

Towards a social history of Jewish educational tourism research

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Abstract

This article presents a socio-historic analysis of research on Jewish educational travel. Jewish educational travel has been pioneering in the field of educational-heritage travel in terms of practice and research. Programs such as group tours to Israel, Jewish summer camps, and pilgrimages to Shoah sites were among the first examples of organized educational heritage travel. They are well-established and have been adopted as models for other types of educational and heritage tourism. In the same vein, since their inception over half a century ago, these programs have been the subject of evaluation and academic study. This article offers a topology of the field, giving a broad perspective on how it has developed over time in terms of methodologies used, populations covered, questions addressed, and scope of surveys.

Keywords: education, tourism, Jewish, Israel, research, socio-history

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Introduction

As a sociologist who has worked for decades in the field of Jewish educational tourism, I would like to offer a sociological assessment of this discipline. To clarify, this is not an overview of Jewish tourism, but rather an analysis of research on the topic. My observations are based on my own professional experiences, discussions with colleagues, and a survey of the relevant literature.

To set the stage, a brief social history of Jewish educational tourism is presented. Then main characteristics of how this subject is studied and parameters of the field are outlined. Finally, some thoughts about the future of the field will be offered, along with some suggestions for how it could be more fruitful and have broader relevance for the scientific community.

'Educational tourism' is voluntary travel motivated, at least in part, by a desire and intention to learn and increase one's knowledge (Ritchie, Carr & Cooper, 2003, p. 18; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007, p. 35). It covers a wide spectrum of tourist activities, from those in which learning is a predominant feature to those in which learning may be peripheral or incidental. Jewish educational tourism, by extension, is travel voluntarily undertaken by Jewish tourists which is motivated at least in part by a desire to increase knowledge about and understanding of subjects and sites related in some way to Jewish religion, culture, or history.

It may be argued that Jewish educational tourism is as old as the Jewish people, and forms a core part of the culture. In the book of Genesis (13: 17), God tells Abraham to travel throughout the Land of Canaan so that he may know the land as a first step in inheriting it for himself and his descendants. Before the Israelites entered the Land of Israel, God told Moses to send representatives of each tribe to 'tour' (*latûr*) the land to see what it and its inhabitants were like. The three yearly pilgrimages commanded to the ancient Israelites may also be seen as a type of spiritual-educational tourism embedded in the Jewish religion. The visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon's court in ancient Jerusalem was prompted by her curiosity about his wisdom, and thus may be seen as an early example of travel undertaken for educational purposes.¹ Throughout the Middle Ages, Jews, Christians, and Muslims made pilgrimages to religious sites in the Holy Land and other countries, though few people were able to embark upon such journeys. Travelogues kept by Jewish scholar-adventurers provide valuable information about daily life and traditions of the time—albeit sometimes mixed with legend. This documentation indicates their journeys had educational as well as religious goals (Dubnov, 1980; Mansoor, 1991). Palestine, under each of its consecutive rulers, and other sites related to Jewish history were often stops in Grand Tours, which may be seen as the progenitor of educational tourism, but these were available only to the European aristocracy (Brodsky-Porges, 1981).

Around the beginning of the 20th century, as travel in general was developing as a leisure activity, we see the first examples of institutionalized Jewish educational travel, namely Jewish summer camps in Diaspora (mainly North American) communities and tours of Israel sponsored by

Zionist associations. The latter involved both international tourism of Diaspora Jews coming to Israel and domestic tourism of Israelis exploring the land. Another distinct type of Jewish educational tourism developed early in the history of the country is the *shlichut* program which sends Israelis as emissaries to work in Diaspora communities. *Shlichut* is a special case in that the primary motivation of the emissaries was to teach; however research found that in practice the travelers learned as well.

Over the past century these types of educational tourism, particularly the summer camps and tourism to Israel, have expanded and evolved. Also, other types of Jewish educational travel have emerged, such as heritage tourism to sites related to Jewish history and culture, and the distinctive branch of *Shoah*² tourism. Each of these has been the subject of documentation, research, and evaluation. This article offers a topology of the field, giving a broad perspective on how it has developed over time in terms of methodologies used, populations covered, questions addressed, and scope of surveys.

Educational tours to Israel

The state-building era. Organized group travel to the Land of Israel which had an explicit educational goal began with the emergence of the Zionist movement. Jewish tourism was advocated as a way to support the *New Yishuv*. As early as the 1920s, Jewish leaders and philanthropists supported initiatives advancing *Yediat ha-Aretz*—knowledge of the Land—as a pedagogic tool to further the goals of the Jewish nationalist movement (Stein, 2009). In 1923, William Topkis, an American Zionist leader, visited British Palestine and then founded an association with the goal of training and promoting Jewish tour guides (Gefen, 1979). A poster from that era announces the availability of trained Jewish guides. The Jewish National Fund issued a film (in conjunction with Topkis) and a series of posters and postcards encouraging Jews to visit and eventually make aliyah (Cohen-Hattab, 2004; Gefen, 1979, 2013). For example, this early poster in Hebrew and English advertises the Association of Jewish Guides and tours of Palestine/Eretz Israel (both names are used). It shows a professional-looking guide in Western dress pointing at a map of the country with inset drawings of various destinations pertaining to Jewish history and the *Yishuv*, as well as some Muslim and Christian sites. The Palestine Zionist Executive published guidebooks of tour itineraries led by Jewish guides and catering to Jewish tourists, with historical, religious, and contemporary Zionist sites. In 1925, they established the Zionist Tourist Information Bureau which recruited among Diaspora Jewish communities, organized and oversaw their trips, and—significantly—connected them with Zionist groups after their return home. This set a pattern which still is followed today. While these tours were not surveyed, an interesting record of the phenomenon is preserved in travelogues which were published in the 1920s and 1930s to spread the message of Zionism and to bolster tourism and *aliyah* (Marzano, 2013).

Minutes of a meeting preserved in the Central Zionist Archives record the planning of the first Israel Experience tour for Diaspora youth while the War of Independence was still being fought.

