"We Didn't Talk About the Conflict": The Birthright Trip's Influence on Jewish Americans' Understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

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Emerging adulthood is a time of identity exploration during which youth actively engage with beliefs and values that shape their political orientation. In this study, we examine the processes and consequences of young adults' exploration of their Jewish identity as it is embedded in the Birthright trip (a free 10-day trip to Israel that is offered to Jewish American emerging adults). In a pretrip/posttrip survey, we found significant increases in Birthright participants' endorsement of the Jewish root narrative on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Jewish people want to live in peace but must defend themselves), disavowal of the Palestinian narrative and understanding of the conflict, sense of collective victimhood, and understanding of the conflict as a zero-sum game. In a separate interview study, participants' narratives of the trip suggested that identification with the Israeli soldiers as being "just like us" as well as border-making between safe (Jewish) and unsafe (Arab) spaces, led to an understanding of the conflict that was based on the Jewish root narrative. Our findings highlight some less examined consequences of identity exploration among emerging adults who are members of groups enmeshed in violent conflict.

Keywords: identity exploration, collective narratives, victimhood, dehumanization, Israeli–Palestinian conflict

The period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2015) is characterized by increased exploration of one's ethnic and religious identity. This investigation of one's identity increases psychological well-being and self-esteem (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008). As part of this explorative process, youth emphasize their sense of initiative and agency in picking and choosing beliefs and values that suit them (Arnett, 2015). Still, emerging adults' engagement with diverse cultural beliefs and values is constrained by cultural and educational institutions within which their engagement is embedded (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011). When ethno-religious groups are enmeshed in prolonged violent conflict, identity exploration within the educational infrastructures of the groups will have political consequences. Not only will this engagement shape how emerging adults understand their collective identity, but also it will shape how youth frame the other.

An important social institution for Jewish American young adults for exploring their Jewish diaspora identity is the Birthright trip. The Birthright trip is a free 10-day trip to Israel offered to any young adult who identifies as Jewish and is between the ages of 18 and 26 (www.BirthrightIsrael.com). Studies examining the Birthright trip show that the trip increases participants' sense of Jewish identity and attachment to Israel. In this study we use a sociopsychological framework to understand processes associated with increased identification with the homeland among groups enmeshed in an intractable conflict. In the first study, we use a quantitative methodological lens to examine belief changes associated with exploration of the homeland. In a

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second study we use a qualitative methodological lens to examine events and experiences associated with a shift in beliefs.

Our aim in this study is not to make generalizable claims about the impact of the Birthright trip on young Jews. We studied the trip independently of the Birthright organization, and consequently didn't have access to a large representative sample that would allow for generalization. Rather, our aim in this study is to contribute to theorizations on the ways in which diaspora youth come to be interpolated into particular narratives common among groups enmeshed in an intractable conflict. By examining both changes in beliefs and participants' phenomenological descriptions of occurrences during the trips, we illuminate some of the passive and active mechanisms by which young Jewish adults may come to identify with Israel and hold a certain orientation on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

This study contributes to social psychological theorizations on the mechanisms with which individuals living away from violent conflict adopt beliefs common among groups enmeshed in conflict. This study also contributes to developmental psychological theories of identity formation, which tend to undertheorize the political consequences of identity exploration among emerging adults. On an applied level, this investigation is useful to educators on college campuses who are faced with vehement debates over the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2017; Dessel, Ali, & Mishkin, 2014). An understanding of how some Jewish students may come to think about the conflict after Birthright can assist educators in creating improved educational programs that critically engage and bridge students' different views on Israel/Palestine.

Birthright-Taglit

The Birthright trip is a fully subsidized trip to Israel offered to any Jewish American identified young adult between the ages of 18 and 26. Thus far, nearly half a million Jewish emerging adults have gone on the Birthright trip, visiting historical sites as well as secular centers in Israel (Birthright-Taglit, n.d). The goals of the trip are to increase Jewish American young adults' connection to their Jewish identity, the Jewish people in Israel, and the diaspora (Saxe & Chazan, 2008). To accomplish these goals, the Birthright trip was designed to use experiential learning to create affect-laden memories of sites important to Jewish history and modern life (Kelner, 2003). Over the course of 10 days, Birthright's participants travel to the Wailing Wall in Old Jerusalem (considered to be the western wall of the holy temple built by King Solomon), Masada (an ancient fortification in the Judean desert where zealous Jews committed suicide under the threat of Roman occupation), and the Holocaust museum Yad Vashem. Trip participants also visit sites important to contemporary Jewish society, including towns and vistas on the Golan Heights overlooking Syria, Tsfat (a center for Jewish mysticism), Kibbutzim (socialist villages), Tel Aviv (Israel's secular cultural capital) and the Mount Herzl cemetery (Israel's National Cemetery). Birthright participants travel in groups of 40, usually accompanied by 5 to 8 Israeli Defense Force soldiers. As young American Jews tour Israel, their Israeli peers help them experience the sites from the perspective of Israelis (Saxe & Chazan, 2008).

Numerous independent studies done in collaboration with the Birthright organization have examined the impact of the trip on contemporary Jewish Americans (Saxe & Chazan, 2008, p. 105). These studies compare representative samples of participants who had gone on the trips with those who had registered to go on the trip but didn't go. Findings indicate that Birthright participants (compared to those who registered but didn't go) are more likely to feel a connection to Israel and the Jewish community, and are more likely to desire to marry a Jewish person (Saxe et al., 2012). Behavioral measures demonstrate that Birthright participants are more likely to make donations to Jewish causes, celebrate Shabbat, become a synagogue member and marry a Jew (Saxe, Sasson, Phillips, Hecht, & Wright, 2007).

It is less clear how and to what extent the program influences youths' understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Studies examining the program's impact are focused on evaluating the trip's goals of increasing attachment to Israel and the Jewish people (Saxe & Boxer, 2012). Less research has been conducted to assess the impact of the trip on how participants understand the conflict with the Palestinians (Sasson, Shain, Hecht, Wright, & Saxe, 2014). The Birthright guidelines emphasize exposing Birthright participants to different narratives of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Saxe & Chazan, 2008). Nevertheless, Kelner's (2010) ethnographical study suggests that the Jewish perspective on the conflict is presented through stories with emotional resonance. The Jewish Israeli perspective on the conflict is conveyed through conversations with Israelis and embodied experiences touring sites highlighting the existential threat Israel is facing. When an Arab or a Palestinian perspective is offered it is voiced by Jewish tour guides and typically does not have the affective weight that the Jewish perspective holds.

