A Grounded Theory of How Jewish Experiential Education Impacts the Identity Development of Jewish Emerging Adults

Scott Turberg Aaron
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss

Part of the International and Comparative Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/497

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License. Copyright © 2013 Scott Turberg Aaron
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

A GROUNDED THEORY OF HOW JEWISH EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IMPACTS THE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH EMERGING ADULTS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL EDUCATION AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

SCOTT T. AARON

CHICAGO, IL

MAY 2013
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my teachers at Loyola University Chicago for seeing the value of my interest in Jewish Identity Development of Jewish Emerging Adults through Experiential Education. These include most notably, but are not limited to, Drs. Robert Roemer, Noah Sobe, John Dugan, Timothy Martin, Jennifer Haworth, Leanne Kallemeyn and Erwin Epstein. All of them influenced my academic interests and growth during my studies and all of them exemplify the highest ideals of the School of Education’s Conceptual Framework Standards. In the language of my own community, they are all chachamim, wise and knowledgeable teachers. I am equally indebted to Loyola University Chicago’s School of Education as an institution of learning that welcomed my interest and exploration of Jewish educational issues. When I first met Dr. Roemer, I explained that I had tried in vain to find a university education school in Chicago that would welcome my research interests. Dr. Roemer simply smiled at me and said, “Not to worry, Scott. We are a Catholic university; we get religion education.” I have never forgotten that openness and am eternally indebted to Loyola for it.

I also am indebted to my teachers at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion during my studies there who first attempted to explore Jewish informal education with me as a career field – Drs. Larry Raphael, Sherry Blumberg, and Rabbi Zahara Davidowitz-Farkas – and The Steinhardt Foundation for underwriting those early efforts. I am equally indebted to Drs. Joseph Reimer, Zohar Raviv, Diane Tickton-
Schuster, and the other faculty and staff of Brandeis University’s Institute for Informal Jewish Education for first exposing me to the field of experiential education as not only a professional discipline but a field of academic research and theory. I also owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Jewish Vocational Services of Chicago for their academic scholarship support of my studies while I lived in Chicago. Equally, I could not have completed my research without the assistance of Rachel Cort and Benji Berlow and the support of Ed Frim and the Agency for Jewish Learning of Greater Pittsburgh.

I am also so appreciative of my mentors in the field of Jewish Experiential Education and supporters of my academic pursuit at this stage of my life – Drs. Barry Chazan, Bruce Powell and Gabe Goldman. I have been blessed to have many influential men and women cross my life path but these three were particularly impactful on my decision to pursue my doctorate and explore this subject matter empirically.

I also am thankful to my parents, Butch and Patti Aaron, for their support and encouragement in this process and their instillation of a passion for education in me as a child. I love you both very much.

I wish to acknowledge my Jewish Emerging Adult students and dissertation research subjects. I remain in awe of you all as the next generation of Jewish life and culture in whatever way you choose to engage in it. I hope what I have learned will help our community support you in your endeavors.

Finally, I thank my friend and colleague Natalie Goldfein, who met me for lunch on a very difficult day eight years ago and gave me the insight to see opportunity where I only saw loss. This dissertation can be directly traced to that conversation and I am so appreciative of her words and presence.
I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful wife and friend, Donni, who honored our ketubbah by supporting my studies, and our beautiful children Meitav, Nitzan and Naor, for their patience with me while I worked on it. I love you all and hope this accomplishment will one day be seen as an inspiration to my children that Torah comes in many forms and we best honor it through a lifelong commitment to learning and education.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ iii

LIST OF TABLES ......................................................................................................................... viii

LIST OF FIGURES ......................................................................................................................... ix

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................... x

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1
  Purpose of the Study ........................................................................................................... 5
  Rationale ............................................................................................................................. 5
  Research Questions ........................................................................................................... 6
  Significance of the Study ..................................................................................................... 6

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ...................................................................................... 7
  Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 7
  Jewish Emerging Adulthood ............................................................................................... 8
  Jewish Identity Development ............................................................................................. 12
  Jewish Experiential Education ............................................................................................ 16
  Summary ............................................................................................................................. 22

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ......................................................................................... 24
  Grounded Theory and Student Development .................................................................. 28
  Research Design Strategy ................................................................................................ 30
  Data Collection Design .................................................................................................... 31
  Data Collection Procedures .............................................................................................. 32
  Data Collection Means and Protocols .............................................................................. 32
  Data Analysis Procedures ................................................................................................ 34
  Overview of Data Coding ................................................................................................ 34
  Ethical Issues ...................................................................................................................... 35

CHAPTER FOUR: THE STUDY ..................................................................................................... 37
  Study Participants ................................................................................................................ 37
    Basic Profile Summary of Study Participants as of April, 2012 ........................................ 38
  Jewish Identity Summaries of Participants – Attached or Detached ................................ 41
    Nicky ................................................................................................................................. 45
    Sheila ................................................................................................................................. 46
    Mona ................................................................................................................................. 47
    Marc ................................................................................................................................... 50
    Joan ................................................................................................................................. 51
    Greta ................................................................................................................................. 53
    Jena ................................................................................................................................. 56
    Lana ................................................................................................................................. 59
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Study Group Demographic Data Table ........................................................................ 102
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Black Box Theory of Jewish Experiential Education, Jewish Identity Development and Jewish Emerging Adulthood ............................................................... 7

Figure 2: Process Diagram of an Experiential Education Event........................................ 69

Figure 3: Process Diagram of Lana’s Experiential Education Event of Observing Jewish Dietary Laws........................................................................................................... 75

Figure 4: Process Diagram of Sheila’s Experiential Education Event of Israeli-Arab Dialogue............................................................................................................................. 83

Figure 5: Process Diagram of Joan’s Experiential Education Event of Hiking in the Negev Desert.................................................................................................................. 89

Figure 6: Black Box Theory of Jewish Experiential Education from Macro to Micro .... 92
ABSTRACT

The Jewish community has increasingly relied upon Experiential Education as a pedagogical approach to instilling Jewish identity and communal affiliation over the past twenty years. The Experiential Education format of travel programs has specifically been emphasized and promoted for Jewish Emerging Adults for this purpose, and outcome studies of these trip programs have demonstrated success in instilling identification and affiliation with both the Jewish community and the state of Israel among their participants. However, little is actually empirically known about the processes that impact the participant during the trip experience – the so-called “black box” - or how significant a participant’s predisposition towards Israel and Judaism are in how they process their trip experiences. Even less is empirically known about the identity development of Jewish Emerging Adults in large part due to a pre-disposition to study Jews developmentally only as affiliates of a religion rather than members of a distinctly multi-layered group.

This grounded theory study examines participants in two different trip experiences, Taglit Birthright Israel and an Alternative Spring Break, through post-trip interviews. The emergent theory suggests three conclusions: The predisposition of a participant towards their own Jewish identity can influence how they process their experiences on the trip; the actual trip experience can be best understood as repeatedly processing multiple and ongoing experiences within the trip itself; the processing of those
experiences can be descriptively modeled as a theory that allows an glimpse in to the “black box.” Such a theoretical model can be used to better train trip staff on how the trip experience impacts the Jewish identity of those participants and also to plan trip itineraries to optimize the trip’s experiential impact on participant Jewish and Zionist identity and communal affiliation.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I don’t know what did it for me, and when I asked my brother he couldn’t answer either. I think it was the whole experience—the combination of the people I met, the places we went, and the conversations we had. I found myself really invested in my religion all on my own for the first time in my life. No one was forcing me into it, I had no obligations to feel that way; it just came about on its own. *Sydney Bucksbaum, describing the shift in her personal Jewish identity from a “Jewish American” to an “American Jew” as a result of her Birthright Israel trip experience.* (Bucksbaum, 2010)

My Jewish identity was molded by an Alternative Spring Break trip to Biloxi, MI in spring 2006, in which I fully understood the importance of *Tzedeck* and *Tikkun Olam.*¹ After that trip, I was motivated to keep exploring my Jewish identity and what was meaningful to me…. *Joshua Leivenberg, describing the impact of his participation in an Alternative Spring Break trip on his personal Jewish identity and subsequent decision to become involved in campus Jewish life at his college.* (Leivenberg, 2007)

The above quotes are from two individuals that exemplify the focus of this study. Both wrote these reflections of the respective impact upon their personal Jewish identity from a Jewish experiential education immersion program. Both participated in these programs as Emerging Adults and both of their experiences produced self-reflected changes in their personal Jewish identity. These two exemplify success by the current sociological measurements being used to evaluate these immersion experiences. Both articulate desirable outcomes for the extensive Jewish communal investment in

---

¹ *Tzedeck* is the Hebrew word for Justice and *Tikkun Olam* literally translates from the Hebrew as Repairing the World.
experiential education programming currently underway in the American Jewish community as a means of stemming and even reversing the trends of Jewish communal disaffiliation that are threatening American Jewish communal continuity. This study does not question if these efforts are successful in increasing communal and cultural affinity among American Jewish Emerging Adults since a host of scholarly research has pointed to a range of successes in doing so (Cohen, Kopelowitz, Wolf, & Ukeles, 2010; Copeland, 2011; Saxe et al., 2011; Saxe & Chazan, 2008; Ukeles, Miller, & Beck, 2006). Rather this study asks why they are successful in positively influencing Jewish self-identity among Jewish Emerging Adults and what is exactly happening to the participant during those experiences that effects a reflectable change in their personal Jewish identity, a change that can be noted, observed and attributed to their experience on these trips. That “why” and “what” is largely unknown to Jewish experiential educators, especially those focused on Jewish Emerging Adults.

The North American Jewish community has been struggling with the communal affiliation and retention of its members who are in the developmental stages of Emerging Adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Arnett, Kloep, Hendry, & Tanner, 2011; Arnett & Tanner, 2006) for the last 20 years. Emerging Adults are between the ages of 18 and the late 20s who exhibit certain behavioral characteristics discussed below in Chapter Two. While hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent trying to engage Jewish Emerging Adults (JEAs) through a wide variety of educational programming that can be generally grouped in to the category of Jewish experiential education (Chazan, 2003), little of this educational programming has actually been intentionally designed or evaluated in the
context of either human developmental or experiential educational theory. What data that has been gathered to evaluate these efforts for JEAs is largely based in sociology (see e.g., Sales & Saxe, 2006; Saxe et al., 2011; Saxe et al., 2012) rather than pedagogy or human development (c.f., Reimer, 2007). Yet the common wisdom is that these educational programs succeed in impacting JEA participants to the point of retaining them as members of the Jewish community as they develop into full adulthood. Equally important, there has been no overarching educational philosophy that has served as a theoretical and testable basis for these educational programs for JEAs. In short, the Jewish community has accepted that these educational programs achieve their purpose of JEA retention, but there is no clear explanation why that is the case or what specific parts of these experiences are succeeding in increasing the personal sense of Jewish communal affiliation among JEAs. The result is that these efforts cannot be reliably understood, replicated or even evaluated from an empirical perspective.

Parsing this problem into more distinct areas, there is a lack of theoretical understanding of the developmental process of Jewish identity for JEAs in both the Jewish educational community and the larger field of human development. Experiential education’s impact on JEAs is also not clearly understood in the Jewish educational community or among experiential educators as a field, and it has not to date been explored enough to formulate a distinct theory of its own. Perhaps most importantly, there is no clear theory of the “ah ha” moments of growth where the actual educational experience makes a significant impact on the JEA’s identity development. While the Jewish educational community knows that JEAs can be impacted in their Jewish
developmental identity by experiential education, it does not know enough about either JEA human development or experiential education to theoretically understand why the impact is happening or how it can be reliably predicted. In short, the Jewish educational and philanthropic community is thrilled to know that these educational programs are producing identity development outcomes like those articulated by Bucksbaum and Leivenberg (above), but it is no more able to explain what exactly is happening during those experiences than either of those JEAs. There is a “black box” in these experiences like that described in the related area of outdoor education:

The research literature…has been uni-dimensional; it has focused on outcome issues (self-concept, locus of control, etc.) and has held a blind eye to their relationship to programmatic types of issues (length of course, activity mix, instructional staff). In essence, we have discovered an educational black box; we know something works but we don’t know why or how. (Ewert, 1983, p. 27)

Phrased another way in the context of Jewish Experiential Education:

I know there is a strong intuitive appreciation for the impact of experiential Jewish learning. Our community gets the impact, but who understands the process by which experiential Jewish learning actually takes place? Who looks inside the black box of these powerful experiences and asks, “What allows them to work their magic?” (Reimer, 2008, p. 2)

Compounding the problem in this case is that the impact of Jewish Experiential Education has not been examined specifically in relation to JEAs. The most extensive work is done at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, through its Institute for Informal Jewish Education and that work is focused almost exclusively on pediatric and adolescent experiential education research. Demographic work done with JEAs through Brandeis’s Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies has produced strong and ongoing
Jewish identity impact analysis of BI and ASB experiences, but these two fields have not been studied in the context of each other in relation to these two programs.²

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to posit a cogent theoretical framework through grounded theory methodology of experiential education for Jewish Emerging Adults based on an understanding of their specific human developmental needs. The theoretical framework will be scaffolded by the theories of Jewish Experiential Education articulated by Chazan (2003) and Emerging Adulthood articulated by Arnett (2000). While work regarding JEAs has been done that incorporates both theories, no specific effort has been made to present an integrated theoretical framework to explain how these theories intersect in the field and specifically impact JEAs. This theoretical framework is needed to effectively train educators, develop curriculum and evaluate educational programming targeting JEAs. This theoretical framework will attempt to fill the current lack of a theoretical basis for current experiential education programming trends for this particular subgroup through the theoretical lenses of human development, educational philosophy and pedagogy in order to produce a cogent philosophical theory of experiential education’s impact on Jewish Emerging Adults.

**Rationale**

If a clearer understanding of exactly how events are experienced by the participants on intermediate Jewish experiential travel experiences, trip itineraries can be

---

² Compare Saxe & Sales, "How Goodly are Thy Tents": Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences, 2004, where the impact of the Jewish experiential education on JEA camp staffs’ personal Jewish identity is discussed.
planned to maximize impactful experiences and trip staff can be better trained to facilitate
these experiences to insure the desired impact on Jewish identity.

Research Questions

The primary research questions are (1) what event or events during the overall
experience causes a noticeable change in self-perception of Jewish identity among Jewish
Emerging Adult participants in intermediate Jewish Experiential Education programs and
(2) can that actual change be modeled as a theory?

Significance of the Study

This theoretical framework will attempt to fill the current lack of a theoretical
basis for current experiential education programming trends for this particular subgroup
through the theoretical lenses of human development, educational philosophy and
pedagogy in order to produce a cogent philosophical theory of experiential education’s
impact on Jewish Emerging Adults.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are three key areas of study that are primary to this query: Jewish Emerging Adulthood (JEA), Jewish Identity Development (JID), and Jewish Experiential Education (JEE). Each of these is a subset of more generalized areas of study and they triangulate around theoretical concept of the “black box”\(^1\) of the actual experiential impact of the trips themselves (see Figure 1).

\[\text{Figure 1. Black Box Theory of Jewish Experiential Education, Jewish Identity Development and Jewish Emerging Adulthood}\]

\(^1\)A recent study also used the metaphor of the “black box” when specifically examining Immersive Jewish Service Learning (IJSL) experiences such as the Private U Jewish Farm School trip. “The term ‘black box,’ borrowed from engineering, describes a type of program model that describes the inputs entering the system and how they are expected to look after exiting, but the processes by which inputs are transformed into outputs is metaphorically hidden from view within the opaque box (Bateson, 1972). If the field of IJSL is to develop a maximally effective pedagogy and establish empirically based standards of practice, it will need to move beyond a black box model of these programs” (Chertok, Tobias, Boxer, & Rosin, 2012, p. 32).
Jewish Emerging Adulthood

Emerging Adulthood is a paradigm of Developmental Psychology, a social science field that evolved over the last century to track the cognitive, emotional and moral growth of the human mind over the span of a lifetime. Emerging Adulthood theorists specifically focus on the chronological development stage of roughly the ages of 18-28 which is a more nuanced period than the catch-all term “young adult.”

Important theories that frame Developmental Psychology are those of Erik Erikson, Lawrence Kohlberg, William Perry and Sharon Daloz Parks among others. Erikson composed an eight stage theory of human development from infancy to late adulthood that marks the acquisition of important life skills such as trust, moral understanding and self-perception (Erikson, 1950, 1968). Kohlberg’s six stages of moral development expanded upon those of Jean Piaget’s stage theory of cognitive development (Piaget, 1954). Kohlberg’s theory holds that each stage brings moral skills that increase the sophistication of skills with each successive stage (see e.g. Conger & Petersen, 1984, pp. 560-561). In both Erikson’s and Kohlberg’s theories these skills have to evolve in their appropriate stages or healthy human development can be delayed or even derailed. Perry brought a systemic understanding of how an understanding of right

---

2 “When I began my initial studies, important theoretical perspectives defined young adulthood as ‘prolonged adolescence,’ a merely ‘transitional’ time or a period of idealism soon to be outgrown. Cultural assumptions implied that young adulthood ends, or should end, with the granting of a college degree around the traditional age of twenty-two. Later, such popular descriptions of young adults as Generation X extended the time frame but attempted primarily to describe and normatively define young adults in media-manageable terms, casting them as a market – yet finding them resistant to categorization” (Daloz Parks, 2000, p. 4).

3 “In talking about a Jewish person Erikson described that the person’s identity was linked ‘with the unique values, fostered by a unique history of his (sic) people’” [Torres (1999), p. 188, quoting Erikson (1968), p.109].
and wrong becomes increasingly layered and nuanced as people cognitively develop through adolescence in to adulthood (see e.g., Perry, 1998), and Daloz-Parks expands upon James Fowler’s theory of faith development (Fowler, 1981) specifically for the college-age population (Daloz Parks, 2000). Emerging Adulthood is the next evolution in stage-based developmental psychology albeit focused on a specific age group within the life span.

Of relevance to this paper is the recognition of the role that ethnicity plays on identity development as well. Phinney developed the seminal theory of ethnic identity development that recognizes a search for meaning-making of one’s ethnicity by exploring one’s ethnic culture and history (Phinney, 1990, 1992, 1996). Ethnic identity commitment, defined as a positive inclination towards one’s ethnicity and membership in one’s ethnic group, has been found to increase during the college experience in correlation to ethnic identity exploration (Syed & Azmitia, 2009).

In 2000, a refined theory of development for this age group was introduced by Dr. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett of Clark University who coined the term Emerging Adulthood and explained that “[h]aving left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood, emerging adults often explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews” (Arnett, 2000, p. 469). Arnett has concluded that Emerging Adults are delaying traditional life experiences that accompany full adult independence such as marriage, child-bearing, home acquisition, and membership in religious and cultural institutions, and has observed a number of trends among them. Emerging Adults are more transient
than previous generations and this transience is leading to less personal interest in affiliation with mainstream communal institutions such as houses of worship, social/fraternal organizations, and political parties. Notably, Emerging Adults seek more personal meaning for their lives than previous generations which is exemplified in a marked increase in social justice activities. They also seek a spiritual understanding of the world but are reluctant to be bound by a religious system. Emerging Adults seek intensive, intimate social relationships with a diverse range of peoples and challenge broad moral assumptions and large cultural and political institutions. They mark time differently, such as in academic cycles or amount of hours expected of them to complete an assignment – and are unwilling to make long-term commitments beyond finishing school. In short, the longer path to maturation of today’s Emerging Adults is marked by more intensive social and personal experimentation, change and risk than previous generations with an emphasis on short-term impact rather than long-term consequences (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Arnett & Arnett Jensen, 2002).

Relatively little work has been done that specifically looks at Jewish Emerging Adults as a holistic subgroup for reasons outlined below in the area of Jewish identity development. Two recent doctoral dissertations focusing on Jewish Emerging Adults are the extent of what could be found among the appropriate research databases and both were focused on more religiously observant Jews. One found higher rates of prioritization of entering marriage and starting families within religiously committed Orthodox Jewish Emerging Adults as opposed to general population trends of Emerging Adulthood (Waldman Sarna, 2011), while the other found differing expectations and
definitions of intimacy in a comparison of subgroups of Orthodox and Reform Jewish Emerging Adult women (Stark-Adler, 2010).  

