Moving between Israel and America: Future Jewish leaders doing dialogue, *mifgash* and peoplehood

Roberta Bell-Kligler

Abstract

Jewish peoplehood is a meaningful concept in today's reality of global patterns, particularly migration and travel, easy transnational communication, and multiple identities. It aims to deepen mutual understanding and appreciation of different ways of being Jewish, regardless of homeland, belief, nationality, commitment, or behavior. Linkage programs have become an accepted way to enhance personal Jewish identity and to promote connections between Jews from different places. This article examines one multi-year linkage program's impact on both Israeli and American university student participants. A four-component peoplehood paradigm consisting of: a sense of belonging to the Jewish People, the feeling of connection to other Jews, Jewish capital, and personal responsibility is used as a frame to present findings. The educational program incorporated coordinated academic study, as well as a travel component and a *mifgash* with peers from another country. The paper discusses the similarities, as well as the differences, not only between the Israeli and the American groups of students, but also between different cohorts of students of the same nationality. While some of the findings are anomalous, there are compelling reasons to believe that a linkage program brings significant benefits to participants, in terms of identity enhancement and feelings of connection to other Jews and to the Jewish people at large.

Keywords: Linkage program, Jewish peoplehood, identity, *mifgash*, belonging, connection.

Dr. Roberta Bell-Kligler Director of the International School of Oranim Academic College of Education ,050-685-1821, Roberta_b@oranim.ac.il

Introduction

Global media, rapid communication, ease of travel, and virtual relationships are signs of the times and, in many ways, the world has indeed become flat (Friedman, 2005). Geographical borders have a different meaning than they used to, not only because of the facility of traveling from one's home to multiple destinations, but also due to recent patterns of migration. Even a decade ago, 175 million people were residing outside the country in which they were born (Waters, Ueda, & Marrow, 2007). Concepts of homeland and diaspora are shifting.

True for many peoples, the transformations in the understandings of homeland and diaspora are especially weighty for the Jewish people, whose narrative is based on tales of repeated exiles and an ongoing yearning to return "home" that is explicitly articulated in prayers and at holiday celebrations. Moreover, more than one half of the world's Jews currently reside outside Israel (DellaPergola, 2014), the historic homeland, and despite the opportunity to fulfill the ancient dream of returning "home" to Israel, most do not plan on doing so. Studies indicate that, as a group, American Jews, living as full citizens in the United States, certainly do not consider themselves "in exile" (Sarna, 2004).

American Jews account for approximately 40% of the contemporary Jewish people (DellaPergola, 2014), and their life reality is quite different from that of Jews in other places, including Israel. For almost a decade, a heated debate between sociologists about possible "distancing" in areas of religion, politics, and identity between the two largest communities of Jews has been drawing much attention (Cohen and Kelman, 2010). All of these factors highlight the need to consider new paradigms and create different interpretations of the traditional narrative. "The connection between Jews in Israel and the United States can no longer be understood without an appreciation of the implications of these trends of global migration and communication for individual and collective experiences of connection and belonging" (Mittelberg, Chertok & Laron, 2012-2013).

The concept of Jewish peoplehood – both as a theoretical framework and as a new paradigm for designing educational endeavors - has been, in recent decades, the focus of much thought, debate, and education in different settings worldwide. Coined by Kaplan (1957) more than half a century ago, the term refers to a sense of belonging and connection among Jews that transcends national, political, religious, or ideological differences. Contemporary community leaders find meaning in such an approach. Ruskay (2000), recent executive vice president and CEO of the UJA-Federation of New York, explains that Jewish peoplehood can enhance the sense of "*klal Yisrael*" – belonging to something beyond geographic boundaries that promotes strong group bonding and engenders a sense of mutual responsibility.

Jewish peoplehood has also been incorporated into the educational arena, leading to programs that are different from the traditional model, which was based on a homeland-centric approach (Lev Ari & Mittelberg, 2008; Powers, 2011). When educational interventions of the traditional model included a travel component, it was to Israel, the homeland of the Jewish

people. Educational interventions informed by Jewish peoplehood, by contrast, often include travel to a Jewish community outside of Israel, sometimes in addition to travel to Israel. Another critical aspect of Jewish peoplehood educational programs is a face-to-face encounter ("*mifgash*") between Jews from diverse backgrounds with different points of view. Jewish peoplehood education attempts to develop mutual understanding and reciprocal appreciation of the contours of Jewish identity and life in both Israel and the Diaspora, as well as a sense of transnational Jewish peoplehood (Ehrenkrantz, 2008; Mittelberg, 2011).

