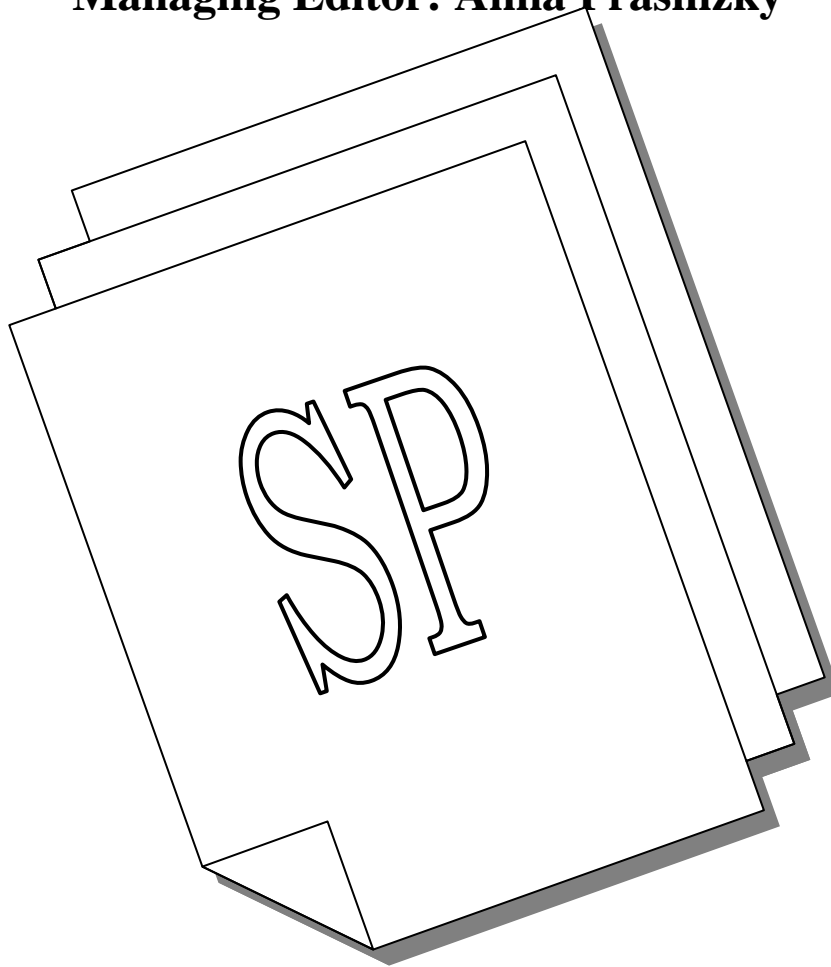


Sociological Papers

Formal and Informal Jewish Education: Lessons and Challenges in Israel and in the Diaspora

**Series Editor: Larissa Remennick
Managing Editor: Anna Prashizky**



Volume 17, 2012-2013

**Sponsored by the Leon Tamman Foundation for
Research into Jewish Communities**



**SOCIOLOGICAL INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY STUDIES
BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

Israeli and Diaspora Students Travel to the Holocaust Sites in Poland: The Impact on the Perceptions of the Holocaust, Jewish Identity, and Israel-Diaspora Ties

Nitza Davidovich

**Director, Department of Academic Evaluation and Development,
Ariel University Center of Samaria, Israel**

Dan Soen

Ariel University Center, Israel

Abstract

The Ministry of Education encourages Israeli students to visit sites of historic Jewish communities in Poland and the sites of Nazi death camps. The trip is designed to reinforce the youngsters' sense of belonging to the Jewish people, their connection to and identification with Jewish heritage and history, and their commitment to the future of Jewish life in Israel and its sovereignty. This study explores the impact of trips to Poland, organized by Tachlit Center, on Israeli and overseas university students. The vast majority of participants confirm that the trip emphasizes the important role of the Holocaust memory and commemoration. Findings on the impact of Holocaust education on other Israeli and Jewish values (e.g., the significance of immigration to Israel and ties to the Jewish Diaspora) are discussed, along with the implications for future Holocaust education programs.

Introduction

Most researchers claim that Judaism forms a core of the Israeli-Jewish culture and the shared ground of Israeli identity (Auron, 1993; Ben Rafael, 2008; Herman, 1988; Levy, Levisohn, & Katz, 1997; Pikar, 2009). Israel's official language is Hebrew, the calendar and most public holidays are Jewish (Ben-Rafael & Ben-Chaim, 2006), the Zionist ideology draws from Jewish tradition (Ben-Rafael, 2008; David, 2012), Israeli art represents different Jewish images and traditions (Hemo & Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2009). Moreover, there are clear indications of the expansion of Jewish education in state schools even in the regions considered a bastion of secularism (Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, Stein & Posner, 2009) and growing interest in Judaism in the secular Jewish sector (Azulay & Tabory, 2008; Azulay & Werczberger, 2008; Goodman & Yona, 2004). Maybe this is the expression for the wish of many in Israeli society and its chief institutions, including the Ministry of Education, to enhance the Jewish

component of Israeli culture (Pikar, 2009). This tendency is understandable given the social structure of Israeli society, which in contrast to the common view is not sharply divided between the religious and the secular. This society is composed of a spectrum of identities, with most Jews situated at various points along the religious-secular axis and not at its polar extremes. This group, forming majority in Israel, has a positive view of creating strong links with Jewish tradition and reinforcing Jewish identity (Mimran, 2010).

