“See Where It Takes You:” 
Attitude Formation and Collective Memory 
on USY Israel Pilgrimage 

by 

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GLOSSARY

Achshav! – formerly USY’s news magazine, now a blog

Aliyah – literally “going up” in Hebrew; immigration of Jews from the diaspora to the Land of Israel

Am Yisrael – the people of Israel; often used to refer to Jews collectively

Bedouin – group of nomadic Arabs

Birthright Israel – free ten-day trip to Israel for young adults of Jewish heritage

Conservative Judaism – major Jewish denomination that emerged in the late 19th century; seeks to preserve Jewish tradition but more flexible than Orthodox Judaism

Druze – ethno-religious group primarily living in Syria, Lebanon, and Israel

Emet Ve’Emunah – Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism, circa 1988

Eretz Yisrael – Land of Israel; borders (which vary) as discussed in Biblical texts

Halakha – Jewish law and jurisprudence, based on the Talmud

IDF – acronym for Israel Defense Forces, the military forces of the State of Israel

Jewish Peoplehood – conception of awareness of underlying unity that makes an individual part of the Jewish people

Judea and Samaria – Israeli government term for parts of the West Bank (Area C, not including East Jerusalem)

JTS – acronym for Jewish Theological Seminary; a Conservative institution
of higher education; ordains Jewish clergy and offers other graduate programs

**Kashrut** – Jewish religious dietary laws

**Kehilot** – Hebrew for “communities”

**Klal Yisrael** – some use interchangeably with *Am Yisrael*; for others, this term has connotations related to the idea of Jewish Peoplehood

**Masada** – ancient fortress on eastern edge of Judean Desert; site of revolt by religious zealots against Roman Empire

**Masorti Judaism** – another name for Conservative Judaism, often used by Jews living outside of the United States

**Medinat Yisrael** – literally “the State of Israel” in Hebrew

**Mitzvot** – in Judaism, precepts and commandments from God

**Nakba** – literally “disaster” in Arabic, this refers to the 1948 Palestinian exodus, when more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or left their homes

**Occupied territories** – territories won/occupied by Israel in the 1967 War; originally included Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, and West Bank (including East Jerusalem); today, people often use this term to refer to the West Bank and Gaza, though they have different status both in the eyes of the State of Israel and international law

**One-state solution** – resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that entails a unitary, federal, or confederate state covering all of modern-day Israel proper and the Palestinian territories

**Peoplehood** – *see “Jewish Peoplehood”*

**Rabbinical Assembly (RA)** – international association of Conservative rabbis

**Rabbi** – Jewish scholar/teacher/communal leader

**Talmud Torah** – field of study that deals with Jewish law and texts
Torah – (1) a sacred scroll containing the Five Books of Moses, central Jewish texts (2) the law (oral and written) of God revealed to Moses (3) more generally, can refer to Jewish teaching, culture, and practice

Tzedakah – charitable giving, often seen as an obligation in Judaism

Two-state solution – resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that envisions an independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel.

USCJ – United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, a network of Conservative Jewish synagogues and communities

United Synagogue Youth (USY) – USCJ’s youth group

USY Israel Pilgrimage – USY’s summer trips to Israel

War of Independence – how Israeli historical narrative refers to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War

West Bank – landlocked territory between modern-day Israel and Jordan, now primarily under Israeli control

Yasser Arafat – former chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from 1969-2004; founding member of Fatah (political party)

Yitzhak Rabin – Israeli Prime Minister from 1974-77 and 1992-95 (when he was assassinated)

Yom Ha’atzmaut – Israel Independence Day, commemorating Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948; falls on the 5 of the Jewish month of Iyar (date on Gregorian calendar changes from year to year)

Zionism – movement for Jewish presence and/or state in Land of Israel

1967 War – also referred to as the Six-Day War, 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and Third Arab-Israeli War; fought between Israel and its neighbors (Egypt, Jordan, and Syria); when Israel won/conquered territory [Sinai, Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, West Bank (including East Jerusalem)]
CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

I felt an overwhelming love of Israel. I can’t explain it, but this trip, I have just felt something that I didn’t last time [I was in Israel], something that makes me love Israel even more.

During those seven weeks, she had developed a strong and everlasting love for Israel, and wished she hadn’t had to leave, ever. Afterwards, back in the United States, she was more than ready, and couldn’t wait, for an opportunity to see her land once again.

This trip has definitely heightened my love of Israel. I know it sounds cheesy, but it’s true. I may not know where I stand on the border/peace agreement issue, but I know that I will always love Israel.

My truest friends are my land, Israel, and my people, fellow Jews.

In the water cisterns at Masada, I really understood that I am part of the history and the future of my people.

My summer in Israel has been made complete by an understanding and sensitivity toward Eretz Yisrael, and, moreover, what it means to the Jewish people.

Now we are here towards the middle of Israel, the heart of the country, and we are sitting and thinking about our holy land, the land we have been living on for 3 weeks now. The soil we wish we could live on for the rest of our lives, this truly was an experience to remember and I always will.

The best summer of my life…Pilgrimage has been a life-changing experience for me. Becoming just one member in a family of 42 people, forging such a deep connection to my people’s past and such a deep love for our present, making friends who [sic] I care more
about than anything in this world or beyond—it changes you. I am a different person, and a better one.

It truly was the greatest experience of my life, and I promise to anyone who reads this, that if you have the opportunity to go to Israel, please take it, it changed my life and it most definitely will change yours too.

She hadn’t visited Israel --- she had experienced her.¹

These statements come from accounts recorded in the 1970s and in the 2010s by Conservative Jewish teenagers from North America who went on United Synagogue Youth (USY)-organized trips to Israel called “Pilgrimage.” Can you attribute a decade to each of the quotes? Despite the forty-some odd years separating some of them, the quotes have a striking similarity. Invoking a strong connection to and love of Israel, these quotations reflect the Zionist element of Conservative Judaism and raise the following questions: Why are quotes from throughout the years so similar? How much has USY Pilgrimage changed throughout its history? What about Conservative Jewish Zionism more broadly? To what extent does Conservative Jewish Zionism shape the goals and/or outcomes of USY Israel Pilgrimage? Is there a collective memory among USYers when it comes to Israel? What attitudes about Israel and Judaism do USYers begin trips with? Do trips impact these attitudes?

This thesis seeks to explore these questions among others, providing a look into the impact of USY trips on participants and considering the implications

¹ 1972 Fall Achshav!, 1974 Fall Achshav!, 1975 Fall Achshav!, 2013 journal (D.S.), 2013 journal (T.K.)
of trip outcomes for Conservative Judaism more broadly. Some findings, such as how trips inform attitudes about Israel and Judaism, provide insights for the broader American Jewish community about Israel education.

Before delving into the USY Israel Pilgrimage case study, let us consider the literature about diaspora tourism, collective memory, and attitude formation. Attitude formation and collective memory intersect via their connection to belief systems, and diaspora tourism provides a myriad of opportunities to examine them both. In researching a case study related to these academic areas, I show that not only does USY Israel Pilgrimage affect attitude formation, but also this attitude formation aligns with an identifiable collective memory among Conservative Jews. Trips advance a very specific type of Zionism, raising questions about Israel education that have relevance for the American Jewish community at large.

**Literature Review**

**Attitude Formation**

Attitudes are “relatively stable and consistent positive or negative views about a person, place, or thing” (Glynn, Herbst, Lindeman, O’Keefe, Shapiro 2016, 107). Attitudes tend to have emotional and cognitive elements and are often evaluative in nature. At times, they can be mixed or even conflicting (107). While some people use the words “attitude” and “opinion” interchangeably, scholars of attitude formation often make a distinction between the two. Opinions are better
understood, according to Thurstone and Chave, as “a verbal expression of attitude” (108). So, for example, an attitude might be respect for the Israel Defense Forces, while an opinion would be something like, “The Israel Defensive Forces are an essential component of Israeli society.” Underlying both attitudes and opinions are beliefs, “cognitive components that make up our understanding of the way things are” (106). Beliefs often fit together, as part of larger belief systems (106).

In order to study attitude formation, it’s important to consider expressed opinions and beliefs, since attitudes cannot be measured directly. Additionally, even once an attitude has been inferred (often based on opinions), it’s difficult to discern whether or not attitudes existed before they were measured (259-61). This study hopes to minimize uncertainty about when attitudes arose by employing pre- and post-trip surveys. Additionally, considering attitudes as they relate to a belief system (that of Conservative Judaism) will allow us to contextualize findings. Through incorporating both pre- and post-trip surveys, this study assesses changes in attitudes over time.2

It is worthwhile to consider the role community plays in attitude formation. USYers experience the influence of community (with USY being their particular community and American Conservative Jewry being their more general community) both before and during trips. The impact of community on attitudes of USYers illustrates the power of socialization, “the lifelong process by which

2 From here onward, “attitudes” and “opinions” will be used interchangeably, since articulated attitudes often manifest in the form of “opinions” or “beliefs.”
people learn norms, beliefs, and behaviors from people around [them]” (179).

Socialization can occur at a number of levels. Much of public opinion research on this topic focuses on political socialization, the way in which people form attitudes and opinions about politics (179-180). For the purpose of this thesis, it is helpful to think of USY, a subcommunity of American Conservative Judaism, as a community in which socialization occurs.3

USYers, then, could experience socialization prior to trips, which might subsequently influence how trips affect attitudes. Richard Petty and John Cacioppo believe that people who receive persuasive messages compare the information to previously absorbed information (114). For this reason, it is particularly interesting to consider youth group trips to Israel, rather than one-off experiences like Birthright—a free 10-day trip for college students and other young adults of Jewish heritage, given that most high school trip participants have spent significant time in youth group programming prior to attending the trip. This raises the questions: Does information absorbed by participants prior to their trip—for example at a USY convention or event—shape attitudes that endures post-event and into the summer? Does the socialization that occurs on summer trips align with pre-trip socialization?

With the understanding that community can influence attitude formation, it is worth further considering the relationship between the collective and individual cognitions. Does collective memory—a shared set of beliefs about the

3 For more, see Chapters Two and Three.
past—simply exist in the theoretical, or does it have tangible connections to individual attitudes?

Jan Assmann writes, “We are the stories that we are able to tell about ourselves” (2011, 209-15). Given the formative nature of collective experiences and stories on individual identity, it makes sense to think of attitude formation as it relates to collective memory. Collective memory is, like attitude formation, highly socialized. Since external factors, like communities, influence attitude formation, it is worth considering how communities come to understand their past and themselves, a process that has implications for the formation and evolution of attitudes; a common understanding of the past could influence attitude formation in the present. This has particular relevance for Conservative Jews, a community with a longstanding relationship to the State of Israel.

Collective Memory

The word “memory” signifies a relationship with the past (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, Levy 2011, 6). Understandings of what exactly constitutes the “past,” as well as the relationship between memory and the past, have changed over time. With the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, societies took a deep interest in the past. For nation-states, the past offered an opportunity to shape and demonstrate the state’s identity. In the way it used the past, nationalism created “new understandings of the relationship to it” (13). The study of memory increased in popularity after the Holocaust (29-36). In discussing the “world-wide
upsurge in memory” that occurred in the mid-20th century, French historian Pierre Nora attributed the trend to the “acceleration” and “democratization” of history, or the rapid rate of change and emergence of minority memories (2011, 438-439).

Within the field of memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs, French philosopher and sociologist of the early twentieth century, is known as the father of “collective memory.” Halbwachs frames his discussion of collective memory by asserting that social influences, often unperceived, shape our “way of looking at things” (2011, 140). For Halbwachs, the relationship between present and past is a continuum; collective memory “retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive” (2011, 142-3). Certain memories are more familiar to us because of their salience in group consciousness; not all individual memories become part of a group’s collective memory (141). As Eviatar Zerubavel writes, “The collective memory of a mnemonic community is quite different from the sum total of the personal recollections of its various individual members, as it includes only those that are commonly shared by all of them…it involves the integration of various different personal pasts into a single common past that all members of a community come to remember collectively” (1999, 96). In short, collective memory is how communities understand their past, or, as sociologist Yael Zerubavel puts it, collective memory is one “level of historical knowledge” (1995, 4).
Perhaps one of the most important elements of collective memory is, as the name implies, the collective, or group. Halbwachs believed that social arrangements didn’t just influence the structure of society but also the way a society understands its past. According to Halbwachs, it is the social frameworks in our lives that affect what and how we recall things (Olick et al. 2011, 16-22)

Other memory scholars have also discussed the importance of the society on collective memory. Eviatar Zerubavel, sociologist and founder of “cognitive sociology,” opposes the idea held by many psychologists that “the act of remembering takes place in a social vacuum” (1996, 284). He highlights the role of the social environment in forming memories: Unspoken “rules of remembrance” determine what and how deeply we remember. As additional evidence of the societal forces at play, Zerubavel points to the fact that humans remember more than they personally experience; “mnemonic communities,” including “families, organizations, [and] nations,” play a significant role in shaping our recollections (1996, 289). Similarly, historian Wulf Kansteiner writes that collective memories originate in “the communal life of the respective collective” (2011, 300-3).

Another element that plays a role in the formation of collective memory is commemoration, an important component of USY Israel Pilgrimage. While often associated with monuments, commemoration also takes place at ceremonies and during other non-ceremonial lived experiences (for example, “pilgrimage” trips) (Casey 2011, 184-7). Edward Casey, American philosopher, depicts
commemoration as “intensified remembering,” a means of reanimating elements of the past and give them meaning for members of a collective (2011, 187). Casey believes this commemoration to be most powerful when embodied and participatory (184-7). Yael Zerubavel writes about how acts of commemoration create commemorative narratives, which come together to form a group’s master commemorative narrative. The master commemorative narrative “focuses on the group’s distinct social identity and highlights its historical development” and depicts the nation as a unified group moving throughout history” (1995, 7).

One would be remiss to ignore the political aspect of collective memory. Often, present concerns influence which aspects of the past we remember and how. Furthermore, the ways in which nation-states understand their past has social and political implications. Benedict Anderson famously defined the nation-state as an “imagined political community,” a sovereign and limited entity in which most members do not know each other personally but hold on to “the image of their communion” (1995, 6). Nation-states use memory, specifically understandings of time and space, to entrench their power (Olick et al. 2011, 13). Maurice Halbwachs discusses how nations often “immobilize time” in a way that “imposes on its members the illusion that, in a given duration of a constantly changing world, certain zones have acquired a relative stability and balance in which nothing essential is altered” (2011, 149). Similarly, Ernest Renan points to two core elements of the nation’s “soul,” one of which individuals possess “in common…a rich legacy of memories” (2011, 80-3). Members of the nation-state
often become willing to make certain sacrifices in the future, he argues, based on common understandings of sacrifices that members of the nation have made in the past. Smith and Halbwachs provide an understanding of how collective memory is formed in nationalist contexts, and Renan extends this idea to suggest what this might mean for present-day action. By situating individuals’ understanding of the past within a larger, consistent, and communal framework, nation-states use the past to engender unity among and loyalty to the state in the present.

The State of Israel serves as a contemporary example of the close relationship between collective memory and nationalism. Numerous scholars, including Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Barbie Zelizer, and Edna Lomsky-Feder, have done extensive work on Israeli collective memory, much of it focusing on religion and various forms of commemoration. Yael Zerubavel, too, wrote about these motifs; Y. Zerubavel’s work, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, has become prominent in studies of Israeli collective memory. Zerubavel traces how the Zionist understanding of the past evolved from a countermemory to the predominant understanding of the past in Israeli society today. While its rhetoric, critical of Jewish religion and life in the diaspora, often contrasted Jewish memory, the Zionist countermemory adopted (rather than abandoned) and subsequently reshaped much of the Jewish past (1995, 13-36). Zerubavel points to the Zionist “periodization of the past,” in which Zionists reframed the two major periods of Jewish history, antiquity and exile, as two
homogenous, contrasting periods. In doing so, they defined Jewish history vis-à-vis nationalism above all else. To Zionists, nationalist revival would be the third major period of Jewish history (13-36).

While much work has been done about Israeli collective memory in Israel, fewer academics have looked at collective memory among Zionists living outside the state. Zionism provides unique opportunities for expanding collective memory studies beyond geographic boundaries; a significant number of individuals who affiliate with this national identity live outside of the nation-state itself. Much has been written about formation of collective memory and nationalism in Israel, but what about among diaspora Jews who identify as Zionist? Scholars of American Jewish history have traced the evolution of Zionism as an ideology in the American Jewish community, sometimes even discussing identity. This thesis, however, seeks to explicitly explore the intersection of American Jewish relationships with Israel and formation of attitudes and collective memory. Specifically, this thesis looks at youth trips to Israel as a site of socialization, influencing collective memory and attitude formation. Before proceeding to a discussion of diaspora tourism (relevant for the case study of USY Israel Pilgrimage), it is worth saying a few words about the importance of memory to the Jewish people.

Religions that incorporate collective memory link the events of the past to their fate in the future. French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger writes, “By placing tradition, that is to say reference to a chain of belief, at the centre of the
question of religion, the future of religion is immediately associated with the problem of collective memory” (2011, 382). Many would say that the Jewish religion does just this, using the past to inform the present and the future. In his seminal work, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi traces the relationship of Jews to history and memory throughout time. In short, for much of their existence, the Jewish people prioritized memory over history. Even Judaism’s foundational text, the Hebrew Bible, stresses the importance of memory, often even commanding it (Yerushalmi, 1982). The word *Zakhor*—a Hebrew verb meaning “Remember!”—appears over 169 times in the Hebrew Bible (5).

In addition to the imperative to remember in Jewish religious texts, events of history have also heightened Jews’ tendency to emphasize memory. A historically persecuted people, Jews experienced threats of expulsion and extermination, which left a permanent mark on the Jewish collective consciousness. Such trauma shapes a group’s self-perception and identity. Sociologists Ron Eyerman and Jeffry Alexander both discuss cultural trauma, which can be felt by the entire collective even though only certain individuals experienced the trauma firsthand. This not only shapes “group consciousness” but also affects how the group behaves moving forward (2011, 304-6; 2011, 307-10). For example, the trauma elements of collective memory often shape group members’ orientation towards different situations, which can have implications for subsequent actions. Sociologist Michael Schudson writes that vicarious trauma
“intill[s] in newcomers…not only information about the past but appropriate emotional orientations to it” (2011, 289). Similarly, a statement by Robert Bellah and colleagues points out that “painful stories of shared suffering” can be even more powerful than success stories in fostering deep identities (2011, 229). In short, trauma can act as a mobilizing agent.