The professional field of Higher Education Administration has begun to notice Jewish students as a distinct group of Emerging Adults but only a few articles and thesis have been published discussing them. Kushner (2009) posits that Jewish college students are gravitating away from Jewish institutions and forming more informal peer networks of belonging in accordance with trends for this population who are more skeptical overall of organized religion. Behneman (2007) found that Jewish students find a primary identity as cultural and secondarily as religious although they are intertwined. However, Blumenfeld (2009) observed that the difficulty in clearly self-determining as an ethnic or a religious minority while visibly part of the Caucasian majority tends to cause Jewish students to refrain from openly identifying as a Jew comfortably.

For the purposes of this study, a Jewish Emerging Adult shall be defined as anyone fitting the age demographic of 18 to 28 years of age who self-identifies, positively or negatively, as Jewish either religiously, culturally or ethnically. As discussed below, attempts to use any more specific of a definition would be limiting since there is not yet a commonly-accepted definition of Jewish identity for the purposes of developmental psychological work as discussed below. However, that self-definition component is a central factor, according to Arnett, for Emerging Adults in terms of social and cultural experimentation and personal exploration for meaning-making; thus

---

4 Orthodox Jews… tend to adhere to the traditional and literal interpretation of the commandments and reject modification. Conservative Jews tend to modify and change some of the traditional laws and may increasingly dismiss Jewish law as essential to their religious existence. Reform Jews tend to reject the authority and observance of all traditional laws and espouse personal autonomy (Waldman Sarna, 2011, p. 18).
allowing the subject to self-determine Jewish identity rather than applying religious
dogma or cultural norm to externally classify the subject.

**Jewish Identity Development**

It is estimated that there are some 6,500,000 Jews in the United States,
comprising 2.1% of the total population (Sheskin & Dashefsky, 2010) although these
numbers are contested because of communal debate over what criteria defines someone
as Jewish (Beckerman, 2010). At the time of this writing, there is no specific definition
of Jewish identity that is uniformly agreed upon by Identity Development experts. Jews
are complex in terms of identity classification across the board in identity development
theory. They can be viewed and self-identify as a religion, a race, an ethnic group, a
quasi-national people, a culture or various combinations of all of these. Generic social
group designations simply do not reflect either/or categories of ethnicity, religion, or
culture in the United States in terms of understanding Jews as a Diaspora people who
have a history of racialized persecution prior to their immigration to this country
(MacDonald-Dennis, 2007).⁵ America historically viewed identity through a racial lens
of black or white and “the distinctiveness of the Jews and their inability to fit neatly
within the categories of ‘black’ and ‘white’ continued to vex American commentators
through the end of World War II” (Goldstein, 2006, p. 2). As Jews have racially
assimilated in to American society and culture, they have also struggled with how to
balance the many facets of their identity. Jews can also be influenced in their sense of

---

⁵ For example, Smith’s analysis of the National Study of Youth and Religion assumes in its data
reporting and collection on Emerging Adults that all Jews are more or less identifiable and measurable as
affiliates of the Jewish religion rather affiliates of the Jewish people or ethnic group or cultural community
(Smith, 2009).
identity by pressure to conform socially and culturally to avoid anti-Semitism, political fervor and opinions held by the communal majority (Altman, Fine, Howard, Inman, & Ritter, 2010).

There has been important work done within the field of sociology and social psychology that looks at the trends of Jewish identity as a process of social development, most notably by Horowitz (2003) (who is credited with first challenging the “survivalist” tone of prior Jewish identity research⁶), Cousens (2008), Charme et al. (2008) and Charme and Hyman Zelkowicz (2011). While these have all helped frame the concept of Jewish identity, it should be noted that

> [t]he majority of literature on American Jewish identity has been written by sociologists, whose primary theme is the interaction of ethnicity/culture and religion. From a sociological perspective, “Jewishness disrupts the various categories of identity because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another. (Ellis, Friedlander, Friedlander, Friedman, Mikhaylov, & Miller, 2010, p. 346, quoting Boyarin & Boyarin, 1993, p. 721)

Thus most of the research that has been done on Jewish identity is limited in its conclusions in part due to the predominance of the work coming out of only one particular field of study rather than a broader, multi-disciplinary context.

There have been models of Jewish Identity Development presented over the past fifty years, but they all looked at various components of a full identity rather than the big

---

⁶ “Social psychologist Bethamie Horowitz, a researcher of adult Jewish identity formation has described this research paradigm of Jewish identity in America as preoccupied with the question “How Jewish are American Jews?” in contrast to what we could be asking, which is “How are American Jews Jewish?” [Horowitz, 2002, p. 14, emphasis in original, cited in Charme and Hyman Zelkowicz (2011), p. 165.]
theoretical picture.\footnote{A classic section of Jewish text, Mishnah Avot 5:21, explains Judaism’s ancient understanding of human development from some 2,100 years ago: He (Rabbi Samuel the Little or Rabbi Ben Hay-Hay) used to say: At five years old [one is fit] for the [study of] Scripture, at ten years for [the study of] the Mishnah (1st century rabbinic law text), at thirteen for [the fulfilling of] the commandments, at fifteen for the Talmud (5th century rabbinic law text), at eighteen for the bridal canopy, at twenty for pursuing [a career], at thirty for full authority, at forty for [wise] discernment, at fifty for (the ability to give) counsel, at sixty to be an elder, at seventy for gray hairs, at eighty for special strength, at ninety for a bent back, and at a hundred a man is as one that has [already] died and passed away and ceased from the world (Blackman, 1990, pp. 537-538).} Shapiro (1961) and Segalman (1966) attempted to measure Jewish affiliation based on behavioral characteristics such as honesty and charitable acts. They ignored religiosity though and did not look at Jews as members of an ethnic or cultural group. Janov (1960) and Lazerwitz (1974) focused their survey research on Jewish group identification through religious practice and community involvement but paid no attention to self-perception. Zak (1973) created a Jewish identity tool that measured only cultural identity, while Herman (1977), Safirstein (2002) and Blustein et al. (2005) did attempt to create ethnic identity studies for Jewish identity that linked religiosity and self-esteem. However, their findings contradicted each other and did not address the reality as seen from other ethnic group studies above that identity is multi-layered and can fluctuate due to a variety of factors.

Ellis et al. (2010) and Altman et al. (2010) are two recent efforts to introduce a multi-faceted American Jewish Identity Development model and they address the complexity of the problem in their theoretical work. Both of these studies stated that their work was focused only on American Jews unlike many previous studies that never made this distinction or assumed it, e.g.:

The AJIS only reflects the experiences of North American Jews. As a population, American Jews have religious and cultural characteristics that
distinguish them from Jews in other parts of the world (e.g. Israel, Latin America, Iran) because of their immigration histories and sociopolitical status within the dominant culture. (Ellis et al., p. 347, fn 1)

Ellis et al. created a quantitative model called the American Jewish Identity Study that measured Religious Identification and Cultural Identification dimensions of American Jewish Identity from over 1,700 individuals of a wide variety of Jewish identities through a 33 question survey. Published results of their testing with this model showed that “American Jews see their religious and cultural identities as intertwined yet distinct, with the cultural aspect being (a) significantly stronger than the religious aspect and (b) notably more variable for the least religious” (p. 356). By contrast, Altman et al. (2010) used a qualitative methodology with ten subjects all self-identified as Conservative Jews that produced a series of categories of Jewish identity that measured frequency of response within the category to four open-ended trigger questions. This resulted in their Jewish Ethnic Identity Model which puts weight on the involvement of the individual in a supportive family or community.

The social psychologist Leonard Saxe and his colleagues at Brandeis University are currently viewed within the Jewish community as having conducted the authoritative studies on the Jewish identity of Jewish college students. As mentioned above, the Jewish community has been extensively investing in various efforts focused on retaining JEAs within the Jewish community and Brandeis’s evaluative work has been central to formulating those strategies for investment. Saxe et al surveyed some 2,000 Jewish

---

8 A multi-faceted study on specifically Canadian Jewish Identity by Haji, LaLonde, Durbin, and Naveh-Benjamin (2011), measured Canadian Jewish identity on the basis of religious identity, cultural identity and identity salience. The results show a similar pattern to the two American studies cited above.
students on 20 American campuses and concluded that they are far from monolithic in their Jewish identity, commitment and outlook. Indeed, in the post-modern era, they may have several distinct senses of themselves as Jews.

Identify formation is one of the critical tasks of emerging adulthood. Although the task is, perhaps, no different for present-day students than for earlier generations, the now ubiquitous personal computer suggests a new metaphor for identity (Turkle 1995). A computer user may have several windows open at once even though the user is attentive to only one of the windows on the screen at any given moment. Similarly, identity for today’s emerging adults is multiple and distributed, not unitary and fixed, although at any given moment a particular aspect of identity may predominate. (Saxe & Sales, 2006, p. 5)

Saxe observed that “[t]he Jewish communal effort to inject Judaism into the college experience must operate within this context and adjust to four realities: emerging adulthood, identity in the post-modern era, college social life, and campus climate” (Saxe & Sales, 2006, p. 5). Much of the Jewish community’s efforts have focused on experiential education’s ability to impact Jewish identity in the post-modern era among Emerging Adults, most notably through Taglit-Birthright Israel trips to Israel and Service Learning initiatives. It is the intentional intersection of these focused Jewish travel experiences with JEAs that will be explored through this study.

**Jewish Experiential Education**

Jewish Experiential Education is a subset of the field of Experiential Education, a term often historically used interchangeably with Informal Education in non-school settings. Experiential education has been a theoretical approach in North American education since the early 20th century when John Dewey published his seminal work *Experience and Education*. The dividing line between schools and non-school education
is not a bright one. Internationally, classroom-based education is usually referred to as “formal education,” while non-classroom education is generally known as “non-formal education.” However, non-formal education is also commonly referred to as “informal education,” and the designations of formal or informal education has commonly been applied to the context of schools or non-school educational environments in Western society.

The term “informal education” entered the educational lexicon as a result of the bifurcation of education in modern societies. These societies created distinct state-run institutions called “schools” with a particular focus on: (1) intellectual learning; (2) progression on a hierarchical educational ladder; (3) transmission of cognitive knowledge from adult to child; and (4) addressing the socio-economic needs of societies. These public schools became associated with “curriculum,” “teachers,” and “grades,” and all other aspects of education were increasingly regarded as “extracurricular,” “supplementary” or “informal” education. (Chazan, 2003)

Even the position that there are only two educational concepts to define is not a uniform one, and there is debate about whether these concepts are descriptive of

---

9 See e.g., ISCED 97 Glossary: Formal education (or initial education or regular school and university education)- Education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous ‘ladder’ of fulltime education for children and young people, generally beginning at age five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old. In some countries, the upper parts of this ‘ladder’ are constituted by organized programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system: such programmes have come to be known as the ‘dual system’ or equivalent terms in these countries.

Non-formal education - Any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills, work skills, and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the ‘ladder’ system, and may have differing duration (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2006, p. 47).

10 Compare note 9 to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s definition (bold emphasis original): Formal learning is always organised and structured, and has learning objectives. From the learner’s standpoint, it is always intentional: i.e. the learner’s explicit objective is to gain knowledge, skills and/or competences. Typical examples are learning that takes place within
different learning environments or just a variety of methodologies that can be employed by any good teacher regardless of environment.\textsuperscript{11} Jewish Experiential Education followed a similar pattern to its secular counterpart.\textsuperscript{12}

> Just as... programs of extracurricular activities arose in the public schools to provide what was lacking in the formal curriculum, so when the Jewish home was no longer able to give the Jewish child an education in Jewish values and religious practices, a movement spontaneously arose to establish frameworks which could accomplish this. (Cohen & Schmida, 1997, p. 50)

Jewish Experiential Education was an integral part of Jewish education in America as far back as the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Indeed Samson Benderly, the acknowledged “father”\textsuperscript{13} of the professional field of American Jewish education and his

---

\textsuperscript{11}See e.g., Wal, 2006 and Graham-Brown, 1991.

\textsuperscript{12} See also Bryfman, 2011.

\textsuperscript{13} “His disciples... called him the ‘chief’ or the ‘boss.’ In later years, he liked to think of himself as ‘Abba’ or father, and he certainly cultivated a paternal relationship with many of them” (Krasner, 2011, p. 5).
students were “equally devoted to John Dewey’s expansive view of democracy as not
only a political system but, more than that, a way of life” (Krasner, 2011, p. 4).”

Benderly and his protégés introduced the concept of residential camping to American
Jewish education (see e.g., Krasner, pp. 268-323), an experiential education methodology
that is today credited as a major venue for bolstering American Jewish identity (Saxe &
Sales, 2004) but saw it primarily as a counterpart to more formalized Jewish education.
The educator credited with first understanding the comprehensive educational value of
Jewish Experiential Education was Bernard Reisman who published a seminal work in
1979, *The Jewish Experiential Book: The Quest for Jewish Identity*. Reisman’s book was
partly a sociological primer of 20th century Jewish identity in the context of modernity,
and it was partly a pedagogic instruction book for activities designed to stimulate thought
and discussion about contemporary Jewish identity in a variety of communal settings.

Reisman saw the challenge facing modern Jews as one of whether or not to remain
Jewish, and if so, in what sense that best expresses one’s own Jewish identity.

The intent of this book is to address that dilemma: to help Jews today to
make choices about their Jewish identity which will be personally
meaningful to them and also contribute to Jewish continuity. This is to be
accomplished in two ways: (1) by providing an intellectual understanding
of Jewish identity – its historical background and contemporary
definition..., and (2) by providing an educational methodology – Jewish
experiential activities – designed to help people arrive at a thoughtful
resolution of the choices which confront them as Jews. (Reisman, 1979,
pp. 16-17)

Reisman (1979) went on to conduct a study, *Informal Jewish Education in North
America*, in 1990 that is recognized as the first expression of Jewish Experiential
Education as a widespread but unrecognized methodology in Jewish education.
In the central section of his report he describes the following major forms of informal Jewish education: (1) Jewish Community Centers, (2) Youth Groups, (3) Jewish Family Education, (4) The Retreat/Conference Center, (5) Informal Programs within Day Schools and Supplementary Schools, (6) Camps, (7) Adults Jewish Education, (8) Informal Adult Jewish Education Groups — Havurot and Minyanim,\(^\text{14}\) and (9) Trips to Israel…. [However], despite the widespread utilization of informal education in the North American Jewish community, as described by Reisman, and despite the identification by researchers … of informal education as the foremost characteristic of all American Jewish education, until very recently there was virtually no formal recognition by the Jewish community of the major contribution of informal education, within and outside the school, towards strengthening the North American system of Jewish education. (Cohen & Schmida, 1997, p. 50)

While Reisman was among the first to recognize the centrality of Jewish experiential education, the leading scholar in this field is Barry Chazan. Chazan’s initial piece in this area, *What is Informal Jewish Education?* (1991), gave a name and theoretical structure to areas of Jewish education that had previously been treated disparately such as camping, youth groups, and travel experiences. By 2003, when Chazan revised his theory in *A Philosophy of Informal Jewish Education*, a field of study had evolved with Joseph Reimer joining Chazan as a counterweight to Chazan’s theory. Where Chazan had focused more on the methodology of Informal Jewish Education, Reimer was focused on what made Informal Jewish Education specifically Jewish (see e.g., Reimer 2003 & 2007). Subsequent work done by David Bryfman, a student of both Chazan and Reimer, has been the next theoretical advancement in this field with his call for reliable instruments of measurement for Jewish Experiential Education, serious

\(^{14}\) *Havurot* and *minyanim* are Hebrew terms for small groups of Jews who gather together to pray, study and socialize usually outside of synagogue environments.
professional training programs for Jewish experiential educators, and the development of unifying structures for provision of Jewish Experiential Education (Bryfman, 2011).

However, as it relates to this specific study, all three of these scholars have primarily emphasized the pedagogic impact of Jewish Experiential Education on children and adolescents rather than Emerging Adults. Chazan has actually been central to the pedagogic intent of the global effort to bring 30,000 Jewish college students each year to Israel on the BI travel experience, but understanding the educational impact of the actual experience upon the identity development of the participant as an Emerging Adult has not been a primary focus of the work done to date. Chazan did co-author a book about the BI experience with the social psychologist Dr. Leonard Saxe, mentioned above, who has been the lead evaluator of the BI program, but it focuses more on what the sociological impact of the experience is upon the participant and does not articulate a theory that explains the developmental impact of the program in any generalizable way (Saxe & Chazan, 2008). A similar book based on Saxe’s research was published about Jewish camping programs that also discusses the impact of the experience upon its Emerging Adult staff members, but again it does not posit a theory of how the program impacts their identity development specifically (Saxe & Sales, 2004; see also Lasker, 2009). Neither of these books posit anything generalizable beyond their subject scope as a general theory of experiential education and Jewish identity development.

Again, it is important to emphasize that outcome-based evaluation of Jewish intermediate travel experiences on positive Jewish identity development are well-documented. Post-trip evaluation as well embedded travel ethnographic studies on these
trips have shown an irrefutable uptick of positive attitude affiliation and affinity with Israel among participants (see e.g., Kelner, 2010; Saxe et al., 2011; Saxe & Chazan, 2008). This increase in affiliation with Israel by trip participants, one of the primary goals of the TBI trips, has even been termed The Birthright Bump (Israel Poll Data, 2012). Key elements in a TBI trip that positively impact a participant have been identified as the peer experience with fellow travelers, personal interactions with Israelis and the context of the land of Israel itself (Saxe, 2012). In the related area of Immersive Jewish Student Learning experiences for JEAs, trips that are primarily focused on some element of social action work as the trip’s main purpose, sociological research has revealed the basic components of a trip for a successful experience for the participants such as strong group cohesion, substantive service work, interaction with the service recipient communities and opportunities for study and reflection upon the work itself (Chertok, Tobias, Boxer, & Rosin, 2012). Indeed, the data collected for the present study supports that finding of key elements as well. But this study seeks to go deeper than just identifying what elements are needed on these trips to successfully optimize their impact. This study seeks to understand how the experiences that are inclusive of these key elements are internally processed by individual participants in order to effect change in their Jewish Identity Development as they engage in the trip experiences.

Summary

So while the last 50 years have brought the evolutionary awareness of these three theoretical fields, namely Identity Development, Experiential Education and Emerging Adulthood, to the point that each of them are now recognized as valid fields of
phenomena, the sub-text of how Jews are processed through them is relatively nascent. Equally important, a concept of how they all interact has not been examined in depth, leaving little resources for Jewish educators and communal professionals to draw upon despite the ever-increasing demand for Jewish experiential education programs targeted at Jewish Emerging Adults with the intent of positively impacting their Jewish Identity Development. This study attempts to shine a bit more light in to this particular black box.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In a recently published essay in the *International Handbook of Jewish Education*, Bryfman (2011) points out that there is relatively little qualitative research in Jewish experiential education that “captures the essence of what these experiences look and feel like, and that uninitiated readers know of the ‘magic’ or the ‘wonder’ that occurs in many such environments” (p. 769). He posits that among the needed areas of research in Jewish Experiential Education is the “[c]ompilation of theoretical research that constitutes the literature necessary to understand experiential Jewish education” (p. 781). The primary task of this study is to contribute to that body of literature by formulating a model from collected data that begins to explain why/what happens to Jewish Emerging Adult participants in intermediate Jewish Experiential Education programs\(^1\) such as Birthright Israel or Alternative Spring Breaks that impacts their Jewish Identity Development. As stated above the successful positive impact of these programs is not being challenged, but why they are successful and what is exactly happening to the participant during those experiences that causes such change in their personal Jewish identity has not been explored. That “why” and “what” is largely unknown to the Jewish experiential educators who conduct Jewish Emerging Adults through these program.

\(^1\) For the purposes of this study, only participants in two popular Jewish Experiential Education programs that extend between seven and ten days flight-to-flight are being examined. The author recognizes that similar questions can be asked of Jewish Experiential Education programs that extend from two months to a full year, but the time differential in the programs places it beyond the scope of this study.
experiences, and an explanatory model could lead to better training of those educators in their work and design of the experiences themselves to maximize impact.

