal of the study was to examine how Jewish identity evolves, "What experiences and relationships, beginning with one's early life experiences and extending on into adulthood, positively or negatively impact a person's Jewish identity? To what extent, if at all, are people's relationships to being Jewish inscribed during childhood and how malleable are these ties later on in life?" (Horowitz, 1994). Regarding the effect of intermarriage on Jewish identity and continuity, Horowitz concluded, "intermarriage continues to increase because Jews are freely interacting with non-Jews and are not acting with an overriding sense of Jewish identity (Horowitz, 1994).

Despite studies and publications on intermarriage, very little has been written on the effects and attitudes of children of intermarried relationships compared with the effects and attitudes of children of non-intermarried relationships on Jewish identity. Several participants on this pilgrimage voluntarily discussed their religious identity concerning having one or both parents being Jewish.

> "Today, we had an activity in the morning where we talked about being Jewish and what we can do to increase the likelihood of Judaism being more popular in the future. I thought the whole exercise was kind of difficult because we had to rank the things in order of effectiveness in order to increase the Jewish population, as if some sort of apocalyptic thing had happened, that eliminated the Jews. I didn't think that marrying Jewish people was that important. I understand the whole concept is that if you married you, you'd have more Jewish children, but I think you can raise your kids Jewish, even without marrying someone who's Jewish. My parents aren't both Jewish. My mom is Jewish. My dad is Catholic. One of the kids my group was talking about the

> idea of being a technical Jew. I didn't really like this term because it almost made it seem like people aren't Jews if their mom isn't Jewish. I understand the concept of only being Jewish if your mom is Jewish because of the idea that you can't prove a father. But it almost seems like it invalidates people who are Jewish with a Jewish father. I think that if you're raised Jewish, no matter who your parents are. You should be considered a Jew."

Annie's ideological identity is rooted in her experience being raised in a mixed-marriage home. She challenges the *halachic*[9] meaning of Judaism to be void of cultural, traditional, communal, and religious identifiers and instead argues that a "technical" understanding of Judaism is incomplete.

Erik Erikson spent much of his career studying adolescent identity. In examining adolescents of mixed marriages, in particular, Erikson discusses an identity schism that takes place in which youth must choose their ethnic or racial grouping, deciding between the ethnic or racial group of their parents (Erikson, Identity: Youth and crisis (No. 7)., 1968). In an article titled, *Jewish Identity in Conversionary and Mixed Marriages*, the authors conclude, "…even if intermarriage does not lead to a decrease in the physical number of persons living in households with a Jewish parent, questions remain as to their Jewishness-that is, the intensity of their communal affiliation, ethnic identification, and religious practice." However, Annie's experience is vastly different. Arguably, her choice to join and engage in this pilgrimage is evidence that her inner reality is without conflict (Erikson, The erik erikson reader., 2001). Annie identifies as Jewish because she was raised Jewish.

Michelle's entry below is fascinating in that her experience raised in a home with two Jewish parents set her on a different course from Annie's. Yet, through this pilgrimage experience, she has reached a similar conclusion to Annie. Both Michelle and Annie recognize that their sense of Jewish identity is fostered through experiences and upbringing, not through their ethnic or racial classifiers assigned to them at birth.

> "Both of my parents are very Jewish. My dad grew up with a mom whose whole family grew up orthodox and whose whole family is still orthodox. So, in my house we have meat plates, and we have milk plates, and as a child I never really understood, kind of why it was like that or that that was even different from other people so when one of my friends came over once, and she wanted to have parmesan cheese with chicken. I was like, 'no, you can't do that; that's not something I do in my house,' and I got into a little bit of a fight with her because I didn't understand that my interpretation of Judaism in my culture is different than hers. But as I've gotten older, I've been able to realize that my parents have led me along the path that has allowed me to be Jewish and while one of my brothers considers himself atheist, and the other brother has played in the Maccabi games multiple times. I'm able to see that Judaism impacts everyone differently, and there's no right or wrong way to interpret it, or to appreciate it, and birthright has helped me embrace the [inaudible] of Vanderbilt Jews all over, and myself for whatever I believe Judaism is."

[9] Halacha: Jewish law and jurisprudence, based on the Talmud.

6.3 Culture, Community & Identity

"My relationship to the Jewish people has become my strongest human bond, ever since I became fully aware of our precarious situation among the nations of the world."

-Albert Einstein in 1952, after being offered the Presidency of the State of Israel[10]

How individuals make sense of their identity is often multifarious. For Jews, considered ethnoreligious, identity markers include more than religious identification (Cohen E. H., 2003). Cultural identity, according to Phinney, is just as relevant to self-concept (Phinney, 1990). Phinney defines cultural identity as the "psychological relationship of cultural and racial minority group members with their own group" (Phinney, 1990). Phinney continues to separate cultural identity into three distinct components: cultural values and behaviors, a sense of group membership (also considered "kinship and connection" (Sinclair & Milner, 2005)), and minority status experiences. "A related theme in both cultural and religious Jewish identification is a global sense of familiarity and solidarity with other Jews, possibly reflecting the reality of the Jewish community's small size on a global scale" (Haji, Lalonde, Durbin, & Naveh-Benjamin, 2011).

Harold Kushner, a prominent American rabbi, gave a speech in Denver, Colorado, in 1993. In his address to the audience, Kushner says,

> "One of the fundamental differences between Judaism and Christianity is that Judaism starts with a people, and the religion grows out of the experience of the people. Christianity starts with an idea, and the idea attracts a community. And therefore, in Judaism, the people is always primary, and the theology, the beliefs are secondary.
>
> I remember the first day of a course in rabbinical school called *Philosophy of Religion*, with Mordechai Kaplan. He asked every student to take out a sheet of paper and write down the names of the ten greatest Jews of the 20th century.
>
> All right, what do you put down? Einstein, Freud, Herzl, Buber, Ben Gurion, names like that. When we were done, he said, next to each name list the synagogues they attended every sabbath. The point was that these men were all Jews. They thought of themselves as Jews. The world saw them as Jewish. Rabbinical students thought they were the greatest Jews of the century. But they were not Jews in the mode of religious observance; they were Jews by linking their fate and destiny with the fate and destiny of the Jewish people. They felt very Jewish but not in a religious way.
>
> This is an issue that always puzzles non-Jewish observers; the fact that there are more ways to be Jewish than simply the religious one, and that you express your Jewishness through involvement with the community" (Kushner, 1993).

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[10] https://www.hadassahmagazine.org/2015/12/09/albert-einstein-space-time-gravity-and-zionism/

Actively identifying as a member of the Jewish community without high levels of spiritual engagement, or knowledge of religious laws is not only doable in Judaism (Haji, Lalonde, Durbin, & Naveh-Benjamin, 2011), but as Kushner points out, commonplace. The role of the community is a strong social identification for the Jewish people. In studying young Jewish adults in Briton, Jennifer Sinclair and David Milner conclude that for the majority of the research participants, ethnic identification was not limited to a symbolic role; participants were active in Jewish social and cultural life (Sinclair & Milner, 2005).

CULTURAL VALUES & BEHAVIORS

Cultural identity has broad implications in understanding an individual's social self-concept. According to Phinney, cultural identity is the "psychological relationship of cultural and racial minority group members with their own group" (Phinney, 1990). Within minority groups, a balance or compromise often occurs in navigating the values of the dominant culture with the values of the minority culture (Haji, Lalonde, Durbin, & Naveh-Benjamin, 2011). There is an understanding that exploring Judaism from a cultural lens is often associated with a de-emphasis on religious ritual and practice. Still, engagement in Jewish culture can easily be found through literature, language (especially Hebrew and Yiddish), art, music, and many other forms of expression as well (Haji, Lalonde, Durbin, & Naveh-Benjamin, 2011). From an ontological perspective, "being Jewish" can be seen as an expression of Jewish values (i.e., Justice), Jewish virtues (i.e., Humility), and Jewish moral obligations (i.e., Honoring one's parents) (Newman L. , 2019).

Reflecting on the first day of his first trip to Israel, Andrew thought about the plane ride. Although he grew up in Chicago (a Jewish population around 270,000[11]), he attended public schools instead of a private Jewish day school. Being on the plane with so many other Jewish people was a novel experience for him. He reflects,

> "You know this stands out because, like I said before, like, I think this is, you know, it's my first time being predominately [with] Jewish people in a Jewish state. And, you know, I think that's this says about me as a person that I take a lot of pride in my Judaism. I take, you know what, I don't practice the religion in a conservative or orthodox way.
>
> I take pride in the culture. I take pride in the values that the Jewish people have to offer. And this just says that I have the ability to, you know, kind of, analyze my surroundings, and then relate that to my personal identity and how my identity is currently relating to my surroundings, and if the people of my surroundings are sharing the same pride - We're the same."

Andrew's entry signifies an ethnic identity referred to by Harriett Hartman and Ira Sheskin as "*Klal Israel*" – a broader ethnic Jewish identity. Hartman and Sheskin argue that visits to Israel by American Jews are a strong contributor to one's ethnic dimension (Hartman & Sheskin, 2012). Emotional attachments to Israel (Andrew: "if the people of my surroundings are sharing

[11] Based on the 2010 Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Community Study. https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/search-results/study/576

the same pride – we're the same.") reflects Andrew's relationship to the Jewish homeland as somewhat familial, and perhaps a representation of a broader ethnic commitment. Andrew shares that his identification with the Jewish people is more ethnic than observant. Admitting that he does not practice the religion "in a conservative or orthodox way" does not seem to diminish his sense of pride in the accomplishments of the Jewish people. In a post-pilgrimage survey, Andrew responded, "strongly agree" to the following question (whereas he responded "agree" before the trip): "When someone praises Judaism, it feels like a personal compliment." Arguably, Andrew's sense of achievement reflects his commitment to Jewish ''secular'' culture and peoplehood (Hartman & Sheskin, 2012).

Annie's entry on the final day of the trip sheds insight on her understanding and relationship with community and culture. She challenges the meaning of belonging by arguing that inactive, involuntary, or passive engagement with other Jewish cultural or religious segments in a community all but disqualifies someone from their 'belonging' to the broader Jewish community.

> "I also thought the Jewish community is really important in our discussion. We talked a lot about living in a Jewish community, and what this could mean. This could mean living with a lot of Jewish people around you, or living in an area where a lot of people are Jewish.
>
> But I'm not really sure if you could consider yourself living in a Jewish community if you're from a place where a lot of people are Jewish, if you don't engage in that community. On the same note, I think that you could live in an area where not a lot of people are Jewish and find a community via a synagogue or by reaching out to other Jews in your area."

To Annie's point, if Judaism is ethnoreligious, and whereas community is primary and theology is secondary (Kushner, 1993), how then does Judaism reconcile with its non-active members? Hartman and Sheskin associate Jewish identity factors with Jewish religious and secular behaviors. They make firm conclusions about one's actions and their identities. The lighting of Chanukah candles, participating in a Passover *seder* (meal), and having a Mezuzah[12] on the front door of the home list among the top religious identifiers. Visiting Israel, being a member of a Jewish organization member, and monetary donations to the local Jewish Federation list among the top ethnic identity factors (Hartman & Sheskin, 2012). Annie's contention has been considered by many scholars, theologians, historians, and sociologists. She surmises that Jewish engagement – the act of being Jewish – is a purposeful commitment, either religious or secular, so long as it is communal.

Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen respond to Annie in their book, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America*.

[12] "Mezuzah: (Lit. "doorpost"): A small parchment scroll upon which the Hebrew words of the Shema are handwritten by a scribe. Mezuzah scrolls are rolled up and affixed to the doorposts of Jewish homes, designating the home as Jewish and reminding those who live there of their connection to G-d and their heritage." (Unknown, What is a Mezzuzah?, 2020).

> "The principal authority for contemporary American Jews in the absence of compelling religious norms and communal loyalties has become the sovereign self. Each person now performs the labor of fashioning his or her own self, pulling together elements from the various Jewish and non-Jewish repertoires available, rather than stepping into an inescapable framework of identity (familial, communal, traditional given at birth). Decisions about ritual observance and involvement in Jewish institutions are made, and made again, considered and reconsidered year by year and even week by week. American Jews speak of their lives and of their Jewish beliefs and commitments, as a journey of ongoing questioning and development, they avoid the language of arrival. There are no final answers, no irrecoverable commitments. The Jews we met in the course of our research reserve the right to choose anew in the future, amending or reversing the decision made today, and defended their children's right to do so for themselves in turn. Personal meanings are sought by these Jews for new, as well as for inherited observances. If such meanings are not fashioned or found, the practices in question, are revised or discarded or not undertaken in the first place" (Cohen S. M., 2000).

From the perspective of Cohen and Eisen, Judaism is too multi-faceted, and too multi-directional and too nuanced for an individual to be a Jew today and a non-Jew tomorrow. I would add that there is no such archetype for "more or less Jewish." Judaism is arrived and accepted internally, and supported by one's relationship to Jewish theology, community, ritual, culture, language, and place. While community engagement is undoubtedly a dominant factor in Jewish identity, it is not the only source of Jewish identification. The evolving ethos of Jewish identity is susceptible to both ordinary and extraordinary experiences. Israel, however, as a place of spiritual, historical, and cultural meaning for Jews offers more of the latter experiences than the former, especially when considered from the journey of pilgrimage. For example, participants noted their experience at the Western Wall as either spiritual, religious, communal, or self-reflective. They needed to see and visit this 'place' before developing an opinion of how one unique center, thousands of years old, contributed, if at all, to their Jewish ethnoreligious identity. As Noah states,

> "And today, when I came back [to the Western Wall], it sort of clicked again, I remembered it. But when I approached the wall, this time, I was wrapped in *Tefillin*, and I was wearing a kippah, I had my note in my hand, it felt much, much different.
>
> And like I've said in previous notes, previous daily logs, it's not because I feel more religious as a result of this trip. It's not because I feel, you know, some new divine connection to God. But it's because I'm developing a complex understanding of what this community means to me and what Israel means to me."

KINSHIP & CONNECTION

Having Israeli soldiers join the group offers participants an opportunity to engage with Israel unpredictably. The pilgrimage is so well structured, with purposeful stops that curate the telling of the Israeli national story. However, a focus on meaningful and structured experiences can leave little room for participants to engage in the discovery of Israel beyond the confines of the bus. Without the Israeli soldier's present, participants are limited to impromptu conversations that happen at rest stops or their limited interaction with hotel staff. While each bus has one

guide and one dedicated guard/medic, the role of the guide and the guard/medic does not provide vacancy for intimate dialogue, as these two individuals are responsible for supporting the narrative and well-being of forty or more participants. There is not enough time or opportunity for engagement, and from the perspective of the participants, these two individuals are not considered peers – which impacts how and when they choose to engage them. The Israeli soldiers (through the *mifgash*), on the other hand, are not dedicated to a particular role. They are as genuine and honest as the participants themselves. By not playing a professional position, they are free to share themselves without filters. Not all Birthright providers truly appreciate the intrinsic value of the soldiers in adding an unfiltered lens for which participants can experience Israel. Many of the larger tour providers incorporate the soldiers on the third day of a ten-day pilgrimage, and by day seven, the soldiers are gone. *Mayonot* (the tour provider of this Birthright experience) recognizes the potential value of having the Israeli soldiers join the group as soon as they land in Tel-Aviv, and remaining with them until they depart. The Israeli soldiers act like pathfinders, providing insight into Israeli culture in a way that these participants would not be able to accomplish on their own (Kelner, 2012). Reflecting on day two on the trip, Naava, a 19-year-old sophomore noted,

> “My favorite part today was, we were in Tel Aviv all day. And my favorite part was going to the market, [it] was really special. It was very cool to see the different shops and the different people who are selling them and to interact with the different locals and really to get closer to the soldiers again, [and] as I mentioned yesterday, I talked with them. And it was very cool to get to know them again and really walking [with] them and having them show us the different foods eat and the different meals to eat and just to see how close we are and how relatable. We are with them and, despite the differences in our lives, we are American college students and they are IDF soldiers. We really have these similar personalities and have similar interests, and we like the same stuff. And it's just really cool to connect with them at a level as Jews and as kids the same age.”

Sinclair writes about the kinship connection as a social network of not just friends, but family and the greater community as well. In developing and cultivating friendships with the Israeli soldiers, Naava and the other participants, affirm that despite regional and cultural differences, the notion of community can be extended beyond geographies. According to Sinclair, “This sense of belonging is arguably a powerful affective dimension among emerging adults who self-identify as Jewish” (Sinclair & Milner, 2005). Findings from a pre and post pilgrimage questionnaire found that 75% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement, “When I talk about Judaism, I usually say “we” rather than “they.”

Encompassed in the notion of a social network is the critical factor of commonality. Shared historical experiences (e.g., Jewish persecution) or current challenges to Judaism as a whole (e.g., antisemitism) are unique characteristics of ethnic groups that bring them together. However, commonality does not need to result from exceptional experiences – historical or ongoing. Prosaic day-to-day occurrences can also contribute to the importance of commonality in developing community. For example, one the first day of the trip, shortly after discovering that one of his roommates would be one of the Israeli soldiers, Jeremy reflects,

> "My other roommate (Aubrey) and I did not go straight to asking him about the IDF, about his responsibilities, etc., but we spoke about Israel and our love for music. We showed each other different types of music and were really able to get to know each other while also getting to know our cultures."

Jeremy's reflection highlights the importance of sharing commonality in fostering his relationship with Boaz, the Israeli soldier. The "love for music" is a genesis for their relationship, despite their divergent upbringing – both as members of the Jewish community. Other participants posted similar sentiments of kinship and community. For example, after arriving at Ben Gurion airport, Noah said,

> "And I looked around, and I looked to the people around me. And I think maybe for the first time in my life, and a huge crowd of people, I had something in common with nearly everyone around me. And that was a very special feeling. And that is one that I'll never forget."

Even the routine act of boarding a flight to Israel, while still in Belgium, struck at least one of the participants as promising. Identifying that commonality can be found in unexpected ways, Justin said,

> "Because even though we were in a foreign country, people that don't speak our language, we still found common ground with a Jewish man who happened to be boarding the plane at the same time as us…I'm someone who loves connecting with people and community, and the fact that I was able to find that community outside of where I thought it would be was something really special."

MINORITY STATUS EXPERIENCES

Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka wrote about the role of identity in collective memory in 1995. They write, "According to Nietzsche, while in the world of animals, genetic programs guarantee the survival of the species, humans must find a means by which to maintain their nature consistently through generations" (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). Assmann and Czaplicka argue that human beings, however, rely on collective and cultural memory, repeated each generation, to facilitate their cultural survival (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995).

Each year, Jews worldwide gather with family and friends to commemorates the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt and their transition from slavery to freedom during the ritual Passover meal. The meal is an opportunity to retell the story of the Jewish experience as slaves, thousands of years ago, a story that has been retold since the 5th century B.C.E. (Brown, 2019). The retelling of the Passover story is precisely the cultural survival narrative that is referred to by Assmann and Czaplicka. As Jefferey Olick points out, "the act of remembering collective history is this a mutual production of the individual and the collective and, by participating in the rituals, retelling of myths, ceremonies, etc., the individual reaffirms his or her membership in the collective" (Olick, 1999).

During the pilgrimage, Birthright Israel recognizes the value of collective memory by requiring all participants to visit heritage sites and museums that are focal points of Jewish history. The

Holocaust museum in Israel, Yad Vashem, provides one such opportunity for sharing a collective memory. In one example, Annie reflects after she visits the museum.

> "So I went to the Holocaust Museum, and it was honestly kind of sad. I didn't really know how to feel, because I don't really have any family that was personally affected by the Holocaust, because by the time of the Holocaust, most of my family had already immigrated to America. But I can still sympathize with those who have been personally affected by the Holocaust. And identifying as a Jew means that it's that it has affected me as well."

The last line in Annie's entry is perhaps the most insightful. For Annie, identity is not just about the personal experience but about the communal experience. Considering that collective memory is not just about tragedy, Annie marked "yes" to the following statement: "Judaism's successes are my successes" in the post pilgrimage survey.

Noah shared a post in which he recalls his experience taking a course on Jewish studies, in which the Holocaust was addressed.

> "And something that I noticed is that when we discuss the Holocaust, in the course, it was always very sad. It was obviously pretty moving. But it didn't feel personal. It didn't feel like an attack on my people. And this time, at *Yad Vashem*[13], walking through all the exhibits, it hit close to home. It felt like it was my family being impacted by being killed, the [inaudible] concentration camps. It really did feel like my people.
>
> You walk out, the doors open, the museum opens, and you just had this beautiful view of Jerusalem. And for me, I knew, I knew what the symbol meant. Before I came, I knew it was supposed to signify this sort of ashes to redemption type narrative, where really all throughout Jewish history and specifically in the Holocaust, Jews have been discriminated, they've been beaten down. They've been murdered, they've been oppressed. But somehow, the Jews as a community in Israel, as a community, seem to always bounce back, seems to always make incredible miracles out of such terrible situations. And I was really able to feel that as I walked out those doors. I was really able to feel the transition from this horrible, horrible event, to the sense of unity, and this beautiful creation of the nation-state of Israel. And it really taught me a life lesson. And I think it's really going to be something that sticks with me because, for me personally, you know, I've never experienced something even remotely as bad as the Holocaust. And my problems are all relative. So, you know, what seems like big problems to me are small problems everyone else. But when I do face those problems, when I do face those challenges, when I do feel like life is dragging me down, I know that through my personality, through my roots of Judaism, that I have the potential to get right back up, to make something good out of it, to turn nothing into something to turn something devastating into something beautiful. And that was really the message that flashed through my mind as I walked out those doors. And I stood on the rail, and I looked out onto truth. And I once again felt, felt a sense of Jewish pride like I've never felt before."

[13] *Yad Vashem*, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, is located in Jerusalem, Israel.