This is particularly relevant for discussions of the relationship drawn between the Holocaust and the state of Israel by the American Zionist community. While much has been said about the role of the Holocaust in Jewish communal trauma, Peter Novick believes that the rise in focus on the Holocaust among American Jews can be explained by geopolitical factors rather than trauma, at least in isolation. Novick refers to “victim culture” as an important background condition for increased focus on the Holocaust over the past few decades but attributes most of this shift to the Holocaust acting as “a common denominator of American Jewish identity” at a time when anxiety about Jewish continuity spiked (1999, 7-8). American Jewish identity became increasingly associated with Israel. As Novick writes, “Holocaust awareness was promoted [by Jews within the American community at large] to mobilize support for a beleaguered Israel” (268-9). The role of the Holocaust, and specifically generational trauma, has impacted the way the American Jewish community relates to Israel. This does not explicitly play a role in Conservative Jewish ideology around Israel (discussed at greater length in Chapter Two) but it has, without a doubt, affected the psyche of the American Jewish community at large. Having discussed certain aspects of Jewish
memory, I will now consider one specific means of shaping collective memory: diaspora tourism.

**Diaspora Tourism**

A diaspora community, Jews have had a dynamic relationship to the Land of Israel throughout history. Jews in America historically related to the Land of Israel in different ways, depending on denomination, family origin, etc. With the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Israel education in the American Jewish community (often regardless of denomination) became about the new state, not just the land of Israel (Zakai 2014; Ezrachi 2015). Though the practice of Israel education has not always been specific and intentional in methodology, “theory about why to teach American Jews about Israel has coalesced around a few major ideas,” says Sivan Zakai (2014, 298). Much of education initially focused on encouraging Jews to make *aliyab*, or to immigrate to Israel. In the 1950s and 1960s, the goals of Israel education expanded to include strengthening bonds between the two major centers of Jewish life (America and Israel) and, in the face of concerns about assimilation in America, focusing on the commitment to Jewish survival (Zakai, 2014). In the 1980s and 1990s, “personal and Jewish growth” became the focus of much experiential Israel education (Ezrachi 2015, 213).

This focus on individual growth relates to discussion of cultivating Jewish “identity” among young people. While this has been a prominent goal of Jewish
education for some time, little consensus exists around what exactly “Jewish identity” is (Horowitz 2002). The term initially emerged in the 1950s and gained attention in the 1960s due to increased emphasis on Jewish survival and particularism, in part a response to the Six-Day War and domestic trends like an “ethnic revival” (Krasner 2016, 132, 149). Given the focus on “Jewish identity,” it should come as little surprise that many studies have attempted to gauge Jewish identity. They have primarily assessed Jewish identity as it relates to activity levels when it comes to Jewish practice, intermarriage, etc. Bethamie Horowitz offers the critique that such studies fail to directly consider “Jewish identity as understood in the psychological sense” (2002, 28). While this study does not explicitly focus on identity, one’s attitudes and collective memory certainly have relevance for discussions about the psychological components of identity.

Attempts to develop the identity of young Jews range from classroom settings to youth groups and summer camps. When it comes to Israel, American Jewish youth groups have been bringing teenagers there for almost as long as the state has existed. Groups like USY and Young Judea began taking teenagers to Israel in 1956 and 1951, respectively. The Reform movement also began running trips to Israel around the same time (Kelner 2012, 31). While USY’s first trip only had 11 participants, participation grew to over 60 USYers within two years. Enrollment during the 1960s ranged from 100 to 150 USYers. After the Six-Day War in 1967, annual participation rose to over 250 USYers. By the 1980s, trips had become known as “Israel Experience” programs. As the trips developed,
USY (and other trip providers) began diversifying trips, adding components like the aforementioned week in Poland. Trips for high schoolers, including USY programs, have continued into the 21st century. Now, however, there are also organized trips to Israel for Jews in their late teens and 20s, most notably Birthright (Kelner 2002).

The rise of tourism among young American Jews can be attributed to efforts to fight assimilation by developing Jewish identity and attempts to develop relationships with Israel (whether conscious or not). Caryn Aviv and David Shneer write about the relatively recent phenomenon of viewing Israel (and Poland) as “important places for creating and/or solidifying rooted, global Jewish identities” (2007, 68). In 1990, the Council of Jewish Federations conducted the National Jewish Population Survey, which included data that suggested “declining group cohesion” and sense of “Jewish identity” in the United States. Some came to see tourism to Israel as a way to cultivate this Jewish identity. Aviv and Shneer assert that people use the “diaspora business,” diaspora Jews traveling to sites of historical significance, to create “a reinvigorated or newly minted passion and excitement for what it means to be Jewish,” a feeling which participants are supposed to “translate…into action” (72, 71).

Some believe that attempts at political socialization serve as another motivating factor for running youth trips to Israel. Not only does Shaul Kelner accredit tourism with the power of helping teenagers understand who they are, but also, he addresses the political implications of the trips (2012, 20). Kelner
argues that while trip organizers might frame the purpose of trips as “ethnic or religious socialization—or, even better, Jewish education,” trips are, in actuality, “an effort in political socialization” (xx). One way in which such trips do so, according to E. Zerubavel, is by “bring[ing] mnemonic communities into closer ‘contact’ with their collective past” (2003, 42). Essentially, using collective memory, trips foster nationalist sentiment. As Jasmin Habib points out, “nationalism isn’t just territorial; nationalism is highly socially mediated” (2004, 19). Youth trips to Israel can serve as a prime case study for the intersection of collective memory and attitude formation.

Most past research on diaspora youth tourism to Israel has (1) been primarily qualitative, often taking an ethnographic approach and (2) looked at a relatively small window of time. In 1994, Harvey Goldberg and Samuel Heilman conducted ethnographies about NFTY Safari and a Young Judea trip, respectively (Kelner 2002). No major, comprehensive research about teen trips to Israel has been published since. With the rise of young adult travel to Israel, other research has emerged. In 2013, Jewish professional Scott Aaron did research on Birthright and Alternative Spring Break trips by conducting interviews of 10 students (Aaron, 2015). In 2008 and 2010, two books came out about Birthright: Ten Days of Birthright Israel: A Journey into Young Adult Jewish Identity by Leonard Saxe and Barry Chazan and Tours that Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israel Birthright Tourism by

4 For research on diaspora tourism to Israel for adults, see Jasmin Habib’s Israel, Diaspora, and the Roots of National Belonging. Research on Israeli youth tourism, specifically to Poland, can be found in Jackie Feldman’s Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag.
Shaul Kelner. In light of the recent heavy focus on Birthright, this study returns to the roots of youth tourism to Israel—high school trips—and considers their impact and significance.

Certain aspects of past research are particularly salient when considering formation of attitudes and collective memory among USYers. Perhaps most important, academics have previously argued for the importance of the collective, or group, in the context of diaspora tourism. Steven M. Cohen and Susan Wall include establishing “group cohesiveness” early on as an indicator of a successful trip (1993, 52-3). Furthermore, group leaders have found that it’s “easier to work with groups that are reasonably homogeneous with respect to Jewish background, familiarity with Israel, level of emotional and intellectual maturity” as it makes designing content easier and the content itself more effective (20-1). A shared background could lead to participants entering trips with a common collective memory. While familiarity with Israel and knowledge level might vary slightly among participants, high school trips are often more uniform in their membership than trips like Birthright. USY Israel Pilgrimage, for example, has fairly homogenous participants; almost all fall within a three-year age range and belong to the same denomination of Judaism. This is important to remember when considering collective memory among USYers, as sense of group identity and collective memory are tightly intertwined.

Scott Aaron speaks to the powerful impact that the collective can have on the individual during trips. He found that it was not specific peer interactions, but
rather the group as a whole, that impacted individuals; Aaron reinforces that “group belonging” and “group identity” are “central to personal meaning-making” (2015, 360). Similarly, Shaul Kelner writes extensively about the difference between touring with a group and touring individually. The peer group functions as a socializing agent “that mediates the encounter with place and establishes norms around its interpretation” (2012, 145).

Staff members, tour guides, and other adults also shape the trip experience. Not only do they serve as role models, but they can also cue certain attitudes and opinions among participants through what is known in psychology as mental heuristics (Aaron 2015, 362). Glynn et al. define mental heuristics as “shortcuts for reaching a plausible…conclusion with far less effort than a complete cognitive analysis requires” (2016, 114). Participants may follow their staff members’ lead when developing attitudes and opinions. Additionally, adults have the ability to influence the emotions of participants, which cannot be separated from attitude and opinion formation. From conducting interviews of Israeli tour guides, Shaul Kelner found that “they often speak of creating emotions,” which can be mobilized to create “a sense of obligation and responsibility” towards the collective, be it the tour group, Conservative Jews, or the Jewish people at large (2012, 65, 151). For some, this even manifests as a sense of responsibility for Israel’s future.

Sociologist Steven M. Cohen has also found that trips become more impactful when the participants have attended or will attend other Jewish
educational experiences (2007, 45-6). This has relevance when considering USY, as many participants on summer trips were previously involved with local chapters and attended regional events.

As far as participants’ perceptions of the trip’s impact, Kelner found that participants frequently commented on the “life changing” nature of the trip (2012, 185). He qualifies that “We can speak of diaspora homeland tours as life changing only in a narrative sense” (190). Basically, USYers report impactfulness, but the extent to which trips have a tangible, long-term impact is harder to measure.

Relevant to discussions of long-term impact is the ever-changing nature of collective memory. Barbie Zelizer refers to remembering as “a process that is constantly unfolding, changing, and transforming” and warns that “we cannot predict the instances in which memory takes on new transformations”; memory is “not necessarily static or stable (1995, 218-21). This means that the impact on collective memory immediately after trips might be different than the collective memory five years out, or ten years out. Therefore, this study, which will be explained in greater depth momentarily, does not intend to measure long-term impacts of trips on behavior, but rather how trips impact attitudes and collective memory in the short-term.

Youth Trips to Israel: USY Pilgrimage

The time has come to revisit teen travel to Israel, especially as it relates to attitude formation and collective memory. In both secular academic and Jewish
communal research, there are gaps to be filled; not only does the existing literature fail to address teenagers after the 1990s, but also numerous academics have mentioned the need for future research about young people traveling to Israel (Zakai, 2014). Meanwhile, Jewish youth organizations—including Ramah Camps, Habonim Dror, and various Orthodox organizations—have hired people like Steven M. Cohen to collect data on the efficacy of trips. USY, however, has not conducted similar studies about their summer programs recently.

Much of the previous research has been conducted during or after trips. Without assessing pre-trip attitudes, past research does not fully capture change over the course of trips. By collecting data both before and after USY summer trips, this study will address whether or not trips form attitudes and, if so, what attitudes they form. Interviews, itineraries, newsletter articles, journal entries, and other primary sources will contextualize findings, helping us to understand the nature and extent of collective memory about Israel among Conservative Jews in America. In short, this thesis returns to looking at high school trips, taking both a qualitative and quantitative approach and considering current trips within the context of Conservative Jewish ideology.

USY, an acronym for United Synagogue Youth, is “USCJ’s youth movement for Conservative Jewish teens across North America.” The organization emerged on the national level in 1951 (25th Anniversary Achshav! 1975, 4). Open to teenagers in grades 8-12, USY is organized at numerous levels,

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\[\text{For more, see Steven M. Cohen’s C.V. http://huc.edu/directory/steven-m-cohen}\]

\[\text{http://usy.org/about-usy/}\]
with chapters based around synagogues and other local communities. The
chapters are grouped into regions, of which there are currently 16. Together, the
16 regions make up international USY, for which there is an annual gathering.
Additionally, international USY offers summer trips all over the world.

USY Israel Pilgrimage, USY’s summer trip to Israel, has existed since 1956.
Though the length and add-on options of trips have changed over time, the core
elements remain the same. Now, USY sends five to six groups of, on average, 35
teenagers, to Israel every summer. Participants must be Jewish according to
Conservative Jewish standards and be rising high school juniors, high school
seniors, or college freshmen. USY hires staff members and coordinates trip
content. USY advertises the trip by claiming that, “for more than 55 years, USY
Summer Experience has provided life-changing summer travel opportunities.” In
promotional materials and online, USY encourages potential participants, “Now
it’s your turn, see where it takes you!”

This thesis considers where Pilgrimage “takes” USYers, specifically looking at attitude formation and collective memory. What impact do trips actually have on participants?

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7 http://usy.org/escape
Research Questions and Hypotheses

This thesis raises and seeks to address the following questions: Is there a collective memory about Israel among USY Pilgrimage participants? Do trips affect attitude formation? Based on the efficacy of diaspora tourism when it comes to socialization, one would expect trips to have some influence. To better understand the ways in which trips might be impactful, these research questions can be broken down into four hypotheses.

**Hypothesis One:** There is collective memory—a cohesive beliefs system—about Israel among USY Pilgrimage participants. The thesis seeks to understand what, specifically, this collective memory includes, should it exist. Additionally, do USYers go into trips with collective memory? In order to gauge what this collective memory might entail, it is important to consider Conservative Jewish ideology, which will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

**Hypothesis Two:** Trips affect collective memory. This could occur whether or not USYers begin trips attached to some sort of collective memory. If they do not, do trips instill in USYers collective memory? If USYers enter trips with preexisting collective memory, how do trips affect it?

**Hypothesis Three:** Trips affect attitudes. Which attitudes, specifically, are affected? This thesis looks at general attitudes about Judaism and Israel, as well as more specific attitudes. The latter category includes self-reported knowledge about Israeli history and geopolitics, general (not Israel/Palestine-specific) foreign policy attitudes, and relationship to various components of Jewish practice and
identity. It would be possible to see attitude formation in some areas but not others.

**Hypothesis Four:** Trip outcomes align with USY’s mission. Based on findings to research questions connected to Hypothesis Three, we can discern trip impact. It is then possible to compare this impact to the expressed mission of USY’s head staff. USY staff has a two-fold mission: developing participants’ relationships to Israel and to Conservative Jewish practice. It could be that USY succeeds in one, both, or neither of its goals.

**Methodology**

This thesis relies heavily on primary sources (1) to trace the history both of USY trips and Conservative Jewish Zionism (2) to understand USY head staff’s goals and intentions when running trips and (3) to learn how USY structures trips, hires staff, and creates itineraries. I conducted interviews with USY head staff members to obtain both institutional memory and logistical information about current trips. I used primary sources to better understand the nature and content of trips throughout time: Old USY newsletters (titled “Achshav!”) include snapshots of past Pilgrimage trips through participants’ testimonies upon return. Similarly, journal entries from more recent trips capture participants’ reactions to the experience. Lastly, I found detailed information about trip content, including how it has (or has not) changed over time, in itineraries from trips spanning a number of decades.
To most accurately assess change over the course of USY trips, I used a panel design to survey current USYers twice. USYers completed one survey prior to departure for USY Israel Pilgrimage and one survey upon return, both during the summer of 2017. The two surveys included detailed, diverse questions about attitudes (about Judaism, Israel, foreign policy, etc.) and experiences (in USY and on USY trips). Wesleyan University’s Institutional Review Board approved the survey content, letter to potential subjects, and distribution process. Responses to these original surveys are the main source of data for this thesis.

At the end of May 2017, a few weeks before USYers left on summer programs, Michelle Rich, Director of Teen Travel and Programs at USY, sent an email to the parents/guardians of every USYer going on Israel Pilgrimage in the summer of 2017 (See Appendix 1). Attached was a letter from the researchers explaining the project to parents/guardians and USYers and asking them to email me if their USYer was willing to participate. Upon expressing interest, USYers (along with parents/guardians) had to sign consent forms. USYers received links to the pre- and post- trip surveys via email from a designated thesis email account; each participant received a unique ID and corresponding link to the survey to protect anonymity. Surveys were created and administered through Qualtrics.

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8 Project ID number: 20170406-tkaplan-srthesis
9 tripsurvey17@wesleyan.edu
Out of the just over 150 USYers participating in Pilgrimage in 2017, 26 USYers filled out a pre- and/or post-trip survey (about 17%). After removing incomplete responses, I had complete pre-trip and corresponding post-trip responses from 88.46% of survey participants (23 USYers). All subsequent quantitative data comes from these 23 sets of responses.

Questions differed in content and style, and I gathered data about a number of topics; questions gauged USYers’ attitudes about Judaism, Israel, and foreign policy. Some questions assessed self-reported knowledge about particular items, while other questions sought to ascertain beliefs. To avoid survey bias, I randomized answers to questions and the order in which questions appeared. Additionally, all Likert scale questions had two versions (presented “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” and vice versa).

I used a number of methods and tests to analyze results. When looking at pre-trip responses or post-trip responses in isolation, I considered percentages or fractions. To analyze change over time, from before participating in trips to after, I used three statistical tests: paired samples t-test, Wilcoxon signed rank test, and sign test. Paired samples t-tests were used to examine a continuous dependent variable when there was an independent variable being measured both pre- and post-trip to determine whether or not the mean difference between the paired

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10 While it is not known why certain USYers chose to respond to the survey while others did not, it should be noted that this could skew responses to be from more enthusiastic and/or participatory USYers. The hypotheses of this survey do not depend much on the sample being random, so this should not have serious implications for the validity of findings.

11 See Appendix 2 for survey questions
observations was statistically significantly different from zero. When examining an ordinal dependent variable or working with data that failed an assumption test, I used either a Wilcoxon signed rank test or a sign test. The Wilcoxon signed rank test, the nonparametric equivalent to the paired samples t-test, determines whether there is a difference in median responses between paired or matched observations. The sign test has a similar function and is used when the distribution of differences between paired observations is neither normal nor symmetrical, respectively. I ran these tests in SPSS.

**Findings**

I find that trips have an impact on collective memory and attitudes, reinforcing the former and, subsequently, impacting the latter in diverse ways. USYers go into trips with collective memory, and that collective memory reflects Conservative Jewish Zionism (Hypothesis One). That being said, the question becomes whether or not trips affect collective memory. Trips do not dramatically change this collective memory but rather reinforce it, in part through perpetuating a narrative common to Conservative Jewish spaces (Hypothesis Two). Participants leave trips with similarly positive general attitudes about Judaism and Israel as well as pro-Israel political views.

When it comes to attitudes, I find that attitudes align with the aforementioned collective memory. This makes sense given the relationship between attitudes and beliefs and the fact that collective memory is, in a way, a set
of beliefs. Like collective memory, the general attitudes do not change but, rather, are reinforced. More specific attitudes, however, do change as a result of Pilgrimage (Hypothesis Three). Participants perceive that they are more knowledgeable about events and individuals that fit into a Zionist narrative about Israel’s history, and they develop foreign policy attitudes affiliated with militant internationalism. Additionally, their Jewish priorities shift; when asked about aspects of Judaism that have personal significance, participants, on average, place a greater value (both statistically and relative to other items) on history and the State of Israel than they did before the trip.