Despite the wish to maintain contact with Judaism and the perception of Jewish education as part of Jewish continuity (Fox & Scheffler, 2000), most Israelis have long been dissatisfied with the manner and degree in which Jewish contents are being imparted in the educational system. The issues related to Jewish Israeli identity and to the historical heritage of the nation are still controversial in Israeli society reflecting the ideological rifts between different segments of Israelis (Resh & Benavot, 1998). Despite the polarization and heated public disputes, there is a relative consensus that the Jewish state cannot exist without shared Jewish identity and basic knowledge of modern Jewish history. One of the most meaningful projects in this context was the launch of youth delegations to Poland organized within the state educational system. The stated goal of these delegations was overcoming the perceived crisis of Jewish identity among Israeli youth by re-connecting with recent Jewish history and strengthening relationships with the Diaspora (Director General Circular, 1999). Despite these declared goals, a study by Romi and Lev (2003) conducted among teenagers after the trip to Poland has shown that it has had no meaningful effect on their Jewish identity. However, participants' self-concept as Israelis was enhanced, probably because they associated Israeliness with feelings of power, pride, and hope reinforced throughout the trip. A recent evaluation study (National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education, 2011) has also found that the trip's effect on reinforcing Jewish identity is fairly marginal, as is its effect on the attitudes towards Diaspora Jewry.

In light of these earlier findings among high school students, our purpose in the current study is to explore the contribution of the trip to Poland to reinforcing Jewish identity and Israel-Diaspora relations in a unique project initiated in Israeli colleges and universities by the *Tachlit* Center for Jewish Education. This project underscored the link between the values of Jewish identity, Diaspora Jewry, and remembrance of the Holocaust.

Jewish Identity, Diaspora and the Exile: Educational Policy until the 1980s

The debate on the content of Jewish education in Israel has been a lengthy one (Kerem, 1997), with fierce battles being waged over the actual meaning of this term. Until 1953 the Israeli school system was divided into three different ideological streams that began operating in the *Yishuv* period: the general-civil stream, the Labor-workers' stream, and the Mizrahi stream. Each ran an autonomous school system, with almost exclusive supervision of their activities (Zameret, 2003). The State Education Law, which stipulated that a uniform curriculum would be operated in the general state and state-religious educational systems, with supplemental religious contents in the latter, was a significant milestone in the history of Israel's Jewish education. The declared purpose of the law was to transfer these educational institutions from the control of sectarian organizations to the centralized state control through a process of unification, on both the organizational and ideological levels. Originally the law was supposed to include a single track of state education, with no

separation for religious schools, in order to realize the melting-pot approach – to forge a generation of young Israelis educated under a single system of values. Due to the strong resistance of the religious parties, however, a compromise was achieved by separating the general from the religious track. Over time, the state system became secularized; eventually the law lost its *raison d'être* and centralism was transformed into decentralism (Ben Artzi, 1989; Zameret, 1989).

Imposing a unified system of public education created intense debates concerning the place of Jewish disciplines. Opponents objected to the "worship of religion", "clerical coercion", and the "mechanism called tradition" (Zameret, 1997). Advocates sought to add other Jewish contents: "emphasize Jewish literature rather than only the Bible, (Tzabari, cited in Zameret, 1997), and instill in youngsters an appreciation of their national integrity and singularity, recognition of the significance of the national home, and the historical rights to the land (Raziel-Naor, cite in Zameret, 1997). Minister of Education Zalman Aran established the Center for Nurturing Jewish Consciousness in response to these debates. The Center demanded the design of study programs with four foci: the people of Israel, its history and main sociocultural movements; Jewish Torah and its basic concepts; Jewish Diasporas in the past and present; and Israeli way of life from a cultural-national perspective. Despite these efforts, the programs were not successful in the long range, mainly due to the dearth of teachers with a suitable background (Zameret, 1997) and the lack of emphasis on differences between the new contents and existing programs. Eventually, even the advocates felt that "'Jewish Consciousness' was merely an encyclopedia of knowledge with no soul" and the program was soon abandoned (Dror, 2003).

The issues of Jewish identity and the Diaspora Jewry re-emerged on the public agenda in the mid-1970s: many claim that the preoccupation with the topic of Diaspora during these years reflected the despondency of Israeli society following the Yom Kippur War (Almog, 2004; Iram & Shechter, 2001). In the aftermath of the war, the concept of Israel's exclusiveness as a spiritual center was eroded, highlighting the position of Diaspora Jewry (Firer, 1985). Others claim that the victorious Six Day War, the subsequent Aliyah of Jews from Europe and America, as well as the political upheaval of 1977 (that ended the historic dominance of the Labor) together caused paradigmatic transformations, a broader view of Jewish peoplehood, and eventually reinterpretation of Jewish tradition in the educational system. This resulted in an emphasis on the national aspects in history and culture without concealing their religious source (Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1983). These trends grew stronger over the years and received a practical manifestation in the commencement of youth delegations to Poland.

Youth Delegations to Poland – Ethical Crisis and Jewish Identity

Youth delegations to Poland commenced in the late 1980s following the ethical qualms and identity crisis in Israeli society that gave rise to a new public consciousness and the significance of Holocaust remembrance. There was also a growing recognition of the need to examine the effects of the Holocaust on social and national identity of Israelis (Wetzler, 1996).