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday December 26, 1947, in the offices of the Youth Affairs Department.

Present: Dr B. Benshalom, Y. Halevy-Levin, Y. Hochstein, Y. Meyuchas, A. Harman.

The meeting was told that many requests had recently been received from Jewish educators in various countries wanting to arrange summer camps in *Eretz Yisrael* [Land of Israel] for Jewish students from the Diaspora. After discussion, it was agreed that:

(A) Implementation of this enterprise would be the function of the Youth Affairs Department, the Zionist Tourism Information Bureau and the Youth Office of the National Authority's Education Department, which would cooperate with the department in carrying this out, and for this purpose a committee would be established, consisting of those present together with Messrs. Z. Weinberg and A. Spector.

(B) The practical program should include: tours of the country, cultural activities, and recreational activities.

(C) Even if this cannot be carried out in the summer of 1948, it is to be hoped that it will be possible to carry it out in the summer of 1949, so it is necessary to start working out the program right away.

(D) In the first year, arrangements must be made for three groups, each about thirty young people from the United States, Britain, and France.

(E) These youngsters should be aged 13-17.

(F) The camp should be held between July 15 and the end of August, for a period of one month.

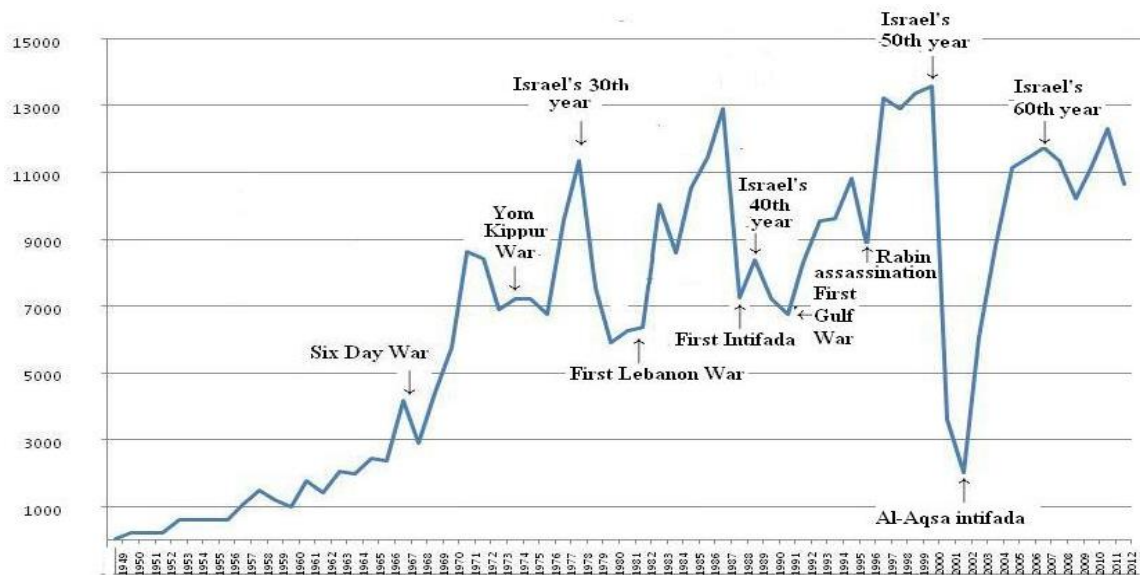
Indeed, the first group of 45 youth arrived in 1949 and quickly grew to hundreds and then thousands of participants per year. Throughout the state-building era, Diaspora Jews also took part in study programs at Israeli universities and study-work programs on kibbutzim.

Thus, the State of Israel and Jewish educational tourism to it were conceived simultaneously (Berkowitz, 2013; E. H. Cohen, 2008; Cohen-Hattab & Katz, 2001; Kelner, 2013; Smith, 2010). Intentionally organizing tour programs aimed at strengthening the connection of a Diaspora population to a 'homeland' or spiritual center was, at this time, a pioneering and essentially untested concept. Moreover, evaluation of these programs began early on. Thus, evaluation and sociological study of such tours were a pioneering enterprise. A survey of a tour to Israel in the summer of 1963 established demographic traits of participants, assessed their satisfaction with the tour, and explored their views about Israel and its place in their identity (Comet, 1965). A comprehensive survey of the American students at Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the 1960s and 1970s explored students' experiences via questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, analysis of student journals, and observations (Herman, 1970, 1977a, 1977b, 1977c). In these studies, Herman laid the groundwork for subsequent research on Jewish identity and identification, defining components of Jewish identity such as identification with the group across space and time, sense of mutual responsibility, and adopting norms of the group. Bubis and Marks

(1975) compared the experiences of American Jewish youth who took a group tour to Israel with those in informal Jewish educational settings in the U.S. Participants in each were surveyed at the start and end of the program, and again nine months later. These various studies established the foundation for sociological study of Jewish educational travel.

Expansion and diversification of educational tourism. Jewish educational tourism to Israel continued to expand in scope and diversity of available programs. For over half a century, the predominant format was the classic 4-6 week “Israel Experience” trip. These were organized cooperatively by international, Israeli, and local Diaspora community institutions. Explicit goals are to strengthen participants’ connection to Israel and Judaism. The tours included a combination of touring, educational activities, and recreation. Between 1949 and 2012, over 410,000 Jewish youth from more than a dozen countries took part in these tours. Peaks and dips in participation correspond to various political events as shown in Figure 1. A sharp rise in participation followed the victory of the Six Day War. Similarly, a study of the impact of this war on Diaspora-Israel relations documented a significant increase in the number of Diaspora Jews who came to Israel as immigrants, tourists, volunteers, and participants in youth leadership training programs following the Six Day War (DellaPergola, Rebhun & Raicher, 2000). Other political conflicts generally caused a drop in tourism especially by North American youth, who comprise the largest group of IE participants. With the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada in 2000 many North American groups cancelled their tours, although youth from other countries, particularly France, continued to come during this time. The ten year anniversaries of Israel’s independence were occasions for increased visits.