Given the changes to knowledge levels and foreign policy attitudes, I find that USY succeeds in its goal of developing participants’ relationship with Israel. However, based on the question about aspects of Judaism, it becomes clear that USY does not seem to succeed when it comes to developing USYers’ relationships to other components of Conservative Judaism. USY achieves one part of its two-pronged goal (Hypothesis Four).

Outline

The previously summarized literature on attitude formation, collective memory, and diaspora tourism will serve as a backdrop for my case study, USY Israel Pilgrimage. Through the integration of primary source analysis, interviews, and original, quantitative survey data, the subsequent chapters will explore the following: Is there is a collective memory about Israel among USY Pilgrimage
participants? Do trips affect collective memory? Do trips affect attitude formation? What attitudes, specifically, are affected? Given findings about collective memory and attitude formation, do trip outcomes align with USY’s mission?

In order to discern whether or not USY achieves its goals and to understand USYers’ attitudes going into trips, it is important to understand both the goals of USY staff for trips and the ideological underpinnings of the trips themselves. Chapter Two covers the ideology of Conservative Judaism since its inception, relying heavily on primary source documents and interviews. This chapter unpacks the tenets of Conservative Judaism, with a focus on the role of Zionism in Conservative Judaism. Chapter Two then reports on staff goals for USY Pilgrimage and raises the question of whether or not USY achieves its goals for the trip.

Using original data from the pre- and post-trip surveys, Chapter Three seeks to answer whether or not USYers have a collective memory about Israel and, if so, at what point in time? (Pre-trip? Post-trip? Both?) First, the chapter discusses USYers’ attitudes pre-trip. The survey does not just look at attitudes about Israel, but also about Judaism and foreign policy. By ascertaining pre-trip attitudes, we can assess whether or not USYers have a common set of beliefs pre-trip. Consistency between said beliefs and Conservative Jewish ideology would reflect the presence of collective memory about Israel among Conservative Jews. The second part of Chapter Three compares pre- and post-trip answers to the
same questions, gauging the extent to which (if at all) trips impacted general attitudes.

Chapter Four focuses on the areas in which there was attitude change: self-reported knowledge of Israeli history, general (not specific to Israel/Palestine) foreign policy attitudes, and relationship to various aspects of Judaism. The findings in Chapter Four not only reveal the impact of USY Pilgrimage on attitude formation, but also answer the question of whether or not USY succeeds in its goals.

Chapter Five will summarize the findings from chapters three and four and discuss limitations of the survey design. Additionally, it will address implications of this research for relevant academic fields and for USY as an organization. The thesis will conclude, in light of these findings, with implications and suggestions for the American Jewish Community.
CHAPTER TWO:

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM, ZIONISM, AND
USY ISRAEL PILGRIMAGE

I’d like us all to affirm clearly and without equivocation—no matter what our opinions about Israeli policy—that our connection to the State of Israel and its citizens is fundamental, nonnegotiable, and unbreakable.

– Chancellor (of JTS) Arnold M. Eisen, 2011

Introduction

USY Israel Pilgrimage does not occur in a vacuum. As an official trip of USY, a Conservative Jewish organization, Pilgrimage both embodies and has implications for Conservative Jewish ideology; to understand Pilgrimage, one must first understand its broader context. Knowledge of the goals and ideological foundation of USY Pilgrimage will allow us to assess (in later chapters) whether or not USY meets its goals. Additionally, a deeper understanding of the beliefs behind USY could help contextualize USYers’ pre-trip attitudes, discussed at length in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two surveys the ideological tenets of Conservative Judaism, followed by a deep dive into the Zionism of Conservative Judaism. I explain how Conservative Jewish tenets, specifically God, halakha, tefillah, learning, klal Yisrael, and the State of Israel, have remained relatively consistent throughout history.
Conservative Judaism has always been Zionist, specifically placing significance on both the religious significance of the State of Israel and on the dual importance of Jewish presence in the State of Israel and in the diaspora. After laying an ideological foundation Chapter Two addresses how USY Israel Pilgrimage fits into this picture, concluding with a discussion of USY staff’s goals for Pilgrimage: Head staff members seek not only do develop USYers’ relationship with Israel, but also to deepen their Conservative Jewish practice/lifestyle.

**Tenets of Conservative Judaism**

Conservative Judaism, a denomination of Judaism that seeks to preserve Jewish tradition but also adapt Judaism to contemporary circumstances, originated in Europe during the late nineteenth century. Across the Atlantic in the United States, individuals dissatisfied with Reform Judaism’s move away from tradition created a rabbinical school, The Jewish Theological Seminary, in 1887. With waves of immigration from Eastern Europe, support for this new type of Judaism, which balanced tradition and modernity, grew. Other Conservative institutions and organizations emerged in the twentieth century (Dorff 1997, 9-36).

Today, Conservative Judaism in America does not have one centralized body but rather a variety of organizations and products that share an underlying ideology and sometimes coordinate. One of these organizations is USCJ, a network for Conservative kehilot (Hebrew for “communities”). USCJ supports
synagogues and serves as the umbrella organization for Nativ, a gap year program in Israel; the Conservative Yeshiva, also in Israel; and USY, a youth group for North American teenagers.

Despite the prevalence of Conservative Judaism in American Jewish life, few comprehensive, self-reflective works by Conservative Jewish organizations exist. This “absence of Conservative self-definition” was noted as early as the 1950s (Eisen 2015, ii). Conservative institutions like the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) and United Synagogue published charters and constitutions, respectively, upon their inception, but no collective piece on Conservative ideology existed until the 1980s. The heads of the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary created a Commission on the Philosophy of Conservative Judaism, which produced *Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism.* This statement reflects the input of thought leaders from major arms of the Conservative Jewish world, including the following: Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbinical Assembly, United Synagogue of America, Cantors’ Assembly, Jewish Educators’ Assembly, and Women’s League for Conservative Judaism (Dorff 1997, 199-200). The statement is divided into three sections: “God in the World,” “The Jewish People,” and “Living a Life of Torah.”

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12 While some talk about the “Conservative Movement,” there is not a singular, centralized body in the Conservative Jewish world. Rather, there are various organizations, some of which formally affiliate with or oversee others. Despite different structures and goals, these organizations share similar ideological tenets. It is therefore more appropriate to talk about “Conservative Judaism” than the “Conservative Movement.”
“God in the World” begins by stating that Judaism “cannot be detached from” a belief in God and the oneness of God, “affirm[ing] the critical importance of belief in God” but not “specify[ing] the particulars of that belief” (1990, 17-19). Similarly, the statement supports the idea of revelation but goes on to explain that revelation can be understood in different ways (19). Emet Ve-Emunah cites theological, communal, and moral reasons for upholding halakha (Jewish law) and simultaneously includes content about circumstances in which change in halakha is necessary (20-3). The section on God concludes with discussions of “The Problem of Evil” and “Eschatology: Our Vision of the Future” (23-7). In short, the first of the three sections highlights the importance of God and Jewish law while acknowledging the evolution and/or pluralism of both.

“The Jewish People” discusses the idea of covenant, the State of Israel, Israel-diaspora relations, the Jewish people (klal Yisrael),13 relations between Jews and people of other religions, and social justice (Emet Ve’emunah 1990, 27-38). In the section about the State of Israel, Emet Ve-Emunah asserts the idea that Israel should be a Jewish and Democratic state.14 According to Emet Ve-Emunah, Conservative Jews believe that a Jewish state is one that “foster[s] Jewish religious

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13 Emet Ve-Emunah affirms, “all Jews, irrespective of philosophical or religious persuasion, are part of one people, Am Yisrael.”
14 What, exactly, a Jewish state is has been widely contested since before the State of Israel’s existence. For some, this means having a majority-Jewish population, for others this means having Jewish culture permeate society. Others believe that Jewish tradition or law should influence the state’s legal and/or justice systems. These are just some of the many ways of interpreting Zionism.
and cultural values” (emphasis mine). They support the state having a “Jewish character and ambience” but not using coercion when it comes to religious practice (29).

Not only do Conservative Jews believe Israel should be a Jewish state, but they also believe that it has religious significance for their own Judaism. The subsection titled “Conservative Judaism and Israel” reads,

We staunchly support the Zionist ideal and take pride in the achievement of the State of Israel in the gathering of our people from the lands of our dispersion and in rebuilding a nation. The State of Israel and its well-being remain a major concern of the Conservative movement, as of all loyal Jews. To be sure, the Conservative movement has not always agreed with Israel’s positions on domestic and foreign affairs. We have often suffered from discriminatory policies, but we remain firm and loving supporters of the State of Israel economically, politically, and morally.

…Each year, thousands of our teenagers visit and study in Israel to be inspired at the sources of our faith, and thousands of adults visit on pilgrimages and synagogue tours.

Conservative liturgy takes cognizance of the rebirth of Israel and Yom Ha’atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) is observed joyfully in our congregations (32).

From this excerpt, we can discern the religious significance attributed to the nation-state of Israel by North American Conservative Jews. Conservative
philosophy conceives of the creation of the State of Israel as “rebirth,” harkening back to pre-exilic times and invoking the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In short, the section on “The Jewish People” describes how Jews should relate to one another and to non-Jews and also devotes a significant amount of space to discussing the communal and religious importance of the State of Israel.

The last of the three sections, “Living a Life of Torah,” discusses women, the Jewish home, tefillah (prayer), Talmud Torah (Jewish study), and “The Ideal Conservative Jew” (38-46). These subsections suggest that Conservative Jewish practice prioritizes egalitarianism, keeping a Jewish home, praying, and studying. Or, to put Conservative Jewish priorities in Emet Ve-Emunah’s terms, the “Ideal Conservative Jew” is “willing,” “learning,” and “striving.” In other words, the Ideal Conservative Jew observes mitzvot (the commandments), Jewish holidays, kashrut (Jewish dietary laws); learns from/about traditional texts and contemporary Jewish thought; and is open to taking on more mitzvot and grappling with new knowledge and ideas (45-6).

These three sections depict a Conservative Judaism that prioritizes God, halakha, the Jewish people (united, regardless of ideology, as klal Yisrael), the state of Israel, prayer, and study. Other mentioned but less emphasized aspects of Conservative Judaism include support for “pluralism among Jews,” opposition to proselytizing, pursuit of “social action,” and an affirmation of “the equality of men and women.”
The aforementioned tenets of Conservative Judaism have remained fairly consistent. In 2015, the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Arnold M. Eisen wrote *Conservative Judaism: Today and Tomorrow*. He did so with the understanding of the dearth of unified Conservative statements of self-definition, writing, “Chancellors of the Jewish Theological Seminary have been driven to try and fill this lacuna” (Eisen 2015, ii). In his introduction, he writes, “Like previous leaders of the Movement, I have stressed covenant, faith, and peoplehood; *Halakah* and *Aggadah*; mitzvah, learning, and *tefillah*; responsibility to Jews and to the world” (iv). In doing so, he reaffirms the centrality of Jewish law, prayer, learning, and peoplehood to Conservative Judaism. He also includes a discussion of the importance of the State of Israel.

While there are many facets of Conservative Judaism, the following tenets have clearly been at the forefront throughout history and today: God, *halakha*, *tefillah*, learning, *klal Yisrael*, and the State of Israel. These elements will be used as a metric when, in Chapters Three and Four, we account for (1) the extent to which USYers identify as Conservative Jews and (2) how closely Conservative-identifying USYers’ practices align with Conservative Jewish ideology.

**The Zionism of Conservative Judaism**

The tenet of Conservative Jewish ideology regarding the importance of the State of Israel has a long and unique history. The following section explores various aspects of the Conservative Jewish relationship with Israel, highlighting
the value placed on the dual importance of the State of Israel and the Diaspora; *klal Yisrael*, or Jewish peoplehood, as it relates to the State of Israel; and the religious significance of the State of Israel for Conservative Jews. After understanding theoretical Conservative Jewish beliefs about Israel, we can then look at survey results and discern the extent to which these beliefs manifest among USYers.

While the Reform and Orthodox movements in America initially opposed Zionism, most of Conservative Judaism’s leaders supported Zionism from the beginning (Friesel 1998, 176; Cohen 2003, 58). Even those who did not initially back the idea of a Jewish state encouraged Jewish presence in and influence on Palestine in some form. Despite slightly varying visions for a Jewish presence in Palestine among Conservative leaders during the early years of Zionism, support for what would become the State of Israel has always been a Conservative Jewish principle. In fact, Lloyd P. Gartner refers to Zionism as a “foundation stone of Conservative Judaism” (1998, 205).

Rabbis Solomon Schechter and Israel Friedlander, two strong, influential Zionist voices at the Jewish Theological Seminary during the pre-state years, helped shape the course of Conservative Jewish Zionism. Schechter, a religious and cultural Zionist, took an approach to Zionism that was crucial for Conservative Judaism in three ways. First, Schechter made Zionism more palatable for American Jews by absolving them of the responsibility to make *aliyah* (move to Palestine), and not questioning the future of Jewish presence in the
diaspora (as foundational Zionists, like Herzl, had) (Cohen 2003, 59). Schechter believed in the importance of a Jewish presence both in the diaspora and in Israel. Second, he made it clear that his support for Zionism was to become the party line of JTS (192). Third, and perhaps most important for discussions of Conservative Jewish Zionism, Schechter infused territorial Zionism with religious significance.15 Schechter identified himself as a Zionist who “lay more stress on the religious-national aspects of Zionism than on any other feature particular to it.” He believed that “the rebirth of Israel’s national consciousness, and the revival of [the people] Israel’s religion, or, to use a shorter term, the revival of Judaism, are inseparable” (Gartner 1998, 205). In short, Schechter believed that Judaism’s future depended on and was interconnected with the creation of a Jewish nation-state. Naomi W. Cohen attributes making “Zionism an integral component of Conservative Judaism and Conservative Jewry an integral component of the American Zionist movement” to Schechter (Cohen 2003, 58).

Similar to Schechter, Friedlander—one of the strongest Zionist voices in Conservative Judaism at the time—believed that Zionism could counter assimilation and reinvigorate diaspora Jewry (Friesel 1998, 177). The legacy of Schechter’s emphasis on the religious aspects of Zionism and both of the rabbis’ belief that Zionism would be good for diaspora Judaism can still be found in Conservative Zionist ideology today.

15 From the inception of Zionism in the late nineteenth century, there have always been numerous strands, including political, socialist, cultural, religious, etc.
Among Conservative Jews, Zionism’s early appeal extended beyond JTS’s ivory tower. Congregational leaders frequently used Zionism to build morale (Friesel 1998, 210). By the 1940s, most Conservative synagogues “were firmly aligned with Zionism” (214). Conservative clergy and lay leaders often served as presidents and officials of Zionist organizations (208). Some attribute Conservative Judaism’s alignment with Zionism to their respective orientations towards the Jewish past: As summarized by Gartner, both “possess as a common basis the unavoidable encounter between Jewish tradition and the modern world of science, historicism, and nationalism and the synthesis that each movement effected between the old and the new” (209).

Despite the widespread appeal of Zionism among Conservative Jews, a few important figures at JTS did not believe in the establishment of a Jewish state. There were disagreements throughout the 1940s. For example, Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, who began his tenure as JTS’s chancellor in 1940, was initially an anti-Zionist. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Finkelstein changed his tone. In fact, within Conservative Judaism, 1948 “neutralized Zionism as an issue” (214). Furthermore, post-1948, Conservative leaders increasingly tried “to give religious significance to their Zionist affiliation” (214).

Primary sources from between 1948 and 1967 illustrate that Conservative leaders continued (1) to believe in the importance of both Israel and the diaspora and (2) to see Zionism as a means of strengthening Jewish life outside of Israel. In a Rabbinical Assembly publication, rabbi and scholar Moshe Davis stated that one
of the “two fundamental propositions” of Conservative Judaism’s approach to Israel was building up the Jewish community in America (1957, 30-1). In the United Synagogue’s 1956 publication, “Israel and Zionism: A Conservative Approach,” Simon Greenberg writes, in reference to the State of Israel and the diaspora, “We can have both; indeed we must have both” (24). Greenberg goes on to discuss how American Jews must still contribute to the growth of the State of Israel, whether it be through making aliyah or supporting Israel through donations and/or “frequent and extended pilgrimages” (24-26).

Conservative rabbis Mordechai Kaplan and Gershon Winer stressed the capacity of Israel to revitalize diaspora Judaism. Kaplan strongly believed that the spiritual status of diaspora Jews would benefit from the State of Israel. He even went so far as to say that Israel “is best qualified to reconstitute the continuity, spirituality and structure of Jewish life.” (1958, 143). Winer, who similarly believed that Israel was good for the spirit of diaspora Jews, argued that Israel should be incorporated into the theological framework of Conservative Judaism (1958, 155-60). As we have seen, this had already begun to happen decades before Winer’s assertion, but his clear endorsement of such an approach speaks to the continued interconnectedness of Zionism and the religious orientation of Conservative Judaism.

Along these lines, it should be noted that Conservative Jewish leaders often referred to Israel as the State of Israel and Eretz Yisrael (the “Land of
Israel”) interchangeably after 1948.¹⁶ The phrase “*Eretz Yisrael*” has a second layer of meaning, however, that problematizes the use of these two phrases interchangeably. Dr. Zohar Raviv discusses the religious connotations of the phrase “*Eretz Yisrael*,” specifically how it “is…seen as an indispensable and inseparable part of the eternal contract between Land, People, and God” (Raviv 2015, 45). Invoking this phrase could, then, be a way of legitimizing Jewish claims to the State of Israel on religious terms. Zali Gurevitch and Gideon Aran write that, in Israeli collective memory, *Haaretz*, or “the Land,” has a “broader sense of place” that suggests a “common fate and perhaps even a common mission” (1994, 195). They go on to argue that a connection to *Eretz Yisrael* remained part of Jewish collective memory in exile, before the establishment of the State of Israel (197). Considering both the spread of this notion to the diaspora and the religious significance of Israel in Conservative Judaism, it would be fair to say that Conservative Judaism’s inconsistent choice of wording when discussing Israel reflects a similar collective memory around *Eretz Yisrael*. In using “*Eretz*” and “*Medinat*” somewhat interchangeably, these sources reflect how, to Conservative Jews today, Israel “is both a Lived Land and an Envisioned Land,” a place in which ideals and reality become conflated (Raviv 2015, 42).