Survey studies of Birthright conducted in collaboration with the Birthright organization suggest that participants are more likely to justify Israel's actions against Hezbollah in the second Lebanon war, agreeing with statements such as "The war was a result of Hezbollah's strategy to destroy Israel" and "Israel strived to minimize civilian deaths" (Saxe, Sasson, & Hecht, 2006). Birthright participants are more likely than nonparticipants to justify Israel's actions against Hamas and the Palestinians living in Gaza during the 2014 war (Shain, Hecht, & Saxe, 2014). Sasson et al. (2014) concludes that Birthright goers, compared with those who registered but didn't go, were more likely to frame Israel as "less guilty of violating the human rights of Palestinians and of treating non-Jews as second-class citizens . . . Taglit increased the tendency to view Israel as a refuge for persecuted Jews. . . . [a]nd under constant threat from hostile neighbors" (p. 449).

In terms of more complex political policy preferences, Birthright appears to have less impact. Sasson et al. (2014) found that participation in Birthright decreased support for the division of Jerusalem as part of a compromise between Israel and the Palestinians, while there was no difference between those who went on the trip, compared to those who registered but did not go, in terms of their support for dismantling all, some, or none of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. In another study, Saxe et al. (2012) concluded "among those [participants] who had an opinion on West Bank settlements, Taglit had a small effect, with participants slightly less likely than nonparticipants to say that they favor dismantling "none" of the settlements in the West Bank as opposed to "some" (p. 18). In this study there was no significant difference in level of agreement over compromise around the status of Jerusalem.

Overall, it appears that Birthright increases young Jewish Americans' attachment to Israel and to the Jewish community. It is less clear how the trip shapes young Jewish Americans' understanding of the conflict. In this study, we use a social psychological lens to understand how a trip that increases attachment to a homeland

shapes how individuals also see the conflict in which the homeland is enmeshed. To understand processes associated with attachment to Israel, we use a framework suggested by Rouhana and Bar-Tal (1998). According to this framework, certain beliefs are shared among members of groups enmeshed in a prolonged intractable conflict. These beliefs include dehumanization of the outgroup (Hammack, Pilecki, Caspi, & Strauss, 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2008), a zero-sum view on the conflict (Kelman, 1999), a sense of collective victimhood (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009; Vollhardt, 2009), and a root narrative on the conflict (Ben Hagai, Zurbriggen, Hammack, & Ziman, 2013; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011; Biton & Salomon, 2006). These beliefs serve to sustain resilience of the collective in a time of war and rationalize aggression toward the outgroup (Bar-Tal, 2007). In the first of our studies described here, we will examine changes in these beliefs following the Birthright trip.

Beliefs Common Among Groups in Conflict

Classic social psychology research suggests that when groups compete over scarce resources such as land or water, intergroup antagonism will emerge (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The more there is tension between the groups, the more group antagonism will lead to the emergence of dehumanizing stereotypes (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005). Common stereotypes toward Palestinians in Jewish Israeli society frame Palestinians as inherently violent, as having an orientalist culture that is lagging behind the West, and as primitive (Hammack et al., 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2008).

Related to a dehumanizing framing of the outgroup is a zero-sum view on the conflict. A zero-sum view frames the conflict based on a belief that any concession to the outgroup is a loss to the ingroup. A zero-sum view has been associated with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict because both Palestinians and Jews trace the historic origin of their collectives to the land (Kelman, 1999; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007).

A sense of collective victimhood has also been postulated to play an important role in the reproduction of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Vollhardt, 2009). Collective victimhood is defined based on three features: a belief that the collective was harmed, that this harm was unjust, and that the collective was helpless against this harm (Bar-Tal et al., 2009). Among members of the Jewish collective (in Israel and the diaspora), a sense of collective victimhood is rooted in the persecution experienced by the Jewish people for centuries, culminating with the events of the Holocaust (Goldberg, 1997). A sense of victimhood also plays a role in Jewish Israelis' understanding of the conflict with the Palestinians, except that helplessness, the third feature defining collective victimhood, does not appear to be prevalent in Jewish Israelis' beliefs about the conflict. In other words, Jewish Israelis do not tend to feel that the Israeli state is helpless against Arab attacks (Maoz & McCauley, 2005).

Finally, a long tradition of qualitative investigations of conflict, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in particular, points to the importance of narratives in the reproduction of conflicts (e.g., Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011; Sagy, Adwan, & Kaplan, 2002). A qualitative analysis of conversations between Palestinian and Jewish Israeli youth suggests that root narratives encapsulating a basic narrative schema (including a protagonist, a problem, and a setting) were routinely provoked during an encounter dialogue group

between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians (Ben Hagai, Hammack, Pilecki, & Aresta, 2013; Dessel & Ali, 2012). In an intergroup dialogue, the Jewish participants tended to frame Jewish Israelis as wanting to live in peace but as having to defend themselves from Arab attacks. The Palestinian participants saw their collective actor as belonging to the land and as indigenous to it, but as continually dispossessed and humiliated due to Jewish occupation (Ben Hagai, Hammack, et al, 2013). These narratives represented "a deep story" (see Hochschild, 2016) that emotionally resonated with the ways in which Jewish and Palestinian participants thought, felt, and experienced their reality living in conflict.

Survey studies of Jewish and Arab Americans show a similar pattern of beliefs: Jewish Americans tend to agree with the root narrative in which Jewish Israelis want to live in peace but have to defend themselves, whereas Arab Americans tend to agree with the root narrative that frames the Palestinians as indigenous to the land but as dispossessed and suffering. When Jewish Americans or Arab Americans agreed with their own collective narrative and disagreed with the narrative of the other, they were more likely to reject peaceful solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Ben Hagai, 2017).