The trips to Poland, which evolved as a result of the change in public ethos and began to catch on in the 1990s, served what anthropology calls the connection between social memory and place (Jarman, 2001) and "the three-dimensionality of memory, where the site is one dimension, time is the second, and relationality – both to the site and to people – the third (Degnen, 2005)." This experiential project was planned to

reinforce the links between the individual and the group and between the Jewish present and past (Fentress & Wickham, 1992), even if no one paid attention to this at first. Thus, memory of the Holocaust became an anchor for the redefinition of Israeli identity based on the Jewish foundations (Ronen, 2003) and, some claim, in neglect of its secular and humanist foundations (Elkana, 1988). From the beginning of the project, educators saw it as a way of interweaving the memory of the Holocaust and the heritage of Diaspora Jewry in order to enhance Jewish identity.

The perceptions of the trip as a means of enhancing Jewish consciousness are reflected in Director General Circulars over the years. Thus, the Director General's Circular of 1999 summarized its goals (1999/10 [a]) as follows: familiarization with Jewish life in Poland prior to World War II; receiving a sense of the meaning of the destruction and loss; familiarization with the basic tenets of Nazi ideology; familiarization with the brave stand taken by the Jews; reinforcing the ties of young people with their Jewish collective past; re-clarification of terms and basic concepts related to Jewish history. Thus, the educational system recognizes that the attitude to the Holocaust and its consequences is a major component of contemporary Jewish identity (Auron, 2003). The assumption is that the connection between Israel and Diaspora Jewry is a way of reinforcing Jewish identity and solidarity (Yankelevitch & Ben Peretz, 2009). This point is further manifested by the various school curricula implemented over the years.

Curricula for Reinforcing Jewish Identity and Diaspora Ties since 1990

While the Holocaust program aimed to promote ties with the Diaspora and reinforce Jewish identity, it also responded to a public demand to expand the Jewish dimension in Israeli education. As a result of this demand, the Shenhar Commission was convened in 1994 with the purpose of discussing the issue of Israeli and Jewish identity in the general state educational system, while focusing on disciplines associated with Jewish heritage (Shenhar, 1994). Despite these efforts, most of the data show that "there is a certain distancing of 'secular populations' from Judaism" (Fiedelman, 2011). This trend reflects several factors described by the Shenhar Commission almost two decades ago and which are true today more than ever:

Enhancement of humanist motifs perceived by many as conflicting with religious values; increasing politicization of religion and its establishment and increasing polarization between the religious and secular public; political disagreements resulting from the security state in Israel, which has led to rising ideological and political use of traditional texts, and more (Shenhar, 1994, p. 3).

For the State of Israel, the weakening of the Jewish dimension and of connections with the Diaspora is not a trivial matter, but rather a real threat:

A crisis in Jewish studies might constitute a real danger and create an identity crisis in the secular Jewish community, possibly even leading to doubts about the just course of Zionism and about the just course of the State of Israel... [and causing] serious harm to the cohesion of the Jewish-Israeli collective. Shenhar, 1994, p. 3)

In this context, the trip to Poland was perceived from the outset, and today more than ever, as a way of preventing the crisis and connecting Judaism, the destruction of European Jewry, the modern Diaspora, and Jewish identity. The question is whether students actually make this connection. In the case of teenagers we know that there

has not been much success. Nonetheless, in light of the greater maturity of academic students, would a trip that constitutes part of a project with a significant Jewish-religious orientation contribute significantly to Jewish identity and to strengthening participants' connection with Diaspora Jewry?

There are numerous models of a Holocaust curriculum including a trip to Holocaust sites in Poland. Previous studies have found (Davidovitch & Soen, 2011) that, despite the goals defined for the Ministry of Education curriculum, there is no conclusive evidence as to the reinforcement of participants' Jewish identity, Zionist ethos, or national identity. Findings show that the trip enhanced the significance that participants' attribute to Jewish and Israeli social and democratic values. Therefore, in the present study we focus on the *Tachlit* program, which includes a segment that explicitly emphasizes Jewish values.

"Jewish Soul" – A Unique Trip to Poland with the *Tachlit* Center

The *Tachlit* Center, which operates on many Israeli campuses including the Ariel University Center, offers a program supported by the Wolfson Foundation designed to reinforce Jewish identity. "We consider the face of the future generation as a part of the culture and heritage of the entire Jewish nation. Based on this perspective, we have developed a unique curriculum that teaches Jewish sources using advanced methods that are specifically customized to students. The program encompasses numerous fields, with the goal of offering participants a theoretical education in Jewish sources and an opportunity to enhance their understanding of Jewish culture, and seeks to spark an intercultural dialogue at a high academic level." The program aims to free students from economic concerns while giving them an opportunity to become familiar with their roots and engage in in-depth study of the Jewish sources at a high academic standard. Hundreds of students are currently participating in this project: they attend lectures, discussion groups, and workshops; participate in weekend field trips in Israel and overseas; engage with ancient texts and the works of contemporary writers; in other words - explore their roots and together investigate what it means to be Jewish.

The unique fabric of the student body on each campus, which includes students from a variety of ideological backgrounds, countries or origin, and different degrees of Jewish knowledge, creates a fascinating challenge for the *Tachlit* Center, which strives to touch participants' spirits. Consequently, activities focus on the study of Jewish contents, on the one hand, and the establishment of genuine interpersonal connections, on the other. In the period since *Tachlit* was founded, warm ties have been established between the staff and students, including Shabbat programs, emotional sharing, long discussions, and genuine friendships.