Ross Poole published an article in 2008 in which he explains the relationship between collective memory and individual memory. Poole argues that memory is normative and not only cognitive. Meaning, "memory does not simply transmit information from the past to the present; it also transmits responsibilities. Insofar as collective memory has a cognitive aspect, it makes claims about the past. These may be confirmed or disconfirmed by historical research. This does not mean that collective memory is just bad history. It is more like history written in the first person, and its role is to inform the present generation of its responsibilities to the past" (Poole, 2008). Noah's sense of pride is an expression of his normative responsibilities to care about and secure the Jewish narrative.

Quite explicitly, Noah touches on the redemption theme when he says, "turning nothing into something." He also considers the view of Jerusalem after exiting the museum as a signal of Jewish redemption through Zionism; Israel is a place of refuge and salvation. And like the words of the Israeli national anthem express, "The two-thousand-year-old hope is not lost;" Jews are a free people in their homeland. His reference to "Something from Nothing" is the name of a Yiddish song that was illustrated in a children's book in 1993. The story centers around grandfather, who makes a blanket for his grandchild, Joseph. As the child grows, the blanket becomes too small. Through a series of "snip, snip, snip," Joseph's grandfather continuously modifies the fabric to become a vest, a tie, a handkerchief, and a button. And once the button disappears, the void is filled with the retelling of the story of how Joseph's grandfather was able to make something from nothing. The story can be considered a parable in which to view the Jewish ethos of being resourceful (Bird, 2017), and of the Jewish value in storytelling as having the rhetorical historical meaning of success despite setbacks (Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010). Symbolically, both Noah's entry and the children's book refer to the early pioneers of Israel, then Palestine, especially in cultivating the dry arid land of the south. David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, is commonly attributed to the commitment of making the desert (i.e., Israel's Negev desert) bloom. As a part of this agricultural revolution, Israeli pioneers developed a commitment to water sustainment, food dependability, and technological innovation (Tal, 2007). Despite their origin (i.e., the narrative of the Jewish story in Palestine, or the Jewish parable in Galicia), the collective historical account belongs to all Jews in which both Noah and Annie recognize as having meaning. The minority status experience is forever shared with the collective memory of the Jewish people.

The group's visit to Masada is another example of a national narrative used to foster collective identity. After Brian's experience on the top of Masada, learning about the historical meaning of this mountaintop and the legacy of past persecution, Brian reflects,

> "Today, the most meaningful moment was standing at Masada. And I say that because, yeah, I think it was just really miraculous because we stood there at the edge of an extremely sacred place, marked in history, by our ancestors because of the sacrifices that many made in the name of their religion and their people and who they were, and, and what they loved. And it was special because I knew in that moment that many were walking in my exact footsteps, or that I was walking in their footsteps.

> Thousands of years ago, the people who died for my right to live as a Jew, for they fight for the freedom, for they died for the right to die as a Jew, and [in] order for me to live as a Jew."

But kinship and connection do not only occur in historical settings with shared cultural meaning. In thinking of the minority experience, which is characteristic of distinct ethnic groups (Sinclair & Milner, 2005), Brian continues,

> "And being raised in an openly Jewish Home in New York City can make it very easy to forget that there is antisemitism out in the world, there are people like me, who cannot live as freely as I do, or go outside or go to my synagogue and not have to worry about anything regarding any hatred to their religion, or you know, any effects physically. And knowing what these people did, they took the ultimate sacrifice, in order to stay true to who they were as a people and as a culture."

This feeling of resistance and resilience is a measure of bonding ethnic groups together, and Jews are no exception. The story of David and Goliath – arguably the most famous metaphor for triumph commonly used today – is a comment on the adaptability of the Israelite people in the face of imminent danger. In response to King Saul, King David – then just a shepherd – is adamant that he can save the Israelites from defeat, he says, "no, you don't understand; I have been defending my flock against lions and wolves for years. I think I can do it" (Gladwell, 2013). This belief in succeeding, despite sometimes unimaginable odds, is a critical message in the Jewish consciousness.

Reflecting from the top of Masada, Noah says,

> "My moment from today was at the top of Masada. All my life, my only real connection to Judaism was my family. I only felt that I was Jewish because my parents were Jewish, and they were only Jewish because their parents were Jewish, and so on. In only three days in Israel, I have started to understand why being Jewish means so much more than just having Jewish family, and today at Masada, another defining feature of the Jewish people was cemented into my mind. I had already known about the story of Masada, but being up on the mountain, standing where our ancestors stood in the gravest of times, and looking out at the Dead Sea reminded me just how brave and resilient our people are. The feeling of pride I got at the top of that mountain is something that I will take with me for the rest of my life because I realized that the ability to stand up in the face of adversity is in our blood."

It is common in the Jewish minority experience to convey a message of suffering and injustice. For example, in both *The Trial* and *The Castle*, Franz Kafka illustrates the notion of guilt without reason. Both of these novels were written before the Holocaust, yet, as Aaron Applefield points out, "Kafka grasped the lowly position Jews held in European civilization" (Applefield, 1998). Folklore of Jewish suffering is easy to find in literature, music, art, and other mediums. Marc Chagall's painting, Solitude, was said to have been painted in response to Adolf Hitler's election as chancellor. In it, the angel is seen flying away, "as if abandoning the Jews to their fate" (Goodman, 2013).

Andrew commented on this them in his entry on day six,

> "But, you know, even though all the sadness that embodies the events that occurred in the Holocaust. I think, analyzing it [and] understanding these events while being in Israel, shows, you

> know, a sense of community among the Jewish people, that no matter how horrific of an event, we can still prosper as a community. We can still prosper as a state of people. And that just shows, you know, by me simply being in Jerusalem.
>
> I think that's a perfect example of the adversity that adversity the Jewish people have dealt with and how they will continue to stand for what they believe in and practice their faith, as well as the culture of the Jewish people.

Linguists will argue that the largest common denominator, connecting individuals, is language. However, in Judaism, it seems that adversity is more important to the historical-cultural narrative than Hebrew – which only became a spoken language in the earlier part of the 20th century. In one of Michelle's entries, she talked about the power of unity through resiliency and determination. One of the Israeli soldiers, Mira, shared a story with the bus of what Israel felt like immediately after the second world war. Mira summarized a story she heard from her grandfather, and after internalizing it, Michelle reflected,

> "When they were serving to, like, support Israel right after the Holocaust, that the members of their group all spoke different languages, but the language barrier didn't matter because they were all fighting for the same cause and so the communication wasn't a barrier when they were trying to reach the same goal.
>
> I thought that was super interesting because it kind of showed how as Jews, we don't always have to know the same things and understand the same languages, but our religion is kind of what brings us together and connects us through hard times."

Ori also reflected on this theme of unity through sacrifice when he says in his daily reflection, "But it just shows us what we're all fighting for, and how dedicated we are. And as a community, it just strengthened us through our losses." Similar to Ori, Michelle, Noah, and Brian, numerous other participants articulated a sense of "we" in the Jewish historical battle for survival – that for the group, begins at the top of Masada two-thousand years ago and ends at the top of Mount Herzl. The symbolism is not lost on this group. Their reflections indicate their understanding that Judaism has historically been about oppression, followed by resilience, and now in Israel, redemption. As Kelner writes, "The hill's architecture powerfully inscribes in Jerusalem's landscape narrative whose ashes-to-redemption, exile-to-home, death to resurrection motifs draw from the deepest wells of human myth" (Kelner, 2012).

Furthermore, I believe that the participants also understand that the Jewish battle for survival is ongoing. The irony of visiting Mount Herzl is that the group nearly bypassed Theodore Herzl's tomb – the namesake of the mountain, and the father of a Zionist political movement that worked tirelessly for the reality of a national Jewish homeland in what is present-day Israel. Instead, the guides and arguably the participants were more interested in the ongoing battle for Judaism's survival; they wanted to pay homage to the casualties of war, who they did not know, and who did not know them. The national cemetery is not a historical site, despite the historical battles that it reflects; Israel continues to battle for its survival and the symbolic survival of the Jewish people as one community. Brian's reflection addressed the group's sentiment quite well.

"And it was so inspiring to see just every person who cared so much about one cause, which was protecting their people. The people that my ancestors are ones that I like to think I am part of. And hearing the stories of these Americans that went on birthright or visited Israel and fell in love with Israel and the Israeli people in the Jewish state, and dedicating their lives to the Jewish state and dying and Israel [inaudible] after joining the IDF was perhaps maybe the most, some of the most moving stories I've ever heard. It literally brought me to tears.

And, I think, I think the reason this resonates so much with me is because, well one, because these kids were my age when they died or younger, when they decided they wanted to dedicate their lives and perhaps die which, you know, ultimately, and unfortunately, they did. But knowingly put themselves in harm's way to protect people that do not even know them, but who they consider family.

And I think that is very thematic of Judaism and multiple levels on a religious and a cultural level. And, I mean, I always say I don't know how religious I am as a Jew. But as a people… the Jews seem to have this connection that goes beyond any religious belief. It's this Kindred, this spirit between every single person that just brings each other together."

6.4 INDIVIDUALITY & IDENTITY

"I am not merely what I distinctly know of myself or, what amounts to the same, there is more to my existence than I might consciously observe of myself; and even what I know of myself is in and for itself capable of far greater development, greater distinctness, and greater completeness than I am able to give it"

(Morning Hours, p. 103/Gesammelte Schriften 3/2, p. 141). Mosses Mendelsohn

Herman Melville's opening line of Moby Dick, "Call me Ishmael," provides readers with immediate, valuable insight into the identity of the narrator, (Herman M. , 1922). There is a sense that Ishmael uses his name to assert his sense of belonging to a rich lineage of the cultural and religious values of the Arab people. While Phinny does not reference Ishmael in her work, she does demonstrate that "Assessment of ethnic group identification should include ethnic, self-identification (e.g., "I call myself___") (Phinney, 1990). Individual identity, however, can be blurred as having its unique compartment, somehow isolated and different from identification with and within the ethnic group. Several participants affirmed a pride they have as being Jewish. This affirmation is just as crucial in understanding a sense of belonging as someone expressing denial, wishing they had been born into a different ethnic group (Phinney, 1990). This identity discovery is ever-changing; it is negotiated based on experiences with, among other things, place, religion, and community.

Brian, for example, had an interesting observation on the second day of the trip. He says in his journal entry that he had come to "a foreign place to find something that was close to home." What about his Jewish identity is exposed on this pilgrimage? Or, more importantly, what about the pilgrimage revealed his Jewish identity? After spending time at a lookout near the old port city of Jaffa, with a clear line of sight to Tel-Aviv, Brian adds, "and seeing all of the old mixed in with the new, really made me understand that to be able to formulate my own sense of self and identity, there are things that I can look at my past and anticipate my future." Regrettably, Brian's entry ends shortly after, and it remains unclear if his past is connected to the affirming Jewish identity that Phinney discusses, or is it connected to an expression of denial.