Though many people talk about 1967—the year of the Six-Day War, i.e. the Third Arab-Israeli War—as a turning point for American Zionism, the core elements of Conservative Jewish Zionism remained the same. For one,

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¹⁶ Determined by analyzing 1948 Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America and 1956 *Israel and Zionism: A Conservative Approach*
Conservative Jewish thinkers continued to enthusiastically discuss the religious significance of the State of Israel. In 1977, Rabbi Elliot Dorff, in *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants*, identified Conservative Zionism as “religious-cultural,” explicitly distinguishing Conservative Zionism from secular Zionism (217). *Emet Ve-Emunah* discusses how Medinat Yisrael, the State of Israel, is located in Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel, to which there has been a “zealous attachment” among Jews for centuries (1990, 31). While most people would acknowledge the religious and historical significance of Eretz Yisrael, using this conception of Israel to explain Conservative Jewish support for a nation-state imbues Conservative Zionism with a particularly religious tone. Furthermore, *Emet Ve-Emunah* lauds the creation of the State of Israel as “a miracle, reflecting Divine Providence in human affairs.” They also refer to existence of State of Israel as “the rebirth of Zion” (31). Plainly stated, Israel’s establishment in 1948 has religious significance for Conservative theology and ideology.

Also consistent with earlier Conservative Zionism, the importance of Jewish presence not only in the State of Israel but also in the diaspora is reaffirmed post-1967. *Emet Ve-Emunah* states, “Both the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry have roles to fill” and “We view it as both a misinterpretation of Jewish history and a threat to Jewish survival to negate the complementary roles of Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora” (33, 32). Though sources still reference the benefits that the State of Israel can bring to diaspora Jews, more emphasis had begun to be placed on how diaspora Jews can help the State of Israel. In 1988,
Conservative leaders convened to discuss Conservative Jews’ relationship to the State of Israel and published papers from the conference, with the intent of “forging a vibrant Zionist ideology for both Conservative Jewry and the broader community” (Ruskay 1990, x). Yes, it was acknowledged that the State of Israel offers “possibilities for future Jewish communal development,” but participants spent much time discussing how American Jews could help Israel (Arzt et al. 1990, 54). Sociologist Steven M. Cohen, in a paper titled “To Strengthen Weak Ties: The Conservative Movement and the Country of Israel,” wrote, “the Conservative Movement should encourage Jews to become intimately involved with the struggle over the Jewish State’s future” (Arzt et al. 1990, 66). In his paper “Ways to Deepen Conservative ‘Israel Consciousness,’” Rabbi Paul Freedman, a prominent leader in USY, argues, “our movement should do everything possible to support Israel’s interest on the North American political scene” (Arzt et al. 1990, 69). Conservative Jewish leaders continued to be ardent Zionists and simultaneously support a Jewish presence in the diaspora.

A new motif found in post-1967 primary sources is the linking of Zionism with being a “good” Jew. Emet Ve-Emunah, after affirming its “staunch” support for the “Zionist ideal,” states, “the State of Israel and its well-being remain a major concern of the Conservative movement, as of all loyal Jews” (32). Not only does this imply that a loyal Jew would support the State of Israel, but also, it suggests that there’s little to no room for non- or anti- Zionist beliefs within Conservative Judaism. Rabbi Elliot Dorff goes a step farther in Conservative
Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants, writing, “it seems obvious that a Jew must be a Zionist” (215). Here, he suggests that to be a good Jew in general, not just a Conservative Jew, one must support the State of Israel in some way.

Today, we still see many of these dominant strands of Conservative Jewish Zionism. Important thinkers continue to stress the ideological compatibility of Zionism and Conservative Judaism, leaders invoke Jewish peoplehood (specifically the idea of *klal Yisrael*) to justify the importance of a Jewish state, and, though the language is less harsh and explicit, there is still an assumption among many that “good” Conservative Jews identify as Zionist.

Current Chancellor of JTS, Arnold M. Eisen, believes that “renewed Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel” connects to the Conservative Jewish belief that “Torah is meant to be lived fully by the Jewish people in the radically new circumstances of modernity” (2015, 8). (The circumstances in this case being nationalism, or, in Eisen’s words, “renewed Jewish sovereignty in…Israel.”)

Additionally, he invokes “*klal Yisrael*” as one of the beliefs of Conservative Judaism that explains its emphasis on not only the “People” and “Land” of Israel, but also the “State of Israel.” Eisen has publicly written, “no matter what our opinions about Israeli policy---that our connection to the State of Israel and its citizens is fundamental, nonnegotiable, and unbreakable” (2011). Rather than saying Jews need to engage with the State of Israel, be it from a Zionist or anti-Zionist (rather than non-Zionist) stance, Eisen argues for a “connection,” implying some sort of pro-Israel, or Zionist, relationship. He goes so far as to say
this is “fundamental” and “nonnegotiable,” which could leave non- or anti-Zionist Jews doubting whether there’s a place for them in Judaism at large. (The publication was not just for Conservative readers.)

While there have been slight changes throughout the years, the Zionism of Conservative Judaism has remained relatively consistent. Zionist beliefs among Conservative Jews predated the existence of the State of Israel, and they have always been central to Conservative Jewish ideology. Specifically, Conservative Jewish Zionism believes in the dual importance of the State of Israel and the Diaspora; *klal Yisrael*, or Jewish peoplehood, as it relates to the State of Israel; and the religious significance of the State of Israel. Other motifs include the compatibility of Conservative Judaism and Zionism, as well as assumptions of support for the State of Israel among Conservative Jews. When looking at USYers’ beliefs pre-trip, we shall consider the extent to which they identify with and/or support the State of Israel. It is important to understand that, given these USYers’ upbringings, this attachment cannot be separated from the aforementioned various elements of Conservative Jewish Zionism.

**USY Israel Pilgrimage: Staff Goals**

USY Pilgrimage provides a unique opportunity to look at American Jewish Zionism; a trip for North American Jews, Pilgrimage takes place, for the most part, in the State of Israel. However, despite the location of USY Israel Pilgrimage, Zionism is only one part of the purpose of these trips.
USY trips to Israel have had consistent goals since their inception in the 1950s: developing (1) a relationship with Israel and (2) a Conservative Jewish lifestyle/identity. Both Morton K. Siegel, founder of USY’s Israel Pilgrimage, and Rabbi Paul Freedman, who served as Associate Director of the Youth Department (1960-66) and Director (1967-91), shared with sociologist Shaul Kelner that “the program’s core content was as much about training people in a Conservative Jewish lifestyle as about seeing Israel” (Kelner 2002, 25). Similarly, in 1995, Jules Gutin—a former high-up USY staff member involved with Pilgrimage for over three decades—wrote,

USY Israel Pilgrimage provides us with the opportunity to teach Jewish History with an obvious focus on Zionism. It also provides us with the opportunity to teach about mitzvot and Jewish observance in a most conducive contest. Using Israel as our classroom, we are able to strengthen Jewish identity through a clearly formulated educational program designed to provide the participants with tools to apply what they have learned in their own communities (and on college campuses) long after the summer has concluded. The Israel Experience, then becomes a vehicle which enables us to provide ingredients which enhance one’s Jewish lifestyle when one has left the protective group environment. In doing so we are able to strengthen the Zionist commitment of our young people along with a reinforcement of their general Jewish commitment (8-9).
Gutin draws a connection between transmission of Jewish history and Zionism. This suggests that the historical narrative shared on Pilgrimage would be one that portrays Zionism in a positive light, which would align with Conservative Jewish beliefs. He then asserts the importance of teaching about Jewish practice, specifically mitzvot and observance—central to Conservative Jewish ideology. In subsequent sentences, Gutin discusses both objectives in an interconnected manner, suggesting that the goals are intertwined and reaffirming the place of Zionism within Conservative Jewish religious ideology and practice.

Interviews from the summer of 2017 with Michelle Rich, Director of Teen Travel and Programs, and David Keren, Director of USY Israel Programs, reinforce the ongoing nature of USY’s two-pronged goal when it comes to Israel Pilgrimage.¹⁷ When asked about whether or not there was a mission statement for USY summer programs, Rich responded that it “comes under the mission statement of USY.” According to USCJ and USY’s websites, “through meaningful and fun experiences based on the ideology of Conservative Judaism, USY empowers Jewish youth to: develop friendships, leadership skills, a sense of belonging to the Jewish People, a deep engagement with and love for Israel, a commitment to inspired Jewish living…preparing them to make Jewish decisions in the real world” (emphasis mine).¹⁸ This statement reflects Conservative Jewish commitment to Zionism and Conservative Jewish practice.

¹⁷ Rich was interviewed at the USCJ office in New York on Monday, August 7, 2017. Keren, who lives in Jerusalem, was interviewed via Skype on Tuesday, August 22, 2017.
¹⁸ https://uscj.org/youth/usy; http://usy.org/about-usy/
Both Rich and Keren also explicitly spoke to the two different goals of USY. In Rich’s words, “We want our kids to experience everything that Israel has to offer and do it with other Conservative Jews.” Similarly, Keren said, “I would say it’s [a] two-fold objective. One is the Jewish component of the program…teaching Shabbat, kashrut, tefillah, and all of that…the other one is teaching about Jewish history and Israel…we cannot have one without the other.”

Not only does Keren mention both objectives, but also, he links Zionism with an understanding of Jewish history and portrays the two goals as interdependent. Keren later elaborated on why USY Israel trips also focus on Conservative Jewish practice:

We need to put equal emphasis on creating a community that teaches Judaism, that prays twice a day at least, that keeps Shabbat, that learns about Judaism and Conservative Judaism…my goal for them is to feel connected to their communities in North America and to adopt some of the things that we do on Pilgrimage. I take into account that many of these kids do not practice Judaism strongly back in their homes or their communities…So we want to provide them with a very positive experience when it comes to day-to-day practice…this is something that they can take and transfer back to their…life in North America.

19 Kashrut—Jewish dietary laws—and Shabbat—the Jewish Sabbath—both relate to halakha, or Jewish law. Tefillah is prayer.

20 Jews who follow halakha, or Jewish law, about prayer pray three times a day.
In saying this, Keren, an Israeli-born Jew, suggests that he agrees with the Conservative Jewish belief that there is a place for a Jewish presence both in the diaspora and in Israel. He also shows that USY is realistic about the observance level of teens going on trips; not all Conservative Jews practice in the way that Conservative Jewish ideology would prescribe. Though Keren understands the imperfect nature of observance among participants, he still expresses a desire to have USYers bring Conservative Jewish practice back into their life in North America. This reinforces that staff aspire to deepen (via USY Israel Pilgrimage) USYers’ commitment to living a Conservative Jewish lifestyle.

Lastly, it should be noted that, during their interviews, neither Rich nor Keren expressed a desire to influence participants’ political attitudes in a particular direction. In fact, Rich advocated for USYers coming into their own politically, and Keren suggested that politics should not be a major part of trips. Rich explained that she hoped the USYers who expressed uncertainty about whether they supported a one-state solution or a two-state solution in the pre-trip survey would become surer of their beliefs but that she did not have a specific political motive. Keren claimed that USY leaves “political opinions…out of the program,” and went on to say that topics like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are dealt with but “not a central component.”

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21 This trend is not unique to teenagers. Since at least the 1950s, there has been a gap between official ideology and individual practice among Conservative Jews of all ages (Goldstein 2000, 66, 90).
While Keren and Rich both discussed the two-part goal of developing USYers’ relationship to Israel and Conservative Jewish practice, the idea that Pilgrimage is more than just a trip to connect teenagers to Israel is not a new one. Siegel, the founder of USY Israel Pilgrimage, explicitly stated that trips are “as much about training people in a Conservative Jewish lifestyle as about seeing Israel” (Kelner 2002, 25). In addition to remaining consistent throughout the years, head staff’s goals for USY Israel Pilgrimage closely align with the ideology of Conservative Judaism, which places significant emphasis on the State of Israel and on aspects of religious practice, like tefillah, Torah, halakha, and God. USY aspires to instill a commitment to all of these elements of Conservative Judaism in USYers.

**Conclusion**

Conservative Judaism, a denomination that attempts to balance tradition and change, highly prioritizes God, halakha, tefillah, learning, kedal Yisrael, and the State of Israel. When it comes to the State of Israel, Conservative Jews in America have, overall, always been staunchly Zionist. This belief can be attributed to the historical and religious significance Conservative Jewish ideology attaches to the creation of the State of Israel. Additionally, some Conservative thinkers have noted similarities between the approach of Conservative ideology to Judaism and the State of Israel to post-Enlightenment trends, such as nationalism. While Conservative Judaism places great importance on the State of Israel, it also
believes in the legitimacy of the diaspora and concept of Jewish peoplehood more broadly.

Conservative Jewish Zionism and the other tenets of Conservative Jewish ideology are of great importance to the head staff of USY Pilgrimage. Trips have always been run with the intent to develop a relationship to both Israel and Conservative Jewish practice among USYers. Despite the absence of a centralized Conservative Jewish institution, there seems to be a coherent ideology, one that the goals of USY Pilgrimage reflect. The question is, to what extent do Conservative Jewish ideology and the goals of USY head staff trickle down to participants? Does USY Israel Pilgrimage succeed when it comes to instilling a commitment to both the State of Israel and to living a Conservative Jewish life?

Based on the importance of Zionism in Conservative Judaism and the fact that many subjects participated in Conservative Jewish communities prior to filling out the pre-trip survey, I would expect to find that USYers hold pro-Israel attitudes even before going on USY Israel Pilgrimage. Let us proceed to a discussion of pre-trip attitudes. We will return to USY head staff’s goals in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER THREE:

COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN USY:

FOUNDATIONS FOR ATTITUDE FORMATION

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Ever since I can remember, I have wanted to get closer to my roots and visit that special place I’ve learned so much about. – Rachel Bloom, USY Pilgrimage alumna

Introduction

To determine the extent to which Conservative Jewish ideology has trickled down to USYers, we turn to pre-trip attitudes, focusing specifically on statements gauging general attitudes about Israel, Judaism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chapter Three explores whether or not collective memory about Israel exists among USYers and, if so, whether or not they have this collective memory pre-trip (Hypothesis One). It goes on to consider how, if at all, trips impact collective memory (Hypothesis Two). Through the responses to statements about Israel, Judaism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one can discern whether or not USYers share a beliefs system reflective of Conservative Jewish ideology and collective memory. These same questions are also asked in the post-trip survey. Analyzing post-trip responses in relation to pre-trip responses to the same questions allows us to assess the extent to which (if at all) trips impact collective memory. I will argue that USYers enter trips with general
attitudes that reflect a collective memory, and USYers leave trips with the same general attitudes (Hypotheses One and Two).

**Pre-Trip Attitudes**

**Methodology**

In the pre-trip survey, USYers answered a series of questions, conveying beliefs that they held before leaving for their USY summer trip. One section of the survey included a series of statements, preceded by the following: “This section includes some brief personal opinion statements. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.” A drop-down menu allowed USYers to pick from the following: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, don’t know/no response. The statements themselves were presented to USYers in a random order. Those that were subsequently analyzed have been grouped by topic:

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22 Response options were randomized “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” and “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”
**Judaism**
My Judaism is important to me.
I identify as a Conservative Jew.
I have a deep understanding of Judaism.
Israel is an important part of my Judaism.

**Israel**
Israel is important to me.
I love Israel.
I care about Israel.
I have a deep understanding of Israel.
I want to make aliyah.

**Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**
I am pro-Israel.
I am pro-Palestine.
I support a one-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
I support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
I am not sure whether I think there should be a one-state solution or a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
I believe that the current Israeli leadership wants to make peace.
I believe that the current Palestinian leadership wants to make peace.

**Findings**

In analyzing findings, it is helpful to look at the three main categories into which statements fell: relationship with Judaism, relationship with Israel, and political orientation. While strong intersections between Judaism and Israel exist within Conservative Jewish ideology, grouping statements in these two separate categories lines up with the two-pronged goals head staff have for USY Israel Pilgrimage (discussed at greater length in Chapters Two and Four). One of the
most important findings is the relative uniformity among USYers’ responses to most questions, regardless of category, as it suggests the presence of collective memory.

Judaism

When it comes to their relationship with Judaism, USYers responded positively. 91.3% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My Judaism is important to me.” 82.6% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed (the majority strongly agreeing) with the statement, “I identify as a Conservative Jew.” Though still a majority, slightly fewer USYers expressed confidence in their understanding of Judaism, with 73.9% responding affirmatively to the statement “I have a deep understanding of Judaism.” For USYers, Israel is an important part of Judaism; 78.3% of participating USYers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Israel is an important part of my Judaism” (See Figure 1).
Regarding their relationship with Israel, USYers once again responded positively. 82.6% agreed or strongly agreed with both the statements “Israel is important to me” and “I love Israel.” It should be noted that no one disagreed with this statement; the remaining participants indicated that they “neither agreed nor disagreed” or that they did not have a response. All USYers who responded (91.3% of all), however, agreed or strongly agreed (the majority strongly agreeing) with the statement “I care about Israel.” For the remaining two questions in this category, there was a greater diversity of USYer responses. USYers responded to the statements “I have a deep understanding of Israel” and “I want to make
*aliyah* in a variety of ways, with “neither agree nor disagree” having the most responses by a small margin for both statements (See Figure 2).^{23}

![Pre-Trip Attitudes about Israel](image)

**Figure 2**

*Israel/Palestine Politics*

There was also relative uniformity among USYers when it came to more political attitudes about Israel/Palestine. These attitudes were strong, though less so than those about Judaism and Israel. 78.2% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am pro-Israel.” 13% neither agreed nor disagreed, but no one disagreed or strongly disagreed. In contrast, only 13% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am pro-Palestine,” while 34.7% disagreed or

^{23} USYers’ range of attitudes about *aliyah* aligns with the Conservative idea that there is a place for Jewish life both in Israel and in the U.S.
strongly disagreed. 30.4% neither agreed nor disagreed. While there was more certainty among USYers regarding their beliefs about Israel, enough USYers expressed beliefs on Palestine that their negative attitudes are clear.

Almost 1/3 of survey participants either did not respond or selected “don’t know/no response” to statements about which solution they would support (one state, two state, uncertain). This suggests that a significant number of USYers were not confident in attitudes regarding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There was a similar level of uncertainty when it came to USYers’ perceptions of both Israeli and Palestinian leaders’ willingness to make peace. That being said, only one USYer agreed with the statement “I believe that the current Palestinian leadership wants to make peace,” while 47.8% of USYers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I believe that the current Israeli government wants to make peace.” As was the case with statements about being “Pro-Israel” and “Pro-Palestine,” we once again see a much stronger affinity towards the Israeli “side” than the Palestinian one (See Figure 3).