Tachlit's overarching goal is to bridge the gaps dividing the various Jewish sectors in Israel by focusing on what they have in common and by affirming that there are more things that unite us than divide us. The program's appeal to the population of students, who will play a role in shaping the country's image in the future, is based on the belief that this group can convey these insights to everyone and create a new climate of collaboration and acceptance in all sections of the nation. The Center seeks to reinforce Jewish identity among students, based on its understanding that our connection to our shared roots and past and to the sources of Jewish heritage will provide the moral strength necessary to ensure our Jewish future in Israel.

One of the special activities organized by the Center is an eight-day trip to Poland that emphasizes the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust. Every year 350 students from all around the country participate in these trips. The project is unique for its combination of a educational trip into the bowels of the valley of death, exposure to the pain and suffering of the Holocaust narrative from a fundamental Jewish perspective, and channeling the extreme emotions to a positive place of growth and observation – together providing a meaningful Jewish experience.

Research Method

Of the numerous educational programs that include a trip to the Holocaust sites in Poland, the *Tachlit* purports to devote the most attention to topics related to Judaism, Jewish values, and the Jewish Diaspora. The findings of this study among college students were subsequently compared with the findings of a large national study involving high school students in Israel's public and public-religious schools who participated in a similar trip as part of the national Holocaust curriculum (Davidovitch & Soen, 2011).

Immediately upon their return from Poland, *Tachlit* participants completed a questionnaire developed for a national study of the Holocaust curriculum (Davidovitch & Soen, 2012). Participants were assured of their anonymity and informed that their responses would be used for aggregate statistical analysis only.

The students background characteristics included in the questionnaire made it possible to break the data set by the following variables:

Academic school (university, college)

Religiosity (secular, traditional, religious)

Country of birth (Israel, United States, other countries)

Family links to the Holocaust (present or absent)

Several indices (dependent variables) were constructed to measure the contribution of the trip to various expressions of Jewish identity and values. The indices were constructed based on factor analyses and their coherence was examined by calculating Cronbach's α .

- * Enhancing knowledge about the Holocaust (5 items, $\alpha = .76$)
- * Reinforcing Jewish, Zionist national identity (6 items, $\alpha = .79$)
- * Significance of Jewish values (6 items, $\alpha = .71$)
- * Significance of Israeli values (6 items, $\alpha = .84$)
- * Significance of social-democratic values (8 items, $\alpha = .84$)

The Sample

In our study, we examined the views of 209 students, including Israeli students (66%) and overseas students (34%), who took part in the trip to Poland organized by the *Tachlit* Center. The personal and social characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Personal and social characteristics of the survey respondents.

		Percentage
All respondents	209	100%
Gender	men	64%
	Women	36%
Age (years)	18–22	29%
	23–25	33%
	26 or older	38%
Religiosity	Secular	44%
	Traditional	27%
	Religious	30%
Country of birth	Israel	66%
	US–Canada (of whom 86% are religious)	26%
	Other countries	8%
Family links to the Holocaust	Absent	42%
	Present	58%
Past trips to Poland	Took a trip to Poland in the past	5%
Academic school type	University	53%
	College	47%
Major discipline of study	Education and the humanities	22%
	Science and engineering studies	22%
	Social studies	55%
Studying for degree	Bachelor's	94%
	Master's	6%

Principal Findings

Sources of knowledge about the Holocaust

The students received information about the Holocaust mainly from the stories of survivors (83%), from visits to Holocaust commemoration museums, and from films and plays (74–76%). Less than half learned about the Holocaust from family stories (mainly those with family links to the Holocaust) and only 37% searched for information on the subject on the Internet. Respondents born in North America were found to make less use of all sources of knowledge examined. Naturally, students with family links to the Holocaust had been more exposed to family stories on the subject. Religious students participating in this project were less exposed to all sources of knowledge than non-religious students who were also more experienced with visits to museums and study days dedicated to the Holocaust.

Student perceptions of the trip's goals, contribution, and impact

The large majority of the students (86%) reported the trip's contribution to raising the significance of Israeli values. A high proportion of students (82–84%) reported that the trip contributed to enhancing their knowledge about the Holocaust and to raising the significance of social and democratic values. A relatively low proportion (68%) indicated the contribution of the trip to raising the significance of Jewish values. For some 90% of the students, the trip contributed to enriching their knowledge about the Holocaust, to understanding the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a phenomenon, and appreciation of the former Jewish communities in Poland. Some 70% of participants thought that the trip helped them understand the universal tragic consequences of the Holocaust. No consistent differences by academic school or religiosity have been found with regard to the trip's contribution to enhancing knowledge about the

Holocaust. Furthermore, no conspicuous differences were found in the trip's contribution to enhancing knowledge about the Holocaust by country of origin or by family links to the Holocaust.

Reinforcing Jewish-Israeli identity

Reinforcing Jewish and Israeli identity was an area in which relatively fewer students reported a contribution. The low proportion seems to result from the fact that only 43% of students felt that the trip helped them understand the mutual ties between Diaspora Jews and Israel, and only for 65% did the trip lead to a better appreciation of the IDF's role in Israel's existence – maybe because the IDF's role in defense is associated with immediate threats by Arab neighbors more than with distant threats by European anti-Semitism. No significant difference in this respect was found between students born in Israel or overseas. Students with a Holocaust-related family background were less inclined to report the trip's contribution to reinforcing their Jewish-Israeli identity. The trip's contribution to reinforcing Jewish identity did not differ significantly by academic school type or by religiosity.