Figure 1: Participation in Israel Experience programs of the Youth & *Hechalutz* Department/Department of Education 1949-2012³



A series of studies conducted in the mid-1980s examined the perspectives of Israel Experience tour directors as well as participants, adding a new dimension to evaluation of the program (Hochstein, 1986, S. Cohen, 1986a, 1986b, 1991; Shye, 1986).

A decade-long study of the program, beginning in 1993, distributed questionnaires at the beginning and end of the tours to tens of thousands of participants from dozens of countries. This yielded a huge database with information on demographics, attitudes and beliefs, assessment of the tour, and more. Over the years the survey focused on various issues such as the kibbutz stay, meetings with Israeli youth, marketing of the program, and special programs such as those which began the tour in Prague or with a boat tour simulating the Exodus refugee ship (E. H. Cohen, 2008). The study of the "Exodus" program offered an interesting insight into the implementation of an itinerary among various populations, in that the programs carried out on boats for participants from different home countries (USA, Canada, UK, France) each reflected assumptions and style of Jewish education and identity in the home country (E. H. Cohen, 2004a).

Throughout this time, Diaspora youth also continued to come to programs at Israeli universities, on kibbutzim, with volunteer programs, and so forth. Mittelberg (1988) studied the kibbutz stay, surveying both hosts and guests via questionnaires, interviews, and observations. A survey of alumni of two volunteer tourism programs provided longitudinal data which showed that in the long-term, the experience strengthened participants' Jewish-American identity, and that the degree of change was similar in the two programs despite differences in participants' pre-program identities (Lev Ari, Mansfeld, and Mittelberg, 2003). Herman's findings have been revisited and verified by studies conducted among new generations of North American Jewish students in Israel (Donitsa-Schmidt, S., & Vadish, 2005; Friedlander, Morag-Talmon & Moshayov, 1991). Using pre- and post-program surveys, it was found that these students, like their predecessors surveyed by Herman, were more strongly motivated by an interest in exploring their Jewish identity than by purely academic concerns, and that during the time in Israel, they learned about Israeli history and current events, Judaism and Jewish identity, and Hebrew. These subsequent studies highlight the immense contribution of Herman to our collective understanding of Jewish identity. Another research on visiting students found a similar pattern among the younger students (at the bachelor's degree level), namely that they emphasized Jewish identity aspects of the sojourn over educational goals. However, among the MA and especially the PhD students the emphasis was clearly more academic and career oriented (Cohen, E. H. 2003a). Several studies looked at the different experiences of visiting youth in religious and secular settings, such as Hebrew language study programs on religious and secular kibbutzim (Mittelberg & Lev-Ari, 1995) and year-long study programs in seminaries and universities (Ohayon, 2004).

Mifgashim—mediated encounters between Israeli and Diaspora youth—provide opportunities for hosts and guests alike to meet their peers, and are a brief departure from the tourist bubble in which most of the tour is spent. Researchers looking at the goals and impact of *mifgashim* found that the encounters tend to be planned as activities essentially for the visitors, yet also may be educational for the Israeli participants (Bar-Shalom, 2002; E. H. Cohen, 2000; Findling-Andy & Spector, 1997; Kujawski, 2000; Wolf). Moreover, the encounters were found to reveal similarities between the two populations (identification with the Jewish People, global youth culture) as well as differences (language, expressions of religiosity, army service, and modalities of friendship).

While much attention has been given to programs for youth, Jewish adults also join study tours. In the 1990s, a number of studies looked at tour programs for Jewish educators, considering issues such as impact on educators' personal and professional lives, curriculum of the trip, and motivations for the travel (Abrams, Klein-Katz & Schachter, 1996; Reisman, 1993). Others surveyed adults who came to Israel in the framework of 'missions' organized by community institutions (S. Cohen, 1996) or on family vacations (Goldfarb Consultants, 1992; Klein-Katz, 1990, 1991).

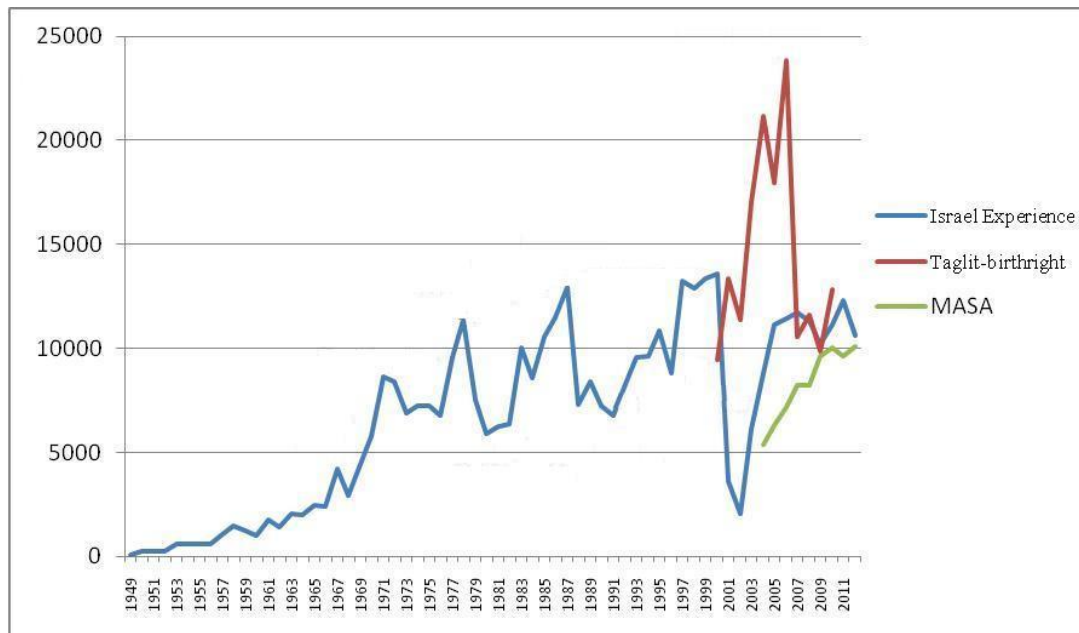
The new millennium. In 2000, the *Taglit*-Birthright Israel was launched, which quickly had a significant impact on the world of Jewish educational tourism. *Taglit* offers free 10-day tours to young adults aged 18-26. Within a decade, several hundred thousand participants, mainly but not exclusively from North America, took part. Since its inception, the *Taglit* program has been regularly evaluated through a longitudinal study that uses a pre-post program method. A series of questionnaires are distributed first to a sample of applicants, then to participants at the end of the tour, and again in periodic follow-up studies. Qualitative methods such as interviews and observations are also included in the survey. An important feature of the surveys is the inclusion of a control group; questionnaires are also distributed to applicants who did not join a tour, providing a basis for comparison of changes in participants' attitudes. At least half a million questionnaires have been collected, providing a massive database (Kelner, 2002, 2010; Kelner et al., 2000; Saxe & Chazan, 2008; Saxe, Sasson & Hecht, 2006; Saxe et al., 2000, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2011a, 2013). Most of the studies have focused on North American participants (who comprise the vast majority of the tour's target population), but several studies have looked at participants from other countries (Chazan & Saxe, 2008; E. H. Cohen, 2004b; Shain, Hecht & Saxe, 2013a, 2013b). The evaluations cover issues such as demographic traits, satisfaction with the tour, intention to return to Israel, Jewish community involvement, attitudes towards Israel and Judaism, and impact of the tour on behavior and attitudes. Among many other findings, the survey has documented that participants express greater feelings of connection to Israel and the Jewish people, even several years after the experience. Sociological analyses have been made on aspects of the tour program, such as *mifgashim* with Israeli youth (Avivi, 2000; Sasson, Mittelberg, Hecht

