

Non-formal education in Israel = 01131

Prior Community Involvement and 'Israel Experience' Educational Tours

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The Israel Experience is a short-term, informal educational programme which brings Jewish youth from other countries to Israel. The purpose of the programme is to instil in Diaspora youth stronger ties with Israel and their Jewish identity. Almost all participants already have some connection with a Jewish community. The programme reinforces and strengthens, rather than radically changing, the attitudes and opinions held by the participants toward Israel and Judaism. There is a positive correlation between this prior affiliation and satisfaction with the programme. Community activities and formal Jewish schooling serve both as preparation for the educational tour and as a framework in which the experience can be understood and integrated.

Background

The Israel Experience programme includes a variety of educational tours of Israel organised through the framework of the Jewish Agency for Israel's Department for Jewish Zionist Education (prior to March 1998, this body was known as the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education's Youth and Hechalutz [pioneer] Department). The programme has been operating since the number of Jewish youth visiting Israel began to increase following the 1967 Six Day War. In the past 25 years, an estimated half a million students have come to Israel, the majority within the framework of the Youth and Hechalutz Department (Cohen, 1994a). Soon the children of many former participants will become the second generation to take part in these programmes.

The programmes are varied, but all share the same basic goal of exposing Diaspora youth to Israel and Israeli society, thereby strengthening the bond between the communities (Mittelberg, 1994). Tours are arranged through youth organisations representing every branch of Judaism and stream of Zionist thought. The programmes are not accredited and most students come during their summer or winter vacations from school.

Programmes last from one week to two months, and they operate throughout the country. Specific programme curriculums are structured according to the priorities and philosophy of the sponsoring organisation. The programmes consist of a series of educational units led either by the groups' counsellors or by independent guides in Israel. These can include visits to museums and archeological sites, hikes, seminars, interactions with Israeli youth, and recreational activities such as camel rides and rappelling. Some groups spend part of their time in Israel working on a kibbutz, volunteering with a social service organisation or living with an Israeli family. Hundreds of such mini-programmes exist in Israel and each group creates a thematic programme based on these. Some programmes, for example, may emphasise religious and historical themes while

others focus on exploring Jewish identity in a modern, pluralistic society (Elad, 1993).

Group size varies from 30–50 students. Most groups are accompanied by one Israeli guide and one or two counsellors from the students' local communities. The counsellors, usually the Israelis, occasionally teach an educational programme. More commonly, however, the lessons are left to the professional guides at each of the individual sites and the counsellors are in charge of logistics and group coordination. They are responsible for mediating group functioning, organisation of the programmes' components, and overseeing that transportation, security, medical, food and accommodation needs are met.

In general, the Israeli counsellors are older than those from the host countries and are less likely to be college students. There is a higher percentage of women counsellors from Israel. These demographics can probably be attributed to the fact that starting at age 18, all Israeli men are required to serve three years of army duty and women must serve two years.

Neither the Israeli nor the Diaspora counsellors are really representative of their peer groups in general: the Diaspora counsellors tend to be more religious than the average young Jewish adult in their respective countries while the Israelis are less. Almost three-quarters of the Diaspora counsellors consider themselves 'Jewish by religion', while less than half of the Israeli counsellors do. The Diaspora counsellors are recruited from the core of the Jewish community and many of them are alumni of the Israel Experience programme. Over half of them studied in Jewish day schools or extra-curricular religious schools and three-quarters were involved with Jewish or Zionist organisations. The Israelis are recruited from college campuses or from the ranks of those young people completing their compulsory army duty (Cohen & Ifergan, 1997).

Methodology

Two questionnaires were distributed to the 7864 participants of Summer 1993 and Winter 1994. The questionnaires were given in the following order: (1) up to three days after arrival; (2) not more than three days before departure. These conditions were strictly followed in order to enable us to measure the possible impact and changes that could occur during the participants' stay in Israel.

The questionnaire distributed upon arrival included questions regarding personal data, attitudes towards Judaism and Israel, Jewish education and expectations about the present trip. Both questionnaires included a battery of 21 identical questions in order to obtain and measure possible differences in opinion as a result of the programme. In addition, the second questionnaire asked for an evaluation of the trip, recommendations, and intentions of future involvement in Jewish/Zionist activities.