The juxtaposition of the old and new is something that Annie references in her prose-like entry, inspired by the same viewing outpost that has consumed Brian. Indeed, Brian's epistemology – what counts as knowledge, how it is constructed and examined (Hofer, 2004)– relies in part on his past exposures to Jewish identification. Jacques Rousseau wrote about the intimate contact with oneself (i.e., knowing thyself) as a source of joy and fulfillment: "le sentiment de l'existance" (Taylor, 1997). In The Politics of recognition, Charles Taylor writes, "If some of the things I value most are accessible to me only in relation to the person I love, then she becomes part of my identity" (Taylor, 1997). Perhaps, though, "the person I love" can be considered a metaphor for all things that are a source of joy and fulfillment. Then, the real challenge of

pilgrimages is identifying sources of joy and fulfillment to expose them, bring them to life, and give them meaning. Yet, this is no easy task; it is an undertaking that reaches into one's identity intimately, often internalized and examined by participants within a timetable that only they can negotiate. I assert, however, that these daily reflections have shed light on both personal ontology and epistemology that would otherwise be dormant to researchers. And sometimes, journal entries can be as elusive as thoughts never shared. Michelle, for example, reveals a conclusion about her experience, which is both reflective and mysterious. She says, "About this trip is that it has had a greater impact on my life than I could have…ever expected." Alone, Michelle's reflection is lost; what are the elements through which she found purpose?

Further, what insight do we have, and where is the evidence of an identity fluctuation? Fortunately, reflective entries by the participants daily – responding to intentional and unintentional programming, has been captured through this research. The evidence of participants challenging their own ethnoreligious identity is clear, as they use their personal, independent reflections to share an intimate interchange of discovery and identity consideration.

Evelyn Kallen identifies what she asserts to be the "most important part of culture" when she writes that culture "is a learned phenomenon; it is acquired, for the most part, through the ordinary process of growing up and participating in the daily life of a particular ethnic collective" (Kallen, 1984). On a national level, the *ordinary process of growing up* for Israeli's has largely been impacted by conflict with its Arab neighbors. Security guards and metal detectors position themselves at mall entrances, hospitals, schools, supermarkets, restaurants, attractions, and more. There is both anxiety and enthusiasm present as teenagers in high school negotiate their required military service once they graduate. Kallen's classification of culture, as a component of the ordinary – the daily life – is perceptive. For Israelis, the ritual sightings of security measures and the constant nationalistic dispatching of defending the nation is undoubtedly a learned phenomenon, in response to a required need for safety. "Next to manual work," writes Shmuel Eisenstadt about Israel, "very strong emphasis was placed on self-defense and self-reliance, in short, on independence from external protection" (Eisenstadt, 1967).

One the second day of the pilgrimage, after sitting on the beach with others from the group – including two of the Israeli soldiers, Stephen engages in a conversation about nationalism. He asks the soldiers about their experience and "the duty that each Israeli feels." His reflection later that day is primarily based on his consideration of "how kids as young as me are serving their country…every citizen is doing something really important." It is doubtful that Stephen, before this unscripted exchange with the soldiers, had considered the value of military service in the United States with the same lens, or the same conclusion. Stephen's reflection is like reading an opinion piece. He argues that Israel's compulsory military service has perhaps purposefully or inadvertently positioned Israel and Israelis to be hyper-successful.

> "And it's a really interesting experience; I think it forces the Israelis to grow up a little bit. And we only have that opportunity in America, we do have that opportunity, but it's not forced upon us. And I think because of that, it takes a longer time for kids to grow up. I think that this also has a lot to do with the success of people in Israel. And after they serve. It teaches them a lot about like diligence and responsibility and productivity that you don't really learn in other places. And I

> think that that experience has really helped the country maintain the maintain of powerful stature in [and] among the world."

Reading into Stephen's reflection, he seems to convey an air of regret; the cultural collective of Israelis, as a result of geopolitical and historical forces, have required their citizens to "grow up" and in doing so, gain valuable life skills that "you don't really learn in other places." Stephen continues,

> "And I just think overall that serving the military is a crazy, you know, it's a crazy thing to think about because me, like I go to college, I had never, had never thought about fighting for my country. But you know, it doesn't always mean fighting on the ground or fighting in the air, but you're doing stuff behind the lines for your country that has to do with the lives of the people in your country. And it gives you this an immense sense of responsibility. When something bad happens to the country, or you know like that's partly on you. And so, you have to do everything you can to prevent that from happening. And so, it really, it really teaches you a lot about, you know, how to act in the world and how to account for others, to play your role in society."

On some level, Birthright Israel is hoping that pilgrimage participants use the soldiers as a conduit for accessing Israeli nationalism in a way that will forever bond them with support for the State of Israel. While I assume that this strategy is more often useful than not, Stephen's example demonstrates both respect for Israel's "powerful stature in [and] among the world" and a disconnect, "that serving the military is a…crazy thing to think about." I contend that Stephen's reflection is full of positive sentiment and awe. He also shares a genuine understanding that part of the Israeli narrative is to "play your role in society." Stephen may utilize his experience and exposure to the young men and women who defend Israel to facilitate his understanding of what it means to "play your role in society" for himself. Still, Stephen admits that "he had never thought about fighting for my country" and in doing so, he reveals a subtle but important conclusion that Israel, while considered the Jewish homeland, is not his to defend – at least not now, or with the same nationalistic duty as the soldiers he interacted with on the beach.

The participants' daily reflections bear witness to a dialogue they have with themselves, as they relate to this extrinsic, yet familiar place called Israel. On the final day of the trip, Stephen uses his journal entry to respond to a challenge offered by Rabbi Shlomo Rothstein – to "find your diamond."

> "And so, you know, I think that this was sort of my diamond. Like Shlomo was talking about I came here looking to find something. I had a bunch of experiences that didn't look like they were going to lead to finding that diamond.
>
> And I found the diamond through those experiences, through the combination of them. And you know, that was something was really important to me and something that I'm tremendously happy that happened."

Stephen's entry raises a critical element in identity construction; a collection of experiences ("through the combination of them") is often necessary for affecting outcomes. In *The Philosophy of Informal Jewish Education*, Barry Chazan discusses the centrality of experience, "Informal Jewish education is rooted in a belief that the experience is central to the individual's

Jewish development. The notion of experience in education derives from the idea that participating in an event or a moment through the sense of the body enables one to understand a concept, fact, or belief in a direct or unmediated way" (Chazan, 2002). He goes on to describe a synergy that exists when combining experiences for sense-making. Chazan provides an example of having chicken soup on Friday evening. Chicken soup is often considered a staple of Friday evening Sabbath meals. However, independent of lighting the sabbath candles or sanctifying the wine or blessing the challah, the chicken soup loses its purpose as a symbol of the sabbath experience. Despite Chazan's lens of informal Jewish learning, identity development also shares the notion of process and synergy in creating meaning. Would Birthright Israel be successful in challenging individuals to self-examine their Jewish identity if the program were only one day long, or only made stops in association with either place, religion, or culture but not all three? Alternatively, this also begs the question, can self-examination – through self-reflection – be achieved in only ten days? Each participant in the study has identified at least one episode in which they challenged previously held beliefs. My assertion, however, is that the collection of experiences on Birthright – from engagements with soldiers, the Western Wall, swimming in the Dead Sea, for example – has been an overriding factor in shaping their identity. The primary reason for this is because the pilgrimage offers a lengthy catalog of both intentional and spontaneous iterations for identity exploration.

Furthermore, the opportunity for individuals to experience this seminal event in their lives with others who are also sharing in the same experience creates emotional ties that Haji et al. describe as attachment elements (Haji, Lalonde, Durbin, & Naveh-Benjamin, 2011). Thinking in terms of the collective experience sheds light on collective identity. In *An Organizing Framework for Collective Identity: Articulation and Significance of Multidimensionality*, the authors examine collective identity in part by considering, for example, self-categorization, attachment, and social embeddedness, in the identity process (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). The expression of this shared experience is both considered from the confines of the group (e.g., Stephen's interpretation of spirituality based on his attachment to the group) and to the Jewish people in general. For example, after visiting the Western Wall, Andrew comments,

> "It was an unbelievable experience having your first time at the Western Wall be on Friday night. Shabbat[14] was truly impeccable. It was amazing to see thousands and thousands of Jews, just celebrate the Sabbath, with praying, dancing, singing.
>
> And it was just a very special moment, because, you know, I was in the middle of it but then at the end I kind of went back and kind of went on the upper level, and kind of observed everything, and just seeing the mass amounts of people. It was, you know, kind of hard [inaudible], and I was, I was a bit speechless. When I was able to kind of come to the understanding that I may never be in an area of so many people who are Jewish like me again in my lifetime, so that was kind of a surreal experience."

[14] "Shabbat" is he Hebrew word for the Sabbath.

Identity development is very much about exploration, and the Birthright Israel experience is successful in providing those exploration opportunities. It seems that the more someone is seeking to find something, the more open they are to finding it. Meaning, I believe that self-exploration requires a want or desire. Soul searching requires active openness or even mindfulness for one's surroundings to be noticed and interpreted. After a visit to an Army base in the southern part of Israel, Michelle begins to wonder, what if she had moved to Israel two to three years ago so that she, too, could have shared in the Army experience.

> "And always makes me think, what if I just picked up and moved to Israel [to] join the army and just serve something greater than myself. I think that a lot of times I tried to think about what I should be doing or what I want to do and I really don't know and so I kind of wish I had this path of two and three years to just go and do something for someone else in the sense that I'm serving a greater purpose. I also think that it's just an amazing sense of camaraderie, and you also grow so much.
>
> And then afterward, you're able to find yourself after having done this incredible thing."

7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL POLICY & PRACTICE

As I discussed earlier, for Birthright Israel to manage expectations, it must adhere to its stated goals. However, to what effect are those goals cared for, developed, revisited, supported, communicated, and implemented? For example,

- Do Jewish youth return with a heightened sense of their Jewish identity?
- Do they engage the Jewish communities in which they return as activists?
- Do they experience Jewish values and rituals with more significant consideration, meaning, and intent than they did before their pilgrimage experience?
- Do they return with more significant curiosity to learn Hebrew?
- Do they promote post-modern, Zionist narratives of Israel as the center of Jewish nationhood?

Critics of the Birthright Israel program argue that "High intensity and low cost to the participant, the Birthright trip — which has positioned itself as a gateway to lifelong Jewish engagement — inverts the reality of day to day Jewish life" (Kafrissen, 2019). Rokhl Kafrissen goes on to elaborate,

> "As a coming of age ritual, Birthright, on the other hand, is essentially all party and no preparation. It's fast-moving, fun, sexy, and asks very little of participants. In other words, it's nothing like day to day Jewish life, or adult life, in general.
>
> Imagine you're a teenager hiking up Masada at sunrise, surrounded by a group of your new best friends, all of whom are under-slept, over-stimulated and very, very far from home. Maybe you've never thought about your Jewishness much before, but now, what previously seemed irrelevant feels utterly inevitable. Rather than feeling bad about being Jewishly disconnected, you're suddenly part of a community which is affirming and validating.
>
> Add to that the drama of Jewish history unfolding before your eyes, across some of the most famous, and most highly charged archaeological sites in the world. The narrative of your trip, of your life, has inexorably led to this moment. You belong there, and, according to the name of the trip, it belongs to you" (Kafrissen, 2019).