& Saxe, 2011; Wolf & Hoffman, 2004), Jewish identity (Kadushin, Wright, Shain & Saxe, 2012; Shain et al., 2013; Taylor, Levi & Dinovitzer, 2012), attitudes towards exogamy (Saxe et al., 2011b), and connection to Israel (S. Cohen & Kelman, 2010; Sobel, 2009). The *madrichim* of these programs have been found to carry out overlapping functions of guide, counselor, and role model (Cohen, Ifergan & Cohen, 2002). However, there has been little in-depth research on the function of the guides and counselors; for example the Taglit surveys identify the guide as one of the main features determining success of the tour, yet provide no details on what makes an effective guide (Saxe, Sasson & Hecht, 2006).

Another initiative launched around this time was the MASA Israel Journey program. This created a unified umbrella organization to match young adults with long-term study programs lasting from several months up to several years. Available programs cover a wide range of areas of interest such as archeology, ecology, history, religious studies, Hebrew language, community service, and more. Between 2004 and 2011, some 55,000 individuals joined study programs via MASA. In 2010, a web-based survey collected data from several thousand MASA alumni and a control group of people who had contacted the program but did not participate (S. Cohen & Kopelowitz, 2010).

Participation in these three main branches of organized educational tourism: Israel Experience, Taglit-Birthright Israel and MASA are shown in Graph 2.

Graph 2: Participation in educational tours to Israel, 1949-2011



Study tours to Israel continue to be part of the professional training of many educators in Diaspora Jewish settings, although these have not expanded and developed to the extent that programs for youth have (Dorph & Holtz, 2000; Kedar, 2011; Pomson & Grant, 2004).

Recently some small and alternative educational programs to Israel have been initiated. These have been the subject of case studies, but have not been evaluated in a systematic way by program organizers (Aviv, 2011; Hazbun, 2012).

Domestic tourism in Israel: The *tiyul* as an educational tool

In addition to international tourism to Israel, domestic tourism among Israelis was also motivated by desire for knowledge of and a link to the land. Beginning in the nation-building era, hikes were common activities among Jewish youth movements, schools, and community groups such as the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (Ben-David, 1997; Dror & Shayish, 2013; Kahane, 1997; Kelner, 2014; Shayish & Cohen, 2011; Stein, 2009). In the newly developing Israeli society, the *tiyul* or hike emerged as a civil pilgrimage during which sites of natural beauty and historical significance would be visited (Katriel, 1995). Thus, the tour guide or *madrish* was an important figure in domestic tourism as well as for overseas visitors (Israeli, 1965; Katz, 1985). Still today, frequent day hikes and overnight camping trips are frequent activities for Israeli state school students, youth movement members, and families and form part of the national culture (Singh & Krakover, 2013).

The *tiyul* has been analyzed as a pedagogic tool and sociological phenomenon both historically and within contemporary Israeli culture, mainly using qualitative methods such as literature surveys, observations, and interviews, and are often published only in Hebrew for use by educators within the school system (Avisar, 2000; Ben-Hur & Levi, 1998; Girtal, 2002, 2010; Gotar, 2009; Oshri, 2005). A socio-historical overview of the *tiyul* commissioned by the Ministry of Education traces how field trips to natural areas developed in Israeli schools as a pedagogic tool for value-driven education including Jewish-Israeli identity, leadership skills, social bonding among the class, spiritual and physical development, and knowledge of the land (Dror & Shayish, 2013). Observation of a school's annual class trip found that it also serves as socialization tool towards the acculturation of Jews from different backgrounds into Israeli society (Markovitz, 2012). Additionally, the development of tourist sites for the Israeli public has been the subject of sociological analyses of the socio-political and historical narratives presented (Bauman, 1995, 2004).

Though there have been few systematic evaluations of *tiyul* programs, an evaluation was conducted by Mashav (2011) on *Masa Israeli Mibereshit*, a program of hikes and field trips for state high school students. In 2010-2011, the program was assessed in 84 schools participating in the

program. The evaluation used pre- and post-program questionnaires to measure the impacts on participants' Israeli, Jewish, and personal identities.