Approximately 90% of the entire population participated in the research. Most completed both questionnaires. Hence the results we present are not those of a representative sample; they indeed refer to a census of the whole population.

A follow-up survey was done on the Summer 1993 programme to measure the impact of the programme a year after the participants returned home. In May–June 1994, we sent a questionnaire to a sample of Americans who had participated in an Israel Experience programme in the summer of 1993. We

received 281 responses. These questionnaires represent more than 70% of the random sample we built for this purpose. Many specialists contend that a response rate of 60% is sufficient and allows us to refer to the entire population as well represented.

General Data

Total number of participants

Close to 8000 young people from Diaspora communities participated in Israel Experience programmes during the summer of 1993 (5686 students) and the winter of 1994 (2178 students). Female students (57%) outnumbered the males (43%).

Country of origin

Participants came from North and South America, Eastern and Western Europe, the CIS, Australia and South Africa. The largest contingent by far came from the United States (42%).

Table 1 Country of origin

<i>Country</i>	<i>Summer participants</i>	<i>Winter participants</i>	<i>Total 1993-94</i>	<i>Total in %</i>
Global	5686	2178	7864	100
United States	2803	463	3266	41.5
Canada	416	—	416	5.3
United Kingdom	929	75	1004	12.8
Australia	—	123	123	1.6
South Africa	—	180	180	2.3
Total English speakers	4148	841	4989	63.4
France	1043	—	1043	13.3
Other countries	178	—	178	2.3
Total French speakers, Europe	1221	—	1221	15.5
Scandinavia	—	118	118	1.5
Eastern Europe	249	44	293	3.7
CIS	—	115	115	1.5
Total Eastern Europe & CIS	249	159	408	5.2
Argentina	—	721	721	9.2
Brazil	—	250	250	3.2
Peru	—	45	45	0.6
Uruguay-Chile	—	44	44	0.6
Other	68	—	68	0.9
Total South America	68	1060	1128	14.3

Age

Nearly three-quarters of the participants on Israel Experience programmes are under 17, with 70% of them aged 15–17. The remaining 27% are between 18 and 22 years old. It is worth noting that the figures for South African participants are just the opposite: 70% of the youngsters are 18–22 years old.

Table 2 Age of participants (by percent)

Age	United States	Canada	Great Britain	South Africa	France	Argentina	Brazil
14 and under	2	7	0	2	12	0	0
15	15	15	11	7	20	0	4
16	34	20	72	9	28	31	48
17	20	26	9	11	19	47	24
18	5	16	3	25	12	13	8
19	4	6	2	18	5	1	3
20	5	3	2	15	1	2	6
21	4	3	1	11	1	1	5
22 and over	11	4	0	2	2	5	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Discussion of Results

Tours for teenagers

The Israel Experience programmes are geared mostly to adolescents. This fact is significant because of the psychological and sociological phenomena that characterise this age. In adolescence, an individual's personality crystallises and crucial events may have a strong impact on long-term courses of action (Bouganim, 1988; Cohen, 1993; Kaufmann & Aronovitz, 1986).

From previous research, we know that in many Western Jewish communities, the teenage years are those of the least community participation and of the least Jewish collective involvement. Precisely when abstract intellectual tools are formed (according to Piaget), when peer socialisation occurs, when affective development takes place, when one's future partner is most likely to be met, and when professional choices are made — in sum, when individuals take leave of the world of childhood and enter the world of adulthood — Jewish youngsters abandon collective and institutional Jewish life in droves (Chazan & London, 1990).

This phenomenon — the 'black hole of communal Jewish life' — which was observed in previous research in French Jewry (Cohen, 1991), has now become the rule for the major Western Jewish centres. It is precisely when the first signs of this 'black hole' begin to appear that the Israel Experience takes place. As we have seen, three-quarters of the Israel Experience participants are 14–17 years old. We may therefore hypothesise that the ways in which Israel Experience participants learned about their programmes are inextricably related to their active involvement in the Jewish community.

We can see a slight but steady decline in the percentage of 'very satisfied'

participants after a peak at age 16. Those 15 years old or younger are somewhat less satisfied than those a few years their senior. The very young may simply not be prepared for a trip so far from home. The decline in satisfaction with age after 16 seems to be related to the group-oriented nature of the programme. There is a graphic difference in the responses to the question regarding to what extent the group added to the experience. The older participants, clearly, are less enthusiastic about the group, a typical and predictable change in attitude as teenagers become young adults.