This study utilizes the qualitative research methodology of Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a methodology for social research. Prior to their work, methods of social research “focused mainly on how to verify theories” and de-emphasized “the prior step of discovering what concepts and hypotheses are relevant for the area that one wishes to research” (pp. 1-2).

Essentially, grounded theory methods consist of systemic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data. Throughout the research process, grounded theorists develop analytic interpretations of their data to focus further data collection, which they use in turn to inform and refine their developing theoretical analyses (Charmaz, 2000, p. 509).

Grounded theorists by and large abjure forcing data through preconceived questions, hypotheses and categories. This could result in stunted data collection that is narrowly tailored. “However, data collecting may demand that researchers ask questions and follow hunches, if not in direct conversation with respondents, then in the observers’ notes about what to look for. Researchers construct rich data by amassing pertinent” details Charmaz (2000, p. 514). Rich data is collected from multiple sources in grounded theory research – conversations, formal interviews, observations, books and articles, public records, institutional reports, journals, diaries, and even the researchers’ own reflections. “Due to the grounding of theory in the actual data collected, grounded theory resonates with both the people who experience the phenomenon and those educators who
have a professional interest in it. Grounded theory provides techniques and procedures to create an inductively-deductively integrative theory” (Brown, Stevens Jr., Troiano, & Schneider, 2002, pp. 2-3). A key recognition of grounded theory is that the data collected “are reconstructions of experience; they are not the original experience itself” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 514).

Grounded theory methodology is predicated on the following eight assumptions: 1. The need to get out into the field to discover what is really going on (i.e., to gain firsthand information taken from its source). 2. The relevance of theory, grounded in data, to the development of a discipline and as a basis for social action. 3. The complexity and variability of phenomena and of human action. 4. The belief that persons are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situations. 5. The realization that persons act on the basis of meaning. 6. The understanding that meaning is defined and redefined through interaction. 7. A sensitivity to the evolving and unfolding nature of events (process). 8. An awareness of the interrelationships among conditions (structure), action (process), and consequences. (Brown et al., 2002, p. 2)

In grounded theory research, the researcher is expected to be not only versed in the professional literature of the area under study but to bring personal and professional experience in that area as well to the research. This is expected to make the researcher more sensitive to the theories permeating the data. “In contrast to quantitative methodology where the researcher is detached from the dynamics of the research process…, the researcher’s assumptions about the phenomenon being explored are critical to the research and should be clearly stated in the research report” (Brown et al., 2002, p. 3).

The process of interviewing in grounded theory research, which will be the primary method of data collection for this study, is focused specifically on exploring a student’s experience and placing those experiences in a context. “The interviews are
designed to acquaint the participant with the nature of the study, to establish rapport, to set a context for understanding the phenomenon, and then to obtain depth and details of the experience” (Brown et al., 2002, pp. 3-4). There is debate about whether to transcribe the interviews and even whether to return them to the interviewee for their review and remarks (see e.g., Brown et al. in support of transcription and Anglin (2002) arguing against the need for transcription).

Coding of data collected for grounded theory research “addresses three fundamental questions: (1) what is happening? (2) Of what process are these actions a part? and (3) What theoretical category does a specific datum indicate?” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 242). Coding of data in the beginning of the research is referred to as open coding which will allow the researcher to make initial comparisons and question the data to form initial categories. This is followed by axial coding which drills down on the open codes to essentially make sub-categories of the data that will “create a model that details the specific conditions that give rise to a phenomenon’s occurrence” (Brown et al., 2002, p. 5). As data is coded, it will begin to focus itself during memo-writing which is seen as the “pivotal analytic step” of grounded theory (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 243). As categories of axial codes, called selective codes, coalesce through the memo-writing, researchers then conduct theoretical sampling to collect more data that will flesh out the categories and find variations or linkages between them. It is not a priority in grounded theory research to have a statistical approximation of representation of a specific populace; the priority is to sample in order to achieve enough data to determine
theoretical saturation\(^2\) in order to solidly base theory. Consistent and simultaneous memo-ing should provide the researcher with a framework of theoretical analysis of the data collected that can be used to construct a grounded theory. The crux issue in grounded theory work is how much data collection is necessary to validly determine saturation. Scant attention to this detail has led to criticism that “a number of grounded theory studies skimp on data collection and tout description as theory” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008).

**Grounded Theory and Student Development**

Qualitative methods are valuable in researching Emerging Adults, specifically when looking at a complex event experienced during their college career such as a Birthright Israel trip or an Alternative Spring Break.

Because many aspects of the college experience do not divide neatly into discrete variables, qualitative methods of inquiry are the best suited for understanding the complex phenomena that comes together to form the college experience. Qualitative methodology is useful in exploring and describing the experiences of college students, especially when little is known about the phenomenon under study. (Brown et al., 2002, p. 1)

This reality has led to the use of grounded theory in a number of areas of student development where the phenomenon being studied was both intricate and largely unexplored. For example, Komives et al. (2006) found grounded theory a useful method to gather data towards the formulation of a Leadership Identity Development model by “situat[ing Leadership Identity Development] in the students’ experiences” in order to “understand the process a person experiences towards creating a leadership identity….

\(^2\) “Theoretical saturation, in effect, is the point at which no new insights are obtained, no new themes are identified, and no issues arise regarding a category of data…. At this milestone, the data categories are well established and validated” (Bowen, 2008, p. 140).
The grounded theory study resulted in the identification of a developmental process of how students situate themselves in the construct of leadership over time” (p. 404).

Grounded theory work in student development can be either objectivist or constructivist. While researchers are often taught that objectivity is preferred as a research approach, grounded theory research from a constructivist epistemological approach allows the research to get past constricting social hierarchies such expected gender roles or social behaviors.

This constructivist approach employs methods in a more flexible and less rigid way than more objectivist approaches to grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theorists do not attempt to be objective in their data collection or analysis, but instead seek to clarify and problematize their assumptions and make those assumptions clear to others. (Edwards & Jones, 2009, p. 212)

Torres (2003) also chose a constructivist grounded theory approach in a study he conducted of Latino ethnic identity development because “I recognize that meaning arises from the experiences of participants as they are shared during the interaction between participants and myself; therefore the relationship between participants and researcher is valued, rather than avoided” (p. 534).

Similarly, developmental study of sexual orientation among college students has found grounded theory to be a useful research medium. For instance, one grounded theory study of sexual orientation of college men asked research questions that phenomenologically echo those of this study:

- What critical incidents have contributed to gay male identity development in college?
- What meaning do the men attach to these incidents?
- How does the college experience influence identity formation of these men?
- In what ways do other dimensions of
identity intersect with sexual orientation and the college environment?
(Stevens, 2004, p. 188)

Stevens (2004) wanted to understand the “interconnections between students and their environments” in a similar vein as the current study:

With this approach, these gay men identified important characteristics and events that were personally meaningful to them. As a result, the author examined gay identity development in college using grounded theory. Grounded theory explicitly creates a plausible theory that is grounded in the data itself. This method allows the exploration of the topic as it evolves throughout the research as opposed to testing a priori hypotheses based on previous research.

**Research Design Strategy**

In keeping with the constructivist paradigm, the complexity of identity theory and the lack of empirical models for both Jewish identity development and Jewish Emerging Adulthood make qualitative inquiry appropriate for this particular study.

Characteristics of a constructivist paradigm include: 1. The researcher-respondent relationship is subjective, interactive, and interdependent. 2. Reality is multiple, complex, and not easily quantifiable. 3. The values of the researcher, respondents, research site, and underlying theory cannot help but undergird all aspects of the research. 4. The research product (e.g., interpretations) is context specific. (Edwards, 2007, p. 60)

The constructivist grounded theory paradigm allows the researcher to state his or her assumptions up front and purposefully seek data that will contradict those assumptions in order to advance theory development. In this study, the author assumes that, as demonstrated in the literature review, there is (1) little overall theoretical understanding of Jewish identity development but especially of Jewish Emerging Adults; (2) the desired effect of Jewish Experiential Education on the Jewish identity development of Jewish Emerging Adults has been well
measured but little is understood about the actual causation of that effect i.e. the “black box”; and (3) Jewish Experiential Education theory has not been examined in detail for this age cohort but is applicable to better understanding cause and effect of Jewish Experiential Education’s desired impact on Jewish Emerging Adults.

**Data Collection Design**

This study employed intensity sampling through the selection of ten total participants in two intermediate Jewish Experiential education programs for Jewish Emerging Adults, specifically five participants in a recent Taglit-Birthright Israel trip and five participants in an Alternative Spring Break trip. Ten interviewees are consistent with sample sizes in other grounded theory studies in student identity development (e.g., Edwards, 2007, p. 71). For common reference, participants in each group had all participated in the same trips at the same time and were interviewed as soon as possible after their return from their trips in order for the experience to be prominent in their memory. The only common denominator required for the interviewees to be eligible subjects was self-identification as a Jew, participation on the trip, an expressed positive experience through that participation and a willingness to reflect on the experience with an interviewer. The subjects were not considered as representative of all participants in all intermediate Jewish Experiential Education programs but as a distinct sample from a distinct pool.
Data Collection Procedures

Participants for interviews were identified through relevant staff at Hillel Foundations at two universities, referred to in this study by the pseudonyms Public U and Private U, who organize Birthright Israel and Alternative Spring Break trips on their campuses with trip providers. Subjects at Public U had participated in a Taglit – Birthright Israel trip over their spring break and the subjects at Private U had participated in an Alternative Spring Break trip to a farm outside Austin, Texas, under the auspices of the Jewish Farm School over their spring break. These two Hillel foundations specifically were drawn upon because of the author’s existing relationship with their staff. Potential interviewees were contacted immediately after their trip seeking their participation via e-mail by the Hillel staff members. Those who were willing to participate were asked to contact the author via e-mail to indicate their interest. Once contacted by the student, the author sent them a consent form with an explanation of the research method and its purpose, and offered a gift card if they complete the full interview process as an incentive. If they were willing to be interviewed after reading the form, they were asked to indicate that to the author via e-mail and an interview time and date was arranged. All initial interviews were done during the spring term of 2012 and, with one exception, the initial interviews were all conducted at the campus Hillel building.

Data Collection Means and Protocols

The author anticipated up to three interviews per participant to allow for reflection and revisiting of themes in depth if warranted. The interviews were recorded but the
recordings were only for continued reflection by the author as needed and for gleaning relevant quotations which are reported here under pseudonyms. Edited transcripts of each participant’s interview that contained the author’s observations and interpretations of the subject’s reflections from what was discussed during the interview shared with each participant for their confirmation and correction via before the second interview. If there were no corrections or additional comments or they preferred to share their corrections only in writing, the subject was not required to complete a second interview. Seven out of the ten subjects had no major additions or corrections to their interviews and chose not to undergo the second interview.

The interviews were constructed around open-ended questions meant to elicit recollection of the trip experiences. Questions and topics for the first interview include:

• Tell me about yourself. Why did you agree to participate in this study?

• How have you come to understand what it means to be a Jew?

• How would you describe society’s definition of what it means to be a Jew? How does that fit or not fit for you?

• How has your understanding of what it means to be a Jew changed over your life up until your trip?

• Did the trip experience change how you understand what it means to be a Jew? If so, what significant people, places, or events (good or bad) were critical in changing how you understood what it means to be a Jew? Did you experience an “ah-ha” moment at any point on the trip?
Regarding this last question, the subjects were also shown itineraries of their specific trips (see Appendices B and C) as a memory trigger after responding to all of the questions purely from recall in order to see what impressions were freshest for them. The memory trigger prompted recall of some experiences they had not previously relayed and also in some cases prompted expansions upon their earlier responses. The second interview of the three subjects (conducted via e-mail exchange) who indicated having more to say generally provided greater breadth to the participants’ reflections since the first interview and in response to the edited transcript. There were no third interviews conducted by the author who did not deem them necessary as the subjects’ experiences had already been saturated.

Data Analysis Procedures

After the interviews were transcribed and edited, they were reviewed by the subject who either approved them as they were, sent back corrections or observations via e-mail, and/or had a brief second interview via telephone to expand on something discussed in the initial interview. Once the edited transcripts were signed off on by the subject, the author conducted line-by-line open coding of each transcript followed by a code memo for each transcript. The code memos coalesced the diverse coding of the transcript into axial codes, and from the axial codes emerged selective codes which formed the theoretical model.

Overview of Data Coding

Level 1 Coding – Open Coding. Open codes of transcripts were utilized for the first level of coding. “Open coding is the part of the analysis concerned with identifying,
naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the text. Essentially, each line, sentence, paragraph etc. is read in search of the answer to the repeated question what is this about? What is being referenced here?” (Borgatti, 2012)

**Level 2 Coding – Axial Coding.** Axial Codes of transcripts were applied as patterns began to emerge from the open codes. “Axial coding is the process of relating codes (categories and properties) to each other, via a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. To simplify this process, rather than look for any and all kind of relations, grounded theorists emphasize causal relationships, and fit things into a basic frame of generic relationships” (Borgatti, 2012).

**Level 3 Coding – Selective Coding.** Selective coding was applied as the theoretical pattern began to emerge from the axial coding. “Selective coding is the process of choosing one category to be the core category, and relating all other categories to that category. The essential idea is to develop a single storyline around which everything else is draped” (Borgatti, 2012).

**Level 4 Coding – Theoretical Concepts.** Once the coding process had been completed and the theoretical concept has fully emerged, the concept was distilled in to a textual explanation with an accompanying visual model.

**Ethical Issues**

The standard ethical issues of concern were addressed through the consent form and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Loyola University Chicago. The one ethical concern by the author that could not be addressed in the consent form was his role in the community as a rabbi. While the author did not know the subjects prior to the
interviews and had no bearing on their activities in the campus Jewish community, the author was concerned that knowledge by the subjects of his communal role would lead to some level of bias or influence on the answers of the subjects or their willingness to participate through transference of any interpersonal issues the subjects may have had with other clergy members in their personal lives. Therefore the author requested the Hillel staff members who assisted in contacting subjects for recruitment to participate not to indicate in any way the professional role of the author other than as a researcher. The author additionally used an alternate e-mail to communicate with subjects that did not have a domain name indicating a Jewish organization or institution, and he did not wear a kippah (religious head covering) as is his daily custom when conducting the interviews so as not to inadvertently imply this role. In a few cases though, it became clear that a Hillel staff member had inadvertently let that information slip to one or two subjects, but it did not seem to impact their responses or candor in those cases when comparing the depth and seriousness of their answers to the other subjects who were unaware of that part of the author’s professional identity.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE STUDY

The Study Participants

As mentioned above, the study subjects were chosen by soliciting participation from participants in two particular trip experiences which meant a finite pool of possible participants. The solicitations were sent to the entire eligible pool for each trip, nine for the Private U farm trip and twelve for the Public U Israel trip. Five were needed from each trip and five from each trip responded to the request for participation. All ten met the baseline criteria of self-identifying as Jewish and reporting having had an overall positive experience on the trip as well as a willingness to discuss it with the author. Brief descriptions of each participant are below and a summary of the group’s demographics can be found in Appendix A. Public U is a Midwestern state university’s main campus with an estimated combined student graduate and undergraduate population of around 28,000 and an estimated combined Jewish student graduate and undergraduate population of around 2,500. Private U is a Midwestern private university with an estimated combined student graduate and undergraduate population of around 14,300 and an estimated combined Jewish student graduate and undergraduate population of around 2,800. Both Public U and Private U are located in the city limits of major Midwestern cities.
Basic Profile Summary of Study Participants as of April, 2012

Nicky is a 20 year old sophomore at Public U. She is from the same city as Public U is located but her parents are from Argentina. Her mother converted to Judaism when she married her father. She has one older brother. Nicky is a double major in Neuroscience and Philosophy with a concentration in the philosophy of science; she hopes to be a teacher or professor. Nicky spends time every year in Argentina. She is a vegetarian for the past seven years and is active with a Jewish community organization working with Special Needs adults. It is her main extra-curricular activity although she is a sorority member and lives on campus.

Sheila is 19 years old sophomore at Public U from the suburbs of a major east coast city. She is a Spanish major and Chemistry minor and a Portuguese minor with a history of philosophy certificate. Sheila wants to be a physician. Sheila was born in the USA but partially raised in Uruguay where her mother is from; her father is American. Both parents are born Jewish. Sheila is a Resident Advisor in her dorm. Sheila is the co-founder of Challah for Hunger at Hillel but is planning to reduce her role with it so that she can become more active in Student Government next year.

Mona is a 19 year old undeclared freshman at Public U from a college town on the East Coast but also lived in a major East Coast city. She grew up with both parents and a younger brother; Mona’s mother is Jewish and her father is not. Mona is active in Engineers for a Sustainable World and Americans for an Informed Democracy. Mona is still deciding if she wants to become an engineer but she is interested in issues around
technology and the environment. Mona has little regular involvement with campus Jewish life and lives on campus.

Marc is a 22 year old senior at Public U from a suburb outside of a major East Coast city. Both of his parents are Jewish. His major is engineering and he is a co-op student. His extracurricular activities at Public U include starting an engineering interest group called Interactive Industry Seminars and being a part of Hillel’s social justice group. He also helps run the machine shop at the engineering school and lives in the campus area.

Joan is a 20 year old sophomore at Public U from New England. She is majoring in biology. Joan is active with Challah for Hunger and Hillel’s social action committee, and also volunteers at a local hospital. She helped start the campus chapter of Gamma Sigma Sigma, a national service sorority, which requires 25 hours of community service each semester to stay affiliated. Joan also lifeguards and teaches swimming in the summers as well as babysits, and she enjoys playing basketball for fun. Joan describes herself as crafty and loves to scrapbook and lives in the campus area. Both of her parents are Jewish.

Greta is a 20 year old second year student at Private U and was raised in the suburbs that city. Greta transferred to Private U from a very large public university in another state where she majored in Journalism and was very active in writing for the school newspaper. Greta decided to leave in part because her course work was so professionally focused. Greta decided she needed more of an academic grounding and is pursuing an interdisciplinary studies degree in religious studies and two as-yet undecided
areas of English literature with the goal of being a high school English teacher. Greta lives on campus and is from an interfaith family; her mother is Jewish and her father is not.

Jena is a 19 year old second year student at Private U from a large New England city. She is from an interfaith family; her mother is Jewish and her father is not. She has one brother. On campus she is an intern at Hillel and she works on Fridays in a local Jewish day school’s pre-school classrooms. Jena dances in two campus extracurricular dance groups. She is a human development major and may double major in Spanish too. She is thinking about a career related to behavioral-social-cognitive issues with children. She is also active in GLBT activities on campus and lives on campus.

Lana is a 19 year old first year student at Private U from the West Coast. She has not declared a major but is leaning towards public policy. She comes from an interfaith family; her father is not Jewish and her mother is Jewish and she has one sister. Lana is involved on campus in correctional reform and felon literacy tutoring on campus and represents her residence house in housing student government.

Lindy is an 18 year old first year student at Private U. Lindy is from a suburb of a major East Coast city, has two older sisters, and both of her parents are Jewish. Lindy is very active in journalism work on campus and she also works at a campus museum as a gallery attendant. She is considering declaring an environmental studies major which she partially credits to her experience on the ASB trip, and is organizing a campus Jewish organization’s community garden. Lindy lives on campus.
Josh is a third year student at Private U and was raised in a rural part of a Mid-Atlantic state. Josh’s father is Jewish and his mother is Protestant. Josh spent his first two years at a two year, all male liberal arts college located in the high desert of a Western state, and then transferred to Private U for his third year. Josh is majoring in Philosophy and hopes to become a high school English teacher and plans on getting a Master’s degree in English and teaching certification. Josh lives in the campus area.