Just as Birthright Israel has a responsibility to build a curriculum, it maintains an obligation to follow up on it, to care for it, and continue nurturing it once participants are stateside. To manage this expectation, Birthright Israel could benefit from engaging in pre, and post-experience, and do more to support the learning engagements of participants while on the pilgrimage

Recommendation Set #1

Meetings with the participants in the focus group sessions revealed that participants felt that the program's preparation lacked opportunities for learning about Israel before going there. One participant noted, "We're from Vanderbilt, we're smart. We can handle learning something, too." Currently, Birthright Israel does not prescribe or mandate any educational learning

opportunities (e.g., read-ahead, seminar, speakers, etc.) ahead of going abroad. This is a missed opportunity. While on the trip, I noted several moments where people were confused when the tour guide said, for example, “The West Bank is east of here.” Many participants lacked a basic understanding of Israel’s geography to situate better where in the country they were and why this was relevant. The group's visit to a border town with Gaza was equally perplexing to them as well. Participants did not understand that Gaza and the West Bank both desire to be united as a Palestinian homeland. Their lack of a geopolitical situation meant that the guide’s educational seminar at the border was elementary. He could not explain the nuanced nature of living there, or the implications of Palestinian sovereignty, because the collective knowledge of the group was too basic.

My recommendation is for Birthright Israel to focus on educational content to support the pre-trip, post trip, and pilgrimage itself. Specifically:

a) *Participants should be introduced to basic Israel geography, history, and political concepts before they land in Israel*. Sessions could be thematic and be used to prepare participants for both the three curriculum goals that Birthright Israel strives towards.
b) *A formal, post-pilgrimage experience is warranted*. In the post-experience, participants can leverage their shared participation to engage in community building, social relationships, and outline opportunities for further inquiry and investigation. For example, it is not uncommon for participants to return from Israel curious about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – perhaps more so then they were before their pilgrimage. With this in mind, Birthright Israel can continue the goal of "narrative" by offering (or linking to) learning engagements that keep the self-reflective questions of "What does this mean to me?", "How can I make sense of this experience?, and "What new knowledge will help me to make meaning of my Jewish identity?"
c) *Birthright Israel should consider including curated podcasts, similar to the approach used by museums for self-guided tours during the pilgrimage itself*. In this way, participants can listen to pre-recorded videos or short audio summaries of the place they are visiting or have already visited. The rationale in using short, pre-recorded curated content is to supplement – not replace – the value of the Israeli tour guide. Large groups (Birthright regularly travels in full buses of 40 or more participants) can pose a challenge for a guide to communicating effectively with each participant when guiding, for example, a historical or cultural site. Additionally, curated podcasts can also be leveraged to augment a participant’s current understanding of a place visited, or to supplement content not addressed or missed by the tour guide. Such an approach will help Birthright in maintaining consistent, educational content that is not reliant on thousands of different tour guides who may or may not communicate the historical, cultural, or religious significance of a site effectively. Although guides are licensed and certified by the State of Israel, there is no guarantee of their competence, for example, to communicate effectively. A study published by the University of Massachusetts aimed to understand the level of perceived knowledge, skills, and motivation of guides. It concluded that the variability of communication skills was a key factor is the guide’s perceived competence (Oschell, 2016).

In the focus group, the participants noted that one of the guides was much better than the other (the group was large and divided into two buses, each with their guide). There are also environmental factors to consider. At the top of Masada, for example, there are not as many places for shade. Participants will often move away from the group to seek some reprieve from the sun, often out of earshot of the guide's explanation or teaching. Moments in the center of Tel-Aviv, or at the lookout in Jaffa, or in the marketplace, make it very difficult for participants to hear the tour guide. The daily movements of cars and people offer another source of distraction whereby participants are not entirely engaged in what the guide is saying. With either a pre-curriculum or a recorded podcast to fall back on, participants may not express a feeling of missing out on some vital learning opportunities.

Recommendation Set #2:

One way in which to examine the program's value then is to consider in what ways is Birthright Israel promoting a meaningful, lasting Jewish identity, that connects participants to Jewish theology and culture, while also connecting them to their ancestral roots in the Jewish homeland.

Here the question is, is the program's design best suited to promote identity development? Are the curricula goals in-line with allowing tour providers, their tour guides, and staff members to act as stewards of Jewish identity? Meaning, how tour are tour organizers, guides, and staff members achieve the mission of fostering a positive Jewish identity?

The participant reflection and the results of the pre and post-survey analysis are critical in demonstrating the unique and sometimes unexpected ways in which participant identification with both Judaism and Israel affects their identity. My recommendations are as follows:

a) Place. Birthright Israel should consider revising its liberal interpretation of the mandatory places to visit. Currently, Birthright Israel literature requires that all nine tour providers attend the following:
   i. The Western Wall
   ii. At least one Holocaust-related site
   iii. At least one Jewish historical site
   iv. At least one site related to the Zionist history
   v. At least one State national site

i. Participants, on numerous occasions, referenced the Western Wall as they found a relationship with both God and the community in this sacred space. Requiring tours to stop at the Western Wall should remain intact. However, this particular group managed to have two experiences visiting the Western Wall. The first was during the weekday, in the afternoon. There, at least one participant shared an intimate moment of coming to terms with wearing *Tefillin* – as a proud member of the Jewish faith. The second visit was on Friday evening – the beginning of the Jewish sabbath. Here, participants reflected less on the religious nature

of the experience and instead shifted to expressing the magnetic pull of the community. Participants reflected on the dancing and singing, the sense of belonging, and rejoicing, regardless of one's level of Jewish observance. The experience on Friday evening was meaningful, despite being completely different. **My recommendation is to mandate at least two visits to the Western Wall, one of them on a Friday evening**. Had the group only visited once, one of these two memorable and arguably, identity changing moments would be lost.

ii. Birthright Israel's lack of specificity in terms of the remaining four mandated stops is a cause for concern. While there are numerous Holocaust memorials around the country, the experience at *Yad Vashem*, Israel's national Holocaust memorial and museum is arguably the most impactful. Participants had the opportunity to experience the museum with a licensed guide (*Yad Vashem* does not allow tour group guides to act as museum docents). They then spent the afternoon and evening entering numerous journal entries in which they shared their relationship to Holocaust victims and survivors, and using their reflection space to comment on Jewish resilience. The museum, unlike the Western Wall or Mount Herzl, is not a site limited to the Israeli consciousness, but rather a site dedicated to the Jewish consciousness. This distinction is important in providing a broader reach in which Jews from around the world can share in a common history and not just Israel's history. **My recommendation is to assign *Yad Vashem* as the only Holocaust-related site**.

iii. Birthright Israel requires a stop at a Jewish historical site. It could be argued that nearly everywhere in Israel, a Jewish historical site is to be found. In a country filled with thousands' year-old artifacts, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to clearly understand what does not qualify as a Jewish historical site. However, the group's visit to the top of Masada was an important moment in their identification with the Jewish historical narrative of resilience. Jews have been assigned an unfair metaphor of going "like sheep to the slaughter" when considering the writings of many Holocaust historians. This image is unsettling, and perhaps one of the ways in which diaspora Jews appreciate Israel is for its mightiness. The image of strong, heroic Israeli's who – through conscription – serve to protect Israel's interests, and those of world Jewry is promising. And the story at the top of Masada, although not mighty, is still considered heroic. Rather than "sheep to the slaughter" as they were destined to become slaves to the Romans, the nearly one-thousand Jewish men, women, and children chose suicide over slavery. In choosing their fate, they have made Masada the site of Jewish identity against oppression. As one participant reflected,

> "My moment from today was at the top of Masada. All my life, my only real connection to Judaism was my family. I only felt that I was Jewish because my parents were Jewish, and they were only Jewish because their parents were Jewish, and so on. In only three days in Israel, I have started to understand why being Jewish means so much more than just having Jewish family, and today at Masada, another defining feature of the Jewish people was cemented into my mind. I had already known about the story of Masada, but being up on the mountain, standing where our ancestors stood in the gravest of times, and looking out at the Dead Sea reminded me just how brave and resilient our people are. The feeling of pride I got at the top of that mountain is something that I will take with me for the rest of my life because I realized that the ability to stand up in the face of adversity is in our blood."

My recommendation is to mandate Masada as the Jewish historical site, or at least list it among others with similar value to moments of identification.

iv. Birthright Israel requires a visit to a site of significance to the history of Zionism. Although the group visited Mount Herzl and stopped by Theodore Herzl's gravesite – the father of modern, political Zionism – the tour guides failed at capturing the group's attention. Instead, they focused their time on the American soldiers who are buried on Mount Herzl.

v. This visit to the national military cemetery – a State national site – was moving for many of the participants. They reflected on nationalism, and what being Jewish means in terms of caring not just for the country of one's residence or birth, but also for the country in which Israelis and foreigners come to fight for the continued safety of the Jewish homeland. Still, Birthright's insistence that tours stop at a location does not guarantee that the tour guides will honor the site in the same spirit as, I imagine, the architects of Birthright Israel would have hoped. Ignoring Theodore Herzl, despite the opportunity being accessible and immediate, the tour guides missed a significant opportunity to discuss Israeli statehood: how it came to be, who was involved, and why it's important in the Jewish psyche. This missed opportunity links back to my first recommendation in that an educational program that accounts not only for the seven days of the pilgrimage but for the pre and post-trip as well, in warranted. There was not a single mention of the history or significance of Zionism in any of the students' reflections. **My recommendation is to assign Mount Herzl as the Zionism historical site and list Mount Herzl as the State national site.**

Recommendation #3

Birthright Israel is relying on stated goals to drive the design of a program with tremendous impact. It seems, however, that the organization is lacking from a more robust, implementable framework for their tour providers, tour guides, and staff, in which to engage Jewish young adults on a soul-searching journey of self-exploration. Equally important, there is no clear indication that tour guides and staff are made explicitly aware of Birthright's ultimate objective, especially concerning identity. Instead, it seems as though Birthright Israel is hoping that through the experience of being with their peers, in a shared space, surrounded by historical and cultural narrative, participants will come to examine their identity organically.

I recommend that to foster a more explicit and directed approach, Birthright Israel considers learning opportunities for tour guides and staff to inform them of Birthright's goal concerning a desire for participants to identify with Judaism and Israel. To complement this approach, Birthright Israel could outfit guides and staff alike with curated activities (e.g., discussion questions for group engagements – unique to each of the five mandatory stops identified earlier). Such a tool-kit would help generate a consistency among the various tour providers, and allow Birthright Israel to exercise greater control over the messaging and learning outcomes of this pilgrimage.

Recommendation #4

At a minimum, this study demonstrates the value of self-reflection as a means of contributing to the sense-making process. With this in mind, **I recommend that Birthright Israel consider including a model in which participants are encouraged – and provided tools and space – to self-reflect, through a journaling exercise**. A reflective model may be more successful if it is supported at the program level, and not left to individual engagement alone. Meaning, participants should be encouraged to reflect (through writing, oral recordings, group conversations, or otherwise) after visits to places that Birthright Israel has identified as compulsory.