One area of significant activity within the Jewish world, designed to promote mutual connections and appreciation, is school connections. The Jewish Agency for Israel has supported and promoted partnerships between schools in Israel and Jewish schools in the Diaspora, creating a school "twinning" network that encompasses more than 300 partnerships (JAFI, 2016), the goals of which include strengthening the connection between pupils, teachers, administrators, and even parents from the respective schools and communities. The Jewish community of Boston has focused on school partnerships as a prime way to enrich and deepen the Jewish knowledge and identity of all participants, regardless of which community they live in (Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 2016). Programs usually include online exchanges, coordinated curriculum, and reciprocal visits.

This study seeks to examine a multi-year, cross-national educational intervention with the overarching goal of promoting Jewish peoplehood. The program was a linkage program called, "Student Leadership for Jewish Peoplehood" that ran for four consecutive years. Similar to the school initiatives, it included coordinated study in the respective locales, reciprocal visits, and collaborative cross-cultural teamwork by the program staff in the respective countries.

While perhaps not one of a kind, the program had a number of aspects that (when taken together) made it unique, among them: the participation of Jewish university students from different countries; a multi-national lead team of educators who worked together smoothly and collaboratively; academic components suitable for each country; travel to Israel and other countries; expansion from a bilateral (Israeli and German) program to a tri-lateral (Israeli and German and American) program.

The findings presented will relate to specific aspects of this program as well as to some of the larger issues connected to the peoplehood paradigm. The study explores the question of the possible impact of a Jewish peoplehood intervention, with a component of travel and *mifgash*, on Jewish college students of today.

Today's reality invites certain questions regarding an educational intervention of this type, among them:

- What are the components of modern Jewish identity and how does it differ from country to country?
- Why construct connections between Israeli Jews and Jews in other countries?
- What is the place of Israel in these connections?

- How can educational interventions promote meaningful learning and experience for emerging Jewish leaders?
- How best to navigate the centrality on the individual Jew today and the desired focus of enhancing Jewish peoplehood?

It was precisely to address these questions that the UJA-Federation of New York funded the multi-year educational initiative called, "Student Leadership for Jewish Peoplehood," upon which this research is based.

Methodology

The findings presented in this paper are drawn from participant survey data from the four-year program: 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015. When the program was launched in 2011, there were two organizational partners: one from Germany (ZWST), and one from Israel (Oranim Academic College). In the two subsequent years, due to the success of the program and additional funding from UJA-Federation of New York, a third partner joined from North America (Columbia/Barnard Hillel).

Each year, all participating organizations opened the program to approximately fifteen participants. Each organization chose its participants, all of whom were enrolled college students who expressed an interest in Jewish peoplehood and in meeting Jewish peers from other countries. In the first year, there were 38 participants from two countries (Israel and Germany); in the second year, there were 33 participants from the same two countries; in the third year there were 43 participants from three countries (Israel and Germany and the United States), and in the final year, there were 29 participants from Israel and the United States (for whom there is data). Thus, during the four years of the program, there were 143 participants.

The program cycle was one academic year, and all participants from all participating countries were asked to complete written questionnaires several times during the year: at the beginning of the program, following a travel experience during the course of the program, and at the end of the program. Usually this meant that each participant completed three questionnaires; however there were instances when the annual program included two travel experiences for some of the participants, so those participants would fill out four questionnaires (for example, in 2013-2014, the American participants traveled both to Germany and to Israel).

All questionnaires (see appendix) included both "closed" questions, with multiple choice answers, and a qualitative component with "open" questions, to which participants responded in their own words. Many of the questions were repeated in the different questionnaires, for comparison sake. The closed items ranked on a Likert-scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

All participant questionnaires were analyzed, including those completed at the beginning of the program, those following the travel experience/s and those at the end of the program. As can be seen in the tables below, the response rate of questionnaires was very high for all cohorts for the questionnaires distributed at the beginning of the program and those following the travel experience.