**Jewish Identity Summaries of Participants – Attached or Detached**

As the data was collected, patterns of self-perception emerged from each student regarding their initial sense of Jewish identity. The subjects were asked the questions found in Appendix B which were intentionally general in order for their own self-perceptions of Jewish identity to be freely reported and not suggested or directed. As the interviews were distilled into memos, patterns of personal perception emerged from the data that pointed to a whether a student perceived their Jewish identity in a positive or negative light. These patterns were unanticipated in the original research questions but emerged to be indicative of patterns of preconceived assumptions that the subjects brought to the experience as discussed below. Selective codes emerged from the memo process that showed the students as falling in to two overarching categories of self-perception of their Jewish identities that the author coded as Attached and Detached.

The descriptive terms Attached and Detached were chosen as reflective of whether or not a student had a positive or negative disposition in certain categories of Jewish identity that emerged as axial codes from this subject group. These terms also are descriptive of the multiple components of Jewish identity that have been overlooked in
the study of Jewish identity development as discussed above in Chapter Two. Attached Jewish Identity implies a positive balance within any particular Jew amongst the majority of the categories while Detached Jewish Identity implies a negative balance within any particular Jew amongst the majority of the categories. The two terms are not descriptive of opposites as much as sections of a sliding scale. Because this finding was unanticipated and emerged from the research itself, more precise research in to these phenomena may determine that there are more accurate descriptive terms for this pre-trip status. Also as discussed below, the data suggests that the trip experiences can be impacted by these pre-dispositions and that the experiences themselves may in turn change the balance of these categories.

The selective code of Attached Jewish Identity in this subject pool is demonstrated by a positively-stated self-identification with four or more of the six axial coding categories below as contributing towards building or sustaining the subject’s Jewish identity. A subject who expressed conflict or ambivalence with four or more of these axial coding categories below in such a way that diminished or weakened the subject’s Jewish identity was selectively coded as a Detached Jewish Identity. All six of the axial codes were equally weighted and in no particular order. The six axial codes for this determination are:

- Theology (articulation of belief or disbelief in a Jewish understanding of a Supreme Being) e.g. “I guess conflicted is a good word. I think I felt conflicted between the side of me that felt like a Jewish person and the side of me that felt like at atheist person, that those are in conflict, or were in conflict, for me (Nicky, 2012).”
• Personal Religious Observance (outside of the family) e.g. “I like to go to Friday night services because I have a lot of memory associated with that and it’s a nice way to end my week and collect my thoughts and come together with a community of people (Jena, 2012).”

• Ethics (social action, personal responsibility, etc, articulated as Jewish beliefs and behaviors by the subject) e.g. “Being Jewish is more than just a religion to me. I mean, it is my religion but I live my life with the morals that I have been taught through my temple and through my parents so mitzvoth and community service has a lot to do with that (Joan, 2012).”

• Cultural Practices (food, language, humor, social and romantic choices, etc) e.g. “My brother and I love nothing more than to call each other ‘dumb Jew’ and make Holocaust jokes at each others’ expense. It’s ok because we are both Jewish and both come from the exact same background (Mona, 2012).”

• Family (Jewish affiliation, practice, history, attitude, behavior of family of origin) e.g. “My dad didn’t have a bar mitzvah. He was Jewish because his family was Jewish and obviously he loves gefilte fish and matzah and he loves all the regular things but his father was from Russia. When he immigrated here his last name was Weinstein and he had to get it changed because he couldn’t get a job so that’s why my name is (Americanized) (Sheila, 2012).”

• Ethnicity/ Genetics (in terms of whether or not this was articulated as relevant to a subject’s self-perception as a Jew) e.g. “It’s always going to be in your DNA. If you
are born Jewish and you go to get tested for genetic diseases you are going to say that you are Jewish, that’s one way to be Jewish (Mona, 2012).”

Making the initial distinction of Attached and Detached emerged as necessary for understanding the various assumptions each subject had as they engaged in the experiences they reported as significant to them on their respective trips. The impact of the subject’s experiences on their various assumptions about Jewish life in all its forms could be better understood once it could be reasonably surmised whether the subject began the encounter inclined favorably or unfavorably towards their sense of Jewish self. This in turn helped to explain the same experience on the trip might have a positive impact on one subject’s Jewish identity and a negative impact on another subject’s Jewish identity. Determining if they have a Attached or Detached Jewish identity was a possible indicator whether or not subjects entered into any given trip experience with a predisposition towards or against growth and change as a result of their experiences. As will be discussed below, such an initial categorization may have beneficial outcomes in the understanding of how future trip participants experience these trips and what planning could be done of the experiences to insure a more uniform experience for all participants on any given trip.
Nicky

Nicky has a Detached Jewish Identity. Her parents do not practice Judaism at home or belong to a synagogue and are professed atheists. Nicky also does not believe in G-d and did not study for a Bat Mitzvah ceremony, but grew up in a very Jewishly populated neighborhood and had many Jewish friends whose families did practice Judaism and celebrate their coming of age in the synagogue. Subsequently she grew up feeling she was not fully Jewish; “if someone had asked me before I went on Birthright if I was Jewish I would have said ‘oh, kind of’.”

I never had a Bat Mitzvah, never went to Hebrew school, and so I always thought ‘how can you be Jewish without these? They are, like, core factors of Judaism.’ I think a Bat Mitzvah is a core part of being Jewish, or at least it feels that way (Nicky, 2012).

Nicky struggled in high school with this conflict and sought out on her own a Jewish education and participation in the Jewish community to try and find equilibrium.

I think I felt conflicted between the side of me that felt like a Jewish person and the side of me that felt like an atheist person, that those are in conflict, or were in conflict, for me. I definitely in high school was getting more involved in the Jewish community through Friendship Circle (a Jewish organization working with special needs individuals), and I was going to synagogue (with friends not family), not regularly, but more than when I was younger, and I was just doing SAJS (a community Jewish high school study program) and everything, but I never felt that the conflict resolved itself or anything (Nicky, 2012).

This conflict continued in to college for Nicky.

If you had asked me two months ago ‘are you Jewish’ I would have answered ‘I don’t understand how I could be Jewish without believing in G-d.’ I could be Jewish in X number of ways, but without this one factor I guess I can’t really call myself a Jew (Nicky, 2012).
This sense of in-authenticity was strong enough for Nicky to wonder if she would even be eligible for the TBI trip.

I thought that here in the US and in other places we have this concept of being half-Jewish or part-Jewish. When I applied for I thought that here in the US and in other places we have this concept of being half-Jewish or part-Jewish. When I applied for Birthright I thought I might not get it on the basis that I am not Jewish enough like all of those phrases (Nicky, 2012).

**Sheila**

Sheila has a Attached Jewish Identity. She also grew up in a very Jewishly populated neighborhood and was active in her synagogue’s youth group as the social action chair, and she continued at Hillel in the social action vein through Challah for Hunger. Sheila is not very compelled by religious observance. Sheila’s bi-national background contributes to her having a multi-layered sense of identity overall of which being Jewish is a strong and positive component.

I define myself as a lot of things. My mom was not born in the States; she was born in Uruguay so I define myself as Uruguayan which is a huge part of me. I also define myself as Jewish; I am a Reform Jew and that is really important to me. I think American kind of comes last for me. I love America and what it has given me but I would rather consider myself a Uruguayan Jew than anything else (Sheila, 2012).

Sheila thinks that it is critical to have a strong Jewish identity regardless of nationality.

Most people don’t know that I am Jewish because I don’t say it outright because my last name is [X]. I don’t ‘look Jewish’ so what usually comes out is that people realize I’m Uruguayan because I am a Spanish major and I have been to Uruguay fifteen plus times so being Jewish to some people is, like, the last thing you think about when you identify someone but people who aren’t Jewish don’t realize how important it is to have that identity (Sheila, 2012).
The Jewish immigrant experiences of her family as well as their encounters with anti-Semitism have contributed to Sheila’s own Jewish cultural identity.

I definitely see myself as more of a cultural Jew than a religious Jew. My dad didn’t have a bar mitzvah. He was Jewish because his family was Jewish and obviously he loves gefilte fish and matzah and he loves all the regular things but his father was from Russia. When he immigrated here his last name was Weinstein and he had to get it changed because he couldn’t get a job so that’s why my name is [X]. Sounds like a cool little story. And then my mom’s family in Uruguay is originally from Poland. They came before the war and they always said they got on the wrong boat; they went to South America instead of North America. And it is also funny with the names. There is a lot of anti-Semitism in Argentina and Uruguay, like, for example if my grandmother… when she goes to the dry cleaners her maiden name is Stein. So when she goes to the dry cleaners, she will put the name’ Suarez’ because if she puts the name down ‘Stein’ they will know that she is Jewish and either won’t serve her correctly or be like ‘oh, she’s the Jew.’ So I was in Uruguay last May for a month and I went to the dry cleaners with her and she said ‘Suarez’ and I said ‘that’s not our last name’ and she said ‘it is here.’ So it is just a very interesting thing because where I lived back home, everyone was Jewish. If you were a Christian, it wasn’t weird but it was like you were a token, like, it never really happened. So in that sense I grew up in a bubble. I never really felt anti-Semitism personally so in terms of being Jewish, definitely cultural. I go to Shabbat services here sometimes but in all honesty I love just schmoozing and having dinner and talking to people (Sheila, 2012).

Mona

Mona has a Attached Jewish Identity. She reports participating in religious school at her synagogue from third through eighth grade, including a Bat Mitzvah, although she had a personality conflict with her rabbi and took pride in being rebellious in class.

We (her family) did little Jewish things like going to services until I was in the 3rd grade. We (Mona and her brother) started to go to Hebrew school so that we would be bat and bar mitzvahed, but our Hebrew school was a joke. The rabbi was not very nice, not very supportive. She was just very harsh. I remember once when I was in the 5th grade I knocked over a prayer book and she stopped the whole service and used that as a lesson on
why you don’t knock over prayer books and that you have to kiss it when you pick it up. I was like ‘I’m not kissing the book in front of the whole auditorium’ so I just put it back there and have had a grudge against her ever since then. She turned me off. My class that I was in, (inaudible) always loud, always screaming, and we kept count; we got about 4 teachers to quit so that was about it. After bat mitzvah I did their high school program for a year and that was all right. It was a lot of discussion (Mona, Post-TBI trip interview, 2012).

Mona reported during a second interview that while she initially described her attitude towards her rabbi in the quote above as negative, she was able to see upon reflection that her dislike for the rabbi stemmed in part from Mona’s own maturity level as well as the rabbi’s personality: “The rabbi was a very nice lady but a bit too harsh, especially with kids. I was intimidated by her.” Mona also reported in the second interview that she wishes she had continued her Jewish education in hindsight. “If I could go back today I probably would have continued with the discussion group. It was a great program but I just didn’t have the motivation back then” (Mona, Second Post-TBI trip interview, 2012).

Mona reported her view that Jewish identity is based on genetics, culture and ethnicity. She acknowledged religion plays a role in Jewish identity but she felt inadequate in her own knowledge of that aspect to prioritize it.

There’s different ways to be a Jew. It’s always going to be in your DNA. If you are born Jewish and you go to get tested for genetic diseases you are going to say that you are Jewish, that’s one way to be Jewish. There is also culturally Jewish. If you eat all the foods and observe all the holidays, that’s Jewish but if you really believe in it, even if you are not of Jewish descent, then that’s Jewish too. That’s what I think. If you want to be religiously Jewish, you would need to convert. For me, it’s mostly culturally and ethnically. Culturally Jewish means celebrating the holidays, eating the foods, going on Birthright. The religion is there but I haven’t really learned much about the religion so I can’t really say much about it. I firmly believe that it is whatever you consider yourself.
Growing up my parents were like, ‘we’re Jewish.’ It was what it was. We are people; we are Jewish (Mona, Post-TBI trip interview, 2012). Mona expresses a very independent sense of Jewish identity both for herself and others; it is a personal definition and not a communal one. “Before I would say someone is Jewish, I would want to know what they consider themselves. You’re Jewish if you say you’re Jewish.” Mona is also enamored of Jewish humor as part of her cultural identity even if it is controversial among her family and peers as to what constitutes acceptable Jewish humor.

I love making Jew jokes. It’s a bit of a tension in my family. My parents are very uptight about Jew jokes. My brother and I love nothing more than to call each other ‘dumb Jew’ and make Holocaust jokes at each others’ expense. It’s ok because we are both Jewish and both come from the exact same background. My parents don’t really, like, we’re the South Park generation. I can’t speak for them because I wasn’t alive then but my mom will say ‘that offends me’ (referring to Jewish jokes) and my brother and I would never say ‘that offends me.’ Sometimes when I make a Jewish joke or just joke about being Jewish and I have been around other Jews (peers) there have been moments of tension where someone will say ‘hey. I’m Jewish’ and I’ll say ‘Well I’m Jewish too so sit down and shut up’ (Mona, 2012).

Mona also doubts that non-Jewish society can fully understand Jewish identity. She does not think most people who are not Jewish can made the distinctions between the various characteristics of Jewish identity or comprehend religious views separate from their own.

I don’t think society has a definition of what it means to be a Jew. I mean people don’t really know. Some people are surprised when I tell them that Jews don’t proselytize; they’re like ‘really? Jews won’t try to convert you?’ and that surprises them. Sometimes people don’t understand you can be ethnically Jewish. I don’t think society has a definition because I think society is pretty ignorant on the issue. Just in general people don’t seem to know. I mean, if you know the difference between culturally Jewish, ethnically Jewish, religiously Jewish, you probably heard it mentioned in a class. Society’s assumptions in my opinion tend to be very
superficial. If someone has a Jewish last name, if some says ‘I’m going to temple,’ if someone has the Brooklyn accent, then they are a Jew. People don’t understand I’m Jewish until I say I’m Jewish…. When society says someone belongs to a group of people, it is because they appear that way. Even stereotyping. When (inaudible) someone would say ‘My dumb Jewish boss won’t give me a raise,’ I mean, maybe they have a bit of a nose and they won’t give them a raise and that could be assuming that person is Jewish (Mona, 2012).

Marc

Marc has a Attached Jewish Identity. Marc clearly reports a sense of cultural identity and he incorporates religious customs and practices in to that viewpoint as traditions. Marc also reports a distinctly personal and independent theology which he reports as “spirituality.” Marc knows his belief system is not compatible with traditional Jewish views but he is not blocked by that from embracing a Jewish identity in other characteristics. He expresses being able to live comfortably within that tension as a result of his age and college experience.

I consider myself more culturally defined, observation rather than observant. I grew up in a Conservative household. I guess we were actually more Reform but I consider culture and tradition to be pretty important to my lifestyle. I feel most Jewish being with family and friends on holidays, especially now that they have this whole thing at Hillel where they send you out to families for the holidays. I thought that was pretty neat. I grew up going to my grandmother’s house for holidays so I like that aspect of it.” Spiritually I like to be outside. I guess everyone has their own way to be spiritual and I don’t want to impede on anyone else’s way of spirituality but I guess mine is pretty minimal because of Judaism, I guess mine encompasses several other ways of looking at faith. I kind of have a hard time relating to one way. I mean, I guess as I’ve gotten older at college I have found my own opinions. I guess it’s a blend; any faith could grab on to those ideas and claim them. I guess that means when it comes to being observant that is tough to do because I have my own opinions. I guess I wouldn’t directly identify myself directly with it (Judaism) but I still identify myself as Jewish. It’s not that I don’t know what my faith is; it’s just that it is hard to define (Marc, 2012).
Marc places a lot of significance in having a Jewish social life. He actively seeks out Jewish friends and social gatherings, and can justify attending Shabbat services and dinners at Hillel socially even if he is not participating in it as a religious act.

This past year I was trying to get into it a little more. Going to Hillel on Friday nights to be with friends. That has had a positive effect with meeting new people and making new friends. It’s nice to get together with people who have… I wouldn’t say an appreciation for my faith but being Jewish and being there together, it’s nice. I think it (the social experience) is important in itself. Again I think that spirituality is something you need to define for yourself. It can’t be defined by others so I think the social aspect is what brings people together (Marc, 2012).

Unlike most of the other subjects, Marc does not express as much doubt about the way non-Jewish society perceives Judaism and Jews even while acknowledging the prevalence of anti-Semitism in the world. He himself is not sure of how to understand certain aspects of the Jewish world so he gives others the benefit of the doubt; “I think overall it (society’s view of being a Jew) is positive. I stay positive in hopes that people will see me as positive.”

**Joan**

Joan has a **Attached Jewish Identity**. She perceives her Jewish identity has rooted in her family’s practices, her synagogue experience and education, and the social justice ethic known in Hebrew as *Tikkun Olam*.¹

A lot of it comes from the community service aspect for me. Being Jewish is more than just a religion to me. I mean, it is my religion but I live my life with the morals that I have been taught through my temple and through my parents so mitzvot² and community service has a lot to do

---

¹ “Repair the World.”

² Mitzvot is the Hebrew word for “commandments.” Traditional Jewish theology posits that G-d gave a multitude of commandments to the Jews at Mount Sinai as a system of living a sacred life. These commandments traditionally encompass both ritual and ethical aspects of daily life, but Reform Judaism
with that…. I guess it kind of started with the whole community service thing around my bat mitzvah. I really liked the satisfaction I got from helping other people that didn’t have what I have. I felt like I learned from a very young age that I am very privileged in life from what I may have gotten from my parents and everything so I try and carry that in everything I do and Gamma Sigma Sigma helps me do that in this community (Joan, 2012).

Joan reported being influenced by her rabbi who was patient with her when she challenged what she was being taught. The rabbi was able to put the teachings on mitzvot in a perspective she could embrace. Joan has made clear decisions regarding her own religious practice and expresses personal validity in her choices and sees those decisions as validly Jewish behavior. She also attributed her ability to do this in part to maturation.

I feel like being accepting of all kinds of ways of life goes along with being Jewish. I did go all the way through confirmation and I did get confirmed. I do enjoy Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday evening prayers) and singing songs with everyone. It’s a way to bring people together and I do enjoy that a lot…. It is my religion but I don’t know if it makes sense to say it’s my religion and it’s more of a way of life. I am completely a Reform Jew. I don’t do everything on Friday nights; I just don’t have time to do that stuff.” Do you mean – are you asking what it feels like to be Jewish? I guess what it means to be Jewish to me is to be proud of my family and where I come from because like I said a lot of what I learned is from my family. Of course over the years I’ve learned more of what it means to be technically Jewish with all the rules and stuff and I’ve learned to accept some of those things and reject some of them. I feel like what it means to be Jewish to me is that I am able to do that. I know in some religions you can’t just take away some things and follow some things, you know what I mean? Stuff like that? Again with the being accepting thing… (Joan, 2012).

Joan reported that the larger gentile world views Jews and Judaism through stereotyping about Jewish religious practices. She thinks most non-Jews assume Jews are religiously

which Joan identifies with has placed an emphasis on ethical commandments over ritual ones for daily living.
observant but they do not understand it more broadly as a way of life with different characteristics of values and behaviors and self-perceptions than blanket religious doctrines or practices. Joan used the word “proud” repeatedly when describing her own Jewish identity which she connected to her ability to make those distinctions in a Jewish community that can accept those choices.

And my Jewish identity personally, I feel as I have gone on that I have learned a lot more personally about the Jewish religion which helps me understand why I call myself a Jew. I feel like a lot about the Jewish religion, well maybe not the religion, is being part of who you are, like, freedom. I feel like a lot of the prayers and melodies are part of what make me proud of being Jewish and part of this [Jewish] community and (Public U) and stuff like that. I feel proud of being Jewish because I like what it stands for… I like the whole mitzvah thing, I like being part of a community that can accept me for what I like to do and who I am. I feel not every community is like that and I have found that in the Jewish community at home and here (at Public U) (Joan, 2012).

Greta

Greta has a Detached Jewish Identity. She reported no real Jewish identity in high school despite growing up among a lot of Jews. “So growing up I didn’t really identify as Jewish and (my home town) is a very Jewish area; more than half of (my) high school is Jewish so it was definitely a cultural immersion but I didn’t have a bat mitzvah….“ Greta became active in Hillel at both of her college campuses and had been on both her ASB trip and a TBI trip by the time she was interviewed and was participating in a religious education program through the campus Chabad3 called Sinai Scholars at the time of her interview. Yet she still struggled to define herself comfortably as Jewish because of a perception of it primarily as a religious system.