Among the *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) population in Israel, *tiyulim* and domestic tourism are becoming increasingly popular. Despite stated opposition to secular forms of recreation on the part of many religious leaders, Israeli *haredi* families travel during their summer vacations, visiting religious, historic, and nature sites. Part of the educational component was in exposure to the secular Israeli culture from which this population usually secludes themselves (Cahaner & Mansfeld, 2012; Mansfeld & Cahaner, 2013; Rahimi, 2010).

***Shoah* pilgrimage journeys**

Another major branch of Jewish educational travel pertains to travel to sites related to the *Shoah* or to pre-war Jewish life. This includes sites in Europe—former death camps, cemeteries, memorials, historic Jewish sections of cities—as well as *Shoah*-related museums and memorials in Israel and other countries (Ashworth, 2002; Beech, 2000; Resnik, 2003).

Significantly, the first Jewish educational tourism related to the *Shoah* was not to sites of the atrocity itself, but to memorial museums. In 1949, the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum⁴ was created on an Israeli kibbutz by a group of survivors of the *Shoah* and veterans of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Shortly afterwards, in 1953, the Israeli Knesset founded Yad Vashem in Jerusalem as a *Shoah* memorial museum and national institute for research and education. Both of these institutes hosted school groups as well as individual visitors, mostly Israelis, although Yad Vashem in particular became a popular destination for international travelers as well. At that time, voluntary travel to 'authentic' sites of the *Shoah* was unthinkable. The first *Shoah* museum in the US was founded in 1961 by survivors living in Los Angeles.⁵ In the past several decades, many others have been established in numerous countries, each with a distinct perspective and interpretation. Among the largest is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, which presents the *Shoah* against the background of democracy, universal values, and the role of the US in the fight against fascism (Flanzbaum, 1999; Lennon & Foley, 1999). Visits to *Shoah* museums may be undertaken as distinct events, such as school field trips, or as part of a broader itinerary in the area where they are located (E.H. Cohen, 2011a; Saidel, 1996). Yad Vashem, in particular, has become a standard site in many educational tours to Israel. Many Israelis, too, visit the museum with school trips or independently (Kraekover, 2005). A survey consisting of observations of and interviews with Russian Jewish tourists visiting Israel in 1998 found that Yad Vashem was the site which most meaningfully communicated a sense of Jewish identity to these tourists—even more so than traditional religious sites such as the Western Wall or *Kotel* (Epstein & Kheimets, 2001).

Tourism to *Shoah* sites in Europe mainly developed following the end of the Communist regime in Europe, as Poland became more open to international tourism. This type of 'dark' Jewish education tourism has become increasingly common among students and adults. Numerous tour programs are offered, and museums and memorials at sites related to the *Shoah* have been developed, catering to both Jewish and non-Jewish travelers.

A small number of groups from Israeli schools went to Poland in the early 1960s, following the trial of former Nazi Adolph Eichmann, but were suspended when Poland broke off diplomatic relations with Israel following the Six Day War of 1967. After a two-decade hiatus, the journeys resumed beginning in 1988, when travel to Poland again became possible (Gross, 2010). Since then, the Israeli Ministry of Education has organized and sponsored journeys to *Shoah* sites in Poland for high school students. This program has expanded greatly in the past quarter century; to date, hundreds of thousands of students and accompanying teachers have taken part. The journeys include a week or ten days of touring sites, ceremonies, lectures, films, and meetings with Polish youth as well as an extensive orientation before the trip and follow-up activities afterwards (E. H. Cohen, 2013a; Feldman, 2008; Vargen, 2008).

These journeys, which are a core and popular yet controversial aspect of Shoah education in Israel, have been the subject of much scientific study, as well as critique in the media. Feldman (2008) conducted an in-depth ethnographic study of the journeys to Poland. His analysis of the journeys is based on observations of training sessions for guides, including their preparatory journey to Poland, on several journeys which he accompanied, first as a guide then as a participant-observer, on participants' diaries kept during the journey, and on responses of 25 participants to open-ended questionnaires. This study focuses on students' reactions and the role of the journey as a pilgrimage, during which Jewish-Israeli identity is expressed.

Other studies have also investigated the impact of the journey to Poland on Israeli adolescents' attitudes towards Israeli-Arabs and Palestinians (Shechter, 2002) or on their universal values (Gross, 2010; Lazar, Chaitin, Gross & Bar-On, 2004a, 2004b). Romi and Lev (2003, 2007) conducted a survey of journey participants immediately after their return to Israel and a follow-up survey several years later, assessing the long-term cognitive and affective impacts. They determine that while the journey increased participants' knowledge of the subject and elicited strong emotional reactions, it did not significantly affect their sense of Jewish identity.

A nation-wide comprehensive research on *Shoah* education in Israel collected a large amount of qualitative and quantitative data on the journeys to Poland in religious and general state schools (Cohen, 2013a). Questionnaires distributed to students, teachers, and principals included sections regarding the journeys. Observations, open questions, and focus groups were also conducted. Interviews with experts in the field provided another perspective on the issue. Taken

together, a rich and detailed picture was compiled, documenting objectives and expectations for the journey and its impacts on knowledge, emotions, and attitudes.

Also in 1988 was the first March of the Living, an educational pilgrimage to *Shoah* sites in Poland culminating in a memorial walk from Auschwitz to Birkenau on Israel's national *Shoah* memorial day in April after which many participants continue to Israel for the country's Independence Day the following week. There were about 1500 participants in the first tour and since then, more than 150,000 have taken part in the bi-annual event (Sheramy, 2009).

Telephone surveys of a random sample of alumni of the first three March of the Living events (1988, 1991, 1992) and a follow-up study of alumni of the 1991, 1999 and 2003 events explored short and long-term effects of the experience (Helmreich, 1995, 2005). Another study used pre- and post-program questionnaires completed by participants of the 2009 march examined the event's impacts on spirituality and health-related issues such as stress and physical illness or discomfort during the trip. During different phases of the journey participants expressed emotions of fear, hope, and faith (Nager et al., 2010).