Table 1: Distribution and Response Rates of Questionnaires at Beginning of Program and after Travel

Table 1a: 2011-2012

Stage	Description of Stage	Participants' Country	Number of Questionnaires Completed	Total Number of Participants	Percentage of Questionnaires Completed
Stage 1	At the beginning of the program	Germany	12	18 (1 dropped out before the Study Tour)	66%
		Israel	20	20 (2 dropped out by the end of the semester)	100%
After travel and *mifgash*	After travelling to Israel for the Study Tour	Germany	17	17	100%
	After travelling to Germany for the Study Tour	Israel	16	17	94%

Table 1b: 2012-2013

Stage	Description of Stage	Participants' Country	Number of Questionnaires Completed	Total Number of Participants	Percentage of Questionnaires Completed
Stage 1	At the beginning of the program	Germany	16	17	94%
		Israel	13	16	81%
After travel and *mifgash*	After travelling to Israel for the Study Tour	Germany	17	17	100%
	After travelling to Germany for the Study Tour	Israel	16	16	100%

Table 1c: 2013-2014

Stage	Description of Stage	Participants' Country	Number of Questionnaires Completed	Total Number of Participants	Percentage of Questionnaires Completed
Stage 1	At the beginning of the program	German	13	13	100%
		Israel	18	18	100%
		America	12	12	100%
After travel and *mifgash*	After travelling to Israel for the Study Tour	Germany	13	13	100%
	After travelling to Germany for the Study Tour	Israel	18	18	100%
	After travelling to Israel for the Study Tour	America	12	12	100%
	After travelling to Germany for the Study Tour	America	11	12	92%

Table 1d: 2014-2015

Stage	Description of Stage	Participants' Country	Number of Questionnaires Completed	Total Number of Participants	Percentage of Questionnaires Completed
Stage 1	At the beginning of the program	Israel	13	14	93%
		America	14	16	88%
	After travelling to Germany for the Study Tour	Israel	12	14	86%
	After travelling to Israel for the Study Tour	America	16	16	100%
	After travelling to Germany for the Study Tour	America	16	16	100%

Regarding the questionnaire distributed at the end of the program, the response rate for the Israeli and American participants was also very high, as can be seen in the tables below.

Table 2: Distribution and Response Rates of Questionnaires at End of Program

Table 2a: 2011-2012

Stage	Description of Stage	Date Given to Participants	Number of Questionnaires Completed	Total Number of Participants	Percentage of Questionnaires Completed
Stage 2	At the end of the program				
		Israelis: May 2012	12	15 (3 of the 18 who finished Semester 1 did not re-enroll)	80%

Table 2b: 2012-2013

Stage	Description of Stage	Date Given to Participants	Number of Questionnaires Completed	Total Number of Participants	Percentage of Questionnaires Completed
	At the end of the program	Israelis: July 2013	16	16	100%

Table 2c: 2013-2014

Stage	Description of Stage	Date Given to Participants	Number of Questionnaires Completed	Total Number of Participants	Percentage of Questionnaires Completed
	At the end of the program	Israelis: June 2014	18	18	100%
		Americans: May 2014	12	12	100%

Table 2d: 2014-2015

Stage	Description of Stage	Date Given to Participants	Number of Questionnaires Completed	Total Number of Participants	Percentage of Questionnaires Completed
	At the end of the program	Israelis: June 2015	15	16	94%
		Americans: June 2015	12	12	100%

Unfortunately, few questionnaires at the end of the program were collected from the German students. Therefore this study, looking at the impact of the entire program on participants, will report on findings regarding only the Israeli and American participants.

Another report to be written at a later date will look closely at the impact of the travel component. In that case, findings from all three groups will be presented, for (as stated above) the response rate for both the beginning of the program questionnaires and the questionnaires following the travel experience/s was high for the Israeli, American, and German participants.

It is worth mentioning at this point that, consistent with other research (Mittelberg, Chertok & Laron, 2012-2013), the travel component seemed to be quite significant for the participants. This was reflected in their comments written on the questionnaire that they filled out at the program's end.

Each of the three questionnaires had a particular focus:

The start of program survey collected information about students' understanding of their Jewish identities, connections to Israeli/American Jewry, sense of Jewish peoplehood, and expectations for the program. There were up to 150 closed questions and five open questions on this questionnaire. The questionnaire following the travel component focused primarily on satisfaction with the travel component and the *mifgash*, as well as questions about identity and peoplehood. It included up to ten closed questions and ten open questions. End-of-year surveys asked about involvement in and reactions to program elements, attitudes toward and connections with peers from the partner communities, and current thinking about Jewish identity and peoplehood. There were up to 150 closed questions and seven open questions on this questionnaire.

The fact that the questionnaires in all given years were identical both within and between communities meant that it was possible to compare impact on participants in a variety of ways: on a given participant, on a particular cohort as a whole, on one community as compared to another, and between all the groups over all the years.