Significance attributed to Jewish values

The trip's contribution to the significance attributed to Jewish values was less emphasized by students. While almost all students (97%) stated the trip's contribution to emphasizing the importance of remembrance and commemoration of the Holocaust, only about 60% saw the trip as a means of raising the significance of absorbing immigration and commitment to Diaspora Jews, and only about 40% saw it as emphasizing the significance of observing Jewish religious commandments. The Tables 2-3 present these findings split by religiosity, country of birth, and family links to the Holocaust.

Table 2. The reinforcement of Jewish values, by respondents' religiosity

	secular	traditional	observant
Understanding the significance of the State of Israel for the Jewish people	90%	93%	81%
Reinforced sense of shared Jewish destiny	84%	89%	91%
Understanding the importance of the IDF	71%	60%	58%
Understanding the importance of Israel-Diaspora ties	40%	42%	46%
General measure: reinforced sense of Jewish identity	78%	79%	77%

Table 3. The contribution to the significance attributed to Jewish values by country of birth and family links to the Holocaust

	Country of birth			Family connection to the Holocaust	
	Israel	North America	Other	No	Yes
A sense of national pride in being Israeli	95%	90%	88%	95%	91%
Reinforced Jewish and Israeli identity	93%	88%	88%	94%	86%
Understanding the significance of the state of	93%	78%	81%	92%	86%

Israel for the Jewish people					
Reinforced sense of shared Jewish destiny	88%	84%	94%	84%	58%
Understanding the importance of the IDF	70%	50%	69%	90%	86%
Understanding the importance of Israel – Diaspora ties	42%	46%	44%	40%	45%
General measure: reinforced sense of Jewish-Israeli identity	80%	73%	77%	80%	77%

Project participants were found to put a greater emphasis on the trip's contribution to raising the significance of Jewish values. Interestingly, respondents born in North America did not see reinforcement of the value of immigration absorption as one of the goals of the trip, while those born in other countries did (47% and 84%, respectively). Students with family links to the Holocaust were less inclined to recognize the trip's contribution to raising the significance of Jewish values.

Table 4. The contribution to the significance attributed to Israeli values

National pride	93%
Meaning of the Israeli flag	93%
Zionism	90%
Being Israeli	84%
National security	82%
Military service	72%
General measure: increased importance of Israeli values	86%

The trip's greatest contribution was its effect on the significance attributed by participants to Israeli values (Table 4). This is particularly conspicuous in subjects of national pride and the symbolic meaning of the Israeli flag. Religious students were less inclined to see the trip as contributing to raising the significance of Israeli values. This was particularly true of subjects of Israeli identity and military service. North American natives too perceived the trip as having less of a contribution to raising the significance of Israeli values – particularly subjects of Israeli identity and military service.

The trip's contribution to the significance attributed to social-democratic values was one of the conspicuous contributions of the trip (Table 5). The main values that contributed to the significance of this subject were "sanctity of life", "protecting the family", "care for others", and "human respect". Respondents born in Israel were more inclined to see the trip as contributing to raising the significance of social and democratic values.

Table 5. Contribution to raising the significance of social and democratic values by the family link to the Holocaust

	No Family link	Family link to the holocaust
Sanctity of life	97%	96%
Protection of Family	91%	92%
care for others	90%	91%
Human dignity	91%	89%
Tolerance	83%	88%
Social equality	71%	69%
Personal safety	64%	64%
Democracy	60%	64%
General index: significance of social-democratic values	81%	82%

Differential assessment of activities, staff, sites, and of the trips generally

The contribution of various factors to achieving the goals of the trip – the quality of accompanying tour guides, organization of the visits to Holocaust sites, scope and content of learning about the Holocaust, were perceived by students as those with the greatest contribution to achieving the trip's goals. The ceremonies, group discussions, and recreational activities had the least impact on the participants.

Of all the sites visited during the trip, almost all students (96%) reported that the visits to Majdanek and Auschwitz strongly contributed to achieving the goals of the trip. The visits to the Nozyk synagogue, to Zakopane, and to Yeshivat Hachmei Lublin contributed somewhat less to achieving these goals.

When asked about their principal support for the Holocaust site trips, almost all students were in favor of the trips to Poland in general and of the trips by academic students in particular. Very few (16%) suggested that such trips should take place in high school. Almost all respondents thought that the trip fulfilled their expectations (92%) and achieved its goals (95%). Over 90% of participants reported that the trip enhanced feelings aroused by the Holocaust and expanded their knowledge and understanding of these historic events. The trip reinforced the existing values of 94% of participants and changed the values of 42%.

Comparative assessment of Tachlit vs. other programs

Do the findings of the present study reflect a strong contribution of the *Tachlit* program's trip to Poland to participants' Jewish identity and their ties with the Jewish Diaspora, as its stated goals? In 2009, the National Authority of Measurement and Assessment in Education (NAMA) sponsored a study on high school students' trips to Poland, using a national sample of 3,588 eleventh-graders who took this trip. Of this group, 69% studied in public schools and 31% attended public-religious schools; 63% were girls, and 55.2% had no family ties to the Holocaust. The study was designed to examine if and to what extent these trips achieve their goals, as defined by the Ministry of Education, from a cognitive, moral, and emotional perspective (NAMA website). Findings of the NAMA study are presented below in comparison to our findings on the *Tachlit* program (the questionnaires were very similar).