Study 1

Emerging adults are engaged in active exploration of their identities, including their beliefs and political values (Arnett, 2015; Azmitia et al., 2008). In this study we were interested in the processes associated with increased connection to Israel among participants in the Birthright trip. To understand processes associated with changes in attachment toward Israel, we used Rouhana and Bar-Tal's (1998) framework of beliefs common among societies enmeshed in intractable conflict. In the first study we used a repeated measures survey design to examine if, after they returned from the Birthright trip, Jewish Americans tended to express stronger agreement with statements that dehumanized the Palestinians or framed the conflict as a zero-sum game. We also examined the extent to which Birthright participants came to see the Israelis as victims, or held a monolithic root narrative on the conflict. We hypothesize that following the trip, there will be an increase in participants' agreement with beliefs common among groups embroiled in an intractable conflict, including: a sense of collective victimhood, a sense of dehumanization, a zero-sum view on the conflict, an increase in agreement with the Jewish narrative on the conflict, and a decrease in agreement with the Palestinian narrative on the conflict.

Method

Participants. To ensure scholarly independence and allow for maximum freedom in theoretical framing and the choice of constructs to study, we chose not to solicit any assistance or support from the Birthright-Taglit organization or from individual trip organizers. To recruit participants, we asked undergraduate research assistants to distribute surveys to upcoming Birthright participants leaving for the trip from different universities. This was generally done by contacting officials from Hillel (a Jewish student center on many campuses) that help recruit participants to Birthright trips, or by asking an upcoming Birthright participant to distribute the surveys among her/his other trip members.

The distribution of pretrip surveys happened within a week of the trips' departure dates, with many of the surveys being filled out in the airport just before departing to Israel. To participate in the study, respondents followed a link to a website, where they completed the survey online. After the end of the Birthright trip, an announcement was sent out reminding the participants to complete the posttrip survey. Of the 112 participants who completed the pretrip survey, 42 (approximately 38%) also completed the second survey. We conducted a set of t tests comparing the participants who only completed the before survey with those completing the before and after survey. There were no significant differences in a sense of collective victimhood, a sense of dehumanization, a zero-sum view on the conflict, endorsement of the Jewish narrative on the conflict or the Palestinian narrative between the group who only completed the pretrip survey compared to the one who completed the pretrip and posttrip surveys. Interestingly, endorsement of a sense of victimhood was lower in our sample, this difference was marginally significant ($p = .052$), suggesting that the sample we analyzed may have had lesser understanding of Israel as victim in the conflict, compared to a larger sample of Birthright participants.

The data analysis presented here only includes participants who completed both the pretrip and posttrip surveys. There were 42 total participants, including 25 women, 13 men, and 4 participants who answered "other." The participants ranged between the ages of 18 and 25, with the average age being 21 years.

Participants were asked to indicate the highest grade or year of school they completed. Four (9.5%) indicated that they were high school graduates, 28 (66.7%) indicated that they had attended college for 1 year to 3 years or were currently in college, and 10 (23.8%) indicated that they had completed 4 years of college. We asked participants what college they attended. Thirteen participants indicated a University of California or California State University campus. Ten participants indicated a University of Washington or Washington State campus. Four participants were from private schools in New York City, and 15 participants (including the 4 who did not attend college) did not indicate a school.

On a scale of political views, 5 (11.9%) identified as extremely liberal, 18 (42.9%) as liberal, 8 (19.0%) as slightly liberal, 7 (16.7%) as moderate or middle of the road, 3 (7.1%) as slightly conservative, and 1 (2.4%) as conservative. In contrast, surveys of a larger and more representative sample of Birthright participants suggest that 64% identify as liberal, 23% as moderate, and 13% as conservative (Shain et al., 2014, p. 8). This suggests that our sample was more liberal than more representative samples of Birthright participants.

In terms of Jewish religious affiliation, 14 (33.3%) reported they were secular or not affiliated, 14 (33.3%) participants reported that they were Reform, 13 (31.0%) were Conservative, 7 (16.7%), and 1 (2.4%) reported nonaffiliated or other. In comparison, in a representative sample of Birthright participants, 27% identified as secular or culturally Jewish, 30% as reform, 33% as conservative, and 9% as other (Saxe et al., 2012). This comparison suggests that in terms of religious affiliation our sample was somewhat parallel to a representative sample of Birthright participants.

Measures. All measures were on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Dehumanization. We measured dehumanization of the Palestinians using three items: "The Palestinians are primitive people" (Smooha, 2008), "The Palestinians are violent by nature" (Ham-mack et al., 2011), and "The Palestinians have a culture that has still not reached levels common in the West" (Ben Hagai, Zurbriggen, et al., 2013; pretrip $\alpha = .78$, posttrip $\alpha = .86$).

A zero-sum view on the conflict. To measure a zero-sum view on the conflict we used an item from Maoz and McCauley (2008): "In the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, there is no place for compromise: either the Jews win or the Palestinians win."

Collective sense of victimhood. Items were taken from Ben Hagai, Zurbriggen, et al. (2013) and followed a definition of victimhood proposed by Bar-Tal et al. (2009). Three items were used to measure victimhood: "Arab and Palestinian attacks on the Jewish population cause them harm and suffering," "The Arab and Palestinian attacks on the Jewish population are unjust and undeserved," and "The state of Israel does not have the power and resources to protect itself against Palestinian and Arab attacks." When it comes to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, previous studies indicate that a sense of helplessness is not common to Jewish understanding of Israel's strength (Ben Hagai, Zurbriggen, et al., 2013; Maoz & McCauley, 2005). In line with those studies, we found a low reliability for these three items together (pretrip $\alpha = .50$, posttrip $\alpha = .37$). Thus, we dropped the helpless item from this measure, and the reliability of the remaining two items was acceptable (pretrip $\alpha = .71$, posttrip $\alpha = .76$).

Jewish narrative on the conflict. The Jewish narrative on the conflict was measured using six items about the past and the present (Ben Hagai, Zurbriggen, et al., 2013). These items invoked a root narrative in which Jews want to live in peace but must continually defend themselves from Arab attacks. Items included: "To the best of my knowledge, the Jewish halutzim (early Jewish immigrants to Eretz Yisrael or Palestine) did not intend to harm the indigenous population living in the area," "Most of the land the Zionist pioneers settled on was purchased legitimately from the Arabs," "Since coming to Eretz-Israel in the 19th century, Jews have had to consistently defend themselves against Arab attacks," "The current Israeli political leadership has tried its best to achieve peace with the Palestinians," and "The Israeli government implementation of checkpoints and the separation fence are motivated by its need to defend Israel from Palestinian aggression" (pretrip $\alpha = .82$, posttrip $\alpha = .82$).