In addition to such program evaluations, there have been sociological and psychological studies and analyses of Jewish *Shoah* tourism (Ashworth, 2002; Kugelmass, 1994). One recurrent theme uncovered by research on tourism to sites such as former concentration camps is that they are intensely emotional experiences. Often, the tourist has previously learned about what happened in the *Shoah* through reading, museum visits, classes and so forth; the educational impact of the tour to the site is in 'seeing for oneself.'

It is notable that the development of Jewish tourism to *Shoah* sites was an early example of what is more generally known as dark tourism or thanatourism. Historically, there have been visitors or pilgrims to sites of natural disasters, battlefields, or other tragedies (Chronis, 2005; Lennon & Foley, 2000; Seaton, 1996; Sharpley & Stone, 2009; Winter, 2009). However, this 'darkest' type of tourist pilgrimage to sites related to genocide against a group with which one identifies became widespread only in recent decades. As other examples of this developed, such as tourism to sites related to mass killings in Armenia, Hiroshima, Cambodia, and Rwanda, or the mass enslavement of Africans, research began to be conducted on this phenomenon, often with Jewish *Shoah* tourism cited as a key case or a point of reference (Ashworth & Hartman, 2005; Bruner, 1996; Caplan, 2007; Dann & Seaton, 2001; Essah, 2001; Lennon & Foley, 2000; Miles, 2002; Stone, 2006; Tumarkin, 2005; Turnbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Williams, 2004; Yoneyama, 1999).

Also, as *Shoah* sites became developed as tourist destinations, and as *Shoah* education became more prevalent in state schools of many countries, non-Jewish tourists and school groups began to visit these sites as well. This opened a branch of study which examined *Shoah* tourism from different angles, such as interpretation for diverse populations, marketing, resource

development, and control (Beech, 2000; Bollag, 1999; Cole, 2000; Hartman, 2005; Huener, 2001; Macdonald, 2006; Marcuse, 2001).

Jewish summer camps

Overnight Jewish camps are another setting to which Jewish youth travel for educational, social, and recreational activities. For the weeks of the camp, participants and staff alike are immersed in an all-encompassing environment created for the purpose of enhancing Jewish identity.

Jewish summer camps began to be established in the US at the beginning of the 20th century. Overnight camps in general were becoming more popular in the US at this time. Additionally, there was already a well-established tradition of Jewish vacation resorts, created in response to anti-Semitic restrictions at many American resorts at this time. The Jewish summer camps enabled youth to enjoy an American pastime within a Jewish environment. In the 1940s and 1950s these camps increasingly added educational content such as learning Hebrew and/or Yiddish and Jewish traditions (Lorge & Zola, 2006; Paris, 2008).

The Jewish summer camp model has been found to be an effective and popular type of informal education. It is well-established in North America and recently has been expanding in Europe and the former Soviet Union. Jewish camps have become a model for other religious-oriented summer camps (Charry & Charry, 1999; Goldman, 1992).

Beginning in the 1970s, studies of Jewish education in North America have considered the impacts of summer camps as compared with other forms of formal and informal education (Bubis & Marks, 1975; Dorph, 1976; Farago, 1972), and this trend has continued, yielding a decades-long picture of the phenomenon and its outcomes. Summer camps have been found to provide positive experiences with a Jewish environment, peer group, and role models that encourage ongoing involvement in Jewish community (S. Cohen & Kotler-Berkowitz, 2004; S. Cohen, Miller, Sheskin & Torr, 2011; Sales & Saxe, 2004). Research has also found that many alumni of camps subsequently become counselors, educators, or community leaders (B. Cohen, 2005).

The Ramah network of camps affiliated with the Conservative movement has been particularly intensively studied in terms of its short and long-term impacts on participants' Jewish identity and subsequent community involvement; it has been documented that those who attended camp for several summers and particularly those who became counselors were more likely to be involved in Jewish community during their college years (Aviad, 1988; S. Cohen, 1998; Ettenberg & Rosenfeld, 1989; Fox & Novak, 1997; Keysar & Kosmin, 2004).

Other studies have looked specifically at summer camps affiliated with the Reform movement, which in many cases may be participants' primary or only exposure to Jewish education (Cohen & Bar-Shalom, 2006, 2010; Lorge & Zola, 2006).

A recent study of US summer camps affiliated with the three major denominations (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox) compared the experiences of youth in the various streams, and particularly those who may be enrolled in camps whose official denomination differs from their personal self-definition (E. H. Cohen, 2009). Jewish summer camps provided a setting for the study of Jewish identity at large, such as the development and improvement of scales of Jewish identity that cover basic categories of community, religion, Israel, culture, and universal values (E. H. Cohen, 2013c).

A survey of Jewish adults in five Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania) included questions pertaining to respondents' experiences in Jewish summer camps (E. H. Cohen, 2013b; Kovács & Barna, 2010).

An interesting parallel area of study has been that of Israeli youth traveling to other countries to be counselors in Jewish camps, and the multi-directional influences that Israeli counselors and Diaspora staff and campers have on one another (Ezrachi, 1994; Wolf & Kopelowitz, 2003). Similar to this, though not directly related to summer camps, is a program which brought Jewish studies teachers and schools principals from Israeli schools in the TALI system on educational tours in the United States to learn about American Judaism and the American Jewish educational system. Pre- and post- program surveys, interviews, and observations were used to explore the impact of this pilot program, which was found to enrich participants' understanding of various expressions of Judaism and pedagogic methods for teaching pluralistic Judaism in Israeli schools (Grant, Kelman & Regev, 2001).