(a) Enhancing knowledge of the Holocaust

Upon their return, the vast majority of the youngsters (95%) reported that they learned a lot about the Holocaust through the trip. Prior information on the Holocaust was

gained by the students mainly from the stories of survivors (70% in the NAMA study compared to 83% in the *Tachlit* study), visits to museums (72% and 76.3%, respectively), the media (70% and 57%, respectively), films and theater (68% and 74%, respectively). Less than one half (38% and 45%, respectively), especially those youngsters with family ties to the Holocaust, learned about the Holocaust from family stories, while less than one third searched for information on the Holocaust on the Internet (38% and 37%, respectively). The college students in the *Tachlit* project read more about the Holocaust than did high-school students in the NAMA study (53% and 36%, respectively). No differences were found in the responses by their families' country of origin, gender, or family ties to the Holocaust.

It appears that experiential learning methods played a more important role than theoretical studies in the Holocaust education of the schoolchildren (sampled in the NAMA study). This is also true of the *Tachlit* program participants, for whom the survivors' stories (83%), museum visits (76%), and watching the films (74%) were important sources of information on the Holocaust.

(b) Reinforcing Jewish, Zionist, and national identity

Most of the pupils in the NAMA sample (who participated in trips to Poland through their schools) and the youngsters who participated in the *Tachlit* program reported that the trip to Poland contributed to a series of their personal values of universal, national, Jewish, and individual character. A large percentage reported that the trip enhanced the significance of democratic values (89% and 83% in the NAMA sample and the *Tachlit* project, respectively) and social equality (91% and 70%, respectively). Regarding universal values such as human dignity, the sanctity of life, care for others, and tolerance, there were no differences between the two groups. A high percentage (95% and 97% in the NAMA and *Tachlit* samples, respectively) noted that the trip contributed to the memory and commemoration of the Holocaust, to a sense of security (94% and 82%, respectively), a sense of national pride (86% and 93%, respectively), the importance of Zionism (82% and 90%, respectively), the importance of absorption of immigration (78% and 61%, respectively), and a commitment to the Jewish Diaspora (68% and 59%, respectively).

Furthermore, a large percentage (75% and 79%, respectively) noted the trip's contribution to the reinforced understanding of Judaism. As expected, the students from public schools attributed less importance to the values of Torah and the commandments (48%). No differences were found between the two samples by religious observance, country of origin, or family ties to the Holocaust. Finally, more girls than boys attributed greater significance to the universal values such as social equality (94% and 84%, respectively), and national values such as absorption of immigration (81% and 72%, respectively) and Judaism (78% and 70%, respectively).

(c) Changes in values following the trip

An examination of the change in values based on background variables indicates minor differences by gender and type of school system. Before the trip, a higher percentage of public school students attributed importance to democratic values than did students from religious-public schools (91% and 80%, respectively). Similar differences were found in their attitudes toward social equality and tolerance. In contrast, a higher percentage of public-religious school students attributed importance to Jewish and national values such as Zionism (93% and 81%, respectively),

commitment to the Jewish Diaspora (72% and 62%, respectively), Torah and the commandments (86% and 48%, respectively). No differences were found in the importance attributed by the students to universal values by the school system or their country of birth.

In the NAMA sample, trip participants did not express any real change in the importance they attribute to various values upon their return. There was a slight increase in the importance participants attribute to a sense of commitment to the Jewish Diaspora (68% before and 70% after the trip). Notably, high percentages of respondents attributed importance to universal values and to most of the national and individual values also *before they took the trip*, indicating that participants in these trips are somewhat self-selected by higher interest in Jewish topics and prior knowledge.

Considering the participants' attitudes towards universal and national values, girls showed a more significance change in these values after the trip compared to boys. Changes in the attitudes towards universal democratic values were more significant among public school students compared to those in the public-religious system, while the opposite was true for national-Zionist and Jewish values.

Conclusion

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, Israeli society has been a melting pot of different identities and Diasporas, leading to a constant battle over its character and leading values. The public educational system, with all its diversity, reflects this cultural controversy manifested in the language of instruction and in the devaluation of Jewish knowledge. Our overview of the educational system shows that over the years many attempts have been made to grapple with this issue. In this context, the trips to Poland as a form of experiential learning have aroused many expectations. This is manifested by the generous funding invested in this project by the Ministry of Education and by its weight relative to all other history studies. Parents, educators, and policy makers invested this initiative with expectations hoping that direct observation of the destruction sites of European Jewry during WWII will lead to understanding, insight, and appreciation on the part of participating youths.

However, the trips to Poland do not occur in a vacuum, rather they take place within the general ethical, normative and educational context of the State of Israel. This means that the trip does not create something *ex nihilo*; rather it is only capable of strengthening existing foundations. The pre-existing ethical beliefs and values of the participants are evident in the ethical hierarchy reinforced by the trip. Jewish values are located at the bottom of this hierarchy. This is true of both school delegations (National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation, 2003) and delegations from *Tachlit*. Within Jewish values, the sense of commitment to Diaspora Jewry stands as last in significance, and this is even truer about high school students. We claim that these findings should shake Israeli society from its apathy. Fundamental to the very nature of the trip to Poland and of the Holocaust experience in general is the fact that it happened to stateless Diaspora Jews because of their Judaism. It is hardly possible to ignore the failure indicated by these findings, which show that despite visits to the site of what was formerly the largest Jewish community in the world, young people return with very little sense of commitment to or affiliation with Diaspora Jewry.