Recommendation #5

As I mentioned earlier,

> "having Israeli soldiers join the group offers participants an opportunity to engage with Israel unpredictably. The pilgrimage is so well structured, with purposeful stops that curate the telling of the Israeli national story. However, a focus on meaningful and structured experiences can leave little room for participants to engage in the discovery of Israel beyond the confines of the bus. Without the Israeli soldier's present, participants are limited to impromptu conversations that happen at rest stops or their limited interaction with hotel staff. While each bus has one guide and one dedicated guard/medic, the role of the guide and the guard/medic does not provide vacancy for intimate dialogue, as these two individuals are responsible for supporting the narrative and well-being of forty or more participants. There is not enough time or opportunity for engagement, and from the perspective of the participants, these two individuals are not considered peers – which impacts how and when they choose to engage them. The Israeli soldiers (through the *mifgash*), on the other hand, are not dedicated to a particular role. They are as genuine and honest as the participants themselves. By not playing a professional role, they are free to share themselves without filters. Not all Birthright providers truly appreciate the intrinsic value of the soldiers in adding an unfiltered lens for which participants can experience Israel. Many of the larger tour providers incorporate the soldiers on the third day of a ten-day pilgrimage, and by day seven, the soldiers are gone. *Mayonot* (the tour provider of this Birthright experience) recognizes the potential value of having the Israeli soldiers join the group as soon as they land in Tel-Aviv, and remaining with them until they depart. The Israeli soldiers act like pathfinders, providing insight into Israeli culture in a way that these participants would not be able to accomplish on their own" (Kelner, 2012).

I recommend that the Mifgash extends from the first day until the last day of the pilgrimage. In doing so, participants will benefit from an Israeli experience that is uncrafted, meaningful, and opportunistic in developing long-lasting relationships between American and Israeli peers.

Recommendation Summary Considerations	
1. **Birthright Israel should focus on**	Sensemaking takes time and requires information. The more prepared participants are for an experience, the more they can

Recommendation Summary Considerations	
educational content to support the pre-trip, post-trip, and pilgrimage itself.	focus on digesting it, interpreting it. Participants visit meaningful and significant places in Jewish history – as part of the Jewish narrative. What if they miss this one opportunity to understand what makes this place significant? Will they still relate to it if they do not understand it? There is a risk that needs to be mitigated, and preparation can serve as that mitigation.
2. **Mandatory places to visit during the pilgrimage.**	Not all places are equal. Imagine if the tour guide decided to visit another national historical site, and not, for example, Masada? Noah's connection to his Jewish ancestors as he articulated a proud moment of identifying as a Jew with a historical narrative, as opposed to being merely a Jew by circumstance, may never have happened in a place with less significance. Consider the effect that Masada had on his Jewish identity!
3. **Learning opportunities for tour guides and staff to inform them of Birthright's goal concerning a desire for participants to identify with Judaism and Israel.**	The guides and staff are not only curators but influencers. How can they possibly be expected to advance Birthright Israel's goal of Jewish identification if they are not aware of it? They need to understand the value and significance of this pilgrimage to be agents of change. They cannot be entirely effective if they continue to regard Birthright trips as tours to Israel; they need to treat them as pilgrimages.
4. Opportunities for self-reflection	Self-reflection (through written journaling, oral journaling, group conversations, or otherwise) promotes sense-making. Sense-making has an essential impact on how individuals relate to the concept and understanding of "who am I" and " what about this experience is meaningful to me?"
5. The *Mifgash*	The Israeli soldiers act as conduits for participants to experience Israel is an authentic way. The Israeli peers are useful in assisting participants with historical and cultural interpretations and meanings that are not always possible or presented by the tour guide and staff alone.

8 CONCLUSION

Birthright Israel's goal of promoting identification with Judaism and Israel is working. Participants recorded numerous reflections in which they identify with Jewish nationalism, peoplehood, faith and spirituality, and the Jewish culture. Additionally, the pre and post-measure analyses contribute to the conclusion that the identification questions posed were statistically significant.

To maximize the benefits of this shared pilgrimage experience, Birthright Israel is focusing on an educational agenda: 1. Narratives of the Jewish People, 2. Contemporary Israel, 3. Ideas and Values of the Jewish People. This institutional commitment – calculated and articulate – sets the discourse for this pilgrimage. Participants ultimately explored their understanding of "self" through the lens of culture and religion (i.e., the narrative of the Jewish people), place (i.e., Israel), and community (i.e., ideas and values of the Jewish people). It cannot be assumed that participants are verse in all or any of these components of these Jewish paradigms. However, these educational themes, and the overall experience of being in Israel, demonstrated an effect on Jewish identity and belonging.

Participants make a conscious choice to participate in this pilgrimage experience. And Birthright Israel recognizes that the Jewish experience is multimodal; Judaism allows for exceptional interpretation and practice of one's Jewish identity, despite strict norms rooted in biblical literature. By offering multiple tour provider options, each of which engages in their vision of creating Jewish identity, Birthright Israel is exhibiting an understanding of their participant population. However, participants are responsible for connecting with a tour provider that they believe will offer them the best opportunities for exploration, reflection, and growth. According to Jane Adams, "there is a conviction that we are under a moral obligation in choosing our experiences, since the result of those experiences must ultimately determine our understanding of life" (Addams, 2002).

Understanding how we view our relationship with ourselves and with others is paramount in furthering the considerations taken upon by Birthright Israel and its program architects. Dr. Phil McGraw, in his book, *Self Matters*, contributes to the conversation of identity through self-care. Writing from the perspective of emotional and mental health, McGraw draws on the notion that we are responsible for living a life that matters (similar to Rabbi Harold Kushner's book: *Living a Life That Matters*). Nonetheless, although McGraw strays from the religious implications of responsibility, he argues for American individualism – what shall I do? Responding with, "reconstruct your authentic self" (McGraw, 2001), McGraw uses his book to highlight the crucial consideration that identity is as much socially constructed as it is individual.

This paper demonstrated that through oral journaling – as a reflective tool – I was able to capture, interpret, and further unpack moments of self-discovery and identification with Judaism and Israel. Participants used their reflections to comment on their intimate understandings of their relationship with place, religion, culture, community, and individuality. In doing so, participants evaluated the impact of their pilgrimage experience on their identity – their understanding of self.

To my knowledge, Birthright Israel does not actively engage in a prescriptive reflective model. I am not aware of tools used or endorsed by Birthright Israel to engage in reflection, and I am not aware of any professional development opportunities for Birthright Israel staff members or Israeli tour guides in reflective practices or protocols.

I would like to add that the Birthright Israel pilgrimage experience has at least one distinctive and noteworthy characteristic, unique from other conventional pilgrimage tours, that is a valuable consideration in the participant identity journey. In many other pilgrimages, individuals or groups set out to reconnect or discover a spiritual or religious engagement that they anticipate will bring them some sort of meaning or clarity. They join tours or travel independently with the expectation that their journey will bring them life-changing results. And there is no reason to believe or assert that such pilgrimages are ineffective at managing participant expectations. Meaning, life-changing experiences and identity discovery do happen and do, in many ways, contribute to a valuable self-discovery that carries with it, life-long results. However, the Birthright Israel experience is uniquely different in that, for the most part, participants do not register for the Israel experience anticipating nor expecting these life-changing results. They are not consciously driven to participate in this journey for identity development – yet, it is occurring nonetheless. The designers of Birthright Israel recognize that life-long changes, understandings, commitments, or 'ah-ha' moments do not draw young adults, ages 18 to 26 to Israel for these experiences. If intrinsic motivation were at play, Birthright Israel could charge participants the cost of providing the tour and expect similar participation rates. However, by providing a cost-free program, Birthright Israel removes not only financial barriers to participate in the Israel experience, but also the intrinsic barriers. Meaning, participants are not risking more than a week or so of their spring break, winter holiday, or post-college/pre-employment time. Individuals respond to the Birthright calling for non-inspirational purposes in which "finding oneself" is an unlikely consideration for signing-up. Instead, the Israel experience shares an image akin to spring break destination parties: fun, overflowing with alcohol, promiscuity, and memorable.

Yet, we can conclude from this research and others like it that more often than not, the Birthright Israel experience manages to challenge participants' understanding of their connection to both Judaism and Israel in a way that is unexpected to them. What begins as a tour concludes as a pilgrimage. The Birthright Israel experience is much more than tourism; it's about a deep-rooted identification with the Jewish narrative, contemporary Israel, and ideas and values of the Jewish people.

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10 APPENDIX

10.1 A: SOLICITATION LETTER

Dear [Name],

I am contacting you on behalf of Vanderbilt University to ask if you would agree to be part of my doctoral capstone study. I would like to solicit your opinions on identity through a short survey, ask that you participate in an oral journal to a daily prompt, and participate in a focus group session. You are being asked because you are participating in a 10-day pilgrimage to Israel, and the study is about identity development as a result of a pilgrimage experience.

Should you agree to participate; I will ask that you complete a pre-trip and post-trip survey (approximate completion time for each survey is 10 minutes), respond to an oral prompt for each of the ten days you are in Israel (approximate completion time is 10 minutes per day), and potentially contribute to a focus group conversation after you return from Israel (approximate completion time is one-hour).

I hope you will choose to participate in this important study that will benefit future pilgrimage trips. If you are willing, please email back confirmation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Ur Barzel
Doctoral Candidate
ur.barzel@vanderbilt.edu
Vanderbilt University

10.2 B: STUDY PROTOCOLS

Pre-trip & Post Trip Survey

Demographic Questions:

Q1. Age: What is your age?
• 17 years old
• 18 years old
• 19 years old
• 20 years old
• 21 years old
• 22 years old
• 23-25 years old
• 26 (and greater) years old

Q2. Which of the following best describes your current level of schooling?
• Freshman
• Sophomore
• Junior
• Senior
• Master's Student
• Doctoral Student
• Other

Q3. Ethnic origin: Please specify your ethnicity.
• White
• Hispanic or Latino
• Black or African American
• Native American or American Indian
• Asian / Pacific Islander
• Other

Surveyors responded using a five-point Likert scale:
(1= very weak, 5= very strong).

(1) When someone criticizes Judaism, it feels like a personal insult.
(2) When someone criticizes Israel, it feels like a personal insult.
(3) I am very interested in what others think about Judaism.
(4) I am very interested in what others think about Israel.
(5) When I talk about Judaism, I usually say ''we'' rather than ''they.''
(6) When I talk about Israel, I usually say ''we'' rather than ''they.''
(7) Judaism's successes are my successes.
(8) Israel's successes are my successes.
(9) When someone praises Judaism, it feels like a personal compliment.
(10) When someone praises Israel, it feels like a personal compliment.
(11) If a story in the media criticized Judaism, I would feel embarrassed.
(12) If a story in the media criticized Israel, I would feel embarrassed.

*Note: The post-trip survey contained the same questions as the pre-trip survey; however, the demographic questions were removed as they are redundant.
**Survey is modified. Citation for the original survey is:
Smaranda, Boros, Petru Lucian, Curseu, Mircea, Miclea (2011). Integrative tests of a multidimensional model of organizational identification. Social Psychology, 2011, 42(2), 111-123.