Jewish heritage tourism

There are also various examples of Jewish heritage tourism which have educational aspects. Jews travel internationally and domestically to visit sites related to Jewish history at large, such as graves of rabbis, and sites such as synagogues in current or former Jewish communities (Collins-Kreiner, 2007). It has become increasingly popular for families to travel to various 'Old Countries' where their ancestors lived, or even to visit traditionally Jewish neighborhoods within the same country (Ioannides & Ioannides, 2002; Roemer, 2005; Wenger, 1997). Even kosher or kosher-style restaurants may be sites of culinary-heritage tourism (Jochowitz, 2003). Museums and exhibits of Jewish art and history draw domestic and international Jewish travelers. Ellis Island in New York and its museum of immigration draws Jewish (as well as many other) tourists. The presentations and interpretations of these museums and exhibits have been the subject of sociological analysis (Clark, 2003; R. Cohen, 1998; Desforges & Maddern, 2004; Greenberg, 2002; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Maddern, 2002; Stead, 2000). Heritage tourism to Eastern Europe—which overlaps but is not identical with Shoah tourism—often brings visitors to places where Jewish

life essentially no longer exists, and may be 'reinvented' for the tourist market (Gruber, 2002; Ioannides & Ioannides, 2004; Schlör, 2003).

Studies of Moroccan-Israelis' pilgrimages to the country of their birth examined motivations for the trips and their role in expression of ethnicity (Kosansky, 2002; A. Levy, 1995, 1997, 2004). A parallel phenomenon of Israeli immigrants visiting the 'homeland' can be seen among Israel's large Russian population; this was explored through interviews with Russian-Israeli students who visited Russia in the 1990s (Lomsky-Feder & Rapoport, 2000).

Another form of travel undertaken by Israelis is that of 'backpackers' who travel overseas after completion of their army service. During their travels, many explicitly and intentionally learn about other countries and cultures, and often as a result about themselves and their own culture, and thus represent a different yet important type of Jewish educational travel (Noy, 2004; Noy & Cohen, 2006). Israelis may also learn about themselves and the Other through travel to neighboring Arab countries. Although organized educational tours of this type are rare, studies of Israeli travel to the neighboring countries of Jordan and Egypt examined motivations, expectations, and perceptions of the destination and local population (Milman, Reichel & Pizam, 1990; Stein, 2002, 2008; Uriely, Maoz & Reichel, 2009).

Educational emissaries as a special case of Jewish educational travel

A special case of travel with Jewish educational goals is that of *shlichut*—the sending of emissaries (*shlichim*) from Israel to teach in Jewish Diaspora communities. *Shlichim* take positions in Jewish schools and community centers around the world teaching subjects such as Hebrew, Jewish and Israeli history, and religious studies, organizing community events, and encouraging and facilitating participation in tours to Israel and immigration to Israel. Over the past 75 years, tens of thousands of Israelis have been sent as *shlichim*, reaching virtually every country with a Jewish population. Unlike the other examples discussed above, the primary goal of this type of travel is to teach. Nevertheless, it has been found that the experience of living and working, often for several years, in Diaspora communities is educational for the *shlichim* as well, and therefore this may be treated as a type of Jewish educational travel.

Like tourism to Israel, *shlichut* was developed as an educational tool of the Zionist movement. The Shlichut Training Institute (STI) was founded in Jerusalem in 1939, with the purpose of training emissaries to work and teach in Jewish Diaspora communities. In the first decades of the program, the primary goals were to encourage immigration to Israel and to increase support for the Zionist cause. Given the classic Zionist perspective of Israel as the center of Jewish life, there was little expectation that time spent in Diaspora communities would be a learning experience for the *shlichim*. However, over time, it increasingly became apparent that *shlichut* was educational for the emissaries as well. First, in order to better meet the needs of the host

community, the training program for candidates began to include more information about the Diaspora countries in which they would be working. Additionally, Zionist ideology has gradually evolved so that while Israel is still seen as the spiritual and political center of the Jewish People, there is greater recognition of the value of exchange between Israel and Diaspora communities. In other words, *shlichim* are exposed to models of Jewish life that differ from those in Israel, and they may carry aspects of these varied expressions of Judaism back to Israel when they return to Israel (Hoffman, 2005). Recently, programs of short-term *shlichut* have been developed in which Israeli teenagers and young adults are sent to Diaspora communities, often to work as counselors in Jewish summer camps. Spending a summer in the Diaspora is perceived by many of the young *shlichim* as enhancing their own personal growth (Gar, 2005; Kopelowitz, 2003).

Much of the research on *shlichut* has been evaluative. As early as 1968, a study conducted in Detroit looked at how *shlichut* enhanced collaboration between Israeli and American Jewry (Shaw, 1968). A study in the mid-1970s looked at the program's response to changing social contexts in the receiving communities (Cromer, 1975). In the mid-1980s, the World Zionist Organization appointed a public committee to evaluate the functioning and activities of *shlichut* and to propose recommendations for its improvement (Landau Commission, 1985). Several years later, a study of *shlichut* in North America looked at the de-politicization of *shlichut* and its adaptation to North American socio-cultural conditions (Verbit & Waxman, 1989). In several case studies, the impact and functioning of *shlichut* has been assessed in Australia (Aharonov, 2010), the former Soviet Union (Dashevsky & Ta'ir, 2009), and North America (American Advisory Council, 1993; Field, 1992; Gar, 2005; Kessler, 1973). In each case, it was found that cultural gaps between *shlichim* and the local Jewish population are challenges to the mission, and that *shlichim* undergo a process of acclimatizing to the new environment while they simultaneously expose Diaspora Jews to the Israeli perspective.

A comprehensive study of *shlichut* (E. H. Cohen, 2011b) covered the history of the program through study of literature and archives as well as an empirical survey. Questionnaires were filled out by 348 *shlichim* who were active at the time of the study (1994-1996) and 470 alumni who completed missions between 1981 and 1993. Additionally, questionnaires were completed by decision-makers affiliated with *shlichut* in North America, France, and Argentina (n=725); decision-makers in Israel (n=163); members of Knesset (n=67) and other local elected officials in Israel (n=141); and Israel Ministry of Education teachers (n=970). Qualitative methods were also used, including personal interviews which were conducted with 300 individuals involved in *shlichut* in Israel, North and South America, and Europe; focus groups including 100 active and alumni *shlichim* and *shlichut* administrators; and on-site observations at the places where *shlichim* work around the world.