Table 3 Satisfaction by age (by percent)

	15 or younger	16	17	18	19	20 or older	Total
Not satisfied at all	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Not satisfied	4	5	4	4	6	5	4
Satisfied	45	41	42	47	49	52	44
Very satisfied	50	55	53	48	44	42	52

Table 4 Group enhancement of experience, by age (by percent)

	15 or younger	16	17	18	19	20 or older	Total
Unsatisfactory	3	2	2	3	3	4	3
Poor	6	4	4	6	7	8	5
Fair	15	10	11	14	14	17	12
Good	32	27	28	31	31	34	29
Excellent	44	57	54	46	44	37	52

Programmes adapted for community-affiliated participants

Participants in the Israel Experience programme tend to have an already strong connection with their local Jewish communities, and most have had prior Jewish education, either formal or informal (Cohen, 1986; Hochstein, 1986). Nearly 80% celebrated their Bar/Bat Mitzvah before this visit to Israel: 46% of all respondents were very active members of their Jewish community, i.e. they had participated in community events at least once a week during the two years preceding the trip ('very frequently'); 28% participated once a month ('frequently'); and 21% participated once or twice a year ('rarely'). Only 5% stated that they had not participated in community life during the preceding two years ('never').

Participants aged 15–17 are less actively involved in their community than older ones. However, they have been, or still are, more visible in Jewish educational frameworks. Obviously, they are more massively represented in Jewish youth organisations (15–17 years old, 67%; 18–21 years old, 50%; over 21 years old, 43%).

The Israel tours attract only a very small number of unaffiliated Diaspora

youngsters. This tendency is even more pronounced for participants from Argentina, Brazil and the United States. For Canada and France participants whose responses indicated most community involvement were fewer in number. Of the participants from Great Britain, 45% were involved with their communities at least once a week; and 78% — the highest percentage of any country surveyed — were members of a Jewish youth organisation.

Recruiting through community channels

The programmes are open to any young person who wishes to join (including non-Jews, although less than 1% of the participants are not Jewish). Youth groups within local Jewish communities organise the Israel Experience trips, and it is by means of their links with this community that most participants learn about the programme. In both North America and Europe, we found that informal marketing had far greater impact on youngsters' decisions to join a programme than advertisements (Cohen, 1995).

Table 5 Which factor had the greatest influence on your decision to come to Israel? (by percent)

<i>Summer 1994</i>	<i>USA</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>France</i>
Friends	34	41	50	42
Former participants	23	20	21	15
Family members	25	28	15	16
Youth organisation members	5	3	7	15
Mail brochures	7	4	4	7
Other media agents	6	4	3	5

Note: Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, and totals do not exactly equal 100%.

Even more significantly, we found that those who learned about the Israel Experience through this personal, informal network of friends, family, former participants, and youth group staff, were more likely to be satisfied with the programme than those recruited through mass media advertising (Cohen, 1994a, 1998). In the US and Canada family members tend to have a greater influence, while in Great Britain and France participants are more likely to be drawn in by their peers in youth organisations. In either scenario, affiliation with a Jewish community, whether it be centred around family or a youth group, is positively correlated with satisfaction with the programme.

The character and demographic make-up of these youth organisations and movements vary from country to country. The British Jewish community, for example, is overwhelmingly Orthodox, in affiliation if not in daily practice. However, the community is in decline, due to assimilation, intermarriage and a low birth rate, and there is a declining interest among British teenagers in attending extra-curricular activities associated with Judaism. Those who continue to be involved are most likely to be from orthodox backgrounds. (Ziderman, 1989; Kosmin *et al.*, 1997). In contrast, many Conservative, Reform and secular Zionist groups from the United States participate in Israel Experience programmes.

Previous trips to Israel

Participants from Great Britain and France are frequent visitors to Israel. For three-quarters of them, this was at least their second visit. The parents of 92% and 95%, respectively, of these teenagers had been to Israel. On the other hand, most of the North and South American participants discovered Israel for the first time on this trip.