The Israeli program staff led the evaluation process and took responsibility for designing the master questionnaires. The American and German teams modified the questions on the questionnaire to the extent necessary for their participants. Then the questionnaires were translated so that all participants could fill out the questionnaires in their respective languages (Hebrew, English and German). The questionnaires were then printed and given to the staff in each country to distribute to participants and then collect. For purposes of collating and analyzing the data, the questionnaires were returned to the Israeli staff, who then had the answers translated into English.

Findings

The peoplehood initiative was designed to affect the participants' knowledge of and understanding about Jews from different parts of the world and to help them develop a sense of belonging to a global collective.

The findings will be presented according to a Jewish peoplehood paradigm developed by a cross-cultural Israeli-American research team consisting of Mittelberg, Chertok, and Laron (2012-13). That paradigm grew out of a set of assessment scales developed for a research of a school twinning initiative between students from Israel and North America (Chertok, Mittelberg, Laron, & Koren, 2012). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis identified four

robust components of Jewish peoplehood, each of which showed a very good level of internal consistency, as follows:

1. Belonging to the Jewish People
2. Connection to Other Jews
3. Jewish Capital
4. Personal Responsibility

In the study of Chertok et al., the students were middle and high school students engaged in a three-year intervention in their schools. In this study, the participants were, as noted, university students who were involved in a one-year program. Despite those differences, both interventions had similar goals and elements. For both, the overarching goal was to advance cross-national Jewish identity and peoplehood. Both initiatives included a travel component in addition to coordinated study done separately by the partners in their home countries, both before and after the travel component. Findings will be presented for each of the four components; the idea is to see if there were any changes in the participants, from the program's beginning to its end. Within the presentation for each component, findings will be described and discussed first for the Israelis, who were involved in the program for four years, and then for the Americans, who were involved for two years.

1. Belonging to the Jewish People

Questions were intended to gauge the sense of belonging to the Jewish people felt by the participants.

Israelis

In all four years, the Israeli participants began the program feeling that it was certainly important to them to "be a part of the Jewish people." At the outset of the program, always more than 85% indicated this feeling (93%, 91%, 94%, and 86% respectively), and at the end of the program, despite some fluctuation, it was essentially the same high percentage. Regarding their sense "that my fate and future are tied to the fate and future of the Jewish people," as the chart below indicates, for the first three years, there was an increase by the end of the program. In the last year, there was actually a decrease in the sense of shared fate and future. While the decrease was significant and unlike the other cohorts, it is possible that these participants related to the issue in a less abstract way than their peers from earlier years; they were just being, perhaps, more realistic.

Table 3: Sense that one's fate and future are connected to that of the Jewish people at beginning (Stage 1) and end (Stage 3) of program

Israelis				
	% answering "to a large" or "very large" degree			
Question asked	**2011-2012**	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**
I feel that my fate and future are tied to the fate and future of the Jewish people.	Stage 1: 74 Stage 3: 82	Stage 1: 77 Stage 3: 80	Stage 1: 83 Stage 3: 95	Stage 1: 92 Stage 3: 73

In three years, the feeling of "a strong connection to the Jewish people," was common to approximately 80% of the Israelis at the program's outset. However, there was more fluctuation from year to year, and the results show less consistency here than with the aspects discussed above. In one year (2011-2012), there was a drop from the beginning of the program (90%) to the end of the program (83%). One year (2013-2014) showed essentially no change (from 94% to 95%). But in one year (2012-2013), there was a significant rise (from 83%) from the beginning to the end of the program, when every single participant (100%) reported feeling a strong connection to the Jewish people. It is not clear why there were these variations from year to year, regarding the Israeli participants' feeling a strong connection to the Jewish people. However, this reality brings with it the important understanding that each group is unique: the same program with the same educators may impact different learners in different ways.

The biggest change, and it was indeed positive, was regarding the participants' "sense of belonging to the Jewish people around the world." It began quite low in all four years (37%, 27% 45% and 62% respectively), but rose by the end of the program. The third cohort remained the lowest, with no change from 45%, but the first two cohorts (2011-2012 and 2012-2013) went up dramatically (to 73% and 60% respectively). Again, the group in the last year of the program (2014-2015) reported a decrease in the sense of belonging to the Jewish people around the world – from 62% to 46%. It seems that regarding aspects of connection, the program affected the cohort in that year differently from the other groups.