---

3 Chabad is an Ultra-Orthodox outreach organization that is very active on college campuses.
I still don’t know if I would identify as Jewish because I am very interested, like, intellectually interested in Jewish thought and exploring it from a religious studies perspective and I really like the Jewish community here but I don’t really go to services often. I go to Shabbat and so I don’t know if someone asked me if I was Jewish I would say yes; I would probably give that more long complicated explanation (Greta, 2012).

Greta seemed to intellectualize her identity and was personally resistant to solidly expressing her identity as Jewish because it would imply an exclusivity to do so that could be construed as superiority which would have been counter to her academic focus on open inquiry.

One of the things that kind of troubled me about that, the reason I just wouldn’t say yes immediately is because it sort of implies an exclusivity of other things. So if I am also interested in, if I would describe my faith or my spirituality in Christian terms also or Buddhist terms, it seems that saying I am Jewish is exclusive of those other religions which is why I am more hesitant to describe myself as Jewish because it seem a sort of exclusive religious definition and, um, I think that there is sort of like two different things like are you practicing, are you religious, do you fully believe in all of the doctrine and the faith part, is your family Jewish by a more cultural definition which is what I would identify with more (Greta, 2012).

Greta was more comfortable considering herself culturally Jewish but did not fully identify herself through that characteristic. She did report seeing herself as genetically Jewish though through her mother but did not think she could be ethnically Jewish since she has a Catholic father.

I don’t know if I would say that as a complete answer but I would definitely mention, like, I am Jewish. I don’t know if that would be my entire answer. I am not really practicing anything else, I’m not in any other religious community other than the Jewish community but I am reading, like, solitary exploration and so, yeah, I mean it would make me uncomfortable because it would mean that Jewish religion constitutes the whole of my religion which I don’t think is true for me personally. Since my dad isn’t Jewish and my dad’s family is Catholic so I don’t think that
ethnically, I would just basically describe it as my mother was Jewish (which mean genetically Jewish) so yeah, it would be (unintelligible) to say that is my ethnic identity (Greta, 2012).

Greta reported a firmer sense of how the non-Jewish world sees Jews and Judaism, but she was quick to limit her opinion to both of her college campus experiences rather than society at large.

I think it is more of an integrated understanding of that cultural aspect and a religious faith and so I think with college students its interesting, like here I think that we talk about this in Sinai Scholars and we talked about this on the trip but it is more of a cultural understanding like, not everyone is 100%, like, not everyone goes to services, not everyone keeps kosher, like, even thinks that they should or believes, like, the Sinai Scholars is basically about the 10 commandments and like people there don’t seem to be very religious and there seems to be a definite divide between people who think the 10 commandment were given from G-d specifically to the Jews, like ‘my faith is in that place’, and people who identify as Jewish but don’t necessarily believe that. And so I think other people, especially college students, have a more cultural understanding of being Jewish than religious. At least the people that I have encountered here, the young people like the people at my high school, and I knew a lot of Jewish people (in high school) and I didn’t know that many who were faithful and religious. I can’t really gauge a larger world perception. I am just trying to limit it to (Private U) and a non-Jewish student, how they would view that, and I think that some people also have the same more nuanced view of it as a cultural identity and not just a religious identity. I think that, I mean not entirely but I think that more so than a Christian identity isn’t necessarily a cultural identity and I think that even non-Jews here recognize Jewish students as more of a culture than a religion than say some of the Christian groups like Intervarsity which isn’t cultural or traditional. At (my previous campus) I think it was very different because there were a lot of kids there from (that state) that did not go to school with any Jewish kids so they thought something, like, more exotic and a very specific religion and a very specific culture and had a kind of an all-or-nothing, like, if you are Jewish then that is a totally separate thing. Here more people are from New York City and Chicago and places where there are a lot more Jewish people so they have that same understanding that if you are Jewish you are not necessarily keeping kosher and going to services every Friday night. You don’t even necessarily believe in G-d so that is a cultural identity (Greta, 2012).
Greta did report that her own seeking out of Jewish activities and peers on both of her campuses helped her become comfortable and desirous of Jewish social and communal life despite her own personal identity ambivalence. While in high school being Jewish had no real relevance to her in terms of social standing, at college it provided community.

I think going to high school I didn’t really realize because so many students were Jewish that I didn’t really identify myself that way because it wasn’t anything that made me different. If anything most people had Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and I was just kind of like sort of Jewish, my mom’s Jewish, but I didn’t have a Bat Mitzvah or anything like that so I think that getting away from that I started to identify more because it was something I had in common with people and I found I had more in common with Jewish students because they were kind of like the people I went to high school with but I don’t think that was the main reason. I think the main reason is actually one of my good friends became very religious and very involved at (my previous campus through an Orthodox outreach organization). She became very involved and was going to Shabbat services every week and was going to rabbis’ homes for Shabbat and staying there for all of Friday night and Saturday and so I was good friends with her and started going with her and just kind of realized that I like that community and I liked that cultural aspect of it. I just found that I liked going to Shabbat and continued to do that here (Greta, 2012).

Jena

Jena has a Attached Jewish Identity. She reports a strong affiliation with Jewish communal activities including her Hillel internship which has done a lot to bolster her sense of Jewish self, and she has a sought a solution through a local synagogue when the Hillel was not meeting her religious observance needs. She connects with Jewish education and takes pride in her own knowledge base of Judaism in comparison to her peers.

I feel comfortable with my Jewishness in terms of being literate in Judaism. I consider myself at least for this campus pretty literate in terms
of knowing about traditions and holidays and stories from the Bible and why we do or don’t do certain things. I keep kosher so I guess I have knowledge of that. I think being Jewish is something that is important to me and this year especially I got a lot more involved in Jewish life both on campus and off. Last year I started going to services at (a local congregation) and I really like that. This year I started doing CEI and I got this job at CEI so I feel like I am collecting Jewish activities. It didn’t hit me until the beginning of this quarter how much of my life has become entrenched in Jewish activities which I didn’t really expect coming to college. I was pretty involved at home but I wasn’t sure how I could translate that into my college experience especially since last year the first time I came to Hillel I didn’t click with it because I think I had some pre-conceived notions about it and things that I was looking for that I wasn’t finding and sort of a mix of those sort of turned me off from it. For me I think of religion as something that is very individual. I enjoy going to Friday night services and sort of keeping up with religious practices, but I wouldn’t say that is a defining factor about being Jewish. I would say that is about connecting with community in any way that works for you. So if that mean having Friday night dinner with someone but it’s not Shabbat dinner, it’s just friends getting together on Friday night or if it is going to services, little things, even if you don’t do any of the practices but you are just interested in learning about them and talking about them. I think being Jewish is sort of engaging with the Jewish community. I feel like I am starting things that I have learned during CEI but what I have come to realize is that what is so great about this internship is that it has given me a space to articulate things that I felt before and sort of seeing it in action. I’ve met plenty of students this year who say ‘I consider myself just culturally Jewish’ and I think that is perfectly valid (Jena, 2012).

Jena reported being initially challenged by being among students she perceived as more literate than herself at Hillel but sought a solution that would support her desire for religious observance in a comfortable setting by going to the local congregation which worshipped in a familiar manner to her own upbringing. She also reported that thought her own religious interest as a non-Orthodox Jew was unique at Private U.

I feel like I am a special case because most people if they grow up Reform or Conservative, they get to college and they don’t really want to do religion anymore. They’ll go to events and then they will identify with the Jewish community but they wouldn’t think to come here for Friday night services (Jena, 2012).
Jena is attuned to the context of Judaism at Private U as cultural. As someone with a positive disposition towards religious practice, this context has challenged her but she sees the common connection through a larger interest in Jewish community.

I would say it’s also a cultural thing like food traditions and I feel like people connect with their family a lot. I don’t think it can be limited to a religious identity, at least on a college campus with my peers and things. I have a lot of friends who identify as Jewish and are not religiously observant in any way. It’s sometimes hard for me to wrap my head around that because I do like the religious aspect of it in some ways. I like to go to Friday night services because I have a lot of memory associated with that and it’s a nice way to end my week and collect my thoughts and come together with a community of people. So I guess it’s a community-based thing for me (Jena, 2012).

Jena thinks society has misperceptions about Jews and Judaism but she also thinks that many non-Orthodox Jews are not helpful in clearing up those misperceptions because of their own Detached identities that lead them to belittle or denigrate Judaism. She is proud of her identity as a non-Orthodox Jew.

I think when people think of Jews they would think of Orthodox Jews because of visibility that is what you might see. I think people could easily jump to stereotypes if they are not informed, like ‘oh yeah, they are lawyers and doctors and have well paying jobs and are from New York.’ I’m from the east coast so I feel that would take place more there. I feel like it’s more … so we read Jonathan Safran’s piece of the New York Times when he wrote his new Haggadah and he was basically saying that to be Jewish at least in the United States pop culture, it’s sort of funny. It’s this quirk about you, which is something that really irks me. I think part of it is the way I was raised. I went to Catholic school for kindergarten through eighth grade. I think it was because my mom didn’t want me to get bullied or whatever that she stressed to me how important it was that people didn’t use something like my religion to bully me. So if someone were to say like ‘you look Jewish’ or ‘you don’t look Jewish,’

---

4 Haggadah means “the legend” in Hebrew and is the term applied to the guidebook used in conducting the ceremonial Passover meal called the Seder.
that’s a no in my house. But I have friends here in my internship group who joke about noses and looks being a certain way and I have a visceral reaction to that. But I think that is what is present in people’s minds, non-Jews and even Jews, about things that make a person Jewish. It’s frustrating to think of being Jewish as a personality quirk. I do consider myself a religious person and being Jewish is something that is very important to me. I chose to keep kosher; that is important to me. I like that it is present in my mind and in my daily life. I take it seriously but at the same time if I am tired on a Friday night I might not go out to services and I don’t keep shomer Shabbes or anything like that. I like to think that what I do is a happy medium; it works for me (Jena, 2012).

Jena has processed her Jewish identity growth on campus into something that she anticipates will be relevant to her in the long-term and something she wishes to pass on to her own children in the future.

I am working now with these kids (in the pre-school classes) in a very active way in a pluralistic Jewish setting and when you are tasked with teaching them these traditions and passing them on, it really made me question how do I want to articulate this to them and why is this important to me so that I can convey it to them and make it something that they would want to be interested in. So I think being exposed to Jewish day school and that sort of education system has made me want to, has made it more present in my life for sure which I didn’t really realize until it happened. Basically working with the kids forced me to figure out what was important to me and in terms of thinking way in the future, having a Jewish family is way important for me. (That is) not necessarily a new revelation. When I would think when I was younger about ‘oh, let’s have kids some day,’ but now I want to have kids and I want them to be Jewish and I want these traditions to continue to be passed on. And even if that means who ever I marry is not Jewish, that conversation would have to happen. Even if it is like my family was growing up where we celebrate Christmas but other than that we are a Jewish family. It was a more articulated revelation than before (Jena, 2012).

Lana

Lana has a Attached Jewish Identity. Lana sees Jewish identity as a very personal concept and describes her Jewish identity as relevant to her intellectually, culturally and

\footnote{Shomer Shabbes is a yiddishized pronunciation of Shomer Shabbat which refers to one who is a “Sabbath Keeper” by observing the traditional commandments that apply to Shabbat observance.}
ethically but not in terms of religious observance or belief. She reported that she was not concerned about conforming to a general definition of Jewish identity. “I mean I am not religious so I guess in that way it wouldn’t fit but it’s not like I am counter-Jewish so… in a way maybe it doesn’t matter whether it fits.”

I feel like if you just identify as Jewish and do whatever practices you associate with a meaningful Jewish way for you, that’s what Jewish for you. For me, I identify as an atheist Jew. I like going to services sometime though. I go on the High Holidays. I like the traditions and the music and that stuff. I like the cultural stuff and I think text study is very interesting. I guess it is because it is what my family was, but I guess if I hadn’t liked it or the Jewish principles hadn’t resonated with me in Hebrew school I wouldn’t have stuck with it. I don’t think I would have denounced Judaism but I don’t think I would be here (Hillel). When asked if she saw being a Jew as a religious identity, she said “No for me it’s not religious because I don’t consider myself very religious. I know a lot of people call themselves cultural Jews which I guess I kind of am but I think there is also the ethics (Lana, 2012).

For Lana, Jewish philosophical ideas took root for her although she maintains skepticism about how intensively those ideas were conveyed to her at the time.

I remember we did tikkun olam and the community feel. I don’t know how much this was my Temple being a ‘hippy-dippy place or what is the real Jewish part, but that sense that we are responsible for the bigger group. We did a meditation class and it said ‘I am coming from dust and I am going to dust’ and I kind of like that perspective. I think ‘systems of living’ is probably a good way to describe it. I just don’t really care that the G-d part is absent since I’m not interested in it (Lana, 2012).

Lana reported that she thinks that society at large perceives Judaism as primarily a religious identity but is able to discern cultural uniqueness.

I think it depends because at least in the US where Christianity is the dominant religion, most people who aren’t familiar with Judaism assume that means you are religious. I suppose people would assume that I say I am Jewish I am religious, but a lot of people do know that a lot of (Jewish) people consider themselves cultural Jews. I think society sees it as a religious identity with a strong cultural component. If you asked someone
to describe it, in addition to the theological differences they would describe a culturally different person than they would a Christian. Even if it was stupid, material small things (Lana, 2012).

**Lindy**

Lindy has a Attached Jewish Identity. She credits her development of a sophisticated Jewish identity to a high school semester in Israel. Lindy terms Judaism at large as a religion even though her explanation describes a sense of identity that is not religiously based. When asked how she identifies herself, she replied “I don’t know. I guess culturally. I mean, if someone asked I would definitely say I’m a Jew. I guess I just don’t feel the need to clarify.”

I really enjoy the tradition of the religion, the culture, whatever you want to call it. I went to Israel my sophomore year of high school for a semester and I really loved that. Before that I had gone to a Conservative synagogue from about 3rd or 4th grade until my bat mitzvah, and you know, Hebrew school was more about my friends and goofing off and having fun. Then I went to Israel and felt more in connection with my religion. I learned a lot about Israel, I saw a lot of Israel and I learned a lot of Jewish history, things like that. So I definitely felt a lot of connection with the religion. I don’t believe in G-d so it’s more of the traditions and the history that I relate to (Lindy, 2012).

Lindy reported being influenced in how she processed components of her Jewish identity by her experience at Private U.

I feel that in high school I didn’t know as much about Israel. Not that I necessarily know that much now but my boyfriend is very knowledgeable about Israel so we talk about it a decent amount. I feel like I am more open-minded about it now and less unwavering in my defense of Israel, I guess. What I learned here but not necessarily about Israel but about keeping an open mind, like, really examining why I feel a certain way and if there is any real substance to back it up (Lindy, 2012).

Lindy reported a sense of nuance in how the larger society views Jews and Judaism, but also reported a certain suspicion at Private U of religion in general.
I guess one is religiously just identifying as Jewish, going to synagogue, praying, believing in the Jewish G-d. Then I guess there is Zionism, supporting Israel and feeling a connection with Israel. So I guess they would view it as a group of people who shares something, whether it be religion or tradition or personal beliefs or international political affiliates. I think there is a lot of negative feelings towards Judaism in the world. Of course that doesn’t apply to everyone. I’m also helping to organize a community garden in the back yard of Chabad, and I’m definitely seeing that hesitation in people when they hear that it’s at Chabad. I think especially young people in college, the kind of people (Private U) attracts, kind of tend to be more anti-religion or don’t want to be judged for having a certain belief. I think that among young intellectuals that there is some kind of culture of anti-religion or not wanting to associate with Judaism (Lindy, 2012).

Despite Lindy’s sense of Private U’s culture of religious suspicion, she personally feels positively inclined towards Jewish life and community due to her own personal experience of Israel and her positive perception of shared experience among both Israeli and Diaspora Jews.

Josh

Josh has a Detached Jewish Identity. Josh identifies as a Jew but “not in any meaningful way.”

I was raised in a very secular family; my name is probably the most Jewish part of me. Growing up I was the most Jewish person anyone knew in (my town), so I identified as a Jew just to stand out and be different. I almost never went to Temple or had a bar mitzvah. We would celebrate Passover and Chanukah as well as Christmas and Easter…. I had very little experience being Jewish. I have had very little exposure to Jews besides my family so until recently I would have called myself, would have seen myself, as culturally Jewish. Not Jewish in any, ah, I never thought of myself as a serious Jew, as someone who knew anything about Judaism but then getting a little bit of exposure through Hillel, I mean I haven’t been highly involved in Hillel but I have spoken to some and pretty much meeting Jews for the first time, [now] I wouldn’t even call myself culturally Jewish. I think most people involved in Hillel are culturally Jewish more than the people who are involved in the Chabad
from what I can tell, and, um, so I would say I am Jewish by name, by my father’s name (Josh, 2012).

Josh elaborated on why he saw himself as a cultural Jew “until recently” by pointing out that his exposure to a Jewish community through Hillel has made him self-aware of how much knowledge of Judaism and familiarity with its customs he perceived himself to lack which compromises his own sense of personal authenticity as a Jew.

The Hillel experience, meeting these people, realizing I know less about Jewish culture than I thought I knew and less about Judaism broadly than I ever realized existed. Just basically in relation to these people that I met here, I am just less Jewish in any sense of the word and so I would not call myself that anymore, I wouldn’t call myself Jewish. The only time I call myself Jewish now is joking around with friends so I wouldn’t call myself Jewish in any serious context. I guess I am redefining it. I am not sure it ever felt like a large part of my identity, being Jewish, maybe a greater part of my identity was being on the fringes of my high school and I associated being on the fringes with my Judaism. I wouldn’t say, I don’t think it has ever been a large touchstone of who I thought I was and even if it had been it certainly isn’t now, it’s less so now and I guess I am probably actually more Jewish now than I was in the past. I have a little more exposure and I know a little more about it but I have only recently realized how much I don’t know and so what it means to be Jewish, I’ve redefined what it actually means to be Jewish which makes me realize that I am farther away from that than I realized. I haven’t stepped back but it has moved forward (Josh, 2012).

Josh’s own Detached identity made him hesitant to posit a viewpoint of Jews and Judaism from society at large and his own struggle was intertwined with that hesitancy.

I think to consider myself Jewish, I would have to, um, I think a lot of it is, or part of it is at least, simple knowledge base and I just don’t have the knowledge. I have exposure to the scriptures but I have rarely attended Temple. I also think there is an aspect of it that is societal, just being involved. I would have to be more involved in Jewish culture, Jewish society, but at large that is what I think it means for myself to identify as a Jew, I would have to do those things. I really do think it is a personal identification for a broader scale so I in no way would tell someone you
are not Jewish for not having those. The hypothetical Josh Jew would need those things, but the Scott Jew would not have to necessarily have to have those things, or anybody, if he simply called himself a Jew and or character X called himself a Jew, that is enough as far as I am concerned, but I would not consider myself a Jew unless I to a greater extent had those traits. (Referring to society at large, Josh said) I think there is a minimum, a base line minimum expectation that they will have those traits, that they will have a baseline knowledge, they will have baseline involvement but largely I think it is identification. I don’t think people walk around questioning each other saying ‘oh, your Facebook says you are Jewish. Do you, you know, what can you tell me about Moses (Josh, 2012)?’

In essence, Josh does not see himself as meeting his own perceived minimum qualifications for being a part of a collective Jewish people even though he is curious about those qualifications and his own sense of Jewish self-outside of the collective.

**Jewish Identity and Its Relation to Jewish Experiences as Emergent in the Study**

As shown above, the coding process led to the emergent categorization of the ten subjects having either Attached or Detached Jewish Identities prior to their respective trips, with seven being categorized as Attached and three as Detached. This established a baseline sense of Jewish identity for each of the subjects through which to examine their trip experiences. While it is not the goal of this study to engage in outcome measurement which looks at pre- and post-measurements around a given experience, it emerged as relevant from the data collection that pre-trip Jewish self-perception was indicative of how certain experiences would be processed and what the subject’s initial assumptions were entering that experience as the examination of the actual experiences themselves were undertaken. Simply put, it emerged that subjects with a Attached Jewish self-identity tended to engage their trip experiences with a disposition towards discovery and
growth through challenge while subjects with a Conflicted Jewish self-identity tended to engage their trip experiences with a disposition towards ambivalence or discomfort through challenge. The subject group was too small to be able to pinpoint the impact of these pre-dispositions on the experiences more specifically, but the trend was emergent enough from the data to strongly suggest a linkage that could help anticipate and contextualize any given participant’s trip experiences prior to the actual trip. At the same time, there was no emergent distinction between the TBI and the ASB trip to suggest that the baseline would not be equally applicable in either trip setting in terms of better understanding trip participants before they engage in the trip experience.