This finding is fairly conspicuous in light of the absolute majority of those who recognize the value of commemoration of the Holocaust, independent of their

religiosity. In this context we may ask, what is the meaning of that commitment to commemoration of the Holocaust? Do trip participants become aware of their historic and current connections with the Jewish people? The relatively minor commitment to Diaspora Jewry is a harbinger of future developments. The connection between the trip lessons and participants' Jewish identity was found to be weak as well.

We think that in this context the trip to Poland should be a factor connected to imparting Jewish values for several reasons. First of all, the general public and educational authorities seem to think that this trip "does the job" and hence relieves them of the need to deal with the subject in other contexts. Second, most of the students (75%) do not take part in the trips and thus they miss out even on the little contribution that does exist. Finally, and most significantly, we cannot expect such a short, one-time experience, exciting and moving as it may be, to correct or build what has not been done in an entire lifetime. We cannot expect a visit to the Diaspora to compensate for many years of neglect. Despite all the efforts reviewed above, we know that Israeli teenagers today are further from their Jewish roots than ever, and have a vague if any sense of belonging to the Jewish people in the Diaspora.

This is an acute problem for which specific programs such as trips to Poland and courses in Jewish heritage are apparently insufficient. If we wish to see a real change in young Israelis' attitudes, it is necessary to match the treatment to the nature of the problem. Such treatment must be comprehensive, thorough, and lengthy. The new program devised by the Ministry of Education seeks to do exactly this: to educate the younger generation, from elementary school on, to develop their relationship and familiarity with their Jewish heritage (Ministry of Education, "Jewish Culture and Heritage"). We can only hope that this program will succeed where its predecessors failed. In this context it is necessary to impart the memory of the Holocaust as an inseparable part of both Diaspora and Israeli Jewish identity, not only in the past but also in the present. As to the Holocaust education programs operating in academic institutions, as welcome as they may be, we should ask: what preceded them? Are Jewish heritage studies and trips to Poland aimed at reinforcing Jewish identity and Diaspora ties really enough to fill the void?

References

- Almog, O. (2004). *Farewell to Srulik – Change of values among the Israeli Elite*. Haifa: University of Haifa and Zmora Bitan. [Hebrew].
- Auron, Y. (1993). *Jewish Israeli identity* Tel Aviv: Po'alim. [Hebrew].
- Auron, Y. (2003). *The Pain of Knowledge: Issues in Instruction of the Holocaust and Genocide*. Tel Aviv: Open University. [Hebrew].
- Azulay, N., & Tabory, E. (2008). From houses of study to houses of prayer: Religious-cultural developments in the Israeli secular sector. *Social Issues in Israel*, 6, 121–170. [Hebrew].
- Azulay, N., & Werczberger, R. (2008). Jewish renaissance in the Israeli secular space: From a phenomenon to new social movement. *Politika*, 18, 141–172. [Hebrew].
- Ben Artzi, H. (1989). Directives for enhancing Jewish education in general state schools. *Dapim*, 9, 62–69. [Hebrew].

- Ben-Rafael, E. (2008). Israel: From pluralism to multiculturalism *Social Issues in Israel*, 6, 94–120. [Hebrew].
- Ben-Rafael, E., & Ben-Chaim, L. (2006). *Jewish Identities in an Era of Multiple Modernities*. Tel-Aviv: The Open University. [Hebrew].
- Benyamini, K. (1986). In regard to political tolerance: political-social and psychological-educational studies. *Psychology and Counselling in Education*. 31–47. [Hebrew].
- David, A. (2012). Sculptures of her mother's face: Jewish-Israeli identity in twentieth century anthologies. *Dor Le'Dor*, 41, 430–33. [Hebrew].
- Degnen, C. (2005). Relationality, Place, and absence: A three-dimensional perspective on social memory. *The Sociological Review*, 53, 729–744.
- Director General of the Ministry of Education. (1999). http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/applications/mankal/arc/se4bk7_6_10.htm [Hebrew].
- Dror, Y. (2003). From 'rejection of the exile' to 'nurturing Jewish consciousness'. *Panim*, 24, 59–69. [Hebrew].
- Dror, Y. (2008). *National Education through Mutually Supportive Devices: The Zionist Story*. Jerusalem: Magnes. [Hebrew].
- Elkana, Y. (1988, March 2). In praise of silence. *Ha'aretz*, p. 13. [Hebrew].
- Fentress, J. and Wickham, C. (1992). *Social Memory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fiedelman, I. (2011). *Several aspects of the state of Jewish studies in public education*. Jerusalem: Knesset Center of Research and Information. [Hebrew].
- Firer, R. (1985). *The Agents of Zionist Education*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad. [Hebrew].
- Fox, S., & Scheffler, I. (2000). *Jewish Education and Jewish Continuity: Prospects and Limitations*. Jerusalem: Mandel Foundation.
- Goodman, Y., & Yona, Y. (2004). Preface: Religiosity and secularism in Israel – The possibilities of different perspectives. In Y. Yona & Y. Goodman (Eds.), *Identities' Whirlpool: A Critical Discussion of Religiosity and Secularism in Israel*. Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Ha'meuchad [Hebrew].
- Hemo, N., & Sabar Ben Yehoshua, N. (2009). It is a half-full cup: On the half-conscious 'Jewishness' of the curriculum in the secular public school system. In I. Kashti (Ed.), *Evaluation, curriculum planning and the history of education – In memory of Prof. Arie Levi* (pp. 331–354). Tel Aviv: Ramot. [Hebrew].
- Herman, S. J. (1988). *Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Iram, Y., & Shechter, A. (2001). Fifty years of moral education – from an emerging society to a changing society. A review of development. In Y. Iram, S. Shkolnikov, Y. Cohen, & A. Shechter (Eds.), *Crossroads: Values and education in Israeli society* (pp. 480–521). Jerusalem: Ministry of Education. [Hebrew].