Table 4: Sense of belonging to the Jewish people around the world at beginning (Stage 1) and end (Stage 3) of program

Israelis				
Question asked	**% answering "to a large" or "very large" degree**			
I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people around the world	Stage 1: 37 Stage 3: 73	Stage 1: 27 Stage 3: 60	Stage 1: 45 Stage 3: 45	Stage 1: 62 Stage 3: 46

The Israelis, then, essentially entered the program with a strong feeling that it was important to them to be part of the Jewish people. Their sense of actually belonging to the Jewish people around the world, however, was much lower at the outset of the program (for all four years) and (for two of the years) was highly enhanced by their participation in the program.

Americans

By and large, the Americans began the program with a developed sense of belonging. The cohort of 2013-2014, in particular, expressed an extremely high feeling of connection, even at the beginning of the program. For them, with one exception, all categories related to belonging had above 90% agreement both at the beginning of the program and at the end. Both the categories of thinking that it is important to be part of the Jewish people and of feeling a connection to the Jewish people received unanimous agreement at the beginning of the program, and that remained the case also at the end.

The exception, interestingly, to the high level of connection, was regarding the statement of "sense of belonging to the Jewish people." At the outset, only 67% of the highly identified cohort claimed they felt a strong sense of belonging. At the program's conclusion, however, there was a sharp rise, with 100% of the participants feeling a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people around the world.

2. Connection to other Jews

Participants were asked to respond to questions designed to gauge their connection to other Jews.

Israelis

The Israelis did not feel a strong connection at all to Jews in the Diaspora. When asked at the beginning of the program, they responded that they felt a low connection (26%, 55%, 28%, 31% in the four years of the program, respectively), indicating in fact the lowest score on any question asked on the entire survey. And only in the year when the score was the lowest at the beginning of the program, did it go up at all (from 26% to 50% in 2011-2012). Every other year, this feeling of connection to Jews in the Diaspora dropped, as seen below.

Table 5: Sense of strong connection to Jews in the Diaspora at beginning (Stage 1) and end (Stage 3) of program

Israelis				
	% answering "to a large" or "very large" degree			
Question asked	**2011-12**	**2012-13**	**2013-14**	**2014-2015**
I feel a strong connection to Jews in the Diaspora	Stage 1: 26 Stage 3: 50	Stage 1: 55 Stage 3: 31	Stage 1: 28 Stage 3: 22	Stage 1: 31 Stage 3: 27

Perhaps the term "Diaspora" made it especially difficult for Israelis to articulate a connection with Jews living outside Israel. When the question asked did not include the term, although still, every year, the Israelis began the program with a low sense of feeling a "strong connection with Jews all over the world," only in one year was there any decline in their sense of being bonded with Jews from around the world. That drop was insignificant (from 46 to 45%), and in two years there was, in fact, a rise in the measurement (in 2012-2013 from 27% to 33%, and in 2013-2014 from 17 to 33%).

When asked if they feel that the Jews of Israel and the Jews of Germany share a common destiny, the responses not only started out low, but actually further dropped (once drastically) during the course of the program.

Table 6: Feeling that the Jews of Germany and the Jews of Israel share a common fate at beginning (Stage 1) and end (Stage 3) of program

Israelis				
	% answering "to a large" or "very large" degree			
Question asked	**2011-12**	**2012-13**	**2013-14**	**2014-2015**
I feel that the Jews of Germany and the Jews of Israel share a common fate.	Stage 1: 42 Stage 3: 36	Stage 1: 31 Stage 3: 53	Stage 1: 50 Stage 3: 28	Stage 1: 54 Stage 3: 9

It was only when the Israeli participants were asked specifically about feeling a connection to German Jews, that the responses became more positive. At the beginning, there was a low sense of connection (10%, 27%, 61% and 23%, respectively). In two of the years of the program, by the end of the program, more than half of the Israeli participants felt that they had a "strong connection" to their German peers (56% and 78% respectively), and in the case where the feeling had been the lowest (10%) it more than doubled (reaching 25%). The single case where there was a decrease was again with the cohort of 2014-2015.

Table 7: Feeling a strong connection to German Jews at beginning (Stage 1) and end (Stage 3) of program

Israelis				
	% answering "to a large" or "very large" degree			
Question asked	**2011-12**	**2012-13**	**2013-14**	**2014-2015**
I feel a strong connection to German Jews.	Stage 1: 10 Stage 3: 25	Stage 1: 27 Stage 3: 56	Stage 1: 61 Stage 3: 78	Stage 1: 23 Stage 3: 18

It seems that referring specifically to a particular type of Jews, with whom the Israeli participants had engaged in discussions and learning, and some of whom had become their friends, increased the sense of connection.