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24 The answers of those who did respond are included on the bar chart titled “Pre-Trip Attitudes about Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”
Reflections

Responses to these questions paint a picture of USYers who, before beginning their summer trip, identified strongly with Judaism—Conservative Judaism in particular—and Israel. Political attitudes were less uniform and strong, though they do show a sizeable bias towards the Israeli “side” of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

From the overwhelming affirmation of the importance of Judaism to survey participants, it is clear that these USYers are not the norm when it comes to American Jewish teenagers. USYers engage with their Judaism to a greater extent than the average teenager, demonstrated by their affiliation with and
participation in a youth group. This should be taken into account when discussing implications of this research for the American Jewish community at large. That being said, it is interesting to see USYers’ strong attachment to the label of Conservative Jew, despite non-affiliation trends in the American Jewish community in recent years. This self-identification of USYers legitimizes analyzing these trips through the lens of Conservative Jewish ideology.

In addition to explicitly indicating affiliation with Conservative Jewry in response to one of the statements, USYers respond to other statements in a way that reflects alignment with certain tenets of Conservative Judaism, specifically Zionism. USYers’ strong affirmation of statements like “I care about Israel,” “Israel is important to me,” “I love Israel,” and “I am pro-Israel” reflect the prominence of Zionism in Conservative Jewish ideology. The similarly strong responses to the statement “Israel is an important part of my Judaism” reflects the Conservative Jewish tendency to understand Zionism as interconnected with religion.

When it comes to Israel, pre-trip responses were consistent, positive, and strong. With the exception of questions about geographic solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, USYers were generally (1) in agreement with one another and

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25 Many Jewish young people stop participating in organized Jewish life post-\textit{b}'nai mitzvah, or coming-of-age ceremony; formally engaged Jewish teenagers are the exception rather than the rule. There are approximately 540,000 Jews between the ages of 13 and 18 in the United States, yet only between 20,000-30,000 participate at some level (locally, regionally internationally) in a denominationally based youth group (Jim Joseph Foundation 2013, 4).

26 For more, see https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/non-denominational-post-denominational/
(2) resolute in their responses (often selecting the most extreme answer). This suggests a commonly held set of attitudes, at least on the topics surveyed, exists among USYers pre-trip. In expressing strongly pro-Israel attitudes and viewing Israel as an important part of their Judaism, USYers begin trips aligned with Conservative Jewish collective memory about Israel.

Socialization before Trips

Why do participants have such uniform attitudes, as conveyed through their beliefs prior to trips? After all, the average USY Pilgrimage participant has only met a few other people on their trip before departure, and the teenagers on trips come from across North America. Though many of these USYers have never met, they exist as part of the same collective—their immediate collective being USY, and their broader collective being American Conservative Jewry.

With group membership often comes shared beliefs. Daniel Bar-Tal calls such beliefs “an integral part of group membership” and “a basis for group formation” that ends up influencing how the group acts (Bar-Tal 2000, xi). USYers could have similar outlooks because of their social context, USY as an organization. Though not exposed to the same ideas in the same place and at the same time, USYers come into contact with these ideas through similar means of communication; social environments not only affect how people perceive things but also what things (that will eventually be perceived) enter the mind in the first place (Zerubavel 1997, 23). Our social environments also shape how we
understand and remember the past. USY would be an example of a mnemonic community, in which imparting a certain perception of the past, a certain set of collective memories, becomes part of socialization (Zerubavel 1996, 289-90). Socialization within mnemonic communities does not have to occur in a formal educational setting; as Yael Zerubavel writes, “socialization in collective memory precedes…introduction to the formal study of history and can exceed its influence” (Zerubavel 1995, 6). So, what USY emphasizes, how they discuss things, and so on all impact formation of attitudes pre-trip. USY seems to form attitudes while teenagers participate in programming in North America, passing down a collective memory about Israel (Hypothesis One). Does USY, then, also impact attitudes during the course of Israel Pilgrimage (Hypothesis Two)?

**Post-Trip Attitudes**

**Methodology**

I will now consider whether or not general attitudes changed over the course of trips, comparing pre- and post- trip responses to the same statements. A Wilcoxon signed rank test was run to determine if the median difference between pre- and post- survey responses was statistically significant.
Findings

Post-trip attitudes were analyzed in relation to pre-trip attitudes to gauge whether or not certain attitudes changed over the course of the trip. Since the question of concern is whether or not trips impact attitudes, I look to see which attitudes saw statistically significant change rather than the degree of intensity of attitudes (i.e. percentage indicating “strongly agree” vs. percentage indicating “agree”). Out of the statements analyzed, only one statement had statistically significant results; median attitudes for almost all statements remained relatively consistent, despite participants having returned from what many would describe as a life-changing experience. In short, USY Israel Pilgrimage did not strengthen general attitudes to a statistically significant extent (for the most part), yet trips also did not weaken these attitudes (See Figures 5-10). The one statement that did see movement was “I have a deep understanding of Israel.” A Wilcoxon signed rank test determined that there was a statistically significant increase in agreement with this statement, $z = 2.388, p < .017$ (See Figure 4). Changes in participants’ understanding of Israel will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Four. For now, we will focus on the uniformity among responses to the other statements.

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27 Out of the subjects who responded to this question during both the pre- and post-trip surveys, 9 did not change, 2 moved negative (towards strongly disagree), and 10 moved positive (towards strongly agree); for the extent to which the trip had an effect on this particular attitude, there is movement in a statistically positive direction.
"I Have a Deep Understanding of Israel."

![Bar chart showing the percentage of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree responses for Pre-Trip and Post-Trip scenarios.]

Figure 4

Attitudes about Judaism

![Bar charts showing the percentage of Strongly Agree and Agree responses for Judaism Important, Conservative Jew, Deep Understanding, and Israel Important Part for Pre-Trip and Post-Trip scenarios.]

Figure 5
Attitudes about Israel (A)

Pre-Trip | Post-Trip | Pre-Trip | Post-Trip | Pre-Trip | Post-Trip
---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------
Israel Important | Love Israel | Care about Israel

Strongly Agree | Agree

Figure 6

Attitudes about Israel (B)

Pre-Trip | Post-Trip | Pre-Trip | Post-Trip
---------|----------|---------|----------
Deep Understanding | Aliyah

Strongly Agree | Agree

Figure 7
Figure 8

Attitudes about Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (A)

Figure 9

Attitudes about Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (B)
Reflections

A lack of statistically significant movement on most statements means that trips reinforce rather than change attitudes (or at least do not undermine preexisting attitudes). In this case, lack of statistically significant change illustrates the consistency of certain aspects of Conservative Jewish beliefs, both in theory and in practice. USYers incorporate new information and experiences into preexisting belief systems.

The set of statements previously discussed, however, was not the only question measuring change over the course of the trip. If foundational attitudes did not change, did anything else? How might the trend seen in responses to general attitude questions align with or diverge from the trends in responses to

Figure 10
statements gauging more specific attitudes and aspects of collective memory? These questions will be explored in depth in the following chapter. Let us first consider possible explanations for preservation of general attitudes over the course of trips.

Socialization during Trips

While it is not possible to say with certainty why trips, for the most part, reinforced USYers’ attitudes (or at least did not undermine them) rather than strengthening or changing them, literature on social psychology and an understanding of USY’s beliefs as an organization provide some possible answers. Psychology offers Leon Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory: cognitive dissonance occurs when two thoughts or beliefs are inconsistent. Attempting to avoid this state can lead people to adjust their thinking (Meyers and Twenge 2016, 109). In an attempt to “maintain consistency among…cognitions,” USYers might end up paying closer attention to trip content that aligns with preexisting attitudes. This could be considered a variation of selective exposure, or the tendency to seek out information that aligns with one’s views while avoiding dissonant information (110). People tend to place a higher priority on preserving cognitions related to things of great personal importance (Glynn et al. 2016, 119-20). USYers’ strong, positive responses to statements about Israel and Judaism pre-trip illustrate the priority of Israel and Judaism in their lives, so it makes sense that USYers would maintain attitudes related to these topics.
Additionally, much of the information that USYers received while on Pilgrimage probably aligned with their previously held attitudes. Pre-trip attitudes, which remained relatively consistent over the course of the summer, reflect aspects of Conservative Jewish ideology. A Conservative organization, USY, plans and runs the trip itself. Therefore, it makes sense that trip content would be a reflection of the organization’s mission and beliefs, another possible explanation for consistency in attitudes. While “there is always more than one cognitive ‘standpoint’ from which something can be approached…[and subsequently] more than just a single way in which it can be ‘correctly’ perceived,” USY, like most communities, has its own standpoint. It is through this standpoint that USY frames Israel for participants (Zerubavel 1999, 29-30). Through this standpoint, USY can impart (or cement) beliefs; optical socialization “is how we come to perceive things” as members of a certain group, in line with our community’s “own distinctive ‘optical’ tradition,” which leads us to see the world a certain way (33).

For an example of USY’s optical lens impacting what participants are exposed to and how, let us consider which current events USY staff discuss with participants. This past summer, during the time that survey participants were in Israel, tensions flared over a change in the status quo at the Temple Mount. When asked if staff talked about this with participants, David Keren responded that they did not and followed up by saying, “We did talk about the whole ordeal with the government and the egalitarian section at the kotel because that definitely relates
to them [i.e. USYers] as Jews” (interview, 2017). USY chooses to discuss events relating directly to Jews, and, in this case, Conservative Jews specifically, but does not spend nearly as much time discussing other political occurrences. This could lead to USYers understanding Israel through a Jewish specifically lens, which would reaffirm attitudes of affinity towards Judaism and Israel.

Consistency of trip itineraries also reinforces the idea of optical lens, as present and past USYers experienced fairly similar content. Both itineraries from the past 40 years and an interview with Michelle Rich affirm the stability of trip content. Despite getting “tweaked each year,” as Rich says, itineraries “don’t…get changed dramatically” (interview, 2017). With the exception of L’Takayn Olam, a community service-oriented Israel trip, all USY Pilgrimage itineraries include the same core components and have done so since at least the 1970s. Throughout the trip, USYers visit sites that have been visited by thousands of USYers before them. This lack of variability illustrates how USY has had a consistent narrative when it comes to Israel, supporting the idea that USYers would be experiencing Israel in similar ways in their home communities and while on Pilgrimage. Should

28 The Kotel (Western Wall) is a site of religious significance for Jews. During the summer of 2017, disputes about Orthodox hegemony arose.
29 One might raise the question: Wouldn’t USYers come to be critical of Israel if they heard about the government mistreating egalitarian Jews like themselves? It has been seen throughout the history of Conservative Judaism, however, that Conservative Jews criticize Israeli politics when they have to do with Judaism but speak up far less frequently on other issues threatening Israeli democracy, such as disputes over the West Bank.
31 The specific sites also have significance for optical lens. The types sites visited will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Four.
this be the case, it makes sense that trips do not change participants’ general outlook.

**Conclusion**

Before going on USY Pilgrimage, USYers felt a common affinity towards Israel and Judaism, with strong pro-Israel views being a component of their belief system. This common set of beliefs suggests the existence of a collective memory among participants, one that aligns with Conservative Jewish ideology (Hypothesis One). It should be noted that, given their positive orientation towards Judaism and Israel, USYers enter trips primed to be receptive; if teenagers have positive feelings about central elements of USY’s mission, it would supposedly make it easier for USY staff to achieve their goals.

Trips did not change most general attitudes; trips reinforced (or at least not undermine) these attitudes (Hypothesis Two). The one statement for which attitudes shifted was “I have a deep understanding of Israel.” What, exactly, that understanding entails will be discussed in Chapter Four. Regarding the other statements, possible explanations for the lack of change in responses include cognitive dissonance theory, the sociological concept of optical lenses, and the consistency of USY trip content over time. Regardless of why trips preserve rather than change attitudes, it is important to note that the general attitudes held by USYers strongly reflect a system of beliefs (collective memory) central to Conservative Judaism.
USYers’ strong affinity towards Israel raises questions moving forward. The fact that USYers feel strongly about the importance of Israel in their life and their Judaism but also expressed more favorable attitudes towards Israelis than Palestinians (two different nationalist groups) raises the question: Is it possible for affinity with a nation-state to be non-political? More specifically, could participants be receiving a politicized narrative about Israel presented in an “apolitical” way? After all, responses indicated a strong affinity towards Israel and anything from uncertainty to opposition when it came to Palestine, responses that reflect the false notion that you have to pick a “side” and support it when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Questions about political implications have increased relevance as we move on to a discussion of the impact of trips on more specific attitudes, including self-reported knowledge of Israel and foreign policy views. Chapter Four will analyze questions that yielded responses which changed over the course of trips in order to (1) discern if trips impact other attitudes and (2) gauge the extent to which specific elements of the trip align with Conservative Jewish ideology and USY head staff’s goals.
CHAPTER FOUR:

EFFICACY OF USY ISRAEL PILGRIMAGE

Pushing away previous soil to form a hole in which to plant a memorial tree, she realized, and felt deep inside herself, that this land was the Jews’ land—was her land.
- Marsha Kovarsky (Pilgrimage alumna), 1974

Introduction

Though USY Israel trips in 2017 did not change general, foundational attitudes, they did impact other aspects of USYers’ attitudes, belief systems, and collective memory (Hypotheses Three). Chapter Four looks at three specific areas in which there were statistically significant changes: self-reported knowledge of ideas, events, and figures from Israeli history; general (not specific to Israel/Palestine) foreign policy attitudes, and relationship to various aspects of Judaism. Through more specific questions related to the broader attitudes discussed in Chapter Three, we can gauge the impact of trips on USYers’ self-reported knowledge of Israel, their Judaism, and their general foreign policy attitudes. We can then discern the extent to which USY achieves its goals (Hypothesis Four).

The changes to attitudes discussed in this chapter align with findings in previous chapters and also paint a more detailed picture of the impact of trips. USYers express increased knowledge of an Israeli historical narrative, develop an
affinity toward militant internationalism, and come to view the State of Israel and
history as increasingly important elements of their (Hypothesis Three). USYers’
post-trip relationship to aspects of Judaism suggests that USY meets its goal of
developing participants’ relationship with the State of Israel but does not
necessarily succeed in strengthening Conservative Jewish practice among
participants (Hypothesis Four).

Knowledge about Israel/Palestine

Methodology

Both the pre- and post-trip surveys gauged USYers’ self-reported
knowledge levels regarding Israeli historical and political events and figures. One
section of the survey instructed, “Please indicate how well you believe you
understand/know about each of the following items where 0 means you do not
believe you understand/know about the item at all and 100 means you believe you
understand/know about the item very well.” Items spanned from wars to peace
talks, political leaders to political parties. The purpose of this set of items was to
assess the areas in which participants gained knowledge. For example, participants
could have learned a good deal about wars but not as much about political
leaders, or vice versa. Additionally, some items were listed by multiple names—
for example: Judea and Samaria, West Bank, Occupied Territories—to discern the
optical lenses, or particular narratives, through which participants received
knowledge.
The included items, selected to gauge knowledge of core concepts in Israeli history and politics, are listed below by category (randomized for USYers):

### Israeli Groups and Leaders
- Ariel Sharon
- Joint List
- Labor Party
- *Likud
- *Yitzhak Rabin

### Palestinian Groups and Leaders
- Fatah
- Hamas
- *Palestinian Authority
- Palestinian Liberation Organization
- *(PLO)
- Yasser Arafat

### Peace Talks
- Camp David Accords (1978)
- Oslo Accords

### Wars/Military Action/Conflict
- *BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions)
- First Intifada
- IDF (Israel Defense Forces)
- *Lone Soldier
- Nakba
- Sabra and Shatila
- Second Intifada
- *War of Independence
- 1967 War
- *1973 War
- *2008-9 Gaza Conflict/War
- 2014 Gaza Conflict/War

### Territory-Related
- *Green Line
- *Judea and Samaria
- Occupied Territories
- *UN Partition Plan
- *UN Resolution 181
- *UN Resolution 242
- West Bank

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32 A coalition of Arab parties in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament)
* = statistically significant shift between pre- trip and post-trip results.
Noteworthy data to be discussed in “Findings” section.
Two things must be kept in mind as we proceed: Knowledge is self-reported, meaning participants could have a skewed perception of the extent to which they understand an item. Additionally, this section does not gauge participants’ feelings about the listed items. For example, a USYer might indicate that they understand what BDS is, but the strength of their response does not indicate whether they view BDS in a positive or negative light. Analysis of these items can, however, inform us about the extent to which participants’ perceived knowledge increased and in which areas.

To analyze data, a paired samples t-test—used to determine whether the mean difference between the same item pre- and post-trip is statistically different from zero—was employed, unless otherwise noted in footnotes. To contextualize some of the findings, we turned to analysis of primary sources, specifically trip itineraries spanning the years of 1976-2017, which offer an excellent record of trip content.\footnote{From 1976, 1985, 1989, 1992, 2001, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2017 (from all 5 trips that summer)}

Findings

Given that the question at hand is the extent to which trips affect attitudes, I focus on items that saw statistically significant change (rather than looking at the individual levels of knowledge reported by USYers). This will allow us to see the
extent to which trips were impactful on perceived knowledge. USYers reported increased knowledge of certain items but not others. This section will discuss items that provide insight about the trips’ ideological orientation. More specifically, by looking at concepts for which multiple items describe the same thing, we can discern the mnemonic/optical lenses through which USYers learn about Israeli history. Let us consider the events of 1948, the land between the State of Israel and Jordan, and two leaders of the Oslo Accords peace process.

On the survey, the items “War of Independence” and “Nakba” represented the events of 1948. In May of 1948, David Ben Gurion declared the independence of the State of Israel. War between Israel’s neighbors and the newly declared state ensued. Many different historical narratives about these events exist. What is important to understand in the context of this discussion is that Israelis and many Jews around the world refer to this military conflict as the “War of Independence.” In 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled their homes. Multiple narratives also exist around this mass movement: some attribute it to forceful acts by Jewish paramilitary forces, while others point to Arab leaders who called for an exodus. Palestinians refer to this event as the “Nakba”—Arabic for disaster or catastrophe—because of the ramifications of this mass displacement. USYers expressed increased knowledge of “War of Independence” after returning from trips; both a Wilcoxon signed rank test and a sign test, which does not assume a symmetrical distribution of responses, yielded statistically

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34 For mean self-reported knowledge scores pre- and post- trip, see Table 1.
significant results for the item “War of Independence,” $\chi^2 = 2.925, p < .003$ with a shift in median from 50 pre-trip to 70 post-trip. However, the same was not true of their self-reported knowledge of “Nakba”; the finding for this knowledge item was not significant. Additionally, USYers’ knowledge increase about the War of Independence was substantively significant; the mean response pre-trip was 45.45 and post-trip was 62.27. This demonstrates that, not only did USYers learn about 1948 with a focus on the War of Independence rather than the Nakba (no change statistically), but they also learned (or believe that they learned) a significant amount about the “War of Independence.”