Table 6 Previous trips to Israel (by percent)

<i>Number of visits to Israel prior to this one</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Brazil</i>
None	64	64	25	58	25	71	65
One	20	17	23	23	23	26	22
Two	5	6	13	8	11	0	9
Three or more	11	13	39	11	41	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Participants' Jewish education experience

The vast majority of participants have had some Jewish education before this visit to Israel, whether intensive (Jewish day school) or not (Hebrew school). Many attended a Jewish community summer or winter camp or a Hebrew school during the two years preceding the trip; and 67% of those who took part in community events once a month and 89% of those who took part once a week did so in the framework of a youth organisation (Cohen, 1994a).

Though community participation and involvement in youth groups is high, compared to other countries in this study, British participants of the Israel Experience are less likely to have been enrolled in formal Jewish educational institutions. Only 32% of British participants ever attended a Sunday school. The percentage of those who were *never* enrolled in a Jewish day school is exceeded only by participants from France. According to a study done in the London suburb of Redbridge, there is a graphic gender division in the Jewish education of youngsters. A quarter of the females aged 15–19 and about 20% of those aged 10–14 received no Jewish education. Almost all of the males received at least part-time synagogue classes until their Bar Mitzvah at age 13 (Waterman & Kosmin, 1986).

The background of the participants raises questions concerning the educational approach of the programme. The methods and content of the Israel Experience place it essentially within the framework of informal Jewish education. Nonetheless, our results indicate that nearly all participants have had some formal as well as informal Jewish education. The informal approach of the stay in Israel must take into account the youngsters' formal educational background, intensifying Jewish education rather than introducing them to it. The impact of the Israel Experience is significant for those participants with an informal Jewish educational background, but even more so for those with *only* a formal Jewish education. For participants for whom the trip to Israel was their first encounter with informal Jewish education, which tends to be more emotional and affective than formal educational programmes, the impact is striking.

Table 7 Previous Jewish education (by percent)

No Jewish education at all	3
Some formal and informal Jewish education	7
Much formal and no informal Jewish education	5
Formal and informal Jewish education (medium)	22
No formal and much informal Jewish education	6
Much formal and informal Jewish education	57
Total	100

Satisfaction with the programme and prior community participation

Overall, alumni indicated a high level of satisfaction with the programme. Over half the participants were 'very satisfied' and 43% were 'satisfied'. Fewer than 10% of the participants in any surveyed country stated that they were dissatisfied. With evaluation rates this high, the important distinction becomes one between the satisfied and very satisfied, as opposed to the satisfied versus the dissatisfied. We can see that almost 20% more of the frequent participants said that they were 'very satisfied' as opposed to merely 'satisfied'. The gap is much narrower for those who never participate in community activities, with a difference of only 5%. In other words, the vast majority of participants, regardless of their prior community experience, have an enjoyable and rewarding summer. Almost no one, it seems, regrets having joined the programme. However, those who have been prepared for the trip by involvement with local Jewish activities, are more likely to appreciate and understand the importance of the experience. Correspondingly, they give even more enthusiastic reviews to the programme.

As a general rule, the more the participants were involved in the community before the trip, the more they tended to be satisfied with it. Interestingly, enrolment in formal Jewish educational institutions such as day schools or Hebrew schools seems to have almost no bearing on satisfaction with the trip to Israel. In fact, those coming from intensive formal Jewish educational programmes are equally likely to say they were not satisfied with the trip. This sub-population is distinct from the one mentioned above, those with only formal education, who we found were deeply affected by the trip. Many students enrolled in day schools are also involved in extra-curricular activities in the Jewish community. Perhaps the dissatisfaction we see among day school students is due to the fact that the current curriculums do not take into account their prior education, as mentioned above.

Table 8 Community participation over the past two years (by percent)

<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Frequently</i>	<i>Very frequently</i>
Not at all satisfied	2	0	1	1
Not satisfied	8	5	5	4
Satisfied	43	46	44	38
Very satisfied	47	49	50	57
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 9 Formal Jewish education and satisfaction (by percent)

	<i>Not satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very satisfied</i>
Never been a student in a Jewish day school	43	45	45
Been a student in a Jewish day school six years or more	43	37	36
Never been a student in a Hebrew school	40	36	34
Been a student in a Hebrew school six years or more	36	35	36

Community involvement as preparation for the trip

Participants who felt they had been prepared for the trip were more likely to say they were satisfied with it. In major centres which send large numbers of students on the programmes, Joint Authority representatives organise preparatory activities several weeks before each trip (Cohen, 1996). When the participants mentioned their preparation for the trip, they placed it within the framework of activities directly linked to the stay in Israel, such as these planned orientations.