Americans

For the Americans, their sense of connection to other Jews, although stronger than that of the Israelis, was not especially strong at the beginning of the program. It is impressive that in both years of participation in the program, except for one specific question (about feeling a connection to German Jews) in one particular year, the sense of connection on the part of American Jews to other Jews rose regarding every question posed.

In both years, there was a significant rise regarding the sense of sharing a common destiny with German Jews. In one year it went up to 67% (from 55%), and in the other year it rose to 64% (from 43%). Those figures - approximately 2/3 of the group at the conclusion of the program - were also the response rates at the end of the program, when the Americans were asked if they "feel a strong bond with Jews from all over the world" (67% and 64% respectively).

3. Jewish Capital

Questions about Jewish capital were intended to gauge the participants' Jewish capital - the possession of Jewish cultural knowledge and skills.

Israelis

Generally Israelis came into the program each year asserting that they knew quite a bit about Jewish tradition and culture, Jewish organizations and institutions. However, there are two cases that should be mentioned. In the 2013-2014 cohort, only 39% of the Israelis felt that they were familiar with Jewish organizations and institutions. And in the following cohort (2014-2015), only 46% said that they felt love for the Torah.

In the former case (the 2013-2014 cohort), regarding familiarity with Jewish organizations and institutions, there was a significant increase (from 39% to 55%) from the beginning of the program to the end, while in the latter case, about love for Torah, there was actually a decrease (from 46% to 36%). The increase in regards to knowledge about Jewish organizations and institutions was consistent with other cohorts. The decrease in love for the Torah, as well, was consistent with the feeling among Israelis about their love for Torah: every year, by the end of the program, there was a marked decrease.

Table 8: Love for the Torah at beginning (Stage 1) and end (Stage 3) of program

Israelis				
	% answering "to a large" or "very large" degree			
Question asked	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-2015
I feel love for Torah.	Stage 1: 50 Stage 3: 46	Stage 1: 63 Stage 3: 40	Stage 1: 50 Stage 3: 39	Stage 1: 46 Stage 3: 36

After being in the program with the Americans and/or the Germans, every year the Israeli students reported that they knew more about Jewish organizations and institutions, but felt less love for the Torah. The contrast between these items within Jewish capital is telling, and perhaps explains the different responses by the Israelis. They were exposed to many types of organizations and institutions and probably felt impressed by the variety and range. At the same time, "love for Torah" was probably associated in their minds with the narrower category of "Torah" – learning and observance. The Israelis who participated in this program were, by and large, self-defined "secular Jews." This type of negative response regarding a phenomenon associated with religious observance is consistent with the findings on secular Israelis outlined in the recently released Pew Study (2016).

Americans

Unlike the Israelis, all the American cohorts reported that their love for the Torah had increased by the end of the program, reaching high levels (83% and 87% respectively, with the latter case being a steep rise from 57% at the beginning of the program). However, in all other aspects, the two American cohorts differed one from another.

The 2014-2015 cohort reported significant increases in all three aspects of their Jewish capital: sense of belonging to Jewish tradition and culture, familiarity with Jewish organizations and institutions, and love for Torah (86% to 93%, 64% to 87%, and 57% to 87%, respectively). The previous cohort (2013-2014), on the other hand, who began the program with significantly higher assessments in all three categories, reported decreases regarding both their sense of belonging to Jewish tradition and culture (100% to 83%) and their familiarity with Jewish organizations (83% to 75%). It should be noted that, given the high levels at which they started, these regressions are not surprising. Regarding their love of Torah, they remained essentially at the high level of 83%. It is interesting to note that, even with the decreases in some of the measurements, especially for the 2013-2014 cohort, both of the American cohorts completed the program with high assessments of their Jewish capital.

To conclude regarding Jewish capital, then, there seem to be differences based on nationality between the Israeli and American Jews regarding certain aspects, especially love of Torah. One common denominator for both nationalities, all years, was the increase in the familiarity with Jewish organizations and institutions. Program participants felt that they had learned a lot about various opportunities and functions that exist within the Jewish community.

4. Personal Responsibility

Participants were asked to respond to questions designed to gauge their sense of personal responsibility about Jews and Jewish peoplehood.

Israelis

When asked whether they "feel anger and pain when reading about anti-Semitism in Jewish history," for one cohort (2012-1013) the initially high (92%) sense of anger and pain decreased (73%) by the conclusion of the program. The other three cohorts, however, reported a complete (100%) sense of anger and pain at the end of the program.