Jewish Experiential Education Grounded Theory as Emergent from the Study

While the baseline of Detached or Attached emerged as a relevant distinction in understanding subject experiences, the actual experiences themselves were the primary focus of this study. The primary research questions are (1) what event or events during the overall experience causes a noticeable change in self-perception of Jewish identity among participants in intermediate Jewish Experiential Education programs and (2) can that actual change be modeled as a theory? The discovery of the patterns of Attached and Detached Jewish identity, while unexpected, does present a baseline for the emergent theory model of Jewish experiential education, but the emergent theory itself is not reliant on the baseline analysis of the participants in order to be demonstrable.

Both trips can be understood as following a general pattern of design as demonstrated by the itineraries in Appendices B and C. While each trip could be broken
down to demonstrate relevant distinctions, the overarching patterns are relevant for this study. Both involved travel to and from a locale different than a college campus; both involved a length of days at that locale; both involved group participation in almost all aspects of the trip with the group being comprised to at least some extent of people not known to each other prior to the trip; both were led by trained staff who followed a planned educational program assisted by accompanying staff from the students’ campuses; both had factors of fatigue and exertion; both involved interactions with local “one-off” speakers or educators; both had clearly stated foci on aspects of Jewish life and identity.

What is also common between the trips is that they had segments within each day of the trip that were distinct from each other. Unlike a spring break trip to Daytona Beach, for example, where students tend to stay in a localized area the entire time engaging in a relatively limited range of activities, students on these trips did different activities in different places with little to no repetition from segment to segment of the day. Yet certain parts of the day did stay consistent for the group in terms of having meals together, riding together from place to place in shared transport, sleeping with the same roommates regardless of location. So there is enough commonality between these two trips in terms of overarching structure that the emergent experiential theory is viable for subjects on either trip.

The emergent theory relates to distinct experiences within the trip day and not to the trip overall. Each segment of the day presented its own potential challenge to students with some students more predisposed to being impacted by a given experience
than others. While prior outcome measurement has shown that certain factors are reported as influential on a trip’s overall impact on a participant (see Chapter Two), what has emerged from this study is that a trip experience is composed of dozens if not more of smaller experiences that follow a pattern of engagement with each student. Many of these smaller experiences are planned and anticipated, but many are also spontaneous and unanticipated and can equally impact the subject’s Jewish identity development.

The model that emerged is as follows and it is applicable to any given experience on the trip that stimulates a participant to reflect on a given understanding (see Figure 2):

1. **Assumption**: Pre-conceived notion, idea or opinion that may or may not be based on first-hand experience and was formed prior to the experience of the Event.

2. **Event**: Experience that stimulates re-thinking or re-examination of the Assumption.


   3a. **Authenticity** - Sense of whether Event is 100% or fully legitimate or valid as a basis for Reflection. An Event that meets that sense is **Authentic** while an Event that does not meet that sense is **Inauthentic**.

   3b. **Corroboration** - Sense of whether Event affirms or supports the validity of the Assumption or whether Event raises doubt about the validity of the Assumption.

4. **Resolution**: Decision or understanding that emerges from Reflection on the impact of the Event on the Assumption. If the Assumption is adjusted or replaced as a result of the Reflection upon the Event, that Assumption is now **Modified**. If the Assumption
is not impacted as a result of the Reflection on the Event, that Assumption is **Maintained**.

5. The **Resolution**, whether it is **Modified** or **Maintained**, is now the Assumption regarding that experience and can be challenged again by future Events.

   The additional understanding of a person’s identity going in to the experience as Attached or Detached is important when looking at the cumulative impact of the whole series of experiences over the course of a trip. If a person enters the trip experience with a Detached Jewish Identity, the experiential process of Assumption-Resolution may strengthen one or more of the six component areas of Jewish Identity discussed above and have a cumulative effect of shifting a person towards a Attached Jewish Identity; the reverse could also prove true.
Figure 2. Process Diagram of an Experiential Education Event
This process can occur in any given experience, either planned or unplanned, and the same Assumption may be challenged by Events numerous times. Here is a generic hypothetical example of this process analogous to the emergent theory from this study that will exemplify that emergent theory. While the subjects of this specific study are Jewish Emerging Adults and the impact of Jewish Experiential Education trips on their Jewish identity, for the sake of explanation the emergent theory model will be hypothetically applied to sports team affiliation.

Let us assume for this example that Joe has a Attached sense of Identity as a New York Yankees fan. Using the six emergent criteria discussed above, he positively associates being a fan of the Yankees as his family heritage, as a component of his ethnicity, as a component of his culture and as a religious proof of G-d. These being four of the six emergent identity criteria, Joe can be identified as having a Attached sense of identity as a Yankees fan. Joe has purchased tickets for the first game of the annual five-game Subway Series between the Yankees and their inter-city rivals, the New York Mets:

1. Joe Assumes that the New York Yankees are unbeatable by the New York Mets.
2. Joe attends the first game (the Event) of the annual Subway Series between the Yankees and the Mets and experiences the Mets defeating the Yankees in that game by a score of 9-3.
3. Joe Reflects on what he has just experienced in the Event. Joe determines the Event is Authentic because the score of the game is a large margin of victory so there could not have been any cheating or other malfeasance. The validity of Joe’s Assumption
that the Yankees could not be defeated by the Mets is also not **Corroborated** since the Mets clearly defeated the Yankees.

4. The **Resolution** to this **Reflection** is that Joe’s **Assumption** that the Yankees cannot be defeated by the Mets in now **Modified** because of the **Authenticity** of his observing the Mets defeat the Yankees and the fact that said defeat does not **Corroborate** his **Assumption**.

5. Joe’s **Assumption** regarding the Yankees and Mets is now that the Mets can indeed defeat the Yankees in an individual game. However, it does not preclude his **Assumption** that the Mets cannot defeat the Yankees in the majority of the games in the Subway Series which is now subject to the same theoretical process.

This specific game experience might lead Joe to question whether his sense of identity as a Yankees fan is as strong as it was before he witnessed the Mets defeat them, but it is a singular event. Should Joe experience the Mets sweeping the entire Subway Series over the Yankee though, he would then undergo the process about his assumption that the Yankees cannot lose to the Mets in the Subway Series. Those cumulative modifications to his assumptions may in turn compromise his sense of identity as a Yankees fan and he will leave the cumulative experience of all the games in the Subway Series without the Attached Sense of Yankee Identity he had before the series.

An examination of representative examples of how this emergent theory explains the experiences of the studied ASB and TBI trip participants and how those experiences impacted their Jewish identity will allow this theoretical model to be better understood in relation to Jewish Identity Development and Jewish Experiential Education.
The Emergent Theory as Applied to the Study Subjects’

Reported Trip Experiences

Among the two subject groups, particular events on each trip were identified as both positively and negatively impactful by all the respondents. In the case of the TBI trip, all of the respondents reported several common positive experiences; their interactions with an Israeli person or persons on the trip, interactions with peer participants, and a location experience in the Negev desert. Again, there was no surprise to these findings as previous research had also shown these components to be influential parts of the trips experience (Saxe, 2012). The respondents also reported a common negative experience in their interaction experience at the Arab-Israeli village of Shorashim with Arab-Israeli teens. The ASB trip group all reported common positive experiences with their peer participants and an individual staff member from the farm or the trip staff as demonstrated in earlier research (Chertok, Tobias, Boxer, & Rosin, 2012), and they also all reported negative experiences with the staff as a unit. The common experiential events among both trips can be grouped as Peers, Role Models and Environments. It is the process of how the respondents’ experiences in these contexts impact identity that is being theorized in relation to the collected data.

Peers

All of the respondents reported group peer experiences that were impactful positively. These ranged from Marc’s simple social acceptance to Jena’s deepening of relationships.

I got to hang out with a bunch of people my own age to experience the same thing which I thought was pretty unique. It’s almost how I would
prefer to travel. You become immersed not just in the country and the people there but the people you travel with too. I was one of the oldest on the trip and then there was a big drop off with a lot of 18 year olds, but it was pretty neat being with people from across the country. It was pretty neat to experience something together (Marc, 2012).

[T]he more meaningful things for me were the other people that were there from my internship and a few other people. It was more about conversations with them and less what the work we were doing. Kind of what we were talking about while we were doing or the thought that we had this time to get to know each other on a deeper level, that was more important for me than the actual agricultural work I guess (Jena, 2012).

Almost none of the subjects reported a specific peer participant impacting them over others; the crucial social connection was to the group. All of the participants reported that in their opinion non-Jews could not really understand what being Jewish felt like to them, and that such a gap of understanding can place a perceived distance with non-Jewish peers. Consider Sheila’s story of her freshman year roommate:

Just by talking with anyone who isn’t Jewish, it’s very difficult. How to explain what Shabbat is. So complicated! It is such a simple thing to people who have celebrated it or who do it every week but to people who have never been around Jewish people or never experienced it, it is very difficult to explain. I think it is difficult for someone who is not Jewish to realize that Judaism is also a culture, and to me that is how I view myself, and it is difficult to convey that to people. They’re like “oh, but you don’t go to synagogue, you don’t keep kosher, you don’t do this, you don’t do that.” Yeah but I am still Jewish. I’m just as Jewish as any other person. So I think I have had a lot of difficulty explaining it to my friends. Freshman year the girl living next to me is from Northwestern Pennsylvania; I was the first Jew she had ever met in her life. So she came to Hillel with me and my friends, and it is difficult to explain why we bless the bread. You can tell them in a concrete way but why? Why are we blessing bread? What is the point of that? So it’s something that when you grow up blessing bread and doing all these things, it’s very hard to step away from yourself and explain it to someone who doesn’t understand it. So I think in terms of society they have no idea what it means to be Jewish, no idea to always feel oppressed, to always feel out of your element, they have no idea. So I think that it is important that Jews try and convey that but it is very difficult to convey it (Sheila, 2012).
That group belonging, that sense of group identity that contributes to ethnic and cultural cohesion which is central to personal meaning-making in identity development among Blacks, Latinos, Asians and Mixed-Race Emerging Adults (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009), is exhibited here among Jewish peer groups and is a needed component for an experience on the trip to be fully processed by the individual participant. In the emerging theory, the peer experience was shown to be critical to the Reflection stage in the trip context as examplified by Lana’s adapted view of Judaism’s dietary laws due to her ASB experience (see Figure 3):

I don’t know if it impacted how I see myself as Jewish but it made me think about different ways of observing, like keeping kosher which before I thought was just ridiculous. We had to keep kosher on the trip and we couldn’t use the temple’s pans and I found that incredibly annoying; there is a baking sheet right here and I can’t use it. I am actually glad we had to do that in hindsight. {A trusted staff member] was talking about how she decided to not eat pork and shellfish a few years ago which I think if someone had told me that a year ago I would have said ‘that’s stupid’ but now I can see more of the connection between the tangible practices and what you believe in a way that I didn’t before. It might have just been being exposed to Jewish life. I mean it wasn’t like ‘you are going to farm to learn this’ but it might have been just being around different sorts of Jews and different Jewish experiences than I usually am and doing that. Had it been a different trip but still a Jewish thing, I still could have seen some sort of connection after. Maybe it wouldn’t have been the same one as being kosher and considering yourself Jewish, but I think that Jewish exposure in a way you are not used to, I would guess, would give you a different or at least a new perspective…. I don’t know why the kosher thing was an ah-ha moment but I feel like it was. I feel like now if someone told me they decided… I do see the difference now between someone deciding to keep kosher or be kosher and someone who was raised with it all their life. We did talk a lot about kosher because I didn’t know much and there were some non-Jewish kids who basically knew nothing about it and I had never really thought much about being kosher beyond facts from people who are kosher who said ‘this is what it is like’ and I didn’t really understand why I guess…. I may have been able to come to the same conclusion on campus spending time at Hillel or with
Figure 3. Process Diagram of Lana’s Experiential Education Event of Observing Jewish Dietary Laws
these same people, or it might have been because we were in this setting where we dealt with food the entire day and then came home and ate food so we would talk about food. It might have just been the fact that the entire week was about food and it was a Jewish group so it was a combination of the two. We were thinking a lot about Jewishness and food. There were two Jewish Farm School staffs and one of them was going to rabbinical school so we would direct all of our religious-y questions to her. So we would talk about it a bunch I guess (Lana, 2012).

Lana began the trip with the Assumption that keeping kosher was “ridiculous” but the Event of having to observe Jewish dietary laws on the trip as a group obligation caused her to reflect upon it. She found the experience Authentic because the entire group was curious and discussing it. The discussions Challenged her Assumption and her Resolution was to modify her Assumption to acknowledge value could found by observers of Jewish dietary laws whereas before she viewed them simply as “ridiculous.”

**Role Models**

Encounters with certain individuals from outside the peer group on the trips were reported as significantly impacting on participants. These role models were trip staff, speakers and people met in the course of travel. In the TBI group, one female participant singled out the Israeli tour guide, Aravah, as an important role model:

She was so great and her attitude about everything was so great. She loves being in Israel, she loves being Jewish and she loved being with us. She would dress up in public and tell these funny stories and not care who was looking at her. It just made my experience so much better. I can’t even imagine having a different tour guide (Joan, 2012).

Joan reported that Aravah’s lack of being self-conscious impacted her to be less self-conscious which Joan perceived as the most significant impact to her Jewish identity on the trip.
All of the TBI trip participants mentioned the Israeli *mifgashim* as role models. These are Israelis of roughly the same age who join each bus for several days to the entire trip depending on the trip provider’s needs. All of them speak English and have undergone an orientation for this purpose. The Hebrew world *mifgashim* (sing. *mifgash*) means “encounters” and the program has been a formal part of the TBI trip since the second year of the trips. Anne Lanski, executive director of the iCenter Israel education organization, is credited with being the primary advocate for permanently including this aspect of the trip.

Israelis are not dancing bears in a circus or pictures in an exhibition. They are real human beings who, together with Jews from abroad, are the Jewish people. The Israel trip should be a journey in Jewish Peoplehood and, to do this, you need Israelis and Jews from abroad for the entire trip. They have to live and talk and play and experience and laugh and cry and do everything together. Their experiencing of Israel together is the Israel experience. (Saxe & Chazan, 2008, p. 74)

The positive role modeling impact of the *mifgashim* has been well documented (Sasson, Mittelberg, Hecht, & Saxe, 2008; Saxe & Chazan, 2008) and all TBI trips today include a *mifgash*. The Israeli Defense Forces provides a significant amount of Israeli participants by assigning units of soldiers to participate. Such a group of soldiers were the *mifgashim* for the Public U TBI trip and Sheila’s experience was typical of the reported affinity.

It’s funny because when I was in Israel one of the soldiers, Noam, was literally me in Israeli form. She was just as sassy as I was, she was just saying it in Hebrew and I was saying it in Spanish or English. So sassy is universal. I saw that… Like I mentioned before, Noam, one of our female soldiers, she was literally me in female form, in Israeli form. So it was very eye-opening to see how similar these people are to us. Yeah, you think ‘oh they’re soldiers oh they’re this or that.’ No, they are nineteen year old Jews who love their family, who love their friends, who have the
same priorities as us, they just live in Israel. So that connection was cool to meet someone who was so similar to me but living under such different circumstances. I go to school full-time, I’m taking eighteen credits, I’m involved in all these different things; she’s guarding a post with a gun in her hand 12 hours a day. That is what she does. Polar opposites really. Yes, she’ll go to school and, yes, she’ll do all those things but life is very different over there (Sheila, 2012).

The mifgashim served as role models of Jewish authenticity as peers to the participants and in the context of the emergent theory they served as components of Reflection. They became measurements of authenticity and validity for the TBI participants. Consider the following from Nicky whose Jewish identity was Detached in part due to her struggle to feel authentically Jewish while not believing in G-d. She was asked how she understood Judaism after her trip:

I would say that Judaism is a bucket and there are a lot of components to it and, yes, I might not identify with this one component but that doesn’t make me not a Jew. What showed me this perspective was the Israelis because they all identify as Jewish and they are the same as me, but they don’t hesitate when you ask them question ‘oh, kind of.’ Here, when you ask someone if they are Jewish, um, when someone asks me if I am Jewish and I say ‘kind of’ the first thing they ask me is ‘oh, did you have a bat mitzvah’ and then I have to say no. But the Israelis wouldn’t ask that of each other necessarily because they understand it more as a race of people or a way of life of a culture (Nicky, 2012).

When asked if this realization changed the way she now feels about being Jewish in the United States, Nicky said “Absolutely because now I feel like a Jew, you know?”

The same impact of role models was reported on the ASB trip although there was no equivalent experience to the mifgashim on most ASB trips including the one studied. Private U participants reported significant role modeling from Rachel, the Hillel staff member who accompanied the trip from their campus, and the farm staff. For example,
Greta described a discussion with Rachel about Shabbat when asked if she had any “ah-ha” moments on the trip:

On Wednesday night we went to the urban farm and stayed there all day and then cooked there and stayed there until late at night versus going back to the synagogue (where the group was camping out) for dinner and we talked about Shabbat and Rachel led the discussion. I had been thinking about Shabbat for the past year just like sort of vaguely floating around in my head and I think that was more of an ‘ah-ha.’ She was sort of like describing the sort of tension between Shabbat as something restrictive and something very relaxing and restful. She was reading from a book about Shabbat, I can’t remember what it was called, but yeah, Wednesday night when we were at the campfire talking was another sort of ‘ah-ha’ time. I can’t really pinpoint what particular realization that I had but I just remember thinking that this is a new way to think about it which is sort of what I was talking about before, like, this isn’t something you have to do because you believe in a divine commandment. This is just something you can just choose for yourself and something that can ground you in a community of people. I remember really liking the quote she read; I wish I could remember what she read (Greta, 2012).

Others described the farmers who ran the farm where the trip was cited as impactful for their dedication. Lindy reported them as significant to her post-trip decision to pursue Environmental Studies as a major:

It was a combination of working in the garden and what I learned in the curriculum sessions learning about GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms) and reading some Wendell Berry and stuff like that. Just a combination of having my eyes opened. Even the farmers Erin and Skip talking to us about what they do and why they decided to start the farm. They were both working in the health industry and they just realized how unhealthy people were, that it’s really all related to the food they are eating. So I think all of that made me more interested in learning about the topic…. Skip and Erin talking to us about genetic engineering and genetic modification of seeds was definitely impactful for me because learning what Monsanto was, I had no idea about that. My sisters were

---

6 The text was an excerpt from A Sabbath World by Judith Shulevitz (see Appendix D).
visiting this weekend and I was explaining to them about GMOS and stuff like that (Lindy, 2012).

A similar report was made by Jena about Erin and Skip but also about one of the farm’s employees who’s name and even his motivation she could not recall:

One of the farmers who didn’t own the farm but worked there, he was going to film school or something and decided it wasn’t working for him and so he totally changed his lifestyle and decided to become a farmer. So hearing his story was pretty cool and that he, I can’t remember exactly why he wanted to do that, but that he cared so much and knew that this was the lifestyle that he wanted to change to, I like meeting people who are that passionate about something (Jena, 2012).

Significant role modeling impact could be experienced even when the encounters were singular on the trip rather than extended like trip staff or mifgashim. Several TBI participants reported being impacted by a stop in an artist’s studio in the Israeli city of Tsfat, a city known as the birthplace of Jewish mysticism, kabbalah, and a popular way station for both tourists and religious seekers. The artist, an American who immigrated to Israel on a spiritual quest named Avraham Lowenthal, made a positive impression on several of the interviewees such as Marc:

We stopped at an artist’s studio, Avraham, and he knew a lot about Kabbalah and I thought it was very cool how he found his spirituality through Kabbalah and put it in to his art. He was just very happy and led a very simple life and I thought that was very cool and unique. It got me interested to read a book about Kabbalah that I got there. I haven’t read it yet though (Marc, 2012).