Though they have more years of experience in Jewish community and organisations, the older participants, who we saw earlier tend to be slightly less satisfied with the programme, are less likely to have taken part in these preparatory activities.

Table 10 Participation in preparatory activities, by age (by percent)

	<i>15 or younger</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20 or older</i>	<i>Total</i>
Never	43	28	32	30	34	43	33
Once or twice	31	44	39	40	44	42	41
3–5 times	16	14	11	15	11	7	13
6 or more times	9	14	18	15	11	8	14
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

However, the results also indicate that 55% of the participants who did not participate in the orientation activities prior to the trip felt that they had nonetheless been adequately prepared. We can explain this only in one way, i.e. that they actually had been undergoing preparation for a long time, one result of such preparation being the decision to attend a programme in Israel. We refer here to their community involvement during the two years preceding the trip, involvement which takes place in the framework of formal and informal community educational structures. This long-term, structural kind of preparation, in addition to or even instead of the specific short-term preparatory activities, serves as an effective orientation for the tour.

The stay in Israel is deeply bound up with the youngsters' past and present Jewish educational experience. The trip to Israel contributes to deepening and strengthening the participants' Jewish education and identity, through a better understanding of Israel today (Bubis & Marks, 1977; Cohen, 1994b; Kafka *et al.*,

1990). The stay in Israel is thus a standard milestone in community life for young people (Fox, 1988). For example, it has been said that "Teenage trips to Israel have become almost a rite of passage for young British Jews" (Kosmin *et al.*, 1997/98). For certain groups, particularly the majority of the British groups, which are very structured and homogeneous in terms of age and youth movement affiliation, the Israel Experience functions as social synergism. This experience affords the participants the opportunity to integrate past experiences in order to cross the threshold of this stage of their lives together, in Israel (Cohen, 1994a).

All this underscores the question of the 'unaffiliated', those young Jews on the periphery of the Jewish communities all over the world. Far from their community, or even lacking one, they find themselves outside the natural ties and connections with Israel. The programme organisers seem unable to reach them, and even if they do, the Israel Experience as it is presently conceived and organised is not necessarily geared to their expectations.

Does this mean that one cannot be sensitive and receptive to the impact of the Israel Experience as presently conceived and organised unless one already has access to the elements conducive to a profound perception of this experience? This is apparently so. Indeed, over and above the immediate cognitive and emotional perceptions of the visit are attitudes and perceptions directly linked to the participant's past and his or her community practices. Furthermore, in order to successfully convey the Israel Experience, those in charge must respect the codes and languages of the participants. We should view the congruence between participants' expectations and knowledge and that of Israel Experience planners and executors as one of the essential keys to the success of these tours (Cohen, 1995). Currently, Israel Experience programmes are not set up with consideration for the needs and aspirations of Jewish youngsters who come from the more distant periphery. There is a risk that if these students are recruited, the tour is liable to disappoint them and not fulfil its own goal of creating positive ties with Israel. Indeed, it could do the opposite. If they are to be included, the organisers will have to design new curricula and activities structured in such a way that these young people will not feel alienated.

We should also note that those at the other end of the spectrum, young people coming from ultra-orthodox communities, seldom participate in the Youth and Hechalutz Department's Israel Experience programmes either. Unlike the unaffiliated Jews, these young people are intensively involved with their communities and they do visit Israel. They come with their families or as visiting students to universities or religious schools. In many orthodox communities in the United States, there is a new tradition for teenagers to spend a year between high school and college in Israel. To attempt to include these youngsters in the existing Israel Experience programmes would also require major logistical restructuring and a new curriculum. Thus we must conclude that it is not simply a lack of attachment to a community that prevents students from joining this particular educational tour.

In the United States, every denomination sends its groups to Israel under the auspices of the Youth & Hechalutz Department: NCSY, B'ne Akiva (Orthodox), USY (Conservative), and NFTY (Reform). Many local communities also send groups: Detroit, Palm Beach, Pittsburgh and many others. Those youngsters

outside the scope of these communities — the unaffiliated and the ultra-Orthodox, generally do not participate and are not currently target populations for the programme.