Daily Prompt for Oral Reflection:

Please describe a scene, episode, or specific moment in your day that stands out as something that you'll remember the most from this day. Please describe this scene in detail. What happened, when and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a bit about why you think this particular moment stands out to you now and what the scene may say about who you are as a person.

Focus Group Questions:

1. Help me understand which of the events/activities/engagements/experiences you had in Israel on your pilgrimage had the most positive impact on your Jewish identity.
2. Help me understand which of the events/activities/engagements/experiences you had in Israel on your pilgrimage had the most negative impact on your Jewish identity.

10.3 C: Pre and Post Survey Bar Graphs

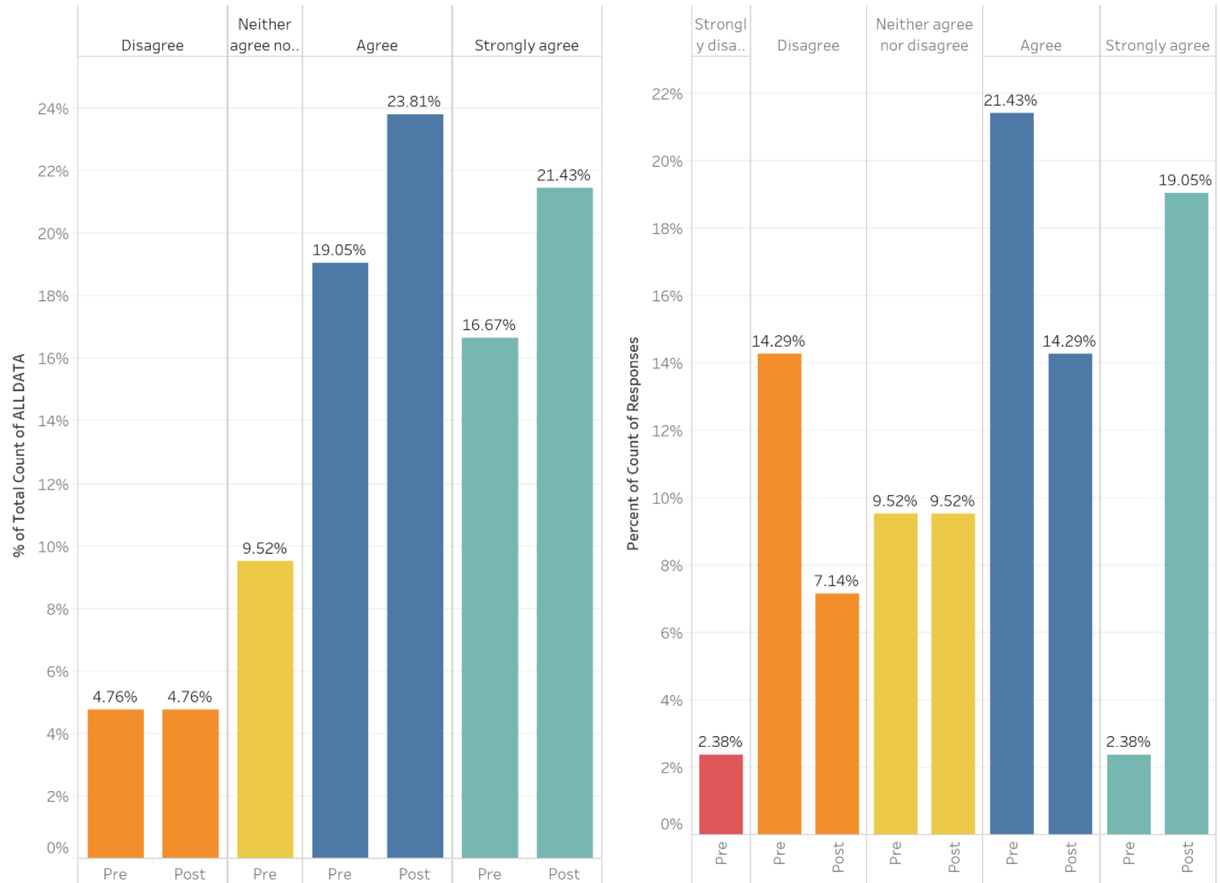

Figure 1: Pre and post survey results - Questions 1 & 2.

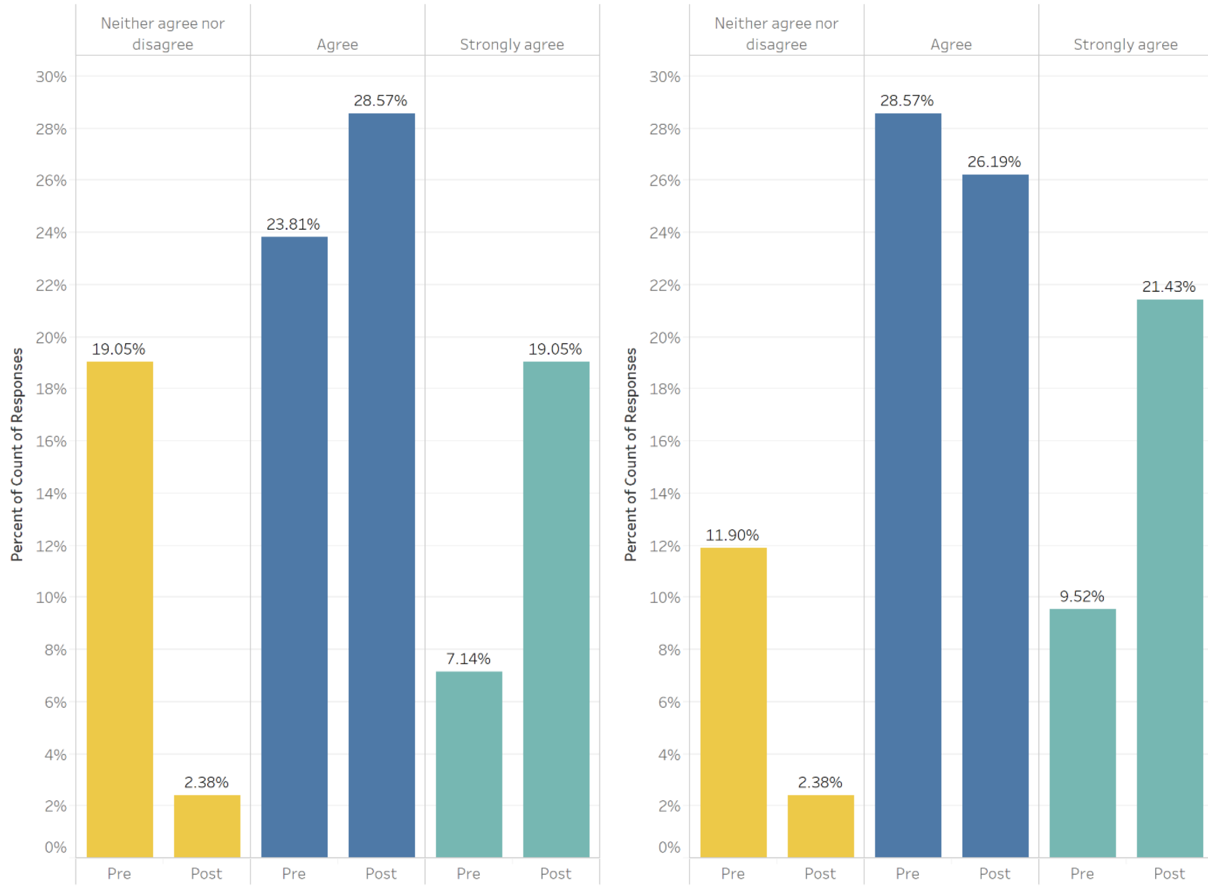

Figure 2: Pre and post survey results - Questions 3 & 4.

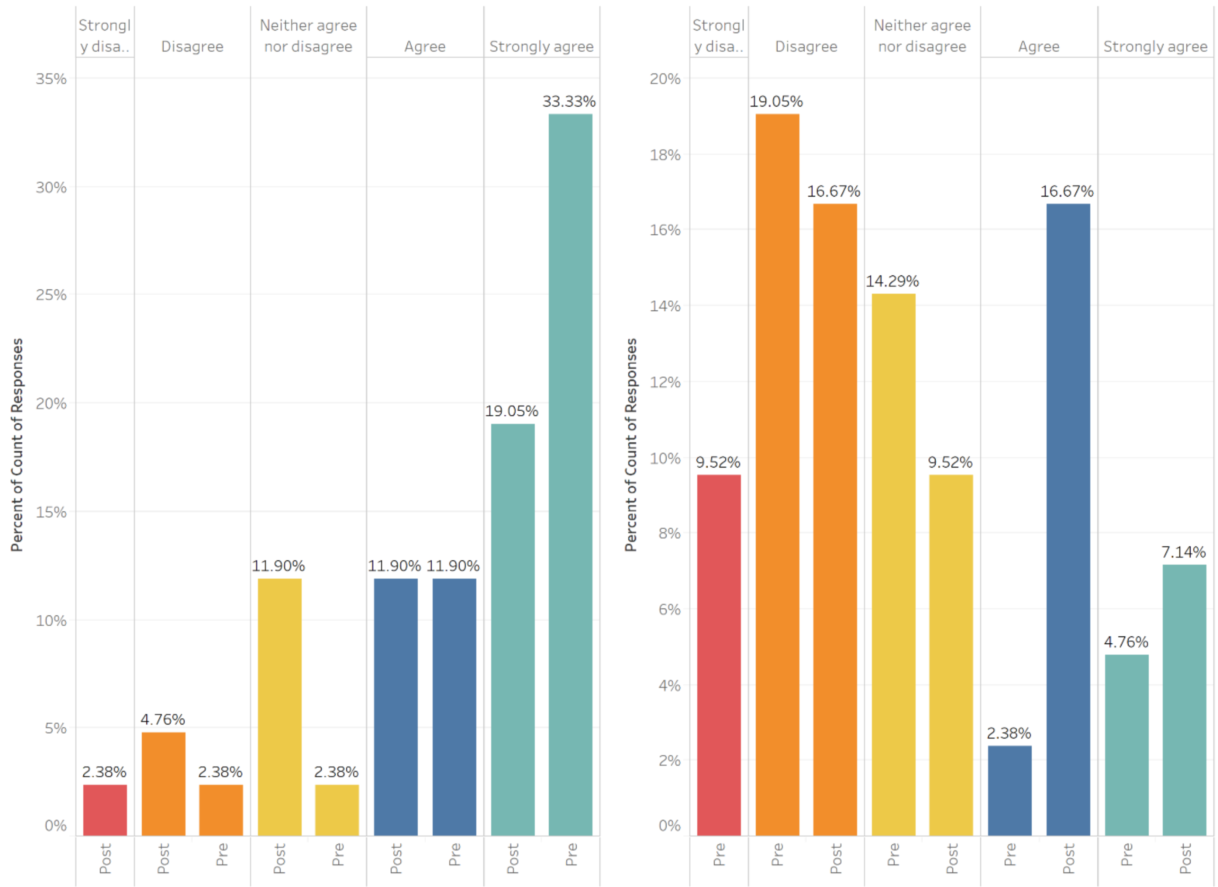

Figure 3: Pre and post survey results - Questions 5 & 6.