Several students on the ASB trip reported impact from Amanda Robinson who spoke the group one evening about her own work in sustainable agriculture. Greta was especially impacted by her as a role model in whom she saw a possible resolution to her own Detached struggle:
Going to the UT (University of Texas) Hillel – I know it wasn’t some people’s favorite part – but we spoke to a woman named Amanda Robinson from an environmentalist interfaith organization; I think it was called Interfaith Power and Light. Personally I really liked just her, what she said, because I think I was coming from a more interfaith perspective and she had a really interesting story that she converted to Judaism and then got involved in this interfaith organization and she just talked about why she chose to convert to Judaism after being, like, this for all paths, all faiths. I just really liked her perspective on why she converted to Judaism and how that connected her to environmentalism because I think her situation was more to how I would describe my religious faith before she converted. She basically was talking about how her parents were Christian and then became Sufi. She talked about how she got involved in a Unitarian church and was studying to be a Unitarian minister, and I’ve gone to the Unitarian services here before and just been interested in that and she said even if all religious paths are equally valid and you respect all of them and get something from all of them, it helps to choose a path to be specific, to have specific traditions and practices to do every week. She talked about how Judaism really provides that and is constantly tying principles in to daily practice which made the final push for her. I really liked her talk…. It was just kind of like a realization for me because I think that is my approach, that any sort of path can be part of my spiritual experience, like, Christianity, Buddhism, any sort of text I read or, like, practice can be part of my experience but her description of how it was so helpful for her to have one identity and one routine with Judaism allowed her to experience that fully was interesting to me (Greta, 2012).

All of these role models provided critical touchstones for the Reflection phase of the emergent theory. While their subject matter or something they discussed may have been a source of an Event in the emergent theory (such as Rachel’s text sharing or Erin and Skip’s explanation of GMOs), the people themselves were the measurement context of Authenticity and Corroboration for Reflection. In common parlance, do the sources of information and authority walk the walk and talk the talk which is consistent with the developmental stage marker of assumed distrust of authority and convention as discussed above. When they did, they were reliable contexts for Reflection of the Event’s challenge to the participant’s Assumptions. However when a role model was not
perceived as reliable contexts for Reflection, they were quickly dismissed. For example, on the TBI trip’s visit to the village of Shorashim for what was billed as a “dialogue with local Israeli-Arabs” (see Appendix B) only to discover that they were to be meeting with teenagers rather than peers or older adult and that they were not supposed to ask political questions, the reported impact by most of the interviewees from that trip was negative and counter-productive. Sheila provided an especially impassioned report:

The one thing I absolutely hated, that I thought was the worst part of the trip, was at Shorashim with the Israeli Arab ‘conversation’. I thought it was very contrived. I have done pluralistic activities in high school and I just learned nothing from this at all. I didn’t think it was a dialogue. It was Arab-Israeli high school students asking me what kind of music I listen to. A lot of people from the trip didn’t like it. I was very frustrated with the woman who led it. She was very biased; it seemed like she didn’t like Arabs whatsoever but she was working with them every day so it was a little awkward. I just think (the trip providers) advertises that they are the only pluralistic tour going to Israel but this was not pluralism. This just took some Arab-Israeli students in to a room and you put them in to a circle and you ask them to talk to Americans. It was very contrived. I didn’t like it. I didn’t learn anything and I left even more frustrated with the whole situation of why these conversations even have to happen. I would have preferred better engagement and better dialogue. Dialogue like that is only beneficial if it is honest. So if you ask me what my favorite band is, I’m going to tell you what my favorite band is. Is it going to help me or you in any way? No it is not. If you really want to talk about this conflict, this situation, then let’s talk about it. Don’t just tip-toe around the issue and ask me to tell you what my favorite band is. When I was in high school I did this program called Walking the Walk. It is pluralistic education with Christian, Baha’i, Muslim, Jewish. I went to a mosque, I went to a church. I did all of these things and I immersed myself in to what their culture and what their religion is. So maybe it’s just me because I have already had education in this but it just felt very ‘you sit here, you sit here, and we’ll talk about this’ and then nothing got talked about. They were also still in high school and there were people on the trip who were 20, 21, 22 who were like ‘why are we here? What is going on?’ So if you want to talk about it, let’s talk about it. Don’t just bullshit. It was a waste of time and I left the program frustrated and not wanting to talk to anyone for a few hours. I was hoping for an honest conversation (Sheila, 2012).
Note that Sheila perceives herself as the expert on dialogue. While the intention of the trip provider in arranging this encounter was to promote understanding of Israeli-Arab citizens of Israel as Israelis, the resulting impact on Sheila was reinforcement of her personal sense of authority regarding effective dialogue as illustrated in Figure 4. Her personal Assumption about what constitutes real dialogue is based on her previous experiences in a high school interfaith group. She assumes that model to be a universal model of dialogue because, in its own context, it involved disclosure and risk to achieve understanding. What she experienced at Shorashim lacked those components, and coupled with the age difference of the Israeli Arabs and the perceived bias of the adult facilitator, Sheila Reflected upon the Event to be Inauthentic and to not Corroborate her pervious assumptions about real dialogue. The result is that Sheila now assumes, rightly or wrongly, that the format for dialogue between Jews and Arab-Israelis in the same as her high school dialogues between Jews and members of other religions. She went on to report what an Authentic experience would have been for her in this situation and why:

I wanted to know how they felt being Arab in Israel and how Israelis… I think what needed to happen was they needed to have Jewish Israelis and Arab Israelis in the same room and they should be talking and we should be talking and we should be having this open dialogue. It shouldn’t be… well, we were in the outer circle and they were in the inner circle and they moved from person to person for three minutes like speed dating. If we had had more of a Q & A session where they were in the front and we were in the audience and we could ask them what ever question we wanted, no-hold-bars, whatever we wanted to know, and they could say ‘I don’t want to answer it’ then fine, we move on. It was just one of those things where they marketed it as ‘an honest conversation, a dialogue with Arab Israelis’ and it just was not at all. I think there are a lot of ways to improve upon that. I would have loved to go in to the Muslim Quarter. I would have loved to see what that looks like but you can’t, you can’t go (Sheila, 2012).
Figure 4. Process Diagram of Sheila’s Experiential Education Event of Israeli-Arab Dialogue
While Sheila’s report of the Shorashim experience was the most impassioned, three of the other four interviewed reported similar experiences and processing results and the fourth did not mention it at all in any context.

A comparable example from the ASB trip was the perception of the education staff for the trip reported by Josh. Josh, someone with a Detached Jewish identity, was disappointed that the educators did not integrate the Jewish curriculum in to the actual work but treated it separately which came out when he was asked if anything on the trip impacted him Jewishly.

I think the closest I came to that was just talking to people that knew more about Judaism than I did, going to a service to some extent, eating kosher and prepping the Sabbath dinner. So I had some more exposure and again some more knowledge. I don’t think I had any… I got kind of frustrated in the long run because of the fact that I don’t think Judaism was incorporated in to the trip and it sort of felt like there were two different topics going on, actually three different topics going on. There was working on the farm which, from what I could tell, was very distinct from Judaism, which wasn’t even that well incorporated in to our discussions of food. I don’t think it came together well, it wasn’t woven together well as three strands. Maybe it could have been done well if we had been on a Jewish farm; I think the course is going to take a little more adjustment. You know when it really became frustrating? When it felt like it was getting forced, when they (the education staff) were trying to force a synthesis that wasn’t happening. It felt condescending or sort of childish. So I guess I think the trip would have benefited significantly from thinking out more how they were going to weave together first Judaism and environmentalism or food justice. It sort of felt like, here are some basic topics… I mean everyone on this trip had read *Omnivore’s Dilemma* and if you have read *Omnivore’s Dilemma* then you know everything you are getting taught anyway. But here are the basic topics and look – here are some passages from the Old Testament to back up these basic topics; you weren’t asked to really, it was never challenging or a really inspiring contrast. Then if that were to synthesize better it would also take some work to incorporate the physical work in to that. It honestly… sitting in a pile of dirt and planting tomatoes for six hours is wonderful and I had so much fun working on this farm. I enjoyed that tremendously but it takes a good teacher who has some good thoughts to make that an educational
experience as far as food justice goes and I don’t think that was done well. It was, everyone was working for a while and then it was “oh, everyone come look at this compost pile and I’ll tell you a few facts about compost.” That was a cool cocktail of information but I didn’t feel that I… It’s a really hard job and I don’t want to criticize them and they had a huge task put in front of them but I don’t think I was learning that much (Josh, 2012).

Josh is a seasoned outdoorsman who had gone to his first two years of college on a ranch campus where ranch work like farming was part of the daily routine so he was looking for role models who could provide him with Jewish meaning to the outdoor work that he embraced. He wanted Jewish Events, like religious texts about the natural world, to challenge his assumptions about the natural world and provoke Reflection. The relative lack of depth of the material provided by the education staff on that level set them up as Inauthentic to him and caused Ambivalence in his Reflection of the Events of learning upon his Assumptions which in turn did not resolve any change in his Assumptions. For Josh, a skillful educator who could integrate both Jewish religious and philosophical ideas in to the work itself would have been a role model that provided Authenticity to the curriculum and Affirmed his Assumption of significance in Judaism’s views on the environment. It is perhaps revealing of what Josh is seeking as authoritative that Josh elsewhere in the interview makes the following comment:

I think a lot of the failures in people who are advocating for food justice, a lot of the reason that thought is rejected is because a lot of those people have no understanding of that (rural, agricultural) culture and so ranchers I know will just scoff at anybody who comes in and tells them to be organic, and its mostly because these people are out there in short-shorts and Merrills. That is what it comes down to, they are very, there is no, um, shared ground except that both of these people have something to do with food (Josh, 2012).
Josh’s prior exposure to “experts” in farming and ranching raised an expectation in him of what is authentic and authoritative that was apparently not met by the education staff on the trip and was a barrier to his experience.

**Environments**

The context of being in a new physicality as stimuli for identity development is a known benefit in Jewish experiential education as noted in work cited earlier. In the framework of the emergent theory, the new environment can be understood as an Event as well. Consider the Negev desert in Israel. This environment was referred to by all respondents on the TBI trip as memorable but several found a particular experience within it significant as exemplified by Joan’s recollection of her group’s experience hiking at night with their guide Aravah while spending the night in a Bedouin tent in the desert:

> It was the night before Masada. It wasn’t so much staying in the Bedouin tent as it was the night hike in the desert. We stared at the desert, a really pretty view, for like 10 minutes in, like, total silence and just thought about everything.

When asked what she thought about on the hike, Joan said

> I must have thought about how awesome it was to be in Israel and how everything was, like, how happy I was to do everything. I was just so happy to be there. It wasn’t anything too deep but our tour guide, Aravah, was like ‘think about how so much has happened in the desert. You can’t see anything right now and you can’t really hear anything but if you sit and you think, you know that so much happened.’ That impacted me a lot because so much did happen in Israel. Now a lot is happening but so much happened before now and I am a part of that because now I have been to Israel.

When asked to elaborate on what she meant by “before now,” Joan said

---
I mean like the ancient people before Moses, like he didn’t come in to Israel but everyone who did are our ancestors and the whole fight for Israel I feel is like totally connected. Israel only recently – it was like 94 years or something – became like a Jewish state\(^7\) and I feel like Jewish people have been fighting so long to be Jewish people and to have a place so that is what I mean by before and after.

When asked to elaborate on the night hike and what exactly was impactful, Joan noted that Aravah was there

> which was obviously important to that but what was so impactful to me was the whole sitting there for 10 minutes and being able to think about whatever I wanted to think about in Israel, think about stuff in Israel, think about stuff being in Israel.

When asked if she had ever thought about that “stuff” before she came to Israel, Joan said

> No, never, and that is what impacted me so much. I never thought about how many people had been to Israel, the whole conflict, like, everyone in Israel and why is Israel so important to the Jewish people. Like, I never thought about that.

As illustrated in Figure 5, Joan’s Assumption that she had no connection to Israel was Challenged by the Event of her hiking in the Negev Desert under the stars. Her guide’s suggestion to think about the land in the context of Jewish history was seen as Authentic by Joan because Aravah had suggested it, but the experience of being in the desert environment at night under a starry sky was clearly the catalyst to her Reflection and her Modified Resolution that she now felt a deep connection to the land and people of Israel.

---

\(^7\) Israel was founded on May 18, 1948, so it would only have been in existence for 64 years at the time Joan was there.
Figure 5. Process Diagram of Joan's Experiential Education Event of Hiking in the Negev Desert
CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary research questions were (1) what event or events during the overall experience causes a noticeable change in self-perception of Jewish identity among Jewish Emerging Adult participants in intermediate Jewish Experiential Education programs and (2) can that actual change be modeled as a theory? The events in question were not the larger overall categories of events, namely peer interactions, location and staff encounters that have already been shown to have impact on Jewish identity on these trips thought outcome-based research (Chertok, Tobias, Boxer, & Rosin, 2012; Saxe & Chazan, 2008), but specifically what within any given experience of the myriad of experiences on the trip occurs that might or might not impact Jewish identity development. To date, there has been little understanding of what actually occurs in the “black box” of these experiences and no model presented to explain it.

The current study has been a bid to describe what goes within that “black box” during any given experience on an intermediate Jewish Experiential Education trip. The study presented evidence that trip participants are constantly reflecting and assessing their assumptions on any given area of identity on these trips and that the process is not only on-going but fluid; the “black box” operates more as an algorithmic data processing mechanism that assesses constantly as new information is presented than a tunable device that can be simply adjusted to produce the desired result. The study demonstrated two
previously unqualified factors, namely that a trip participant’s pre-existing self-perception as a Jew (discerned through this study as Attached or Detached) could significantly pre-dispose how the various events on the trip would be experienced, and that the events themselves have a cumulative organic impact on Jewish identity development that is not understandable as a sequential process but as a constant one. The black box process of these trips can be envisioned as follows from macro to micro (see Figure 6).

**Relationship of Findings to Previous Literature**

As discussed above, a relatively small body of work has been published regarding understanding specifically Jewish Identity development among self-identified Jewish Emerging Adults residing in the United States. Yet, as also discussed above, it has been previously well documented that Jewish Experiential Education programs have the outcome of strengthening positive self-identity of Jewish Emerging Adults as Jews. The results of this study offer a theoretical model of the mechanism that moves the Jewish Emerging Adult towards a strengthened Jewish self-identification.

**Jewish Identity Development – Attached and Detached**

The work among American Jews that has been done largely amongst sociologists and social psychologists in the last ten years has demonstrated that affiliation with Jewish culture is generally more predominant in Jewish identity than Jewish religion, and that family and community are more critical anchors of Jewish identity than Jewish institutions or affiliations (see e.g., Altman, Inman, Fine, Ritter, & Howard, 2010; Ellis et al., 2010). In the current study, the predisposition of a subject toward their own Jewish
identity that emerged as either Attached or Detached appears to be influenced through the same relationships. The emergent axial codes from the transcripts arose in response to the open-ended questions put to the subject about their Jewish self-perception prior to their trip experience. Those six emergent codes are

Any Intermediate Jewish Experiential Education Trip

Any Individual Trip Day within a Trip

Any Individual Trip Experience within a Trip Day

Figure 6. Black Box Theory of Jewish Experiential Education from Macro to Micro
• Theology (articulation of belief or disbelief in a Jewish understanding of a Supreme Being)
• Personal Religious Observance (outside of the family)
• Ethics (social action, personal responsibility, etc., articulated as Jewish beliefs and behaviors by the subject)
• Cultural Practices (food, language, humor, social and romantic choices, etc.)
• Family (Jewish affiliation, practice, history, attitude, behavior of family of origin)
• Ethnicity/Genetics (in terms of whether or not this was articulated as relevant to a subject’s self-perception as a Jew)

Subjects’ previous experience with these axial areas, positive or negative, impacted their assumptions about a wide range of components of Jewish life, culture, people, beliefs, practices and Israel that were challenged by multiple events on their trips. Since these six axial codes were emergent factors from the study and not part of the initial research questions, they were not explored in any sense as an independent scale for Jewish Identity. However, while additional research would certainly need to be done to validate this assertion, they seem to indicate another potential system of measurement for Jewish identity among Emerging Adults that does not focus on establishing areas of influence on Jewish identity but on dispositions towards those areas of influence.

**Jewish Emerging Adulthood**

As indicated previously, little work has been specifically done about understanding Jewish Emerging Adults as a distinct demographic group in the field of Developmental Psychology beyond the body of research on Emerging Adults done by
Arnett and his students. As also indicated previously, there has been some indicative work done in the related field of Higher Education Administration though with published work indicating that Jewish Emerging Adults on American college campuses are following similar developmental trends as other Emerging Adults (Kushner, 2009) while struggling with whether they self-perceive their identity as religious or cultural when compared to the larger Caucasian student population (Behneman, 2007; Blumenfeld & Klein, 2009; MacDonald-Dennis, 2007). Arnett’s categorization of Emerging Adults as, in part, challenging social and moral assumptions, seeking more personal meaning from life without institutional affiliation, spiritual significance without ecclesiastical substantiation and self-defined communal improvement through social justice are all reinforced through the current study specifically during the phase of the event processing labeled in the theory model as Reflection (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Arnett & Arnett Jensen, 2002). In that phase, the subject weighs whether or not an experienced event is an authentic experience in relation to their previous assumptions and subsequently whether or not that experienced event validates or challenges the previous assumption. Emerging Adults do not accept any given piece of information as valid simply because an established communal authority or social more has determined it so. Emerging Adults are much more likely to be skeptical of any event being presented as valid by those standards until they can self-determine that validity i.e. that authenticity. In the study this was demonstrated by the subjects’ repeated priority given to weighing whether or not a presented individual with responsibility during an event (staff member, speaker, subject matter expert) was deemed authentic by themselves regardless of any institutional
affiliation or formal designation as such. This was especially true if the message or
information being provided by that responsible individual challenged the subjects’ pre-
existing assumptions. The cooberated take-away about Jewish Emerging Adults on these
trip experiences was that their definition of experience validity of any given trip event
was not contingent upon objective criteria (e.g., a dialogue as defined by the tour guide is
a face-to-face conversation with an Israeli-Arab), as much as subjective criteria e.g. that
conversation was not substantive enough for the trip participant to qualify as a dialogue
according to their own criteria). The relevance of authenticity may be of interest to future
researchers in the broader field of Emerging Adulthood in terms of assessing criteria for
how EAs measure social and moral assumptions as to necessity or depth of challenging
them.

**Jewish Experiential Education**

As indicated previously, Jewish Experiential Education programs like these trips
are increasingly relied upon to shore up positive affiliation of Jewish Emerging Adults
with Judaism, Jewish community and Israel. In the case of both TBI and ASB trips,
those intended outcomes have been generally achieved (Israel Poll Data, 2012; Repair
The World, 2011; Saxe, 2012). And, as previously stated, Chazan’s, Reimer’s and
Reisman’s pedagogic work in this area have proven to be critical to the successful
process of these Jewish Experiential Education trip programs. However, it is noteworthy
that the findings of this study highlight the importance of the concept of challenge as
explored by Bryfman to the impact of these experiences among Jewish Emerging Adults.
Bryfman, building off work he has done with Reimer, has emphasized the need for strong
Jewish Experiential Education to cause a participant to stretch themselves beyond their comfort zone, to have to put real effort of some sort towards completing an experience in order for it to have a lasting impact of some kind on the participant (Bryfman, 2008, 2011). While Bryfman’s work has focused on adolescents, his supposition was clearly shown to apply to Jewish Emerging Adults as well participating in these intermediate Jewish Experiential Education trips. As demonstrated in the resulting model, events that really challenge assumptions and trigger deep enough reflection that determining whether or not those assumption are validated or need to be modified are the events that were reported as being the most influential on the subjects’ Jewish Identity Development.