The impact of Israel Experience on participants' attitudes

The sponsor's primary goal for the Israel Experience programmes is to strengthen the bond of Diaspora Jews to Israel and their local Jewish communities. The programme is largely successful in accomplishing this goal.

Table 11 Did the programme enhance your relation to Israel? (by percent)

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Brazil</i>
Yes/Definitely yes	91	93	86	86	89	85	95

Table 12 Feelings regarding the State of Israel: Close/very close (by percent)

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Brazil</i>
Before	79	79	75	76	89	85	69
After	90	88	82	84	88	86	80

Table 13 Did the programme make you more aware of your community's needs? (by percent)

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Brazil</i>
Yes/Definitely yes	74	69	63	71	67	75	88

Students who were satisfied with the programme were more likely to say their feelings toward Israel and the Jewish community had been enhanced. This indicates the educational tour itself, and not just time spent in Israel, was responsible for the change.

Table 14 Satisfaction with programme impact on attitudes (by percent)

<i>Did the programme enhance your relationship to Israel?</i>			
	<i>Not satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very satisfied</i>
Yes/Definitely yes	63	84	93
<i>Feelings regarding the State of Israel: close/very close</i>			
	<i>Not satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very satisfied</i>
Before	71	79	82
After	78	85	90
<i>More aware of community needs</i>			
	<i>Not satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very satisfied</i>
Yes/Definitely yes	38	67	79

The programme sparked significant interest in further visits. More than half the participants (and almost 70% of the largest group, the Americans) said they would be interested in coming back to Israel to study or participate in community/national service.

Table 15 Interest in participating in a one-year programme in Israel (by percent)

	United States	Canada	Great Britain	South Africa	France	Argentina	Brazil
Yes/Definitely yes	69	77	66	50	63	39	61
<i>Type of programme</i>							
University	74	84	23	42	59	66	49
Jewish study institute	21	16	13	8	11	14	9
Religious school	10	4	9	15	5	3	0
Civil volunteer	14	8	8	3	38	6	6
Army	24	22	30	32	36	18	23
Youth Organisation	38	23	65	42	27	18	42
Kibbutz	31	28	41	44	46	19	35
Leadership training	28	18	44	17	16	31	14
Professional training	18	12	11	15	8	33	11

The programme reinforced rather than drastically altered participants' basic attitudes. This can probably be attributed to the fact that almost all were already involved in Jewish/Zionist activities, and youngsters holding these values are the most likely to participate. An article on British Jews' attachment to Israel states that the Orthodox, who tend to be staunch supporters of Israel, are over-represented among the youth who visit Israel (Kosmin *et al.*, 1997/98). Youngsters with ambivalent or negative attitudes toward Israel or Judaism are unlikely to choose to spend their vacation on this type of programme. In some cases, there were actually fewer participants identifying themselves as religious or Zionist after the programme. It is not clear whether this is due to an unfavourable experience or an altered understanding of those terms after spending time in Israel.

Table 16 Regards him/herself as religious/Zionist by country (by percent)

<i>Regards him/herself as religious: yes/definitely yes</i>							
	United States	Canada	Great Britain	South Africa	France	Argentina	Brazil
Before	54	34	48	41	38	15	20
After	54	29	47	47	41	9	22
<i>Regards him/herself as Zionist: yes/definitely yes</i>							
	United States	Canada	Great Britain	South Africa	France	Argentina	Brazil
Before	71	58	67	58	65	32	44
After	77	67	67	64	69	28	40

Satisfaction with the programme did not seem to increase participants' religious or Zionist attitudes either, reinforcing the theory that, while the programme enhanced emotional ties to the nation and community, it did not alter basic political and religious beliefs. In fact, it was the students the *least* satisfied with the programme who showed the greatest increase in considering themselves Zionists. In this case, perhaps it was the visit to Israel itself, rather than the programme, that caused the change. Another possibility is that since the students who were most satisfied with the programme tended to be those who called themselves Zionists *before* the trip, there was less room for increase among them. The 'after' figure for the dissatisfied is still lower than the 'before' figure for the satisfied. Perhaps holding opinions similar to those espoused by the programme from the outset made the experience more enjoyable.