Interestingly enough, however, their level of "sadness when hearing about something bad happening to a Jewish person" declined by the end of the program. It was still quite high, at the end of the program, with more than 70% of each group reporting on feeling sadness; however, except for the 2014-1015 cohort, who indicated only a miniscule decline (from 92% to 91%), the other three cohorts reported quite deep drops in the level of sadness felt (at least 10%, as seen in the table below).

Table 9: Sadness felt when hearing about something bad happening to a Jewish person at beginning (Stage 1) and end (Stage 3) of program

Israelis				
	% answering "to a large" or "very large" degree			
Question asked	**2011-2012**	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**
I feel sadness when I hear about something bad happening to a Jewish person.	Stage 1: 83 Stage 3: 73	Stage 1: 85 Stage 3: 71	Stage 1: 94 Stage 3: 83	Stage 1: 92 Stage 3: 91

For an intervention intended to heighten feelings of connection and responsibility, this finding is anomalous. One possible explanation is that, after studying more about the Jewish people today and meeting peers from different parts of the contemporary Jewish world, participants felt that there was less to be sad about, and if they were to hear about something "bad" happening nowadays, sadness would not necessarily be their reaction. It is likely that they understood this question as referring to the present. The previous question, on the other hand (about something bad happening in Jewish history), explicitly mentions the past, hence there is nothing more to do except look back and feel anger and pain. And in that case, the emotions of anger and pain were expressed.

When looking forward, there was a sense of concern and responsibility reported at the outset of the program, among all four cohorts, regarding the Jewish future. For three of the cohorts, this sense grew by the end of the program, sometimes more, sometimes less, as can be seen below.

Table 10: Feeling sense of concern and responsibility at beginning (Stage 1) and end (Stage 3) of program

Israelis				
	% answering "to a large" or "very large" degree			
Question asked	**2011-2012**	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014=2015**
I feel concerned about the future of Jewish survival.	Stage 1: 78 Stage 3: 64	Stage 1: 69 Stage 3: 73	Stage 1: 83 Stage 3: 94	Stage 1: 54 Stage 3: 82

One interesting finding regards the extremely high sense of pride Israelis have about being Jewish and about the Jewish people. When they entered the program, all four cohorts of Israelis indicated extremely developed feelings of pride for both categories. Even if a decline occurred during the course of the program, it was slight indeed, and should not be viewed as significant. Three of the four cohorts concluded the program with 93% or more of the participants reporting they felt proud to be Jewish. Similarly, three of the four groups concluded the program with 90% or more reporting they felt proud of the Jewish people.

Americans

Similar to the Israelis, the Americans also reported extremely high levels of pride about being Jewish. Both cohorts began with all (100%) of the participants saying they felt proud to be Jewish. One group finished the program with still unanimous agreement about that. The other group had a slight decline, but at the end of the program, was still extremely proud to be Jewish (92%).

At the same time, for both cohorts there was an increase in the pride they feel in the Jewish people. One American cohort increased from 75% to 92%; the other cohort, who began the program with a higher sense of pride in the Jewish people, increased from 93% to unanimous (100%) sense of pride.

Regarding concern and worry they feel about the future of Jewish survival, the findings were divided: with one cohort, more concern developed from the beginning of the program to its end (a rise from 67% to 83%), while the other cohort reported a decline in concern (from 86% to 67%).

In terms of feeling anger, pain and sadness, the Americans, like their Israeli peers, felt the same or even a higher level – when hearing about something bad happening today to Jews or about anti-Semitism that had happened in the past. The other similarity, which should not be underestimated, is the high level of pride felt by both nationalities overall – both regarding their own Jewish identity and their pride about the Jewish people.

Summary and Conclusions

Jewish peoplehood, as a paradigm that both responds to today's global realities and resonates within the worldwide Jewish community, is still developing. Evidently, the paradigm is meaningful; as educators, philosophers, and policymakers alike seem to be gravitating toward it. A question looming large is how best to prepare future Jewish leaders with the affective, cognitive and behavioral skills necessary to model and promote Jewish peoplehood. This research suggests that a cross-cultural educational intervention for university students with the goal of enhancing the sense of Jewish peoplehood can be significant indeed.