The survey included three items related to the land between the State of Israel and Jordan: “Judea and Samaria,” “West Bank,” and “Occupied Territories.” The Israeli government refers to part of the area as “Judea and Samaria,” while much of the international and academic community (including some within Israel) refer to the area as the “West Bank.” “Occupied Territories” speaks to a larger category, but, with regard to the West Bank, evokes the illegal status of Israeli control over the West Bank in the eyes of much of the international community, including the United Nations. USYers expressed increased knowledge of “Judea and Samaria” at a statistically significant level, $\chi^2 =$

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35 Test of normalcy failed, meaning paired samples t-test cannot be run for this item. The Wilcoxon signed rank test did not meet the symmetrical shape criteria, so I ran a sign test, which yielded statistically significant results.

36 The phrase “Occupied Territories” also includes other areas of land that Israel “won” or “occupied” in the 1967 war: Gaza Strip, Sinai, Golan Heights, East Jerusalem. The status of the aforementioned areas of land vary.

37 Area C of the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem)

38 See UN Resolution 242
2.066, \( p = .035 \) with a shift in median from 5 to 20.\(^9\) Items gauging USYers’ self-reported knowledge of “West Bank” and “Occupied Territories” did not yield statistically significant results. So, USYers reported increased knowledge of “Judea and Samaria” at a statistically significant level, but the same cannot be said for their self-reported knowledge of “West Bank” and “Occupied Territories.”

The list of knowledge items included two key Middle Eastern leaders from the Oslo Accords peace talks: Yitzhak Rabin, then-Israeli Prime Minister, and Yasser Arafat, then-chairman of the PLO. Rabin and Arafat, along with then-Foreign Minister of Israel Shimon Peres, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for their efforts. USYers expressed increased knowledge of “Yitzhak Rabin” at a statistically significant level, \( t(20) = 3.897, p < .001 \) (pre-trip mean: 42.73, post-trip mean: 66.82). The same was not true of their self-reported knowledge of “Yasser Arafat,” an item for which results were not statistically significant. Additionally, both after and before the trip, USYers had an average self-reported knowledge level about Rabin far higher than their average self-reported knowledge level about Arafat. So, not only did USYers on average gain more knowledge about Rabin yet not about Arafat, but they also demonstrated a large gap in general between their knowledge of both of the figures.

\(^9\)Test of normalcy failed, meaning paired samples t-test cannot be run for this item. The Wilcoxon signed rank test did not meet the symmetrical shape criteria, so I ran a sign test, which yielded statistically significant results. Additionally, there was clear positive movement, with 12 responses increasing in value between pre-trip and post-trip, 3 decreasing, and 5 ties.
Table: Knowledge Items

(With Statistically Significant Change in Red)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Pre-Trip Mean</th>
<th>Post-Trip Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Israeli Groups and Leaders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel Sharon</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint List</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>15.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Party</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>22.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likud</td>
<td>11.82</td>
<td>25.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yitzhak Rabin</td>
<td>42.73</td>
<td>66.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palestinian Groups and Leaders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>49.09</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Authority</td>
<td>25.45</td>
<td>31.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)</td>
<td>23.18</td>
<td>35.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasser Arafat</td>
<td>23.18</td>
<td>25.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Territory-Related</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Line</td>
<td>29.55</td>
<td>43.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judea and Samaria</td>
<td>19.55</td>
<td>27.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupied Territories</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>49.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Partition Plan</td>
<td>37.73</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Resolution 181</td>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Resolution 242</td>
<td>12.73</td>
<td>25.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bank</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>58.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peace Talks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp David Accords (1978)</td>
<td>36.82</td>
<td>35.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrid Conference (1991)</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>17.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oslo Accords</td>
<td>22.73</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wars/Military Action/Conflict</td>
<td>42.27</td>
<td>65.45</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanctions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Intifada</td>
<td>23.64</td>
<td>27.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDF (Israel Defense Forces)</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>75.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Soldier</td>
<td>42.73</td>
<td>83.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakba</td>
<td>17.27</td>
<td>16.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabra and Shatila</td>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>20.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Intifada</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>37.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War of Independence</td>
<td>45.45</td>
<td>62.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967 War</td>
<td>40.91</td>
<td>54.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973 War</td>
<td>16.82</td>
<td>39.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-9 Gaza Conflict/War</td>
<td>28.64</td>
<td>44.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 Gaza Conflict/War</td>
<td>34.55</td>
<td>49.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Possible Explanations

The items for which USYers indicated increased knowledge fit together cohesively, reflecting a pro-Israel understanding of history. Both “War of Independence” and “Judea and Samaria” have strong Zionist connotations. Increased knowledge about Rabin but not Arafat indicates that USYers are familiar with Israelis who worked for peace but not Palestinians who did the same. This could reinforce the “we want peace, they don’t” trope that is common on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

What might explain USYers’ areas of increased knowledge? One possibility is the propensity for cognitive consistency (for more, see Chapter Three). If
USYers go into the trip with a pro-Israel worldview, they might selectively incorporate pro-Israel historical narratives into their knowledge base. As Eviatar Zerubavel writes, “we usually pay more attention to things that ‘fit’ the mental schemas we use to make sense of the world…than to those that are inconsistent with them” (Zerubavel 1999, 48).

Though cognitively probable, the previous explanation does not account for the fact that trips are run by a Zionist organization, so it is likely that USYers hear a predominantly (and perhaps exclusively) Zionist narrative. To get a sense of trip content, let us consider itineraries and the staff who execute these itineraries.

Based on an analysis of thirteen itineraries spanning the period of 1976-2017, it is clear that trip content has remained relatively consistent over time. Since at least 1976, USYers have visited the following locations/done the following activities on most, if not all, trips:

Akko, archeological dig, visit with Druze citizens of Israel, Eilat, Golan Heights, Israel Museum, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Masada, Mount Herzl, tree planting, Rosh Hanikra, Sde Boker, Tzfat, visit to kibbutz, volunteering, and Yad Vashem.

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40 There have always been various types of Zionism. The Zionist narrative referenced here would align with the Zionist ideology of Conservative Judaism. For more, see Chapters Two and Three.

The following content have been added since 1989:

Bedouin tent, camel ride, Negev—specifically Ein Ovdat and/or Mitzpe Ramon, City of David, rafting on the Jordan River, Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), Upper Galilee, Yad Lakashish—a non-profit empowering Israel’s elderly, talk with Neil Lazarus, Rabin Square, and Independence Hall.

Entire papers could be written about the collective memory attached to each of these sites. What is worth commenting on now is the range of content.

Trips cover sites of both biblical and contemporary historical significance as well as “fun” tourist sites (for example, camel rides). The integration of sites of biblical and modern significance, sometimes even in the same day, contributes to a narrative in which the history of the State of Israel is part of a larger historical narrative. This chronology is not by chance. David Keren shared that the “concept is that they will deal both with historical sites, such as First Temple, Second Temple, Mishna and Talmud periods, and deal also with the history of the State of Israel…so we will mix sites that are historical and go back to 2000, 3000 years ago and also current Zionistic [sic] sites and also dealing with what we call current events” (Interview, 2017). USYers experience a version of the past in which the modern nation-state of Israel is a continuation of 2000 years of history. This reflects the conflation of different “Israel”s (discussed in Chapter Two).

Additionally, the fun sites included in the itinerary create positive memories that participants will long associate with their time in Israel. Keren “add[s] water hikes
and swims” and other content so USYers “leave Israel with [an] enjoyable and sweet taste” (2017).

It is also important to notice what content is missing: deep encounters with Palestinian society. While USYers engage with minorities in Israel, it is likely to be those groups that fit neatly into a Zionist narrative, such as Druze citizens who often serve in the Israeli army. USYers do not spend time in the West Bank talking to settlers or to Palestinians. Additionally, when in East Jerusalem—a predominantly Palestinian area—USYers spend time at City of David—a controversial archeological site run by right-wing Israelis—rather than engaging with Palestinian citizens. Not seeing this particular side of life in Israel/Palestine contributes to the entrenchment of a traditional Conservative Jewish Zionist narrative. How would USYers learn more about the Nakba, for example, if they spent little to no time engaging with Palestinian sites, tour guides, and civilians?

When USYers go throughout their day, they sometimes meet up with tour guides, but they are always with the same five staff members—two American staff members, two Israeli staff members, and one main staff member. Given the hiring circumstances for USY staff, it is likely that staff members hold relatively similar beliefs. Most of the American staffers grew up in USY and/or identify with Conservative Judaism, making it likely that they would adopt a Conservative Zionist orientation towards Israel. Fewer Israeli staffers are affiliated with Masorti (the global Conservative Jewish organization) because of the demographics of Jews in Israel and the fact that many Masorti Israelis staff their own movement
summer programs (Keren interview, 2017). That being said, Keren expressed a need to find staff that will support the egalitarian nature of Conservative Judaism. He said that he does not take into account political positions when hiring. However, the Israeli organization through which USY acquires staff hires from greater Israel, meaning they do not consider whether or not staff members live or have lived in settlements east of the Green Line. In the past, including in 2017, USY’s Israeli staff has included Israelis from the West Bank. Additionally, all Israeli staffers are Jewish, meaning they served in the Israeli army (with a few exceptions). Given the demographics of USY’s staff, both from North America and Israel, USYers likely receive a pro-Israel narrative from the people leading their trips. Not only do staffers have one-on-one conversations with participants on a daily basis, but they also sometimes act as tour guides and educators. In this way, staffers serve as what Bar-Tal refers to as “epistemic authorities,” or “sources of information that exert determinative influence on the formation of individuals’ knowledge” because USYers have “high confidence” in the information staffers provide (Bar-Tal 2000, 65).

Through staff, trip content, cognitive processes, or a combination of the three, USYers learn a cohesive, Zionist historical narrative while on USY Pilgrimage. This narrative aligns with previously held attitudes and helps shape new ones throughout the course of the trip.
Foreign Policy Attitudes

Methodology

Not only do trips impact USYers’ knowledge of history, but trips also shape contemporary political attitudes. In addition to including questions about Israeli politics, the survey incorporates broader questions that enable us to consider the impact of travel on more general attitudes. The pre- and post-trip surveys gauged USYers’ foreign policy attitudes through a series of questions that have previously been employed in the literature (Foyle 2017). These survey questions can be used to examine the following dimensions of foreign policy attitudes among USYers: isolationism, militant internationalism, and cooperative internationalism. Isolationism refers to a general preference for withdrawal from the international system (Rathbun 2007). Militant internationalism includes a proclivity toward forceful action in pursuit of American interests and a realist approach to foreign affairs, whereas cooperative internationalism refers to one’s inclination to favor or oppose collaborating with other nations to solve international problems (Wittkopf 1990).
The pre- and post- trip survey gauged attitudes about isolationism via the following questions from the literature:

Below is a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one, please select whether you think that it should be a very important goal, a somewhat important goal, neither an important nor unimportant goal, a somewhat unimportant goal, or a very unimportant goal.

- Protecting the jobs of American workers
- Securing adequate supplies of energy

Below are several possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see the item as a very important threat, a somewhat important threat, neither important nor unimportant threat, a somewhat unimportant threat, a very unimportant threat.

- Large number of immigrants and refugees coming into the U.S.
- Economic competition from low-wage countries

Both the pre- and post- trip surveys incorporated questions about Militant internationalism and cooperative internationalism identical to those in Foyle's survey (See Table 2). All items were preceded by the phrase: “This question asks you to indicate your opinion of certain foreign policy views. For each item below, please indicate whether you oppose or support the following views.” Response options were: strongly support, somewhat support, neither support nor oppose, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose, and don’t know.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Question Wording</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Militant Internationalism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domino Theory</td>
<td>There is considerable validity to the &quot;domino theory&quot; that when one nation falls to aggressor nations, others nearby will soon follow a similar path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA Use</td>
<td>There is nothing wrong with using the CIA to try to undermine hostile governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent Aggression</td>
<td>The United States should take all steps, including the use of force, to prevent aggression by any expansionist power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart of Opponent</td>
<td>Rather than simply countering the opponent's thrusts, it is necessary to strike at the heart of an opponent's power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperative Internationalism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Cooperation</td>
<td>It is vital to enlist the cooperation of the United Nations in settling international disputes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Standard of Living</td>
<td>It is vital that the United States help improve the standard of living in less developed countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Cooperation</td>
<td>International cooperation is vital to solve common problems such as food, energy, and climate change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms Control</td>
<td>Worldwide arms control should be pursued.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

A paired samples t-test was used to analyze the mean response of each group of statements, and a related samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was used on the individual statements.
Findings

For both the paired samples t-test and the Wilcoxon signed rank test, the outcomes were the same: The results for the questions measuring support for isolationism and the questions measuring support for cooperative internationalism were not statistically significant, indicating no change in these groups of attitudes before and after the trip (See Figures 12 and 13). However, tests of questions having to do with militant internationalism yielded statistically significant results (See Figure 11); USYers viewed foreign policy attitudes associated with militant internationalism more favorably upon return from their trips.

A paired samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference in militant internationalist attitudes before and after the USY trip. For each set of questions, responses to question items presented in Table 2 were converted into a 1 to 5 scale (1 = very unimportant, 2 = somewhat unimportant, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = somewhat important, 5 = very important). A mean score for each group of attitudes was created. Individuals who did not respond to all questions were not included in the data (MI n = 12; CI n = 15; Isolationism n = 21). Data are mean ± standard deviation. Scores for CI (p = .004) and isolationism (p = .037) violated the assumption of normalcy as assessed by the Shapiro-Wilk’s test. Subsequent nonparametric test results of a Wilcoxon signed rank test are reported below. For MI, no outliers were detected and the assumption of normality was not violated as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test for militant internationalism, (p = .197).
Trip participants experienced a shift in their attitudes more favorable of MI after the trip (4.02) as opposed to their MI attitudes before the trip (3.58), a statistically significant increase of $0.44 \pm 0.13$ [mean ± standard error], $t(11) = 3.436$, $p < .006$, $d = 0.99$. The Cohen’s $d$ variable indicates a large effect size (Cohen 1988).

A Wilcoxon signed rank test revealed no statistically significant differences between in median pre and post trip attitudes for either the cooperative internationalism (pre and trip median 4.5, $z = -1.734$, $p < .083$) or isolationism (pre and post trip median 3.75, $z = -0.371$, $p < .711$).^{42}

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^42 Data in paragraphs 2-4 of this section analyzed and summarized by Douglas C. Foyle
Possible Explanations

To understand USYers’ increased proclivity towards a militant nationalism approach to foreign policy—which includes a favorable view of the use of force—it is helpful to consider trip itineraries, the role of Israeli staff, and the newfound findings on areas of increased knowledge. For starters, USY Israel Pilgrimage itineraries include a number of locations at which staff and tour guides discuss Israel’s national security with participants. At places like the Upper Golan Heights and Rosh Hanikra (Israel’s northwestern tip), issues of border security arise. USYers also visit sites of historic military significance, such as Ammunition Hill (a site in Jerusalem of importance from the 1967 War). Even certain sites that have to do with pre-state history have militaristic elements. Take, for example, Masada, which Yael Zerubavel (and others) have written about extensively. Masada was the site of a Jewish revolt against the Romans in the first century CE that ended in group suicide. Today, in Israeli (and often Jewish) collective memory, Masada represents defending one’s land at all costs (and connects antiquity to the modern-day Zionist revival). As Yigael Yadin, head of archeological excavation at the site in the 2960s, said, Masada teaches [our bretheren from the Diaspora] what we today call ‘Zionism’ better than thousands of pompous speeches [could]” (Zerubavel 1995, 67). Glorification of military might occurs at the modern-day tourist site of Masada on a daily basis.

In addition to visiting physical sites that have connections to national security and military force, USYers and staff frequently discussed topics related to
issues of war and security. A post-trip survey question asked USYers about the frequency with which topics came up. In response, USYers spoke to a number of topics including Israel’s security, borders, and the IDF, all of which came up often. 10/23 USYers said Israel’s security came up more than once a week, and 7/23 USYers said this topic came up about once a week. 9/23 USYers said the topic of borders came up more than once a week, and 6/23 USYers indicated that this topic came up about once a week. Discussion of borders and security could reinforce experiences that USYers had at some of the aforementioned locations. Also, 11/23 said the IDF came up more than once a week, and 6/23 USYers said it came up about once a week (See Figure 14).

![Figure 14](image-url)
Not only does the topic of the IDF come up frequently, but also, USYers develop personal relationships with former soldiers. Each USY trip has two Israeli staff members, and almost all of them have served in the IDF (since Israel’s national army that has mandatory conscription, with a few exceptions). Not only do Israeli staffers share their personal experiences from their time in the IDF, but also, they usually run at least one program a summer on the topic of the IDF. Staff members convey to USYers the importance of the IDF in Israeli society and sometimes even glorify military service, bolstering support for the IDF among USYers. Favorable views of the IDF could contribute to positive attitudes towards the use of military force.

This trip content aligns with the Zionist, one-sided narrative previously discussed. USYers are more likely to resonate with a Zionist interpretation of history if they think of Israel in terms of the threats to its existence and its military triumphs in the face of these threats. A history of Israel through this lens would propagate the belief that force is necessary when it comes to Israel’s foreign policy. It is not a stretch to consider how this might influence USYers’ more general foreign policy views.
Elements of Judaism

Methodology

In both the pre- and post-trip surveys, USYers were asked to “Please select how important each of the following aspects of Judaism is to you personally where 0 means the item is not at all important and 100 means the item is extremely important.” There were thirteen items, listed in alphabetical order below but randomized in the survey:

Community
Culture
God
*Halakha and Mitzvot*\(^{43}\)
*History*
Learning
Peoplehood
Prayer
Social Action
Social Justice
*State of Israel*
Torah
*Tzedakah*\(^{44}\)

This question served to gauge USYers’ relationship to Judaism both before and after USY Israel trips. To analyze data, I employed a paired samples t-test—used to determine whether the mean difference between responses to the same item pre- and post-trip questions is statistically different from zero.

\(^{43}\) Jewish law and commandments
\(^{44}\) Charitable giving
* = Statistically significant shift between pre-trip and post-trip results. Discussed at greater length in “Findings” section.
Given USYers’ consistent general attitudes about Judaism pre- and post-trip (Chapter Three), one might expect their relationship to specific aspects of Judaism to remain the same. That being said, if trips were to meet head staff’s two-part goal—developing a relationship with (1) Israel and (2) Conservative Jewish practice—one would expect certain items to become more important (on average) to USYers upon return from trips. The former staff goal clearly aligns with the item “State of Israel.” Given the core elements of Conservative Jewish ideology (Chapter Two), I would posit that the following items correspond to USY staff’s second goal: “God,” “Torah,” “Halakha and Mitzvot,” “State of Israel,” “Peoplehood;” “Learning,” “Prayer.” Should USY trips achieve both goals, USYers’ responses to the aforementioned items would be higher post-trip than pre-trip.