Table 17 Regards him/herself as religious/Zionist by satisfaction (by percent)

<i>Regards him/herself as religious: yes/definitely yes</i>			
	<i>Not satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very Satisfied</i>
Before	31	39	41
After	37	40	41
<i>Regards him/herself as Zionist: yes/definitely yes</i>			
	<i>Not satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very satisfied</i>
Before	45	60	64
After	62	64	68

Long-term impact

The follow-up study was done to measure whether the feedback from the students was tinted by natural enthusiasm at the end of an exciting experience, or if it indicated a lasting effect on the participants' attitudes. The results of the survey given one year later to the alumni of the Summer 1993 programme indicate that the impact of the programme is long-lasting. In fact, a year later, alumni seemed to be even more closely affiliated with the community.

Table 18 Attitudes after one year

<i>Did the programme enhance your Jewish identity? (by percent)</i>		
	<i>Alumni</i>	<i>Summer 1993 responses</i>
Definitely not/no	15	11
Yes/Definitely yes	85	89
<i>Did the programme make you more aware of the needs of your home Jewish community?</i>		
	<i>Alumni</i>	<i>Summer 1993 responses</i>
Definitely not/no	29	21
Yes/Definitely yes	71	79
<i>Did the programme enhance your relationship to Israel?</i>		
Definitely not/no	5	6
Yes/Definitely yes	95	94

Not only are Israel Experience participants active in their communities prior to the trip, the alumni continue this trend on their return to their home country: 81% have been in touch with a Jewish organisation. Almost two-thirds currently participate in a Jewish youth organisation and half have had some responsibility such as counsellor or officer. Possibly the most impressive figure is the 96% who have kept in touch with other programme participants since their return home, among them three-quarters who keep in touch with three or more peer participants.

Generally speaking, the richer a respondent's Jewish educational background, the greater his or her participation in Jewish community life (Cohen, 1992). Those involved with their home communities were not only more likely to join an Israel Experience tour, but were also more likely to be satisfied with it. Thus, we can see that the Israel Experience programme depends upon active involvement in Jewish communities as much as it encourages it.

Table 19 Community involvement after programme (by percent)

<i>Currently a participant in a Jewish youth organisation in home country (from survey at beginning of programme)</i>						
<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Brazil</i>
70	45	78	55	40	48	38
<i>Will participate in Jewish youth organisation in coming year (yes/definitely yes) (from survey at end of programme)</i>						
<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Brazil</i>
83	76	85	80	79	49	63

Conclusions and Questions for Future Study

The Israel Experience differs from other summer or semester abroad programmes in that it targets a specific population and promotes a well-defined goal, namely strengthening the bond between Diaspora and Israeli Jewish communities. It primarily reaches young people already involved with Jewish and Zionist organisations and seems to reinforce rather than reverse attitudes. We have seen that prior involvement in the local Jewish community is linked to greater satisfaction with the Israel Experience summer tours. We also know that recruitment through youth groups and the informal community network corresponds to greater satisfaction.

Each youth group and local community has a different flavour, different priorities, different philosophy. The individual Israel Experience programmes are tailored to the youth groups' level of knowledge, brand of Judaism, brand of Zionism, etc. Though some sites and activities are almost universal (such as visiting the Western Wall,) a Reform group such as NFTY would not develop the same curriculum or patronise the same programme components as an Orthodox group such as B'ne Akiva. Therefore, it is not surprising that an individual who comes out of that community, who is familiar with the philosophy and most likely has internalised it to some extent, would have a better time on the trip. A

youngster who had been involved in weekly activities with a Reform youth organisation and somehow wound up in a group of modern Orthodox students (or vice versa) very likely would not be satisfied with the programme. We can predict not simply a generalised community/Israel Experience connection, but a *specific* community/*specific* Israel Experience programme connection.

If the sponsors of the programme wish to reach youngsters on the periphery of the Jewish community, they will have to significantly modify their approach (Cohen, 1995). An outreach policy presumes: (a) redefining the programmes which were adapted to the composition of the groups already affiliated with the community; (b) re-examining present marketing on the basis of informal networks (friends, family, members of Jewish youth movements); (c) training educators to adopt an approach based first and foremost on an initial encounter. Further study would be needed to determine whether that population is in fact reachable and whether they want to invest the effort and money necessary to recruit these youngsters.

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