Palestinian narrative on the conflict. The Palestinian root narrative on the conflict was measured using eight items about the past and present reality in Palestine (Ben Hagai, Zurbriggen, et al., 2013). Items related to the past were "Before the beginning of the Jewish aliyot (waves of Jewish immigrations to Israel beginning at the end of the 18th century) most of the land of Israel was populated by an indigenous Arab (Muslim and Christian) population," "The indigenous Arab population had little power to protect itself against the organized Zionist movement," "Early Jewish aspiration to settle in Israel ignored the presence and the rights of the Palestinians to the land," and "The state of Israel acted to push the Palestinians out of the land of Israel." Items associated with the present included, "The Israeli government is acting to push most of the Palestinian population out of the land of Israel," "The Israeli army often 'uses excessive amounts of force' when dealing with the Palestinians," "Arab-Israelis experience discrimination in Israel," and "The Israeli occupation oppresses and causes suffering to the Palestinian population" (pretrip $\alpha = .91$, posttrip $\alpha = .90$).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Tests of Change in Beliefs Before and After the Birthright Trip

Measure	Before		After					
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*t*	*p*	dz
Dehumanization	2.71	1.20	3.04	1.24	41	1.69	.098	.26
A zero-sum game	3.00	1.28	3.61	1.49	36	2.51	.017	.45
Victimhood conflict	5.34	1.05	5.73	.82	40	2.95	.005	.47
Jewish narrative	4.66	.94	4.98	1.00	42	2.41	.021	.37
Palestinian narrative	4.44	1.06	4.10	1.03	41	−2.50	.017	.39

Note. dz= effect size based on standardized difference scores. All beliefs were measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Results

Descriptive statistics for all variables and repeated measures *t* tests for differences pre- and posttrip are presented in Table 1. Intercorrelations between all variables are presented in Table 2.[1] Correlations between variables was relatively high. These high correlations are expected because many of these beliefs are theorized as a cluster of beliefs common among groups living in conflict (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2007). We analyzed variables separately with *t* tests in order to maximize our sample size. These tests indicate a significant increase in trip participants' endorsement of a zero-sum view on the conflict ($N = 36$, $t = 2.51$, $p = .02$), sense of collective victimhood ($N = 40$, $t = 2.95$, $p = .01$), and the Jewish narrative on the conflict ($N = 42$, $t = 2.40$, $p = .02$), as well as a decrease in acceptance of the Palestinian narrative on the conflict ($N = 41$, $t = −2.50$, $p = .02$). There was also an increase in dehumanization of the Palestinians after the Birthright trip, but this increase was not significant ($N = 41$, $t = 1.69$, $p = .10$).

Discussion

Our hypothesis that there would be a significant increase in all beliefs common to groups enmeshed in conflict was mostly supported. The results suggest a significant increase in participants' belief that Jewish Israelis are victimized by the conflict (i.e., are hurt by unjust Palestinian attacks). Moreover, there is an increase in understanding of the conflict in terms of the Jewish narrative in which Jews want to live in peace but must defend themselves. These results are in line with prior studies that show that Birthright increases participants' understanding of Israel as a place that offers refuge to Jews and equal rights to all its citizens, as well as a state that must defend itself from attacks (Sasson et al., 2014; Saxe et

al., 2012). The beliefs that Israel offers equality to all its citizens including Palestinian Arabs and lives under constant threat support the narrative construction that Israelis want to live in peace but must defend themselves, and negate the Palestinian claims for dispossession and discrimination.

Following the trip, our participants were more likely to understand the conflict in terms of a zero-sum game in which any concession to one's own side is a loss to the outgroup. Our finding that there was an increase in framing of concessions as a loss to one's own group may be understood as contradicting previous studies that demonstrate little change in support of dividing Jerusalem or dismantling settlements among Birthright participants (Saxe et al., 2012; Sasson et al., 2014). The differences we observed but that are not observed by other studies may be due to differences in measurement scale or level of complexity of the items. Our zero-sum item is less complex and requires less background knowledge than items in which participants are asked if they support dismantling Jewish settlements in the West Bank or dividing Jerusalem. Moreover, unlike other studies that measure shift in policy preference on a nominal (yes, no) or ordinal scale (all, most, none) we measured change in belief in a zero-sum understanding of the conflict on a continuous scale; this additional statistical power may have led to our significant results.

The lack of a statistically significant shift in dehumanization may be associated with our small sample size. It is possible that if our sample was larger we would have had more statistical power to conclude a significant change. It is also possible that the explicit way in which we measured dehumanization (e.g., "The Palestinians are violent by nature") may have been too overt or crude. Because our participants were largely liberal (and more liberal than a representative sample of Birthright participants), they might not identify with explicitly racist statements. Finally, the experience of taking a survey before going to Israel and after may have

Table 2

Intercorrelations of Variables Before and After the Birthright-Taglit Trip

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Dehumanization	—	.53**	.30	.48**	−.61**
2. Zero-sum	.34*	—	.29	.29	−.40**
3. Victimhood conflict	.31*	−.12	—	.71	−.52**
4. Jewish narrative	.52**	.01	.71**	—	−.69**
5. Palestinian narrative	−.54**	−.01	−.65**	−.76**	—

Note. Correlations for measures before the trip are below the diagonal and correlations for after the trip above the diagonal.
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.