A few recent articles have examined sociological aspects of *shlichut*, such as the 'teacher-as-stranger' (Pomson & Gillis, 2010), and Hebrew language skills as an indicator of 'authenticity' (Kattan, 2009).

Conclusion

This social history of Jewish educational tourism research illustrates the vibrant and pioneering nature of the field on two parallel tracks: the travel itself and the research of it. The latter includes content issues explored, methodologies used to investigate them, and theories of identity and travel which have been developed as part of this research. Many of the educational programs developed were among the first examples of travel which were designed to enhance religious and ethnic identity, to create a bond with a homeland, and to commemorate national tragedies. Moreover, many of these were surveyed from their inception. This is an indicator of the extent to which educational travel was perceived as important. The travel programs were not seen simply as vacations, but as integral tools towards articulated goals of identity enhancement, nation-building, preservation of collective memories, and so forth. Organizers were convinced they were dealing with something significant. The issues explored in the surveys give an indication of the explicit and implied goals of the tour programs. For example, while in the early decades of the program encouraging *aliyah* was an explicit goal—survey respondents were routinely asked if they intended to make *aliyah*, over time this has been de-emphasized in promotion of the program and also in research on it, even if *aliyah* may still be an implied goal of organizers. In more recent decades, objectives which are of greater interest to the Diaspora communities have been emphasized, such as participation in the home Jewish community following the tour, and encouraging marrying a Jewish partner. Reflecting this, these issues have been tracked through research on the programs (E. H. Cohen, 2003b; Saxe et al., 2011b). A future article could explore in greater depth the explicit and implicit goals of Jewish educational travel, and how the success of the tours in accomplishing these goals has been evaluated.

Taken cumulatively, the research undertaken offers a deeper understanding of Jewish identity—identification with the Jewish People and Israel, components of identity, symbols of identity, of informal education—quality of tour, group dynamics, guiding), and of tourism—destination image, connection to destination, and local population. Throughout decades of research, scales of Jewish identity were developed, expanded, verified, and improved. Research on Jewish educational travel provides a lens for investigating numerous Jewish communities in the world, particularly as they visit Israel. In particular, the ten-year study of Israel Experience tours took an international approach, considering participants even from very small Jewish communities, rather than focusing mainly on the large North American population. The data collected reveal

much about Jewish youth around the world, their relationship with Israel, and Jewish identity formation in various home countries (Cohen, E.H., in press). Research on travel provides a rich setting to look at Israel-Diaspora relations (Cohen, E. H. and Horenczyk, 2003), which may be studied, for example, in the context of interactions between Israeli and Diaspora staff on tours and in summer camps, and during *mifgashim* arranged among Israeli and Diaspora youth (Cohen, E. H., 2000). Moreover, studies of the numerous populations of Jewish youth surveyed provided insights into global youth culture, in which travel is an increasingly widespread and important undertaking.

The research conducted on Jewish educational tourism also made a contribution to educational research at large, as it helped identify elements of successful programs, challenges, and areas in need of improvement. Given that the research continued over many decades, the effectiveness of tours and the results of changes and innovations were tracked.

It may be noted—and I believe this is an issue which deserves further investigation—that virtually all the studies were conducted by Jewish researchers. This fact reflects many deep-seated characteristics of the institutional world organizing the tours and commissioning the research. The implications, both positive and negative, of this situation are beyond the scope of this article, but may be the subject of future analysis. In any case, the studies provided a rich picture of Jewish travel using a multitude of qualitative and quantitative data analysis tools.

As other populations have emulated examples of Jewish educational travel, for example, in organized group tourism to sites related to heritage, homeland, and history, they have been able to learn from the experiences of Jewish program organizers and tourists—more specifically they were able to learn from their scientifically documented experiences. The rapid expansion of the fields of heritage tourism, Diaspora tourism, and dark tourism related to the history of various groups is accompanied by a growth of scientific studies in these fields.

Mega-evaluation. A fruitful next step in research on Jewish educational travel would be to move beyond program evaluations and towards a mega-assessment of the field. One element of this would be expansion of the populations surveyed to include, in addition to participants, other related parties, namely *madrichim*, applicants' parents, Diaspora community leaders and educators, members of relevant Israeli government committees, and so forth. In this way, researchers could document the impact of the program on Diaspora community organizations and the hosts and operators in Israel. Another interesting population to investigate would be those who do not participate; this could give much insight into barriers to participation. The *Taglit* evaluation has included a sample of applicants as a control group; this aspect of the research could be expanded. Such a mega-evaluation should be international in scope, taking into account not only the large North American population but also the many smaller populations of participants from South American, Europe, the former Soviet Union, Australia, and South Africa. Research could further

investigate sub-populations within each national population, considering demographic features such as denomination, age, gender, size of local Jewish community, and so forth. Furthermore, such research could take a comparative approach to different frameworks of educational travel. A recent study of Graham (2014) offers a case study comparing different types of Jewish education, including but not limited to travel, among British youth in which it was found that gap year programs in Israel have far more significant effects on Jewish identity than do short tours to Israel. A mega-evaluation could eventually assist in the mapping of educational priorities among the Jewish people. In this way, Jewish educational travel can be considered in the context of a global view regarding the policy of education and Diaspora-Israel relations.

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Endnotes

¹ Kings 1, 10 as analyzed in Young, 1973

² In this article the Hebrew term *Shoah* is used, as it refers specifically to the Nazis' genocidal campaign, whereas the English word 'Holocaust' may refer to other atrocities and tragedies; see Gerstenfeld 2008, Petrie 2009.

³ Data were collected from annual reports preserved in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem and were confirmed by data in Mittelberg, 1999, pp. 137-138. For the years 1950-1952 and 1953-1956 are estimates based on cumulative data for these two periods. Figures for 1964 are an estimate. This graph shows only participants in Israel Experience tours and does not include participants in *Taglit* birthright Israel tours, which were launched in 2000.

⁴ Also known as the Itzhak Katzenelson Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum.

⁵ <http://www.lamoth.org/the-museum/history/>

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