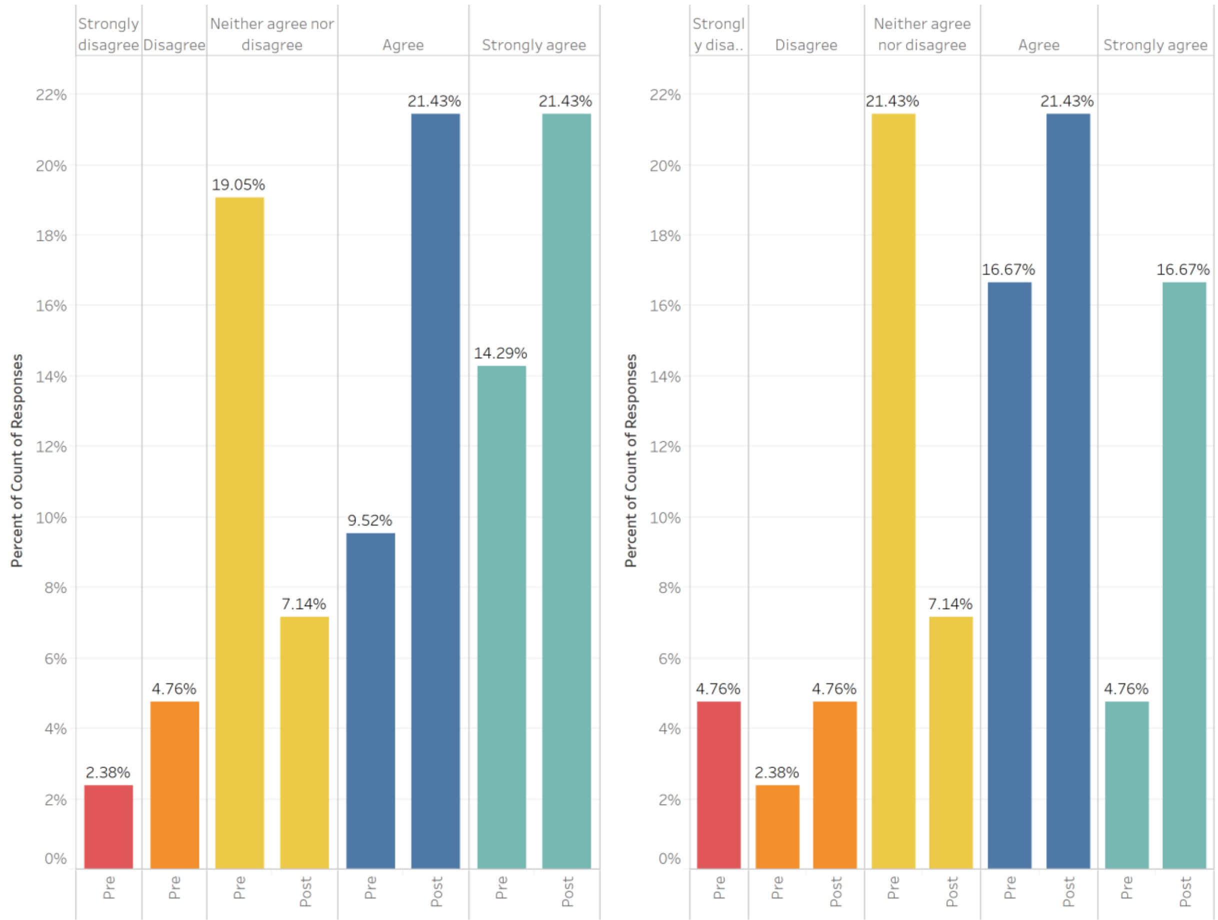

Figure 4: Pre and post survey results - Questions 7 & 8.

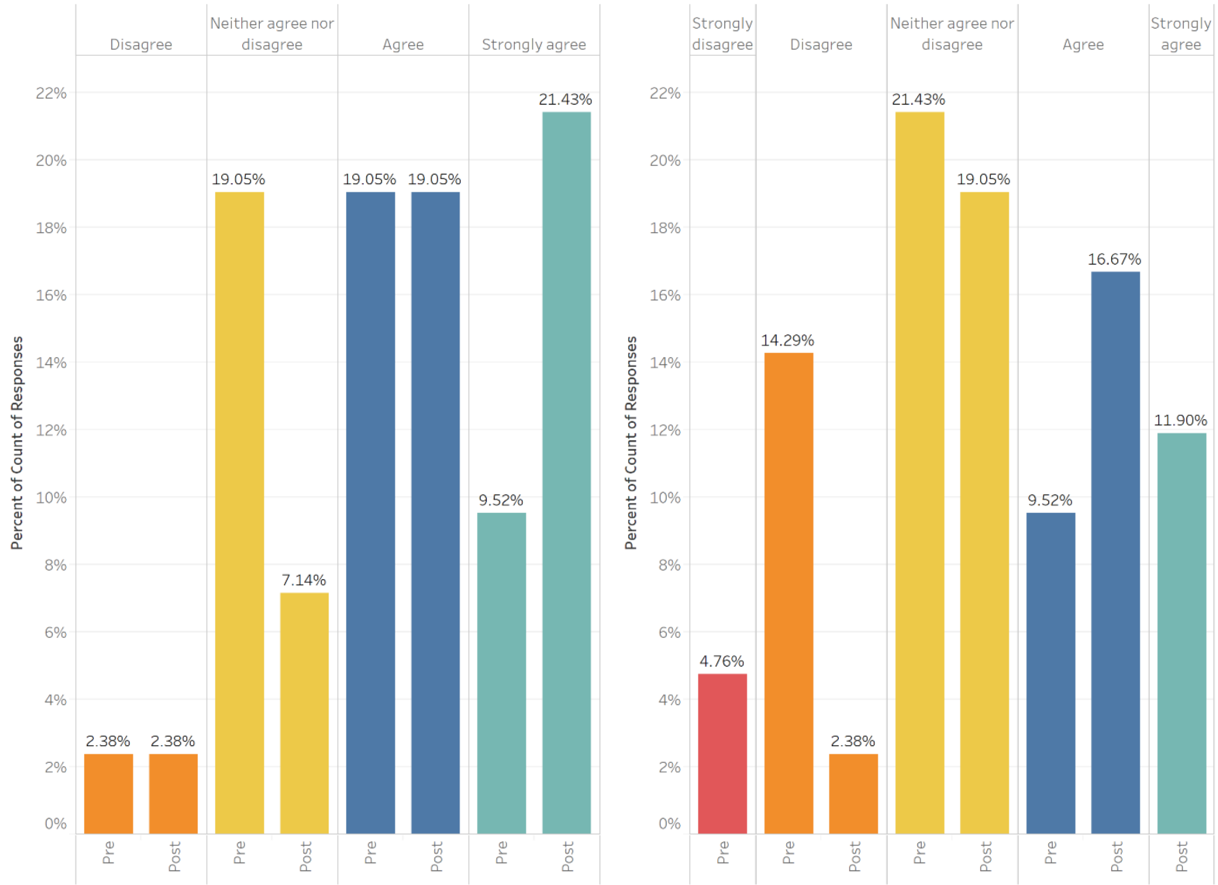

Figure 5: Pre and post survey results - Questions 9 & 10.

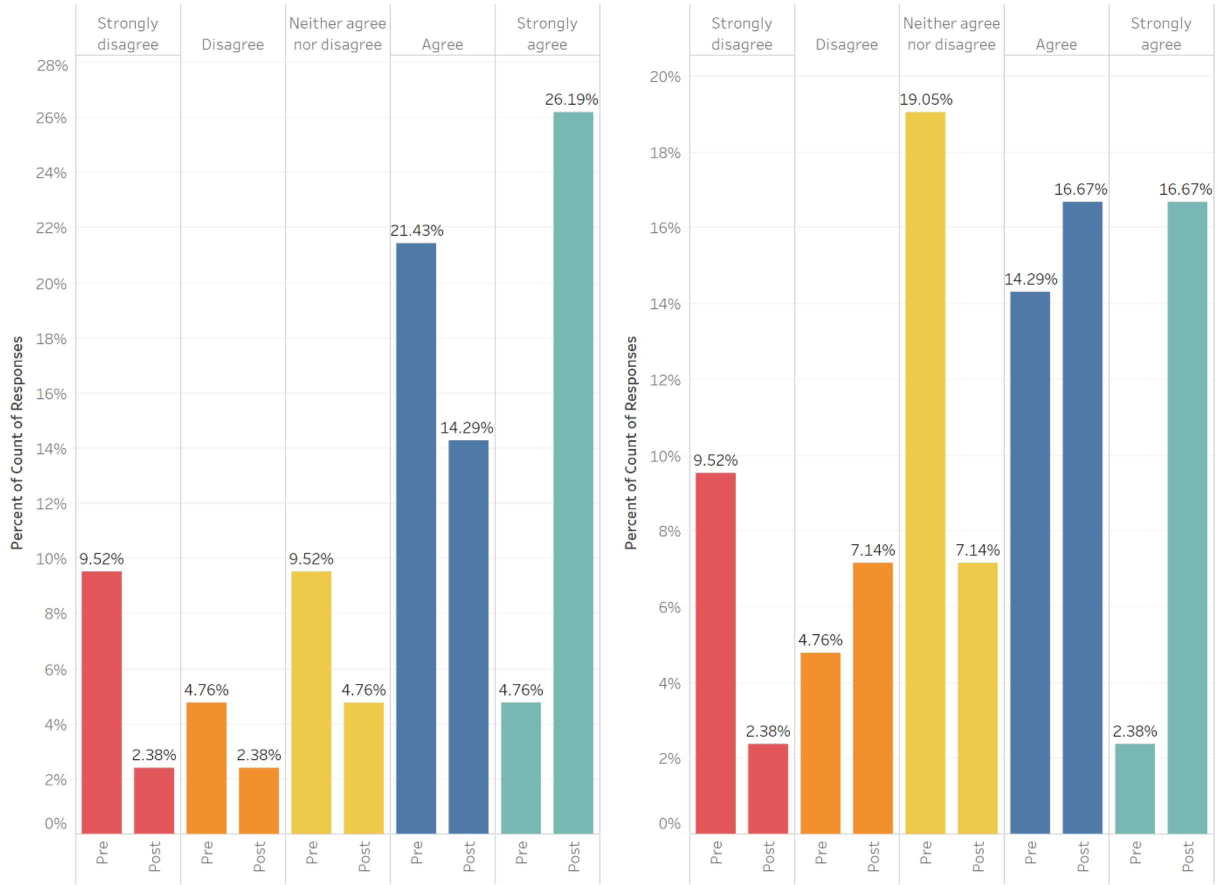

Figure 6: Pre and post survey results - Questions 11 & 12.

About Ur Barzel

As an associate with Booz Allen Hamilton, Ur has more than 12 years of professional experience with large scale system training, organizational strategy, and design for learning in a multitude of varied environments.

While not busy with school, work, or his family, Ur uses his Rule 31 mediation skills to support non-profit work and also volunteers as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, working with abused and neglected children in Davidson County.

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