[1] We analyzed variables separately with *t* tests in order to maximize sample size. However, results from a repeated-measures multivariate analysis of variance were not substantively different. The overall effect of the five predictors was marginally significant, $F(5, 30) = 2.10$, $p = .09$. The tests of within-subject contrasts for each variable revealed a nonsignificant change in terms of dehumanization of the Palestinians, $F(1, 34) = 2.63$, $p = .11$, a significant increase in a zero-sum view on the conflict, $F(1, 34) = 5.35$, $p = .03$, a significant increase in a sense of collective victimhood, $F(1, 34) = 6.95$, $p = .01$, a significant increase in agreement with the Jewish narrative on the conflict, $F(1, 34) = 4.64$, $p = .04$, and a significant decrease in agreement with the Palestinian narrative on the conflict, $F(1, 34) = 6.28$, $p = .02$.

created a measurement bias making our participants more likely to indicate responses they thought were socially desirable. Overall it is important to note that this finding should be seen as a case study, and not as a generalizable study applicable to other Birthright samples. A study with research samples from other political and religious backgrounds may have led to different results.

The quantitative component of our investigation suggests that members of our sample came to see the Israeli–Palestinian conflict increasingly in terms of the Jewish narrative on the conflict; the Jewish collective actor aims to live in peace but must be defended from Arab threat. In the second study using an independent sample of participants, we examine processes associated with increased identification with the Jewish narrative on the conflict.

Study 2

To better understand how the Birthright trip may create change in participants' opinions about Israel, we conducted an additional interview study with an independent sample of participants. Our main research question was "What events and trip occurrences play a significant role in shaping participants' understanding of Israel and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict?". In this second study, we examine reoccurring themes in the ways in which participants describe their Birthright trip. In the discussion section, we consider how these reoccurring themes converge with findings from the first study on how beliefs shift during the trip.

Method

Participants.   Transcripts from 22 in-depth interviews conducted with college students who participated in the Birthright trip were analyzed for this study. None of the interviewees participated in Study 1. Participants were between the ages of 19 and 24. Eight participants were male, 13 participants were female, and one participant identified as transgender. All attended a public university in California, with the exception of 2 participants from Vermont (1 was attending a public university, and 1 was attending liberal arts college). All reported being middle class, except 2 who had a working class background. All grew up in communities in California, except 1 participant who grew up outside of Philadelphia and 1 whose family had lived in many different states in the United States.

Fourteen interviews were taken from a larger sample ($n = 30$) of interviews with Jewish Americans active in the Jewish community on a large public university campus. This larger study looked at Jewish Americans' understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2017). Fourteen participants from this larger study indicated during their interview that they had gone on a Birthright trip. If such a disclosure was made, participants were asked extensively about their experiences on the trip. These 14 interview transcripts are analyzed in this study. In addition, we also conducted eight interviews focused only on the Birthright trip. Six of these interviews were with students from the same university campus as the 14 interviewees discussed above. To increase validity and diversity of participants we also sought cases that were vastly different than the large public university interviewees (as recommended by Merriam, 2002). Thus, we interviewed two students who had gone on a special LGBT trip. All trips were accredited by the Birthright Israel organization, and they all followed the core program.

Recruitment and procedure.   For 14 of the interviews, recruitment was done through purposeful sampling, asking students who were active in the Jewish community (defined as participating in Jewish community events) to be interviewed for a study about their Jewish identity and their experiences discussing the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on campus. For the remaining eight participants, recruitment was also purposeful, but in this case participants were invited to participate in a study investigating how they learned about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict through participating in a Birthright trip to Israel. The study was announced on social media sites. Finally, we also used snowball recruitment methodology asking people who participated in this study to invite others who had gone on Birthright to be interviewed.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer explained that the goal of the study was to learn of ways to create a constructive dialogue about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on college campuses. All participants were interviewed by the first author. Participants who volunteered to participate in the study were interviewed in an office in the Psychology department, or in another private room on campus, based on their preference. The interviews lasted between 30 min to 2 hr and were semistructured. Questions included, in order of occurrence: "Can you please tell me, what are the activities you participated in during the trip?," "What did your guides try to convey about Israel or Palestine?," "What was your opinion on what you experienced?," and "How do you think Birthright influenced your opinion on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict?" Participants were encouraged to tell their own narrative of what happened on the trip and how it affected how they thought about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The interviews were audio recorded, and these recordings were transcribed verbatim, with the participants' names changed into pseudonyms.

Data analysis.   We approached the interview from the lens of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997), and were also influenced by grounded theory methodology (Dey, 1999; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Both these methods see knowledge as constructed through the research processes and impacted by the researcher's own situated knowledge. Phenomenological investigation aims to illuminate how participants make meaning of their experiences. As such, our approach to the interview transcripts was inductive, aiming to account for participants' own meaning making processes, rejecting the urge to impose deductive categories on participants' description of their experiences. In our analysis, we searched for reoccurring patterns of meaning making across the narratives of the different participants.

Analysis of the interview transcripts followed several stages. The first author, with the assistance of research assistants, read and reread transcripts from the interviews. Careful notes were taken reiterating participants' assertions. Memos were constructed based on these notes and analyzed for emerging themes. Emerging themes were listed and compared between interviews. We then examined possible connections between the emerging themes. These connections were further clarified through discussions between researchers and rereading of the interview transcripts. The emerging themes we noted were: (a) Discovering Israel as a fun place (b) Connecting with Judaism especially in relation to the Wailing Wall, (c) Connecting with Israeli soldiers (d) A sense of collective mourning in Mount Herzl, and (e) Learning about the conflict through border zones.

We triangulated our emerging themes with other qualitative studies and reports on the Birthright trip conducted by other researchers (See Kelner, 2010; Saxe & Chazan, 2008). We discuss points of convergence between our research and previous qualitative research in the Discussion section.

Researchers' positionality. All interviews were conducted by the first author who also led the qualitative analysis of the interviews. The first author is a Jewish Israeli scholar who used to watch the Birthright buses pass her hometown. The first author approached the project with the assumption that Birthright indoctrinates Jewish Americans with a romantic, and perhaps simplistic, image of Israel. Nevertheless, the reading and rereading of the transcripts from the interviews suggested a relational process in which trip participants, through engagement with their Israeli peers, came to understand Israel in a more complex manner. A group of research assistants, some of whom attended the trip and some who did not, helped analyze the interviews for this research. The groups of research assistants had varied opinions on Israel and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Through discussion of the transcripts and emerging categories within the data analysis, we were able to reflect on our own assumptions and biases when analyzing participants' narratives.