Analyzing results from multiple questionnaires, according to the four component paradigm of Jewish peoplehood developed by Mittelberg et al., not only offered a general scheme for assessing the impact of the program but also brought into focus the respective categories and emphasized the complexity of Jewish peoplehood. As the title of this study suggests, there is a lot of "moving": in today's reality, university students travel from one place to another and then back again. They find themselves meeting many different types of people and experiencing different approaches to a variety of issues. There is a lot of multi-directional travel, even in one educational program. Moreover, individuals today have multiple identities that coexist comfortably one with another. As such, modern people – students being no exception - are always "doing" a lot of different things, as the title of the article suggests.

Despite these common denominators between today's young people, presenting results group by group made evidently clear the differences between them: at times, the same program affected the Israelis and the Americans in dissimilar ways. While their strong Jewish identities and sincere commitment to the Jewish people were common across the board, as groups, they were manifestly distinct from one another. It seems important to emphasize, then, that in a cross-cultural program, especially one with the goal of promoting a sense of the collective and the common, special attention must be given to the nuances of background, culture, mentality, and language.

The *mifgash* component of the program, with its emphasis on peer encounter, was an important element. It (regardless of whether there were participants from two or three countries) focused on dialogue, discussion, and getting to know individuals whose Jewish identities and practices were initially unfamiliar and essentially dissimilar. The comments written by participants on the questionnaires at the end of the program indicated that they found the *mifgash* very significant for them. It seems that for today's university students who identify as Jews, there are few, if any, substitutes for being together, in order both to grapple with one's own identity and to promote a sense of connection to other Jews. It would be interesting to ascertain whether a *mifgash* longer than the several days the students spent together would have improved some of the feelings about sharing a common destiny with the "other." The triangular *mifgash* that occurred during this initiative, but for which the data was incomplete, added many layers of complexity to the more common Israel-American *mifgash* and invites more research.

Another area warranting additional study is the role of the educational team responsible for design and implementation of a Jewish peoplehood program. In a study by Chertok et al. (2013) focusing on school twinning, the researchers propose the development of Israeli-American educator teams as "key to positive and productive working relationships … and ultimately to the success of the school twinning agenda" (p. 416). In this intervention with university students, the project coordinators in all three countries were young professional women, each with a master's degree in education and/or psychology. All three were either bi-

or tri-lingual, and all had lived for extended periods in a country different from the one where she currently resided. Their similar stage of life, common language, and sense of camaraderie (not to mention high level of competence and dedication), as well as the fact that all three were central in the project almost from its outset until its conclusion, may have helped overcome certain lacks discerned in other studies. It would be interesting to try to ascertain whether the three elements deemed critical by Chertok et al. (2013): mission-centered goals, collaborative capacity, and cultural competence, were actually present among those responsible for the Student Leadership intervention. Certainly more research about what background, knowledge, training, and supervision are needed for those charged with conceptualizing and implementing the global connection program is warranted.

To conclude, the current research indicates that there is much value in a cross-cultural educational intervention for university students dedicated to Jewish peoplehood. More studies would be helpful to help explain the different results for different cohorts, as well as to gather responses from more participants in similar interventions. Further interpretation of some of the findings that were hard to explain would also be welcome.

This study identified certain needs, such as the urgency in helping Israelis appreciate the Jewishness of Jews living outside of Israel. While knowledgeable about many aspects of Judaism, Israelis still have a negative response to basic aspects, such as "love for Torah," while participants from the diaspora communities were much more positive about it. The term itself and what it conjures up are clearly very different for secular Israeli Jews than for Jews who attend synagogue regularly in the Diaspora. All participants agreed that they gained much knowledge about and appreciation for the Jewish community and its institutions; this is not a small accomplishment for a program geared to future leaders. The participants' solid sentiments of pride about being Jewish and about belonging to the Jewish people were impressive and gave hope that they would want to play an active role in future endeavors. Interesting were the students' anger and sadness about aspects of the Jewish past, especially when compared with the decreasing concern and worry about the Jewish future that most of them clearly articulated.

Participation in this Student Leadership initiative, especially their *mifgash* with peers from different parts of the Jewish world, seems to have generally engendered a modicum of confidence and certainty about the future. Despite some fluctuations from cohort to cohort and differences between nationalities, this study demonstrated the impact of a Jewish peoplehood intervention on the first component of the peoplehood paradigm: a sense of belonging to the Jewish people. While all participants indicated at the program's beginning that it was "important to be part of the Jewish people," not all actually felt a strong connection to the Jewish people. The Americans and Israelis (especially) showed low feelings of connection.) By the end of the program, there were significant increases in the sense of belonging to the Jewish people.

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