Findings

Both before and after the trip, USYers rated all thirteen items highly, with the lowest mean rating at 61.36 and the highest at 93.18. This suggests that all of these items play some role in most USYers’ relationship to Judaism. In terms of change over the course of the trip, most of the statistical tests showed non-findings, with two important exceptions: “History” and “State of Israel.” The mean score for “History” increased significantly, \( t(20) = 2.158, p < .043 \). The mean score for “State of Israel” also increased significantly, \( t(20) = 3.133, p < .005 \).
Additionally, because these two items increased in mean value while the other eleven remained statistically consistent, the ranked order of the thirteen items changed. The bottom three items—“God,” “Prayer,” and “Torah”—remained the same, as did two of the three top items—“Community” and “Culture.” That being said, “History” moved from tenth to eighth, and “State of Israel” moved all the way from eighth to third. In short, most of the thirteen items remain relatively important for USYers, though “History” and “State of Israel” become increasingly important.

If USYers were aligned with the tenets Conservative Jewish ideology, not just the affiliation, they should have ranked the following seven highly: “God,” “Halakha and Mitzvot,” “Learning,” “Peoplehood,” “Prayer,” “State of Israel,” and “Torah.” Before the trip, Learning, Peoplehood and Halakha and Mitzvot fell in the middle of USYers’ list. Furthermore, “God,” “Prayer,” and “Torah” fell at the very bottom of the list. While the components that USYers ranked highly are a part of Conservative Jewish life, these components are less ideologically central; USYers’ pre-trip Jewish priorities do not reflect those of Conservative Judaism as closely as they could.

The twofold goals of USY when it comes to Pilgrimage—strengthening relationship with Israel and developing Conservative Jewish practice—suggest that rankings for “State of Israel” as well as “God,” “Halakha and Mitzvot,” “Learning,” “Peoplehood,” “Prayer,” and “Torah” should be higher after USYers

45 We know that USYers strongly identify as Conservative Jews from general attitude questions (see Chapter Three).
return, regardless of where they were pre-trip. However, the only one of these seven that increased in a statistically significant manner was “State of Israel,” increasing by almost 10 (out of 100) and moving from eighth to third on the list of thirteen items. Meanwhile, “God,” “Prayer,” “Peoplehood,” and “Torah” fall in the bottom four. (“Halakha and Mitzvot” and “History” fall in the middle of the pack.) This suggests that, USY Pilgrimage succeeds in strengthening USYers’ relationship to Israel but does not necessarily increase the importance of elements of Conservative Jewish practice among USYers.

Another survey question raises similar concerns about the efficacy of USY when it comes to increasing Conservative Jewish practice. In response to the open-ended question, “If you’ve made changes to your day-to-day life since Pilgrimage (religious, personal, etc.), please describe below. If this does not apply to you, write ‘n/a,’” 8/23 USYers, or 34.78%, described making changes that could be categorized as “increased religious practice.” First of all, growth in Conservative Jewish practice would somewhat depend on the level of observance of participants coming into trips. While this study did not specifically measure this, future studies might go down this path. With the knowledge available to me, based on both the interview in which Keren acknowledges that many USYers are not observant halakhically and my own experiences, I would venture that there is room for significant growth in practice among USYers. In light of this venture, some might say that the number of USYers who indicated increased observance, 8/23, is low, especially given that increasing Conservative Jewish practice among
USYers was a primary goal of USY staff. However, USY trips did supposedly increase the religious practice of about 1/3 of surveyed USYers, so they did see some success. This question both reinforces that the majority of USYers do not experience a deepening of Conservative Jewish practice on USY summer trips and proves that such an impact is possible. 

While it is important to note that USYers responded positively to all of the items both before and after trips, the question at hand is whether or not trips impacted USYers’ relationship to Judaism. Therefore, it makes sense to look at change in responses over the course of the trips. As evidenced by the increased importance of the “State of Israel” and “History,” trips can impact USYers’ relationships with Judaism. So, while trips are not negatively impacting Conservative Jewish practice, they do not reach their full potential. In short, USY appears to have succeeded in one of its goals—strengthening relationships with Israel—but not the other—developing Conservative Jewish practice.

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46 Further research should be done to more precisely determine trips’ impacts on religious practice; in the future, specific religious practices should be gauged via explicit pre- and post- trip questions.
## Possible Explanations

How might we explain the disparity between change on the “State of Israel” item but not other items central to Conservative Jewish ideology? While USYers are always affiliated with a Conservative institution (USY), they are not always in Israel. Therefore, much of the emphasis during USY Israel Pilgrimage could have been placed on uniquely “Israel” experiences. This is reflected in the itinerary, which—aside from daily prayer and Shabbat observance—contains

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Trip</th>
<th>Post-Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>93.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>86.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Social Action</td>
<td>83.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Tzedakah</td>
<td>78.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>78.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Peoplehood</td>
<td>77.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Halakha and Mitzvot</td>
<td>77.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>State of Israel</td>
<td>77.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>75.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>68.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>67.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>66.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Torah</td>
<td>61.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
content primarily related to Israel and its history. Even if USY talks about Israel in the context of its Jewish status (which they do), this is different than spending a significant amount of time focusing on developing the other aspects of Conservative Jewish practice: prayer, learning, relationship with God, etc. Some might argue that USY prays daily, keeps kashrut, and incorporates other tenets of Conservative Jewish practice on all summer trips. While this is true, much more of the core programming focuses on Israel than on religious practice, and the daily religious elements could become rote, fading into the background. USYers are likely to be more excited about, say camel rides, than about daily prayer. Furthermore, religious practice on USY trips does not always live up to Conservative Jewish ideals. For example, groups often pray once or twice a day, as opposed to the traditional three times.

It might make sense to focus on Israel while USYers are physically there; most itinerary items are site-specific. Despite this, it is worth considering how USY can achieve the other part of its goal, should the organization still see its goal as two-fold. The two surveys did not yield data that answers the question of how to remedy the disparity in impact, in large part because this trend was not yet known when constructing the surveys. In the future, others might explore this further.
Conclusion

This chapter explores areas in which trips impacted USYers’ attitudes, specifically self-reported knowledge of ideas, events, and figures from Israeli history; general (not specific to Israel/Palestine) foreign policy attitudes; and relationship to various aspects of Judaism (Hypothesis Three). When it comes to knowledge, USYers report an increased understanding of concepts aligned with a Zionist narrative about Israel’s history. Foreign policy views also shift, with USYers becoming more supportive of militant internationalism. USYers’ Jewish priorities change over the course of the trip, as well, with the “State of Israel” and “History” becoming more important to USYers than they had been before trips. Trips succeed in one part of USY staff’s goal—strengthening participants’ relationship with Israel—but not necessarily in the other part of the goal—deepening USYers’ relationships to other components of Conservative Judaism (Hypothesis Four).

When considered holistically, the three areas in which we saw attitude shifts paint a cohesive picture about the impact of USY summer trips on orientation towards Israel, both in the context of the nation-state’s history and as it relates to Conservative Jewish ideology. USYers definitely express increased affinity towards Israel, and this impacts their relationship to Judaism, given the interconnectedness of the two in Conservative Jewish ideology. Additionally, non-Israel/Palestine-specific foreign policy questions reveal that trips impact broader foreign policy attitudes, particularly increasing favorable attitudes towards militant
internationalism. This fits the narrative told by the other findings, one in which USYers become more Zionist, i.e. nationalist.

The fact that trips make USYers more likely to think through a framework of military force rather than peace might be concerning to some. This could have implications for how USYers view other geopolitical issues, not just Israel/Palestine. Even if just considered in relationship to Israel/Palestine, however, this finding will be troubling to some. An increasingly hawkish Jewish community would probably not move Israel any closer to a just peace with the Palestinians. For example, if USYers don’t know about past Palestinian leaders who worked towards peace, like Yasser Arafat, they’re more likely to align with the right-wing belief that Israel doesn’t have partners for peace.

Geopolitics aside, USYers’ evolved relationship to the State of Israel has implications for their Jewish lives as well. The increased importance of a nation-state in their understanding of Judaism elevates one aspect of Conservative ideology over many others. This might impact how USYers “practice” their Judaism. For some, attending an AIPAC policy conference could be living out their Conservative Judaism. USYers might be more likely to invest their time and resources in Israel-related experiences rather than in Torah study, spiritual prayer experiences, etc. While a relationship with the State of Israel is a core element of Conservative Jewish ideology, it is worth considering how Conservative communities could maintain this relationship without eclipsing other tenets of Conservative Jewish life.
The specific disparity between increased affinity for the State of Israel and a consistent relationship with other tenets of Conservative Judaism might be worth further exploring for USY staff. After all, they succeed on one of their goals, demonstrating the potential of Pilgrimage to influence attitudes, but not the other. What does this mean for trips in the future? How might USY reevaluate trip content, framing, etc. to achieve both goals? Or, will they reimagine the purpose and goals of trips completely? How might integration of multiple historical narratives and innovative approaches to Israel education and Conservative Jewish life practice the outcomes of USY Israel Pilgrimage?
CHAPTER FIVE:
CONCLUSION

This trip has definitely heightened my love of Israel. I know it sounds cheesy, but it’s true. I may not know where I stand on the border/peace agreement issue, but I know that I will always love Israel. – Anonymous USY alumna, 2013

For the last 10 years, I have struggled to find a connection to my Jewish identity because it was so tied up in being 'pro-Israel,' which I haven't identified as for many years… Truthfully, I have kept my Jewish identity at a distance during my 20s because I could not reconcile these feelings. That is probably the opposite of USY’s goal... - A different anonymous USY alumna, Fall 2017

Introduction

In this study, I find that USY trips to Israel impact collective memory and attitude formation among participants. USYers, having grown up in Conservative Jewish institutions, come into trips with generally strong and consistent attitudes about Judaism and Israel. Though they express less certainty when it comes to beliefs about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, USYers’ beliefs still skew pro-Israel. Over the course of trips, USYers’ foundational attitudes are preserved, while their more specific attitudes take shape. These newly formed attitudes—specifically knowledge about Israel/Palestine, general foreign policy attitudes, and relationship to various aspects of Judaism—align with their preexisting general

47 https://younevertoldme.org/stories/usy1
attitude about Judaism and Israel. While none of the data contradicts Conservative Jewish beliefs, USYers deepen their connection to Israel but not to Conservative Jewish practice, suggesting that USY only succeeds in one area of its two-part goal.

This chapter will briefly revisit findings and address limitations of the survey, specifically sample size, access to USYers, and time frame for conducting research. I will then discuss the implications of findings for both relevant academic fields and USY as an organization. The chapter concludes with suggestions for the American Jewish community at large, rooted in the findings of this case study.

**Survey**

**Findings**

USYers begin trips with fairly uniform and positive general attitudes about Judaism and Israel. Pre-trip attitudes reflect a collective memory about Israel among USYers, one that reflects the Conservative Jewish approach to Zionism. Trips then reinforce (or at least do not undermine) rather than shift these general attitudes. In addition, trips impact more specific attitudes, in particular self-reported knowledge about Israel/Palestine, foreign policy ideology, and relationship to various aspects of Judaism.

Chapter Two analyzes the underlying principles of USY trips and its parent denomination of Judaism, enumerating the tenets of Conservative Judaism,
elaborating on Conservative Jewish ideology about the State of Israel, and
illuminating the goals of USY Pilgrimage staff. I highlight that Conservative
Jewish priorities include God, *halakha*, *tefillah*, learning, *klal Yisrael*, and the State
of Israel. When it comes to the State of Israel, Conservative Jewish Zionism has
remained relatively consistent throughout the decades, placing an emphasis on the
importance of the state on the premises of religious significance, Jewish
peoplehood, the need for both Israel and the diaspora, and the compatibility of
Conservative Judaism and Zionism. It is also worth noting that Conservative
Jewish thinkers throughout history have conflated the State of Israel and the land
of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*) in their writing. When it comes to the main staff’s goals for
USY Pilgrimage, I show that said goals reflect multiple components of
Conservative Judaism; USY hopes that Pilgrimage participants deepen their
relationship with both the State of Israel and Conservative Jewish practice.

Chapter Three demonstrates that there is a collective memory among
USYers before going on Pilgrimage, and trips preserve this collective memory;
Chapter Three proves Hypotheses One and Two to be true. Analysis of pre-trip
survey responses to more general attitude questions—questions about affinity for
Israel and Judaism and general attitudes about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—
suggest that the Conservative Jewish collective memory about Israel has been
successfully transmitted to USYers before trips. Trips then reinforce this set of
beliefs, as evidenced by analytical tests comparing pre- and post-trip responses to
the same general attitude statements.
In light of the finding that trips do not dramatically impact general attitudes and collective memory, Chapter Four focuses on areas in which we do see attitude formation, specifically change in a statistically positive direction. This demonstrates that (1) trips do affect attitudes and (2) USY succeeds when it comes to the Israel part of its goal; I find Hypothesis Three to be true and Hypothesis Four to be partially true. Chapter Four considers and reports attitude formation in three specific areas—self-reported knowledge, general (not Israel/Palestine-specific) foreign policy opinions, and components of Judaism. When it comes to self-reported knowledge, USYers indicate increased knowledge of historical events or concepts represented by phrases commonly used in Zionist narratives but not the same historical events or concepts represented by other terms. Regarding foreign policy opinions, USYers become increasingly supportive of militant internationalism. Together, these two outcomes suggest that trips further develop and reinforce pro-Israel attitudes while making USYers more likely to favor the use of military force. These findings could have serious implications for USYers’ political opinions. Regarding the final area, Judaism, USYers come to view history and the State of Israel as more important to them personally—both in terms of overall quantified importance (compared with pre-trip ranking) and relative to other aspects of Judaism included in the question. This suggests that USY succeeds in one part of its goal: deepening relationships with Israel. That being said, the fact that the importance to USYers of other tenets of Conservative Judaism does not increase suggests that USY does not
succeed, at least as much as they could, when it comes to developing Conservative Jewish practice.

Limitations

This survey produced a significant amount of data that has both academic and practical implications. That being said, limitations to the survey design meant that research could not be expanded to certain areas. This section will discuss limitations, as well as other aspects of survey design that should be kept in mind. Namely, participants responded to the post-trip survey just a few weeks after returning. As explained in Chapter One, attitudes and collective memory change over time, so this thesis does not claim to represent the final outcome of trips’ influence on formation of attitudes and collective memory. Rather, this research provides a glimpse into the change that occurs over the course of the trip, namely fairly immediate post-trip attitudes, beliefs, and collective memory. Now, I will briefly discuss three areas in which I experienced constraints: sample size, access to USYers, and time frame for conducting research.

The sample size for this thesis was 26 out of just over 150 eligible USYers, i.e. about 17%. It should be noted that USYers self-elected to respond, meaning the results could be from more involved or enthusiastic USYers. While sample size was not a limitation for the questions focused on in the survey, it did prevent me from expanding my research in certain comparative directions. For example, I
did not have the ability to compare the results of surveys from USYers who began their trips in different locations (Eastern Europe vs. Israel).\textsuperscript{48}

I did not interview these USYers, primarily due to the ethical complexities of collecting data from minors and the anticipated challenge of getting participants, given how difficult it was to get teenagers just to agree to take the survey. It would have been interesting to see if qualitative feedback from USYers, obtained in interviews, could add a different dimension to the findings; interviews from USYers could have added more nuance to the picture painted by the data and/or prompt additional research questions.

Additionally, given the time frame of this project, it was not possible to measure beliefs farther out from USYers’ return from Israel. If not constrained to my time as an undergraduate, I would have attempted to survey the same USYers one year, five years (during/post college), and ten years (young adults) out from the original post-trip survey date to see whether or not attitudes changed. As discussed at length in Chapter One, collective memory constantly shifts, so it would be interesting to see whether the observed impacts endure; do trips have a long term impact on attitudes and collective memory? For how long do attitudes influenced by trips remain? What factors might change attitudes upon return from trips?

\textsuperscript{48} Discussed at greater length in “Literature” subsection of “Implications,” found later on in this chapter.
Implications

Literature

We know from the literature that attitudes and memory do not exist in a vacuum; community plays a formative role in collective memory and attitude formation. Collective memory—or how social groups’ understanding of the past informs group identity in the present—is, in a sense, a set of beliefs. Beliefs are a foundational component of attitudes. Also worth noting, people tend to integrate new information into preexisting systems of beliefs. Preexisting beliefs systems and new attitudes developed on trips can both be the product of socialization.

Before trips, socialization occurs within USY and the larger Conservative “movement,” both of which can be considered, in collective memory jargon, mnemonic communities. Religious groups act as mnemonic communities when they bring individuals into contact with or awareness of a common past. This could occur, for example, through discussions of Jewish history, prayer services that include liturgy that evokes narrative elements (patriarchs, Temple, etc.), or a USY convention program about the founding of Israel. Pre-trip experiences also have significance given Cohen’s finding that trips become more impactful when participants have previously attended other Jewish programs (2007, 45-6).

Because USYers enter trips with shared beliefs gained from time previously spent in Conservative Jewish spaces, it becomes easier for trips both to cement existing attitudes and to develop new attitudes that fit into previously held belief systems.
Once on Pilgrimage, USYers have various experiences that influence attitudes and collective memory. Commemoration, one means of forming collective memory, occurs frequently on USY Israel Pilgrimage. Not only do USY trips have moments for USYers to explicitly pay tribute to the past (Yad Vashem—the Holocaust museum, Har Herzl—the military cemetery, Masada, etc.), but trips also include similar elements year after year. This creates a pattern of commemoration that perpetuates collective memory.

Regarding literature on diaspora tourism, trips reinforce Cohen and Wall’s belief that group cohesiveness is one indicator of an effective trip (1993, 52-3). While Cohen and Wall were not discussing group cohesiveness as it relates to collective memory and attitude formation, we know from the literature about both that community plays a critical role. It makes sense that individuals in a close-knit group would experience similar attitude shifts. We also know, from various journal entries and open-ended survey responses referencing the importance of the group to the individual respondent, that positive group dynamics are a prominent aspect of USY trips.