Results

In the following sections, we describe emergent themes and the relationship between these themes as they appeared in participants' narrations of the trip. We briefly highlight reoccurring themes not directly related to the conflict but important to the ways in which our interviewees understood the trip. We also provide an in-depth analysis of reoccurring themes in participants' narratives related to how they came to understand the conflict.

Discovering Israel as a fun place. Most of the participants we spoke to described the Birthright trip as a "fun" trip, a sort of vacation with their friends. Moreover, it was common for participants to construct the story of the trip within discovery genera. For instance, George describes the trip as "eye opening":

> It's eye opening [because] it's just completely different from what everybody else says here. It's not like you have to pray and everybody is Orthodox Jew . . . it's a country where civilization isn't too different from us. I mean of course there are no lines [queue]-which is actually awesome- and of course it is a more of a blunt of a country, but I loved it there, I really did. I didn't see much of a difference.

George, like several other participants, spoke of his pretrip belief that Israel was a premodern, orthodox religious country that was not very safe. In the Birthright trip he, and others, "discovered" that Israel is a modern, vibrant, and fun place, not very different from the United States (other than its disorderly line culture and cultural preference for a blunt communication style).

Intragroup dynamics of mutual enjoyment and a sense of belonging reinforced Birthright goers' sense of fun and connection to Israel. Nevertheless, several participants were critical of the trip because of its emphasis on fun. Some participants noted that the trip was mainly about drinking, partying, and hooking up. Others said that the trip was about showing Israel in the best possible light. For instance, Stuart explained, "I always call Birthright like a sugarcoated trip to Israel." Chaim concluded, "they [the trip organizers] are trying to promote Israel in a positive way . . . every single thing is planned out, they can tailor things exactly how they want to tailor." As they were having fun, participants tended to be aware that the trip only showed certain sides of Israel.

Connecting with Judaism. A meaningful experience highlighted in the Birthright stories of many of the participants was the visit to the Wailing Wall (in Hebrew the Kotel) in Old Jerusalem. This ancient wall is considered to be a wall from the holy temple built by King Solomon. Some trip participants reflected with surprise on their emotional reaction to the Wailing Wall. Participants like David, Kate, George, and Stuart felt a sense of connection with their ancestors when standing in front of the Wall. Stuart remembered,

> I put my hands on the Wall; I just I started crying immediately. It was nuts. I was just thinking about how ancestors of mine for the past like 5,000 years have wanted to be right where I'm standing, and I'm like the first person in countless generations to be able to be there. Even though I'm not the most religious Jew, I'm much more of a cultural Jew, it was still something that hundreds of my ancestors have died without ever being able to like breathe the air and like touch the stone . . . I guess I felt my genes.

Many of the participants gained an appreciation of their Jewish identity as they stood in front of Wailing Wall. Some felt a connection as they thought about their Jewish ancestors who aspired to come to Jerusalem, others were impacted by the devotion of Jewish worshipers praying around them.

Not all participants had a transcendent experience against the Kotel. Some participants described a sense of alienation from the Orthodox Jewish worshipers and the gender segregation of men and women into different parts of the Wailing Wall. Fin, a transgender participant, didn't feel safe at the Wailing Wall (Kotel) because he didn't fit into a binary gender presentation. In his interview he said "there was a lot of back and forth about accommodating safety. So, the Kotel was mostly stressful for me." Examining the interviews with several participants, it appears that a sense of safety and comfort seem to have been a prerequisite for a sense of transcendence and connection to the Jewish people that the Kotel evoked.

Connecting with Israeli soldiers. A key experience in the narrative of Birthright participants was the meeting with the Israeli soldiers who had joined their trip. Participants tended to feel a bond with the Israeli soldiers, which came to frame the way participants understood Israelis and the conflict with the Palestinians. A day or two into the Birthright trip participants were joined by a group of Israeli soldiers (5 to 10) who traveled with them during the trip. Michael describes the meeting with the soldiers and its goals.

> They wanted us to get a look at life from an Israeli point of view so they put I think a series of 5 to 6 soldiers in our group. . . . We shared experiences and we sort of tore down this wall between American Jews and Israeli Jews and we realized that despite all this action they've seen and their hectic violent lives—which were not all that violent—they are really a lot like us. . . . They like to party and get drunk and just dance around like the rest of us . . . and every so often they fire a gun.

Almost all the participants we talked to, when reflecting on the Birthright trip, highlighted a sense of identification or a bond with the Israeli soldiers. This bond was strengthened through the design

of the trip in which the soldiers shared rooms with Birthright participants and often traveled in their civilian clothes. Although the identification with the Israeli soldiers was especially around fun activities, participants also noted a reverence and respect for the Israeli soldiers as fighters who were risking their lives. David for instance remembered,

> I kind of almost forgot that they were soldiers and then I was like 'oh, oh wait, I'm with soldiers'. And it was crazy, 'cause it was like I'm forming relationships with them but in five days when I leave they are going back to the army and like could very well never see them again because they could like, something could happen.

The identification with the Israeli soldiers as being just like us, not wanting to engage in violence, but rather live peacefully, also emerged through the contrast several of the participants invoked between the Israeli soldiers and the American military. Interviewees like David, Stuart, and Sam saw a difference between Israeli soldiers who had to serve in the Israeli Defense Force and American soldiers who volunteer to serve. Stuart explained that the Israeli soldiers

> . . . seemed proud to defend their country. . . . I do not think any of them were like excited to "go kill some Arabs." They were proud, but I would say reluctant. . . . The people that I know that have gone into the Marines were juvenile delinquents or covered in tattoos and could not get a real job, and they aren't well educated, so they play a lot of Call of Duty and then go join the Marines. . . . I respect a lot of people that are willing to put their life on the line to defend the freedoms that we enjoy as Americans. However, I wouldn't necessarily call it defending lately. . . .

In the eyes of these participants, the Israeli soldiers appeared unlike American soldiers in that the Israelis were reluctant to fight and did so only because the country needed defense.

A sense of collective mourning in Mount Herzl. The relationship and bond participants felt with the soldiers became tied to the story of Israel during the visit to Mount Herzl, Israel's National Cemetery. It was common for participants to visit Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum, before going to Mount Herzl. The juxtaposition of Yad Vashem followed by Mount Herzl suggests a narrative in which the Jewish people rose from the ashes of the Holocaust to establish their own safe haven (also see Saxe & Chazan, 2008). The gravesites in Mount Herzl served as a reminder that many young Jews sacrificed their lives for the Jewish state.