Another factor from the literature is highlighted in this study as well. Horowitz has posited that Jewish Experiential Education should not be viewed as formal or informal but voluntary or involuntary. In her seminal study on Jewish Identity Development (Connections and Journeys: Assessing Critical Opportunities for Enhancing Jewish Identity, 2003), Horowitz (2001) noted that the adults she studied who “came from less intensively Jewish backgrounds were most strongly influenced by later, ‘voluntary’ experiences during their adolescence and early adulthood, including being involved in Jewish youth groups, Jewish studies and Hillel-like activities in college, or having a significantly positive relationship or experience being Jewish” (p. 9). All of the students who went on the studied trips took them voluntarily and several articulated that they had hoped to participate in a similar trip at some point in their college career. These were not required class field trips writ large for the participants, but chosen experiences over other activity options during their breaks.
Related to the issue of voluntariness is the weight that emerged on authenticity of information providers and authority figures. If the subject participants determined that either of these was inauthentic in relation to an experience, the assumption was much less likely to be modified. Work has been done in the field of tourism research on the subject of authenticity in terms of the travel setting and the cognitive and emotional impact of the trip (Andriotis, 2009; Kelner, 2001, 2010; Selwyn, 1996; Wang, 1999), but it is unclear if work has been done focusing specifically on the authenticity of authority figures on the trip from the participant’s perspective that would explain this emergent finding.

Emerging Adult theory as noted above sees the distrust of authority as a marker of this developmental phase, but additional research would be called for to determine if it as prominent of an influence on other intermediate JEE trips as well.

**Explanation of Unanticipated Findings**

There was one unanticipated anomaly in this study that could be perceived as skewing the sample. Four out of five of the Private U ASB interviewees were children of intermarried families which is counter to other data which shows significantly lower percentages of children of intermarriage participating in ASB trips (Rehnborg, Lee, Veron, & Zaligson, 2008; Repair The World, 2011). While five from one trip is a small sample, the trip itself only had twelve participants and three of them did not identify as Jewish. It is not possible to know whether the remaining four participants who had indicated a Jewish identity to the trip planner but were not interview subjects were children of intermarriage, but assuming they were not five out of nine participants is still
a higher participation rate of this Jewish sub-population than previous data suggests is common on ASB experiences.

**Limitations**

This study was done using in-depth interviews with a small subject pool which is permissible in grounded theory research as discussed in Chapter 3. From this small subject pool a theoretical model could be extracted, but the subject pool is too small to state with certainty that this theoretical model is universally applicable to American Emerging Adults in Jewish experiential education much less non-Jewish experiential education. More research to conventionally test this theory is called for and a larger subject pool would also allow for a determination of whether the unexpected finding of Attached and Detached Jewish Identity assessment is replicable. It would also allow researchers to determine if any of the six categories that emerged from the axial coding used in that assessment would be more influential than another as this study’s subject pool was too small to draw that inference from in the research.

**Implications for Practice**

The implications of this emergent theory for Jewish Experiential Education practitioners are potentially very significant. Current training of North American trip staff for both types of intermediate travel experiences studied here has little inclusion of JEA, JID or JEE theory. It tends to lean towards safety and health information and subject content knowledge (see e.g., Amir, Gur, & Aaron, 2011). Now that there is a theory that demonstrates the “black box” factors in ASB and TBI trip experiences, key personnel can be trained to construct their experiences accordingly in order to better plan
and process trip experiences with participants. What is also clear from this study is that knowledge of the participant beyond their general demographic information is critical to insuring successful impact of the experience on their Jewish identity development. The more that can be learned in advance of a trip about a participant’s personal beliefs, background, interest areas and ethical positions, in effect understanding each subject’s Jewish identity as Attached or Detached in advance of the trip, the more trip staff can anticipate, prepare and process the trip experience for a participant to maximize the trip’s affect. Indeed, simply knowing whether a student’s Jewish identity is Attached or Detached before the trip would have a real influence on how the student is challenged on the trip itself. In this study those determinations offered important context about the assumptions that were challenged by the trips’ experiences for each subject and at least hinted at the potential for pre-evaluation along a similar scale for trip participants. This is not a small change in training structures. These trips are currently planned by remote providers and staffed by a rotating group of people of various backgrounds for groups that are often not finalized until the last minute. The trip content is usually determined by a common curriculum and is designed to be replicable from group to group with little need or interest in modification. Understandably, resources have been dedicated to develop the trip content with an eye towards a broader application to a general audience rather than a deeper exploration with specific people. The result of not taking the participant’s individual experience in to account though as demonstrated here is that there is no guarantee the experience will be deemed authentic by the participant or that their reflection will reach the desired outcome. The emergent theory now allows for training
tools to be created though that should assist trip provider and staff to focus in on their participants’ personal experience and not just the group’s overall experience.

Additionally, while this emergent theory was focused on Jewish Emerging Adults on intermediate trip experiences, it could be adapted to other areas of Experiential Education and Identity Development for better understanding of their populations as well including adolescents at summer camp, seniors at Elderhostels and children in youth groups to name just a few examples.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Further qualitative research from a larger sample and among other demographic groups will be necessary to refine this theory and develop subsequent training methods and tools. There is a debate within the Jewish educational community right now over the relative value and impact of qualitative versus quantitative evaluation and study of Jewish Experiential Education programs such as intermediate travel experiences. The debate centers on which can be done more effectively given the numbers of participants participating in these experiences, the amount of resources available to conduct the research and perceptions of validity (Hazony, 2012; Kaplan, 2012). One educator has advocated for qualitative evaluation and wrote of an effort to apply it to part-time congregational schools: “We call it ‘Noticing’ because it’s about observing, witnessing growth in our learners as they travel their own journeys” (Marx, 2012). This theory captures the same truth for Jewish Experiential Education. Quantitative data can provide important information about groups or an individual in the context of a group, but Jewish Experiential Education, indeed all experiential education, is inherently an individual
experience. More research that will develop and explain the theory for use in the field that allows a practitioner to better assess a participant’s particular needs from an experience and tailor it towards that need will mean more effective programs that are better utilizing communal resources to provide these experiences that have been deemed critical for Jewish communal cohesion and progression. Additionally, the theory itself needs to be tested on a larger trip pool to see if the model stands up. Pre-screening tools and a process where the results can be utilized to tailor a trip to the specific participants needs to be developed and tested as well in addition to evaluation mechanisms that will screen for these specific adjustments and weigh the level of benefit versus effort in the process.
APPENDIX A

STUDY GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC DATA TABLE
Table 1: Study Group Demographic Data Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nicky</th>
<th>Sheila</th>
<th>Morgan</th>
<th>Marc</th>
<th>Jean</th>
<th>Greta</th>
<th>Jenna</th>
<th>Lane</th>
<th>Emily</th>
<th>Josh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year Age</td>
<td>Sophomore 19</td>
<td>Sophomore 19</td>
<td>Freshman 19</td>
<td>Senior 22</td>
<td>Sophomore 19</td>
<td>Second Year 19</td>
<td>Second Year 19</td>
<td>First Year 19</td>
<td>First Year 18</td>
<td>Third Year 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip</td>
<td>TBi</td>
<td>TBi</td>
<td>TBi</td>
<td>TBi</td>
<td>TBi</td>
<td>A5B</td>
<td>A5B</td>
<td>A5B</td>
<td>A5B</td>
<td>A5B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarried Family?</td>
<td>No, but reported mother converted to Judaism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Family Life</td>
<td>Reform, Active in congregational Youth Group</td>
<td>Reform, Hebrew School, Bar Mitzvah, Some Hebrew High School</td>
<td>Conservative, JCC summer camp</td>
<td>Reform, Hebrew School, Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Youth Group</td>
<td>None except for some Jewish celebrations with relatives</td>
<td>Reform, Hebrew school, Bat Mitzvah, teaching assistant in Sunday school</td>
<td>Reform, Hebrew school from 5th grade through high school, Bat Mitzvah</td>
<td>Conservative, Hebrew school, bat mitzvah, Elul High school semester in Israel</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Campus Life</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Chabad for Hunger</td>
<td>Casual Hilli Shabbat dinner attendance</td>
<td>Hilli social justice group, Chabad for Hunger</td>
<td>Hilli social justice group</td>
<td>Hilli social activities, Shabbat dinners, Shabbat dinners, Shabbat dinners, Shabbat dinners</td>
<td>Hilli social activities</td>
<td>Hilli social and Shabbat activities</td>
<td>Hilli social and Shabbat activities</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Activities</td>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>Student Gov't RA</td>
<td>Engineers for a Sustainable World, Americans for an Interfaith Democracy</td>
<td>Interactive Industry Seminars at Engineering school</td>
<td>Gamma Sigma Sigma social service fraternity, volunteer at hospital</td>
<td>None formally outside of Hilli</td>
<td>Extracurricular dance groups and GLBT activities</td>
<td>Correctional reform and human rights</td>
<td>Journalism, works in a local museum</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interests</td>
<td>Special Needs, Argentina</td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>Campus museum, shop</td>
<td>Scrapbooking, basketball, Reganizing</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>Going on TBi this summer</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Farming, teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

TBI TRIP ITINERARY
Day 1 – Sunday, March 4th

- 5:25 PM - Arrive at Ben-Gurion International Airport. You will be met and assisted through customs by (trip provider) staff and will meet your Israeli tour guide and driver who will be with you throughout your tour.
- Orientation: Take some time to get to know your fellow participants, staff, and guide while preparing for the 10-day journey ahead of you.

Day 2 - Monday, March 5th

- Engage in the “Changing Map of the Middle East” activity which focuses on the political and historical background that led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and the current geopolitical situation in the Middle East.
- Explore Tzfat - the ancient and modern home of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). Tour ancient synagogues and artists’ quarters.

Day 3 - Tuesday, March 6th

- Travel to the former military outpost at Har Bental and take in a stunning 360 degree view of Israel and Syria.
- Visit Tel Hai, one of the first four settlements of the Galilee, and hear about the pioneers of the modern State of Israel.
- Engage in dialogue with local Israeli-Arabs at Shorashim, an institution dedicated to promoting co-existence.
- Take an in-depth look into Israeli society via an interactive workshop on Israeli cinema.

Day 4 - Wednesday, March 7th

- Visit Tzippori, a rich archeological site which once served as a center of Jewish religious and spiritual life in the Galilee.
Explore Jaffa, one of the world's ancient ports. Modern Jaffa has a heterogeneous population of Muslims, Christians and Jews. Jaffa is a major tourist site with an exciting combination of old and new. You may have time to explore the local flea market called Shuk Hapishpeshim for all kinds of hidden treasures (and delicious things to eat).

- Visit Independence Hall where David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel's Independence in 1948.

Celebrate Purim! Start off the night by hearing the reading of Megillat Esther and end the evening celebrating the festive holiday in style!

Day 5 - Thursday, March 8th

- Mifgash ("Encounter") Begins. Today you will be joined by 8 young Israelis who will be traveling with you for the next 5 days. You will have the privilege to explore Israel through their eyes (and they through yours) and to forge new and lasting friendships.

- Visit Rabin Square ("Kikar Rabin" in Hebrew); a large public city square in central Tel Aviv, named after Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated at the conclusion of a massive peace rally held at the square on November 4, 1995.

- Take part in an activity at Neot Kedumim, the Biblical Nature Reserve in Israel.

- Spend the night at Kfar Hanokdim - Desert Experience. Start the adventure riding camel-back as the sun sets over the desert. Partake in a light taste of Bedouin tradition and culture including a welcome ceremony of coffee and tea followed by a Middle-Eastern dinner served in the traditional style seated on rugs and pillows in a Bedouin style tent. Accommodation is in a mock up of a traditional Bedouin tent.

- Enjoy a group gathering around an Israeli style bonfire and take a night hike.

Day 6 - Friday, March 9th

- Climb Masada via the earthen Roman ramp built 2000 years ago to storm this desert fortress and view the remarkable excavations including Herod's Palace and stables, the ancient synagogue and the ancient water system.
• Hike in the Ein Gedi desert oasis at Nachal David and float in the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth.

• Arrive at your kibbutz in time to prepare for Kabbalat Shabbat (the arrival of Shabbat) and candle lighting followed by Shabbat dinner. Participate in Oneg Shabbat program.

Day 7 – Saturday, March 10th

• Spend Shabbat relaxing with your group with various programming and free time at the kibbutz.

• You'll also have the opportunity to take a guided tour of the Kibbutz to learn more about the history of the Kibbutz movement and the history of the Kibbutz on which you're staying. Get to know your Mifgash Israelis by partaking in a special activity they have prepared for you.

• Take part in the ceremony ending the Shabbat and welcoming the new week: Havdalla.

Day 8 – Sunday, March 11th

• Visit Mount Herzl, Israel's military cemetery and the burial place of Yitzhak Rabin, Golda Meir and Theodore Herzl.

• Visit Yad Vashem, Israel's national memorial to the Holocaust. The museum presents the historic events that befell Europe following the Nazis’ rise to power in Germany and the fate of the Jews under Nazi rule in the occupied countries.

• Go out for dinner and spend the night out on Jerusalem's vibrant pedestrian mall, Ben Yehudah Street. Enjoy the open-air mall (a.k.a. 'ha midrechov') with its pubs, shops, and restaurants with plenty of live music.

Day 9 – Monday, March 12th

• Visit the Old City of Jerusalem - visit the Kotel (Western Wall), Cardo and the Jewish Quarter.

• From the Western Wall, walk to the Davidson Center. The Davidson Center offers a rare opportunity to explore and study the most significant archaeological site in Israel by means of exhibitions and illustrations describing Jerusalem's main episodes.
• Visit **Mahane Yehuda**, Jerusalem’s largest "shuk" (outdoor market), where you can find many different people and wares.

• Farewell for Israelis – End of Mifgash.

• Bring the experience to an end with a closing session.

**Day 10 - Tuesday, March 13th**

*El Al flight 007 departs at 10:15 AM*
ASB Trip Itinerary

(Compiled by Private U Hillel staff member who led the trip with anonymity edits by the author)

Sunday: Arrival at airport, picked up by JFS staff, orientation and cooking dinner at the synagogue where were staying.

Monday: Half of us went to the urban farm site while the other half went to the River farm to do some harvesting. That evening we had our first educational session, on food systems.

Tuesday: we got rained out of working on the farm, so we went to Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Sanctuary, then to a vegan restaurant for lunch, then to an organic ice cream shop called Lick. That evening we did a fermentation workshop in which the students made sauerkraut.

Wednesday: Back to the urban farm

Thursday: We spent the day at the River farm. A good portion of us spent the afternoon chasing around some lambs/goats that Farmer Skip was trying to herd back to his property. That evening we went to UT-Austin Hillel to meet their Executive Director and see their community garden. The students then had a couple of hours to wander around Austin and eat. Afterwards, we made sourdough that would eventually become Challah.

Friday: We went back to the Urban farm for our last half day. Some students got to ride the farm horse, and others learned how to milk a goat. In the afternoon, Farmer Skip and Farmer Erin talked to us about genetic modification/genetic engineering of seeds, and we made “seed bombs”—when we got back to campus we walked to (a large lawn area at Private U) and threw them there.

Friday evening: the students prepared a Shabbat experience, including a meal that they cooked themselves. We attended services at the synagogue we were staying at and then hung out.

Saturday: Again, the students were responsible for almost the entire day's worth of activities. Two students created a Saturday morning service experience for us (using foods that corresponded to the different prayers), and we spent the afternoon out in the sun, playing some team-building games. We also had an afternoon educational session in which we learned about the concept of shmita. Near Havdallah time we went to Barton Springs and the students went swimming. The students also created a Havdallah ceremony and experience.

Sunday: clean up and depart for airport.
APPENDIX D

ASB STUDY TEXT
Religion is made up of rites and customs, I explained, or would have explained, had I thought of it at the time. These rites and customs get handed down like old pieces of antique furniture, the names of their makers lost, their sentimental value forgotten along with the ancestors who treasured them. To dig up the meaning of this inheritance, to honor those ancestors and put myself in some sort of relation to them—that is what I want to do.

But to do that you have to give up so much! To do it right, at least as I construed "right" at the time. To submit to the rituals of the Sabbath and let them take you where they will, which is a place far beyond what Heschel called, with some irritation, "religious behaviorism" and the "sociological fallacy." By that, he meant the purely external understanding of religion as a set of behaviors and traditions worth preserving: religion construed as a social asset. To be transformed by a religious experience, rather than merely to appreciate it, to drop an anchor into the depths of the past and keep your life from drifting away, you have to be willing, I thought, to give yourself over to a different way of living, one that seems antiquated and foreign and extinguishing unless you’re already immersed in it. You had to become that dreadful thing, a religious person.

I had always associated being religious with all sorts of unfortunate character traits. Being really religious, I mean, Because in my family we did not think of ourselves as religious. We kept the Sabbath by lighting candles and having dinner on Friday night. We kept kosher, sort of, at least in the house, by not mixing milk and meat and eating only kosher-slaughtered meat, though we didn’t keep two sets of dishes, the way Orthodox Jews do, and all of us except my mother ate whatever we liked in restaurants or at other people's houses, although she sometimes muttered things about having failed as a parent when we ordered pork or shrimp. We did what our parents did and they did what their parents did, largely in defiance of their parents, with their old-world styles of observance. Apart from my mother, there was no one around to care whether it was done in the prescribed manner--and even she didn't care enough to stop us from breaking the rules.

Religiosity, to us, was obsessive-compulsive, masochistic, intellectually narrow, irrational, tribalistic, antimodern. Living the religious life, especially the Jewish religious life, means making a commitment to live by rules that are neither logical nor natural. Why should we only eat animals that chew their cud and have cloven hooves? Why are we forbidden to wear clothes that mix wool and flax? You have to take these rules on faith, and derive their legitimacy from tradition. To become religious is to brave a leap into the absurd. Kierkegaard understood that leap. You have to give up your ability to control your world. It's a form of self-sacrifice. Kierkegaard compares it to Abrahams' sacrifice of Isaac.

Kierkegaard couldn't make the leap. He could describe the moments of faith, he said, but he couldn't perform them... Kierkegaard did not hone in on his stolid burgher's Sabbath
by accident. There is no better point of entry to the religious experience than the Sabbath, for all its apparent ordinariness. Because of its ordinariness. The extraordinariness of the Sabbath lies in its being commonplace. We who look at religion from the outside think of transcendence as something that occurs at special moments, in concentrated bursts of illumination, but people raised in homes where religious ritual occurs over breakfast and at dinner and in school and throughout weekends know that revelation commingles promiscuously with routine. If ritual is art, then it is stretched over the frame of habit.
REFERENCE LIST


Josh. (2012, April 30). Post-ASB trip interview. (S. Aaron, Interviewer)


Lana. (2012, April 30). Post-ASB trip interview. (S. Aaron, Interviewer)


Lindy. (2012, April 30). Post-ASB trip interview. (S. Aaron, Interviewer)


Marc. (2012, April 5). Post-TBI trip interview. (S. Aaron, Interviewer)


Melzer, S., & Schein, J. (1994). Kashrut: A ritual decision that is not easy (7th Grade). In J. Schein, & J. M. Blair (Eds.), Windows on the Jewish soul: Resources for teaching the values of Jewish peoplehood. Wyncote: FRCH.


VITA

Scott Aaron is currently the Community Scholar for the Agency for Jewish Learning for Greater Pittsburgh where he specializes in formal and informal adult education. He has rabbinic ordination and a Masters of Arts in Hebrew Literature from the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion and a Juris Doctor from the University of Toledo. Scott has worked in Emerging Adult education through the Hillels at New York University, the Ohio State University, and the University of Chicago. He has also worked extensively in the camping and retreat field, and was the Director of Education for the Brandeis-Bardin Institute outside Los Angeles from 2001-2004.

Scott is the author of a number of published articles and stories including his well-known book, *Jewish U: A Contemporary Guide for The Jewish College Student* which is now in its second edition. Scott is currently adjunct faculty at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership and the education schools of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. Scott is also a professional mentor for the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership Master of Arts Program in Jewish Professional Studies and the iCenter, and he consults nationwide on Jewish experiential education and professional development.

He is also a member of the editorial board of the Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education’s publication series on the theme of “Peoplehood in Practice.”