This survey offers significant updates to the research on teen trips to Israel, but it should not be the end of the conversation. Future research in this area could go in a number of different directions. Suggestions based on the findings of this survey include:

1. A comparative look at the outcomes of trips on attitudes of USY Pilgrimage participants who start in Eastern Europe and then fly to Israel
and those who go directly to Israel. This would allow people to consider the question of whether or not starting location impacts attitudes. This has particular relevance for trips that start with Holocaust sites, given the place of the Holocaust in Jewish collective memory and the potential for a “Holocaust to Israel” historical narrative (that closely links the creation of the State of Israel with the events of World War II).

2. A comparative look at the outcomes of USY Pilgrimage and USY on Wheels, USY’s North American summer program. Both trips have the same parent organization, and USYers likely enter both trips with a similar collective memory. That being said, trips have different content and possibly different goals: USY on Wheels is a cross-country bus tour that includes America’s greatest tourist attractions (ranging from the Grand Canyon to the Jelly Belly Factory), with Jewish prayer and other experiences taking place in a wide range of locations. Meanwhile, USY Pilgrimage is an immersive Israel experience. How might these distinct elements impact attitude formation during the course of trips?

3. A study of attitude formation and collective memory in other Conservative Jewish youth spaces, like the Ramah camping movement. Though affiliated with different organizations, these Conservative Jewish summer programs share a similar ideology. How might the diverse settings, content, and goals of these programs affect attitude formation? To what extent is collective memory and attitude formation consistent across Conservative Jewish
youth programming, and to what extent does it depend on the program itself?

4. A follow-up survey of USYers on Pilgrimage in summer 2017, looking at collective memory 1, 5, and/or 10 years down the road. While surveys have gauged the Jewish involvement levels of youth group and camp alumni, fewer have looked at attitudes. Given that we know that collective memory change over time, might attitudes about Israel and Judaism also change?

It should also be noted that a large-scale project about North American Jewish teens will be published in the upcoming months. This study, led by The Jewish Education Project and Rosov Consulting, will explore the learning and growth outcomes of Jewish teen experiences in North America. Tens of thousands of 7th-12th graders across the continent make up the subjects. The survey looks at personal development as well as Jewish literacy and connection.

The publication date for the survey has not yet been set, but data collection and analysis are in the works.49 Because this survey has subjects from grades 8-12 who vary in type of USY involvement, it will allow for examination of what occurs in USY before people go on summer trips, providing information that could be helpful when considering the development of collective memory and attitudes over time. This comprehensive project will not only offer more information about

49 For more, see: http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/national-study-on-jewish-teens-to-explore-how-programs-are-helping-them-flourish-in-todays-world/
the impact of USY on Jewish teenagers but also allow for a comparative look at the impact of Jewish youth programming among various organizations. How might the outcomes discussed in this paper fit in to this larger narrative in terms of formative power of Jewish youth programming?

USY

USY head staff members clearly expressed a desire for trips to positively impact USYers’ (1) relationship with Israel and (2) engagement with/practice of a Conservative Jewish lifestyle (prayer, learning, halakha, etc.). Throughout the course of this study, I found that USY succeeds in bringing USYers closer to Israel, specifically when it comes to their understanding of Israeli history and the role the State of Israel plays in their relationship with Judaism. While USYers do not become less committed to Conservative Jewish practice over the course of the trips, findings raise doubts about trips’ current success in deepening Conservative Jewish practice, which staff seems to want.

There is no doubt that USY succeeds in strengthening teens’ connection with the State of Israel. The specifics of that connection are worth discussing, especially in light of USY staff members’ assertions that trips do not have a political aim.50 While many USYers enter trips unsure of whether they support one or two states in Israel/Palestine, they express far greater sympathy for Israeli

50 As discussed in Chapter Two, Michelle Rich and David Keren expressed comfort with USYers having a range of political opinions. On the topic of one states vs. two states, Rich said, “I am not pushing one way or the other” (Interview, 2017). Keren went so far as to say that USY leaves political opinions “out of the program” (Interview, 2017).
nationalism than for Palestinian nationalism (Chapter Three). Trips reinforce (or at least do not undermine) these attitudes as well as shape new attitudes; USYers return from trips viewing militant internationalism more favorably and with a deeper understanding of an Israeli historical narrative but not a Palestinian one. This suggests that USYers became more nationalistic and militaristic in their pro-Israel attitudes. In short, USYers possess fairly homogenous attitudes about Israel, including when it comes to politics, and trips further develop these attitudes.

The impact of trips on political attitudes has at least two implications. First of all, the impact reminds us that intent does not equal outcome. Though USY might not consciously intend to push a specific political agenda, they could end up doing so through staff members with centrist or right wing political views and trip itineraries that include many sites having to do with Israeli military history and security but few to none addressing Palestinian narratives. Trips often, then, include a limited range of opinions about Israel with which USYers can engage. If USY wants to change this dynamic in the future, they can reassess itinerary content and hire staff with diverse political opinions.

Second, trip influence on political attitudes speaks to the fact that the Zionism of Conservative Judaism may not be separable from politics. This reflects Conservative Jewish institutions’ support for Israel, not just in the form of a religiously significant land (Eretz) or as a people (Am), but also in the form of a nation-state (Medinat). By fostering a connection to a nation-state, especially a connection that seems to be connected to right-wing political attitudes, USY trips
illustrate the way in which nationalism has become a part of religion in Conservative Jewish ideology. Zionism can take many forms, and the form that it seems to take in Conservative Jewish ideology and practice has geopolitical implications.

Furthermore, this Zionism becomes a more important aspect of Judaism for many USYers than do God, *halakha*, learning, peoplehood, Torah, and *tefillah*, central components of Conservative Jewish practice. Even for Conservative Jews who are comfortable with USYers having more centrist or right-wing attitudes about Israel, this should be cause for concern. USYers’ responses to survey questions about Judaism, as discussed in Chapter Four, suggest that USY does not meet the other part of its goal: developing USYers’ relationship to Conservative Judaism. While they express an increased commitment to the “State of Israel” and “History” in terms of their personal relationship to Judaism, the same cannot be said of their relationship to other tenets of Conservative Jewish practice (God, *halakha*, learning, peoplehood, Torah, and *tefillah*).

While future studies might explore why USY does not meet their goal of developing Conservative Jewish practice, especially given that this study did not account for the specifics of participants’ pre-trip religious practice, USY staff can begin to have discussions about the disparity between goal outcomes revealed by this research. Next steps might include the following: changing the quantity of and/or approach to prayer and Jewish learning on trips, bringing in speakers to talk about Jewish educational content (just as Pilgrimage includes speakers, like
Neil Lazarus, who focus on Israeli politics and current events), and/or providing USYers with more encounters with egalitarian Jews in Israel.

In short, USY succeeds in strengthening participants’ relationship to Israel, but participants do not leave trips placing a greater importance on Conservative Jewish practice. Given the capacity of trips to impact attitudes, USY might consider how to meet part of its goal that pertains to Conservative Jewish practice. Additionally, in light of findings about the nature of USYers’ relationship to Israel, USY staff might discuss whether or not they want to adjust how they’re meeting their goal concerning a connection with the State of Israel.

Zionisms, Plural

The question of if and to what extent various Jewish communities should educate around the State of Israel is beyond the scope of this thesis. That being said, it is still possible—and necessary—to consider the ways in which Israel education manifests, an area in which the findings of this thesis have relevance.

Questions about approaches to teaching Israel cannot be separated from a discussion of the educational goals. Organizations have diverse intentions when it comes to Israel education, so a one-size-fits-all model for best practices is unrealistic. That being said, the findings in this study can provide us with insight for education that aspires to be Zionist but not aligned with political narrative any more specific than that.
First of all, Zionism itself can be a wide umbrella. While Conservative Jewish institutions have advanced a particular strand of Zionism, it is one of many. Additionally, nothing is to say that Conservative Zionism will remain stagnant. Given the variety of beliefs that can fall under the term Zionism, the following suggestions could be applicable for groups that approach Zionism in different ways.

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the Zionism espoused on USY trips often leads participants to have a one-sided understanding of Israeli history and politics. Some might be comfortable with this, but those supportive of critical thinking and diversity of opinion should give pause. If people want young Jews to have a relationship with the State of Israel, this relationship should be with the State of Israel in full, with all of its complexities. However, people often say that they do not want Israel education to be political, but simply to foster a love of Israel. As we see with USY Pilgrimage, apolitical Israel education is not necessarily possible; whether or not trips have overt political aims, they often have political outcomes. The case for “not political” education could be reframed, however, to be an argument for holistic Israel education. How about—instead of saying Israel education should avoid politics—saying that education should not just be about politics? When educating about the State of Israel, educate about its government, its citizens, its culture, its religion, etc. The State of Israel is more than its government and its military decisions, and, at the same time, it cannot be separated from these things.
This still leaves the question, then, about how to educate on issues of politics. The simplest way to avoid homogeny among views is to provide a variety of narratives. While this alone cannot ensure diversity of opinions (as we’ve seen, previous exposure also matters), it is a start, and a powerful one at that. Just as Israel education should address Israel from a variety of angles (cultural, political, social, etc.), it should address politics from a range of viewpoints. When historical events, especially those with contemporary implications, arise, they should be discussed from a variety of narrative angles. So, for example, teaching about 1948 would include conversations about the War of Independence, but also about the Nakba.

Not only would this allow for a variety of political opinions, but it would also lay the foundation for more accurate education. Very few concepts can be reduced to talking points, and Israel is an especially complex topic. Since the inception of Jewish nationalism, Jews had different visions for Zionism. Cultural Zionism, political Zionism, religious Zionism, revisionist Zionism, the list goes on. Teachers can start there. By illustrating the centrality of different beliefs about the Jewish presence in Palestine to Jewish history, educators would not only paint an accurate picture of the past but also set a precedent for having conversations about present-day Israel in a nuanced way. Pluralism regarding Israel could be broadened out to conversations about “Israel” as an idea. For example, Israel education should address the differences between Am (people/nation), Eretz
(land), and Medinat (state). Or, this can also be narrowed in to specific political discussions, including those about contemporary circumstances.

If every aspect of Israel education were multifaceted and pluralistic, participants would gain a more holistic and authentic understanding of Israel. So, the next time Jewish educators plan a classroom lesson, camp program, or trip to Israel, they should stop and consider if their approach will impact young Jews in the way intended. Where—emotionally and intellectually—will Israel education take young Jews?
Dear USYer and Parents/Guardians,

Hello from a former USYer and pilgrimage participant. As part of my senior thesis, I am conducting a research study with Wesleyan University Government Professor Douglas Foyle about USY summer trips to Israel.

Participation from this summer’s USYers is vital to insure the success of my project, so I’m writing to ask for your help: Will you fill out a survey before and after participating on your USY summer 2017 trip?

Involvement includes about 10-30 minutes per survey, for a total time of one hour or less. Your identity will not be revealed in any presentation of the data. All of your responses will be anonymous and will not be associated with any individually identifying information. Wesleyan’s Institutional Review Board has approved this research process (ID number 20170406-tkaplan-srthesis).
Once my research is complete, I’ll share a general overview of the results with survey participants so you can compare your experience with others. Not only will this survey give you a chance to reflect and learn about your experience, but my final paper will provide invaluable information that USY can use when planning future trips.

If you would like to help me out with my survey, please email tripsurvey17@wesleyan.edu by no later than May 31, 2017.

You will receive an electronic form to sign and send back giving consent. Once the form has been received, we will send you a link to the survey. If you agree to take the survey, it is very important that you also fill out the post-trip survey.

Thank you in advance for your time. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me at my school email, tkaplan@wesleyan.edu.

L’shalom,
Talia Kaplan
Permission Form

Research Informed Consent

“See Where It Takes You”: Attitude Formation on USY Summer Experience Trips

Talia Kaplan
Advisor: Professor Doug Foyle

Purpose
We are conducting a research study to examine the formation of attitudes, identity, and collective memory among diaspora Jews. Our specific case study is USY summer trips to Israel.

Procedures
Participation in this study will involve completing two surveys during the summer of 2017: one prior to departure for the trip and one upon return from the trip. We anticipate that your involvement will require 10-30 minutes per survey, for a total time of one hour or less.

Risks and Benefits
Participants in this study should not experience any risks. This study will not only provide you with a chance to prepare for and reflect on your experience, but it will potentially provide information that will be useful to the Jewish professionals who run these trips, as well as to various academic fields.

Confidentiality
Your identity will not be revealed in any presentation of these data. All of your responses will be anonymous and will not be associated with any individually identifying information. Each participant will receive an ID number, which will be associated with the data. The code linking your ID number with your name will be stored separately.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate, to end participation at any time for any reason, or to refuse to answer any individual question without penalty.

Questions
If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the investigator, Talia Kaplan (tkaplan@wesleyan.edu). If you would like to talk with someone other than the researchers to discuss problems or concerns, or to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact James McGuire, Department of Government chair (jmcmguire@wesleyan.edu) You may also contact the Wesleyan University Institutional Review Board (IRB@wesleyan.edu).

Agreement to Participate

Participant
I have read the above information, have had the opportunity to have any questions about this study answered, and agree to participate in this study.

_____________________________  _____________________
(printed name)                (date)

_____________________________
(signature)

Legal Parent/Guardian
I have read the above information, have had the opportunity to have any questions about this study answered, and agree to allow the individual listed above to participate in this study.

_____________________________  _____________________
(printed name)                (date)

_____________________________
(signature)
APPENDIX 2
Selected Survey Questions

Pre- and Post- Trip Questions

Please indicate how well you believe you understand/know about each of the following items where – means you do not believe you understand/know about the item at all and 100 means you believe you understand/know about the item very well.

Ariel Sharon
BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions)
Camp David Accords (1978)
Fatah
First Intifada
Green Line
Hamas
IDF
Joint List
Judea and Samaria
Labor party
Likud
Lone soldier
Madrid Peace Conference (1991)
Nakba
Occupied Territories
Oslo Accords
Palestinian Authority
Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)
Sabra and Shatila
Second Intifada
UN Partition Plan
UN Resolution 181
UN Resolution 242
War of Independence
West Bank
Yasser Arafat
Yitzhak Rabin
1967 War
1973 War
2008-9 Gaza Conflict/War
2014 Gaza Conflict/War
Please select how important each of the following aspects of Judaism is to you personally, where 0 means the item is not at all important and 100 means the item is extremely important.

- Community
- Culture
- God
- *Halakha and Mitzvot*
- History
- Learning
- Peoplehood
- Prayer
- Social Action
- Social Justice
- State of Israel
- Torah
- *Tzedakah*

This section includes some personal opinion statements. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement. (Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)

I am hopeful about Israel's future.
I am hopeful about the future of diaspora Judaism.
I am hopeful about the future of Judaism in Israel.
I am hopeful about the future of Judaism.
I am pro-Israel.
I am pro-Palestine.
I am proud to be Jewish.
I believe it is possible for Israel to be both Jewish and democratic.
I believe that the current Israeli leadership wants to make peace.
I believe that the current Palestinian leadership wants to make peace.
I care about Israel.
I have a deep understanding of Israel.
I have a deep understanding of Judaism.
I have friends in USY.
I identify as a Conservative Jew.
I love Israel.
I support a one-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
I support a strong US-Israel relationship.
I support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
I think it is important that the State of Israel exists.
I want to be involved with a Jewish community when I get to college.
I want to be a Jewish professional.
I want to join an Israel group when I get to college.  
I want to make aliyah.  
I want to serve in the IDF.  
I'm not sure whether I think there should be a one-state solution or a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.  
Israel is an important part of my Judaism.  
Israel is important to me.  
My Judaism is important to me.  
The Shoah/Holocaust is an important part of my Judaism.

Below is a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one, please select whether you think that it should be a very important goal, a somewhat important goal, neither an important nor unimportant goal, a somewhat unimportant goal, or a very unimportant goal.

Protecting the jobs of American workers  
Securing adequate supplies of energy

Below are several possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see the item as a very important threat, a somewhat important threat, neither important nor unimportant threat, a somewhat unimportant threat, a very unimportant threat.

Large number of immigrants and refugees coming into the U.S.  
Economic competition from low-wage countries

This question ask you to indicate your opinion of certain foreign policy views. For each item below, please indicate whether you oppose or support the following views:

There is nothing wrong with using the CIA to try to undermine hostile governments.

The United States should take all steps, including the use of force, to prevent aggression by an expansionist power.

International cooperation is vital to solve common problems such as food, energy, and climate change.

It is vital that the United States help improve the standard of living in less developed countries.

Rather than simply countering the opponent’s thrusts, it is necessary to strike at the heart of an opponent’s power.
There is considerable validity to the “domino theory” that when one nation falls to aggressor nations, others nearby will soon follow a similar path.

Worldwide arms control should be pursued.

It is vital to enlist the cooperation of the United Nations in settling international disputes.

Post-Trip Questions

If you’ve made changes to your day-to-day life since Pilgrimage (religious, personal, etc.), please describe below. If this does not apply to you, write “n/a.”

(open-ended question)

Please select how often each topic (listed on the left) came up during programming/touring. (Not at all, less than once a week, about once a week, more than once a week, don’t know/no response)

Challenges facing non-Orthodox/egalitarian Judaism in Israel
What it means to live a Jewish life in Israel
Israel’s borders
Serving in the IDF
Israeli innovation (ex. high tech)
The Shoah/Holocaust
The settlements
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict
Israel’s security
Israel on college campuses
What it means to live a Jewish life in North America
Interviews, Itineraries, Journals

1976 Sample Itinerary (from Spring 1976 Achshav!)
1985 Israel Pilgrimage Itinerary (courtesy of Michelle Rich via Facebook)
1989 Poland Seminar Itinerary (courtesy of Debbie Goldenberg)
1992 Poland Seminary Itinerary (courtesy of Ilana Glazier)
2001 Poland Seminar Itinerary (courtesy of Samantha Knight)
2010 Poland Seminar Itinerary (courtesy of Matan Silberstein)
2011 Poland Seminar Itinerary (courtesy of Matan Silberstein)
2012 Poland Seminar Itinerary (courtesy of Matan Silberstein)
2013 journal (D.S.)
2013 journal (T.K.)
2013 Poland Seminar (First Departure) Itinerary (courtesy of Talia Kaplan)
2014 journal (L.B.)
2015 journal (W.S.)
2017 Israel Adventure Itinerary (courtesy of Michelle Rich)
2017 Eastern Europe (First Departure) Itinerary (courtesy of Michelle Rich)
2017 Eastern Europe (Second Departure) Itinerary (courtesy of Michelle Rich)
2017 Poland Seminar Itinerary (courtesy of Michelle Rich)
2017 L’Takyn Olam Itinerary (courtesy of Michelle Rich)

*Names from journals omitted to respect requested anonymity*
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