This national story of Israel (from the ashes of the Holocaust to a Jewish state) became emotionally meaningful to American young adults through the conversations with the soldiers. As a group of American college students and Israeli soldiers visited the Mount Herzl cemetery it was common for the Israeli soldiers to point at the graves of people they knew who were buried in the cemetery and tell their story. David described his experience of going from Yad Vashem to Mount Herzl.

> We went to Yad Vashem and then we went to Har Herzl, it was this whole day of just "we want you to cry". . . . I've never felt so connected to the narrative of the Holocaust before, and then we immediately go to Har Herzl and we are with soldiers that are on the trip and one of them is like he starts to cry and I was like "Why are you crying?" and he like points (to a grave) that was his cousin. . . .

And this is a soldier I was really close to on that trip like we traded clothes. . . .

Anna who had gone on a LGBT Birthright trip also remembered that

> The soldiers were really sad when we were there and it was very intense for them which I think sparked like emotion in the people in my group in a lot of ways. One of the soldiers, [when] we passed the grave of a family friend he started crying and he was kind of off to the side crying and some Americans were with him and then he kind of came over to the group and told us. Yeah, so he came over and told us what was happening, and then the Israeli tour guide asked the Israelis [soldiers] to speak a little bit about what it meant to them to be at the graveyard. . . .

Birthright goers' affective ties, friendship, and empathy for the Israeli soldiers increased their understanding of sacrifice and loss experienced by Jewish Israelis.

Some of our participants recalled being shown graves of Israeli soldiers who had gone on the Birthright trip. The insight that some of the soldiers buried in Mount Herzl were like the participants themselves, young Americans who had gone on Birthright, evoked affective identification and grief. Kristal reflected on such a moment of experiential learning as she recalled a ceremonial event when the American youth said goodbye to the soldiers who accompanied them throughout the trip:

> Then we went to Herzl's grave and the rest of the army graves and we heard about all the people who died, and how there was an 18-year-old who was one of a pair of twins [and he died]. . . . and the twins on our trip started freaking out. We then walked to another part of the cemetery and said good-bye to the soldiers. It was like they [the trip organizers] wanted us to understand the importance of those protecting Israel, and I think . . . no one likes Israel there [in the Mideast], and it's hard.

Even for critical participants like Kristal, Anna, and Fin, the experience of identification with the Israeli soldiers as peers enhanced an understanding of Israelis as defending themselves.

Learning about the conflict through border zones. Analysis of our interviews suggest that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is rarely discussed during the trip. Stuart summarized Birthright's focus as "[it was] mostly history very little conflict." Like Sam, David, George, and Michael, Anna described having one session focused on politics:

> There was one session we had that was like a political session with someone I think he was like a professor or something . . . he gave us a PowerPoint on like the political situation . . . There was no time for questions in the session, which I think frustrated a lot of people in the group because this was like halfway or maybe a week into the trip, a little over halfway, and we like hadn't talked about politics at all so people were like "finally! We're getting to talk about politics!" but then it felt cut short.

Usually participants described having one session in which geo-politics, the conflict, or media bias against Israel was discussed. Although interviewees often said that the presentation aimed at showing the different sides of the conflict, the lesson they recalled was in line with the Jewish root narrative of wishing to live in peace but having to defend Israel. For example, Sam remembered,

[The presenter] showed us a Hamas recruitment video, and that was intense for me. Um, especially because he explained like, yeah they [Hamas] will pick to shoot from a certain point so that if Israel misses it, it hits like a hospital or hits a school and they can film that and be like, "Oh, Israel is this horrible place" and they hate us.

Another moment in which participants thought about the threat Israel was under was when visiting border zones. It was common that Birthright participants visited vistas on the Golan Heights overlooking the border with Syria. Another border zone some participants visited was near the separation wall (also called the security fence) between Jerusalem and the West Bank. A few participants described visiting a vista overlooking the Gaza Strip. As they looked out at Syria, the West Bank or Gaza, participants experienced a sense of threat. David remembered standing on the Golan Heights overlooking Syria.

We could see Syria. It was crazy, Israel was like, you know beautiful and green and then you see Syria and then the tour guy was like 'you see that over there?' I'm not lying to you, that's ISIS.

Sam remembered standing in a spot overlooking the Gaza Strip and thinking "[it was] intense contrast to be like there's all this greenery [in Israel] and then there's all this dark like concrete looking like pale buildings". Kate stood on a vista in Jerusalem overlooking the separation fence, and remembered thinking,

We stood in the specific part of Jerusalem that looks right over the fence, and there's a whole bunch of bullet holes in the side of one of the buildings, and he [a man involved in designing the separation fence/wall] would explain to us, like, "we have the fence . . . We have this buffer zone so we can like catch people if they're trying to run across the border . . . He personally hates the wall. He wants to be the first person to take the first brick of the wall.

Birthright participants' gaze was directed toward looking at the Syria, Gaza, or the West Bank; as they gazed from Israel they saw dark, chaotic, and hostile neighbors, which increased participants' sense of threat.

A sense of threat was also invoked through the dichotomy between safe and unsafe spaces when traveling within Israel. As Sally recalled,

One time we were in a little town and they said over there is the Muslim quarter, do not go over to the Muslim quarter it's very dangerous. Like if you go over there you know there's no guarantee we can get you back like they made a huge deal about it. When we went to go see the Syrian border they just explained to us, the issues with Syria. . . . All the warfare and the Israeli soldiers getting killed by snipers.

The identification with the Israeli soldiers as being "just like us," as well as border making between safe (Israeli) and unsafe (Arab/Muslim) spaces reiterate the Jewish Israeli narrative.

Discussion

Reoccurring themes in the narratives of Birthright participants suggest that the trip was fun and presented Israel in a positive light. We found that some participants became more attached to Israel through a sense of connection with their ancestors and other Jewish people praying in front of the Wailing Wall. A key way in which participants became connected to the people of Israel was

through an encounter (mifgash) with the Israeli soldiers (see also Saxe & Chazan, 2008). The connection with the soldiers was based on a sense that the soldiers were just like "us"—peace loving and fun seeking—but called to duty to defend their country. Through the connection with the soldiers the Birthright participants came to see the Israeli collective actor as wishing to have fun and live in peace. Through mutual mourning in Israel's national cemetery and through discussions about Israel's vulnerability at border zones, participants came to understand the setting in which the Jewish collective actor is situated as grounded in danger and threat.