- Jarman, N. (1999). Commemorating 1916, Celebrating Difference: Parading and Painting in Belfast. In A. Forty and S. Küchler (Eds.), *The Art of Forgetting* (pp. 171–195). Oxford: Berg Books.
- Katzenelson, B. (1934, July 26). Inexhaustible Sources, *Davar*.
- Kerem, M. (1994). Towards open Jewish education in Israel. In A. Shkedi (Ed.), *The Meeting of Cultures: On Education, Judaism, and the Kibbutz* (pp. 127–141). Tel Aviv: Open University. [Hebrew].
- Kerem, M. (1997). The debate about the image of Jewish education in Israel. In A. Paldi (Ed.), *Challenges to Education* (pp. 293–295). Tel Aviv: Ramot. [Hebrew].
- Kovner, A. (1988). *From Generation to Generation. A Reserve of Documents from the Holocaust Period*. Tel Aviv: Seminar Hakibbutzim. [Hebrew].
- Levy, S., Levisohn, H., & Katz, E. (1997). Beliefs, observances and social interaction among Israeli Jews: The Guttman Institute report. In C. S. Liebman & E. Katz (Eds.), *The Jewishness of Israelis: Responses to the Gutmann Report* (pp. 1–38). New York: SUNY.
- Liebman, C. S. and Don-Yehiya, E. (1983). *Civil Religion in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Maslovati, N., & Iram, Y. (Eds.). (2002). *Value Education in Varied Instructional Contexts*. Tel Aviv: Ramot, Tel Aviv University. [Hebrew].
- Mimran, Y. (2010). Being ourselves: Neither religious nor secular, *Eretz Aheret*, 58, 60–3. [Hebrew].
- Ministry of Education (n.d.) Jewish culture and heritage. Retrieved from http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Mazkirut_Pedagogit/Tarbutisrael moreshet/TarbutIsraelUmorashto/
- Ministry of Education and Culture. Website: Retrieved from http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Mazkirut_Pedagogit/Tarbutisrael moreshet/TarbutIsraelUmorashto [Hebrew].
- National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation. (2011). *Evaluation of youth trips to Poland in 2009*. Retrieved from http://cms.education.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/EDFB2F83-BA42-4706-A7D7-95638E02BB76/139929/polin_2009_f.pdf [Hebrew].
- Pikar, A. (2009). Teaching Judaism in the Israeli educational system, *Alpayim*, 34, 148–158. [Hebrew].
- Resh, N., & Benavot, A. (1998). *An evaluation of the implementation of the Shenhar Committee Report: Jewish education in the state sector junior-high schools*. Jerusalem: NCJW Research Institute for Innovation in Education, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. [Hebrew].
- Romi, S., & Lev, M. (2003). The Holocaust: Changes following the trip to Poland, *Megamot*, 42, 219–239. [Hebrew].
- Ronen, A. (2003). Recognizing another's pain: Teaching racism and the Holocaust to Arabs and Jews. In A. Nahtomi (Ed.), *Challenges to multiculturalism in Israeli society* (pp. 193–203). Jerusalem: Magnes. [Hebrew].

- Sabar Ben Yehoshua, N., Stein, A., & Posner, M. (2009). Trends in the Revival of Secular Judaism – The Case of the Tel Aviv – Jaffa Educational System. In I. Kashti (Ed.), *Evaluation, curriculum planning and the history of education – In memory of Prof. Arie Levi* (pp. 253–274). Tel Aviv: Ramot. [Hebrew].
- Shenhar, A. (1994). *A people and the world – Jewish Culture in a changing world: Recommendations of the commission of inquiry for Jewish studies in the general education system, headed by Prof. Aliza Shenhar*, Jerusalem: Ministry of Education. [Hebrew].
- Vergun, Y. (2008). *Pupils' Delegations to Poland*. Jerusalem: Knesset Information and Research Center.
- Wetzler, A. (1996). Fifty years later: Varying motifs in research and theory concerning the Holocaust survivors from a psychological perspective, *Gerontologia*, 72/73, 4–14. [Hebrew].
- Yankelevitch, E., & Ben Peretz, M. (2009). Nurturing Jewish nationhood by inter-community connections. In I. Kashti (Ed.), *Evaluation, curriculum planning and the history of education – In memory of Prof. Arie Levi* (pp. 291–306). Tel Aviv: Ramot. [Hebrew].
- Zameret, Z. (1989). Jewish education: Reality and its problems in the general state system. In S. Stempler (Ed.), *People and State: Israeli Society* (pp. 307–315). Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense. [Hebrew].
- Zameret, Z. (1997). *Israel in the First Decade – Development of the Educational System* (Volume 4). Tel Aviv: Open University. [Hebrew].
- Zameret, Z. (2003). *Education in the First Decade*. Tel Aviv: Open University. [Hebrew].
- http://cms.education.gov.il/NR/ronlyres/EDFB2F83-BA42-4706-A7D7-95638E02BB76/139929/polin_2009_f.pdf.