Our results echo Saxe and Chazen's (2008) research that also highlights the importance of the encounter with soldiers in bringing young Jewish Americans to feel more connected to Jewish Israelis. Our finding that a sense of threat is emphasized during the trip, is also discussed in Kelner's research (2010) who argues that threat is emphasized in the Birthright trip through "attention-grabbing security measures [employed by] tour operators [that] highlight rather than mask the danger facing Israel" (p. 99)

Our analysis of participants' interviews suggests that the current politics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and the Palestinian perspective, were rarely discussed during Birthright. It is possible that a more complex understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict was presented to participants, but that these nuances were not part of their memories of the trip as articulated in their interviews. Our findings are in line with Kelner's (2010) conclusion that the Palestinian narrative was not discussed frequently on the trip, and that when the Palestinian narrative was discussed, it was voiced by Jewish guides and did not have the same emotional resonance as the Jewish narrative.

General Discussion

Integrating findings from both the qualitative and quantitative components of this research makes several contributions to social psychological theorization. In these studies, we moved away from a discussion of group identification as central in intergroup conflict, to a focus on the role of narratives in supplementing identification with the ingroup. Although the concept of a narrative is usually used in qualitative research, in this research we explored narratives using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Our findings suggest that a root narrative, similar to Hochschild's (2016) concept of a deep story, was central to group identification. As participants came to identify with Israel, they came to adopt a certain narrative on Israel.

The structure of the root narrative induced identification with the collective. The structure of the root narrative includes a framing of the collective actor, a setting, and a mismatch between the setting and the actor's intentions (Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2017). When the Birthright participants came to know and identify with the Israeli soldiers, they came to understand the Israeli collective as wanting to live in peace. The trip's framing of the setting of Israel as under threat from Arab attacks created a root narrative in which, although Israelis want to live in peace, they must defend themselves. Through processes of emotional identification with the Israeli soldiers, shared mourning, and a shared sense of threat, young Jewish Americans came to embody and identify with the Israeli narrative on the conflict. This research contributes to our understanding of the ways in which narratives common to groups

enmeshed in conflict become adopted by members of diaspora groups not living under conflict conditions.

Relatedly, our findings suggest that it was not an explicit disavowal of the Palestinian narrative but rather an emphasis on the Jewish narrative that may explain participants' lack of attention to the ways in which the Israeli occupation impacts Palestinians' lives. When Birthright participants stood in border zones their gaze was directed toward a sense of threat and away from Jewish settlement expansion or checkpoints. It appears that it need not be by explicit delegitimizing, but rather can be by lack of deep engagement with the perspective of the outgroup, that members of a collective come to disavow the outgroup narrative on the conflict. This disavowal may be associated with an understanding of the conflict as a zero-sum game in which either "they" win or "we" win, as the results of our quantitative study suggest.

A second contribution this research makes is that it expands our understanding of the consequences of identity exploration among ethnic youth. Much of the literature on identity exploration and achievement highlights the positive aspects of these processes including increased self-esteem and wellbeing (Azmitia et al., 2008; Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007). In this study we show how emerging adults' (Arnett, 2015) interest in exploring their ethnic identity associated with participation in an educational trip. Through experiential learning, a certain story about the collective emerged. A focus on one's own story was also associated with the disavowal of outgroup suffering.

Our results are limited in several ways. It is important to note that our study is not an evaluation of the Birthright trip. We didn't have a representative sample of Birthright participants and our samples are small. Working independently of the Birthright trip we relied on convenience sampling. We only studied young adults who had gone on Birthright with relatively secular trips. Moreover, our samples for the two studies were recruited independently of each other. We theorize certain connections between a shift in beliefs and experiential learning, but we cannot make any claims of causal connection between the findings of the two studies. In order to address the limitation of our samples we triangulated our findings with other research on the Birthright trip, focusing on trends that other researchers looking at Birthright trips have also found.

We also focused in our interviews on participants' Jewish identities. Religious or cultural identity is only one component of the self; emerging adults explore and integrate many different identities as they navigate the process of identity formation. Our sample was not diverse enough to explore other identities that might intersect with Jewish identity and lead to different experiences on the Birthright trip and different views on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. However, there were hints in our data that other identities might intersect in meaningful ways with one's Jewish identity. For example, Stuart's understanding of the background and motivations of American soldiers suggests that class is an important identity. Similarly, the experiences and perspectives of the two LGBT participants were different in some ways than those of the heterosexual participants. Further research can explore myriad identities and the complex ways that they are integrated or challenged on the Birthright trip and in thinking about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Our findings and theoretical formulations suggest some important lessons for educators. First, affect-laden learning experiences like the Birthright trip can reduce a sense of alienation and increase a sense of connection with one's ethnic group. Nevertheless, it can also reduce participants' understanding of the outgroup narrative. We recommend that college educators engage critically with both perspectives on the conflict to supplement some of the monolithic narratives that students learn through participation in experiential programs in which they explore their ethnic identity.

Moreover, because one of the goals of the Birthright trip is to present participants with different perspectives on the conflict, we recommend that Birthright invite Palestinian activists and politicians to discuss the conflict from their own perspectives. Moreover, because the Israelis who join the trip play an important role in increasing young Jews' identification with Israel, young Israelis who join the trip should reflect the variable ways in which Israelis understand the conflict, including those who tell narratives that break with the Jewish root narrative.

In conclusion, we found that when members of a diaspora group explore their ethnic identity, the process of adopting a collective narrative may associate with a disavowal of the outgroup narrative. Adoption of the collective narrative among groups in conflict is grounded in identification with the young soldiers, shared mourning over the death of soldiers, and increased sense of threat from the outgroup. Overall, the increased identification with the Jewish story has implications for whether Jewish Americans acknowledge the dispossession of the Palestinians, and if they believe peace with the Palestinians is possible.

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